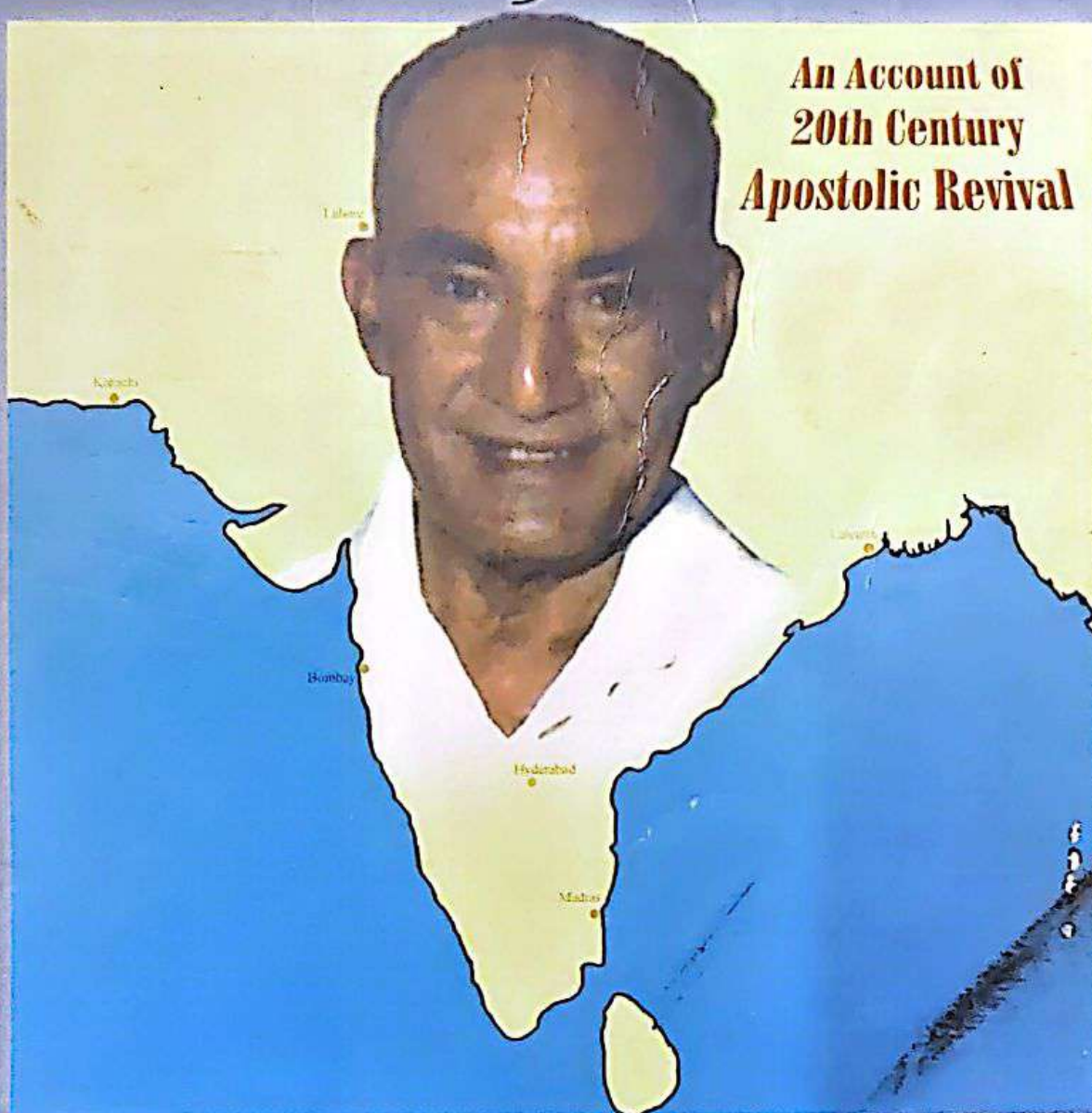


Brother **Bakht Singh** *Of* **India**

**An Account of
20th Century
Apostolic Revival**



T. E. Koshy

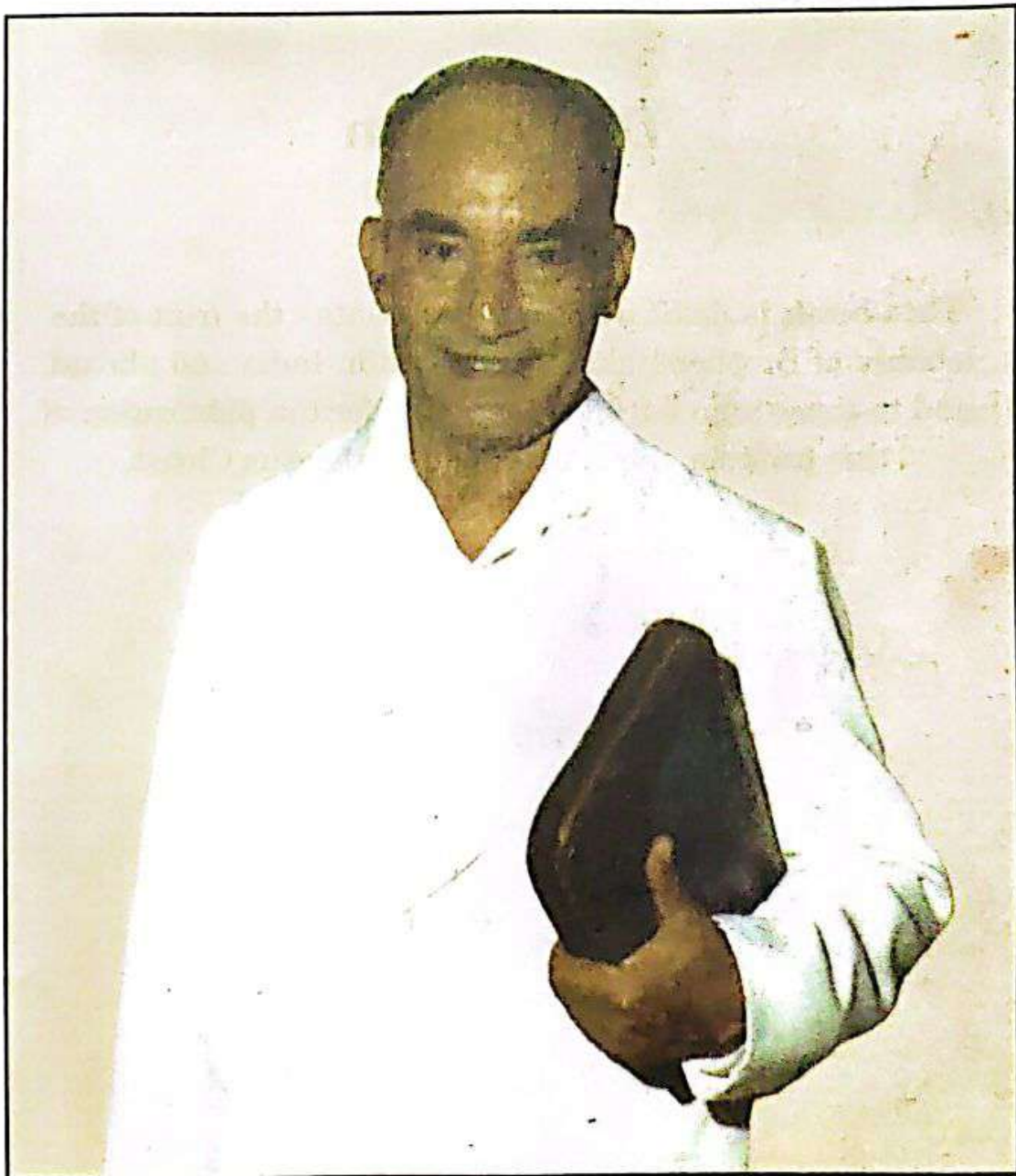
Foreword by **George Verwer**

In this authorized biography of the life and ministry of Brother Bakht Singh, a foremost evangelist, revivalist and world-renowned New Testament Church planter of 20th century India, Dr. T. E. Koshy shares many unique incidents about Brother Bakht Singh which are reminiscent of the Acts of the Apostles. From his extensive research and interviews with Brother Bakht Singh, his siblings, friends, associates and fellow-believers, Dr. Koshy has written an intimate account of his vision and mission, which hitherto are not known to many. For about twenty years, from the late 60s to 80s, Dr. Koshy was able to spend time with Brother Bakht Singh during his annual visits to Syracuse, New York on 'a one-on-one' basis to obtain important and intimate information for the book.

This is an amazing account of a marvellous movement of God through a man who in his youth—growing up in colonial India as a Sikh-hated Christ, the Bible and Christians. While studying engineering in England, he became an atheist, renouncing his Sikh religion and any other form of religious faith; yet while on his way to Canada for his summer holidays on board a ship, God's irresistible and amazing grace reached out to him. After his miraculous conversion to Christ, he became a true disciple of the Lord Jesus, seeking and doing the will of God at any cost. The book is filled with examples of the way the Lord performed great and mighty things through Brother Bakht Singh, to demonstrate His greatness, power and glory. As a man of prayer and faith, he proved the faithfulness of God by his life and ministry, depending solely upon God for his every need, both personal and corporate. While many Christian organisations would appeal for funds publicly, Brother Bakht Singh made known his needs only to God Who honoured his faith by providing for his every need throughout his life. In a life of faith he was second to none and can be included among the great heroes of faith of the past, men like Hudson Taylor, George Mueller and others. The book narrates how the Lord led him to establish indigenous local churches, patterned after New Testament principles, which

(Continued on Back Flap)

Brother
Bakht Singh
Of India



(6 June 1903 – 17 September 2000)

An Account of 20th Century Apostolic Revival

Dedication

This book is dedicated to all the saints - the fruit of the labours of Brother Bakht Singh both in India and abroad, and to those who have been praying for the publication of this book for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Brother
Bakht Singh
Of **India**

*An Account of
20th Century Apostolic Revival*

T. E. Koshy

Om Books
Secunderabad

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Foreword

We always stand amazed when we see God using someone in an unusual way, and that certainly is true of Brother Bakht Singh.

My friendship and partnership with this amazing man of God was one of the most important and unique in my 47 year pilgrimage in evangelism and mission.

From the pages of this book God will “shout” different truths at us, and I pray that we will be obedient to what the Holy Spirit is wanting to do in our lives and our churches.

Be sure not to miss chapter 15 which shows how our brother, Bakht Singh, was also an ‘earthen vessel’ just like the rest of us.

It is my prayer that all of us who read this book, will reach out around us to people of other religions and cultures.

We see a great story of how God works in different people in different ways. And rather than destroy our culture or personality, He works in and through them. Let’s be sure to share this book with others, some of whom may have never heard of the unusual work of the Holy Spirit through Bakht Singh.

London,
January 2003.

George Verwer
Founder, International Director
Operation Mobilisation
England

Acknowledgements

Since the sixties, it has been my desire to write Bakht Singh's biography. In the mid-sixties, while doing my graduate work in journalism at Syracuse University, Syracuse (U.S.A), I wrote a brief sketch of his life and ministry as a project for my class-work. Then, in the early seventies, at my request, Bakht Singh gave me a letter authorizing me to be his official biographer. Since then, I have interviewed him on several occasions, particularly during his visit to Syracuse, New York, and have been collecting data for the biography. Therefore I want to express my gratitude to him for giving me the honour of being his official biographer, and for sharing with me much valuable information in response to several interviews I had with him over a number of years.

I also want to thank his siblings, Amarnath, and particularly Sri Chand Chabra for spending several hours with me answering many of my questions and providing me with some valuable material and information for this book.

I am very grateful to many people from around the world who have prayed for this project, and who have contributed their time, providing me with useful material and information. While it is not possible to list all their names, I should mention a few of them for their special contribution.

Dr. Angus Kinnear of England, knew Bakht Singh since the forties, while he was working as a medical missionary in India. He provided me with much valuable material which he had collected over the years, as he himself was planning to write Bakht Singh's biography someday. Knowing that I was planning to write it, he graciously released all the original material to me. Moreover, he spent several hours with me in London, sharing many things in connection with the biography, and giving much counsel and insight which were of great value in the preparation and writing of this book.

Words fail me to adequately thank Bill Thompson of London, England, for helping and guiding me through this difficult project. He had known Bakht Singh and worked with him since the forties, while he was serving the Lord in Bombay as a missionary. Among other things, he helped me with a number of books and material which aided in the writing of the book. He spent days with me in Syracuse and in London during the initial stage and throughout the writing of this book counselling me and critiquing the manuscripts, which required several trans-Atlantic phone calls. I am grateful for his goodwill, as well as his constant prayers for the completion and publication of this book. I am also thankful to numerous of Bakht Singh's co-workers and friends, both nationals and foreigners – Fred Flack, Raymond Golsworthy, Lesley Carter, Sister Grace Stalley, Dr. Sheela Gupta, Devasagayam, K. Phillip, S. Martin, George Verwer, Paul Marsh, Dennis Clark, Geoff Abbiss, Dr. Christy Wilson, Dr. Robert Finley of Christian Aid, G.T. Benjamin, Maqbool Gill, Sisters Daisy, Nissi, Jony and several others for taking time to provide me with information and insight into the life and ministry of Bakht Singh. I also want to thank Jebamani Devanesan who transcribed many of the tapes of my interviews with

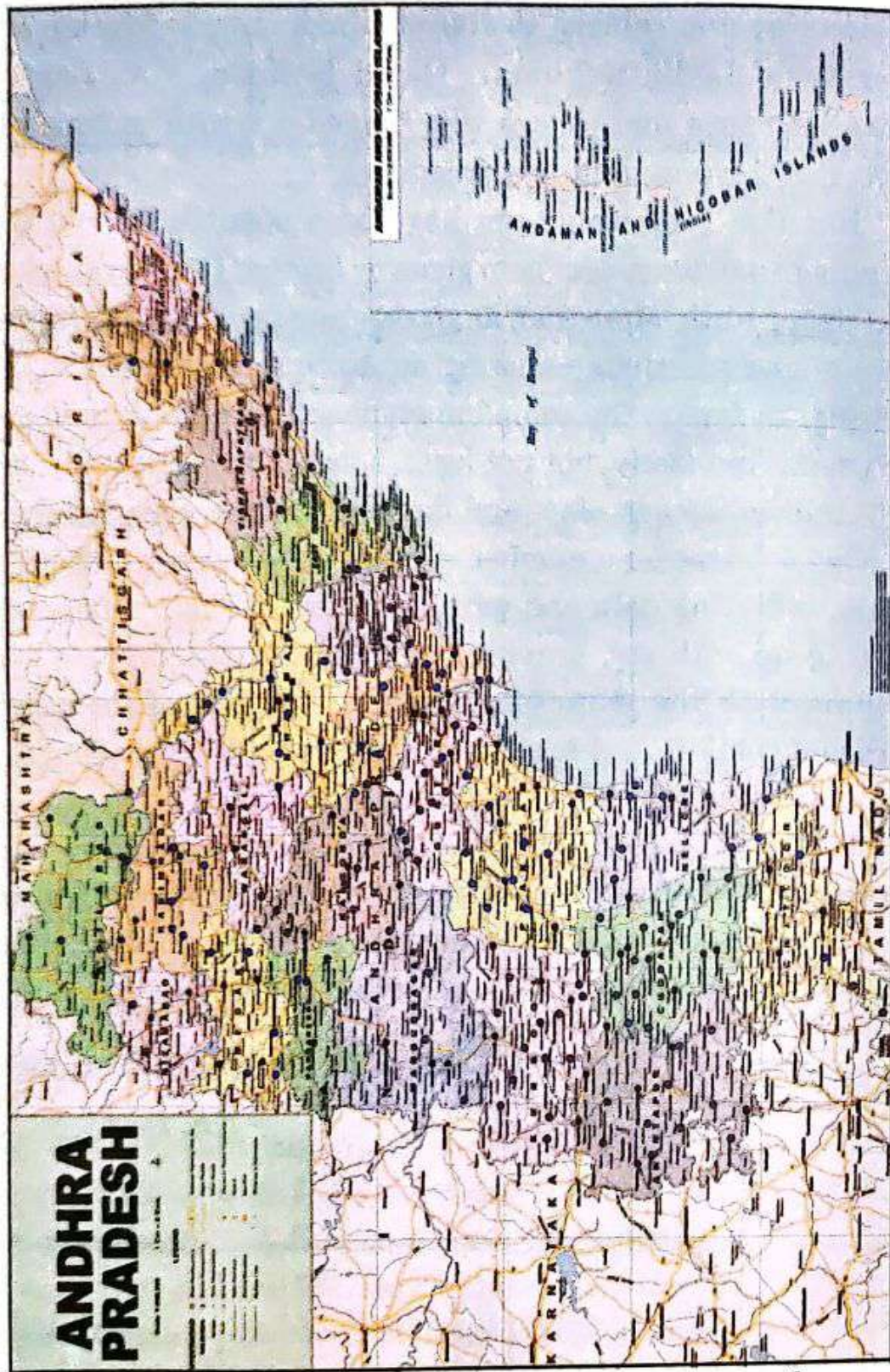
various people related to Bakht Singh. Lynda Weeks, my secretary, Lydia Sukumar, David McKeon, M.E. Eapen, Sister Chithra and others who helped me with sorting out materials, typing and proofreading.

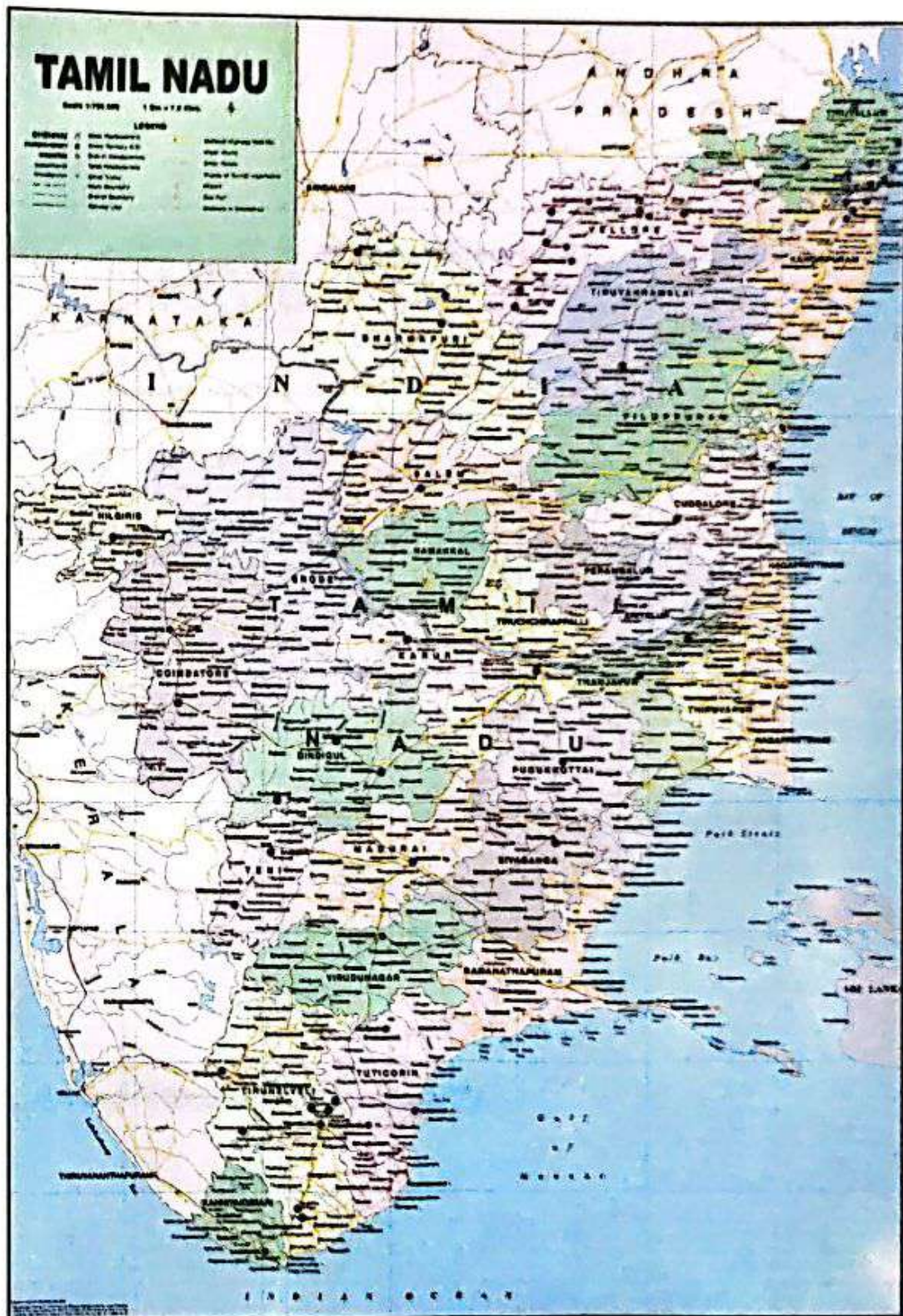
But this book would not have been possible without the sacrificial and consistent help given by Brother D.S. Christopher and Sister Ruth. More than anybody else, they spent their time, talents and treasures assisting me since the beginning of the writing, in typing the complete manuscript. I thank the Lord for them. And lastly, but not least, I thank my own family, my wife Indira, my son, Jay, and daughter-in-law, Susi, for their bearing with me for a number of years while I was in and out of home, collecting data and writing the book. Their patience in putting up with me, praying for me and supporting me and helping with the manuscript even at the cost of their own personal comfort and needs; particularly Jay, for reading the manuscript and for his valuable suggestions.

There are several others who have contributed in various ways. Although their names are not mentioned here, the Lord knows, and I know them, and acknowledge them all for what they have done towards the completion and publication of this book - to all my sincere thanks.

-- T.E. Koshy

Map with
dots (●)
indicating
the location
of Assemblies
in Andhra
Pradesh





Map with dots (●) indicating the location of Assemblies in Tamil Nadu



Map with dots (•) indicating the location of Assemblies in India except in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu

Introduction

From the late thirties of the 20th Century, "Brother Bakht Singh" has been a household name among Protestants in India. He was one of the most sought-after evangelists/revivalists in colonial India. Few were free from the impact of his life and ministry be it individuals, denominations, mission societies, clergy, laity or non-Christians. Many were challenged and transformed by his Bible-based and Spirit-anointed messages. From Kashmir in the North to Kerala in the South, people thronged to hear him and were greatly influenced and impacted for Christ. Indeed he was India's foremost evangelist and indigenous church planter of world renown.

In the thirties, India was going through a turbulent time. Her struggle for political independence from Britain was at its zenith under the indisputable leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. He was not only the most popular political leader of India, but to millions of Indians he was their spiritual leader as well. Influenced by the rising popularity and power of Mahatma Gandhi, both politically and religiously, many Christian leaders both national and missionaries were reluctant to preach openly the Christ of the Bible as the only Saviour and Lord. During the thirties Christianity in India was at its nadir, plagued by problems from both within and with-

out. Because of its close association with Britain and the West, most non-Christians in India viewed Christianity as "foreign" and considered it to be non relevant to Indians.

Dr. John Webster Grant well explained this predicament:

"The foreignness of Christianity, in modern India as in medieval Europe, is due not only to our partial understanding of the gospel but also to a strangeness inherent in the gospel itself. Always and everywhere the church has been suspect as an upsetter of traditions and a disturber of folkways. It lives a pilgrim life, calling men to allegiance to the God who measures all the nations in the span of his hand. Religions that grow out of the soil have no problem of indigenization. Their gods are only symbols of the experience and aspirations of a particular culture, and it is inherent in their nature that they do not attempt missionary work among people of other cultures. Only a religion of revelation, claiming to bear a message to all men from the living God, has difficulty in coming to terms with national customs and ways of life.

Christianity makes a universal claim precisely because it is rooted not in general human knowledge of God but in God's disclosure of himself in specific events that can be located in space and time. ...

We cannot purge Christianity of its strangeness, for to do so would be to destroy what is distinctive about it. If Christianity were only an idea to be presented or an experience to be shared, we might without much difficulty invite new peoples to clothe the idea or the experience in forms of their own choosing. But the gospel didn't come into the world as a naked idea or as a simple experience. It came embodied in human personality, and in each generation it must be embodied in the living fellowship of the church. Communicating Christianity means more than convincing individuals about Christ or conveying to them an experience of his pres-

ence. It means transmitting the life lived and shared by Christ's people, and we cannot transmit that life apart from the forms of thought and worship and organization through which we express it.

In modern times, moreover, the foreignness of Christianity has been greatly aggravated by the close association of missions with an outward movement of European power and influence that has affected the entire world.¹

As Dr. Stanley Jones, a prominent American missionary to India, wrote, "But standing amid the shadows of Western civilisation, India has seen a Figure who has greatly attracted her. She has hesitated in regard to any allegiance to him, for India has thought that if she took one she would have to take both—Christ and Western civilisation went together."²

Whenever the church needs a fresh awakening, the Lord Jesus Christ raises up His vessels to call the church back to Him. Throughout church history, we see this phenomenon. Let me cite just a few of the numerous such examples: Martin Luther, Nicholas Zinzendorf, John Wesley, George Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards, William Carey, Charles Finney, Hudson Taylor, D.L. Moody, to name a few. Bakht Singh of India is one of those vessels raised up by the Lord in the 20th century. He was God's man with God's message calling people to God and to His Word.

In the early thirties, Bakht Singh, a Sikh convert to Christ, returned to Bombay, India from Canada having had his education in the West. Little did he realize then that the God of love was going to use him mightily as His vessel to do a new thing in India, to bring about an unprecedented spiritual reformation and revolution of love based on the Word of God. God put His seal of approval on him and upon his ministry by using him as His instrument to bring about a mighty revival in the rural village of Martinpur (now in Pakistan) in June of 1937. Thus God had initiated a new move-

ment, New Testament indigenous Christianity, through Bakht Singh which was to impact not only India, but to some extent people across the world.

As Dave Hunt wrote, "The arrival of Bakht Singh turned the churches of Madras upside down. Upset because their members, who were nearly all nominal Christians, were being converted by thousands through his preaching, crowds gathered in the open air, as many as twelve thousand, on one occasion, to hear this man of God preach. Many seriously ill were healed when Bakht Singh prayed for them, even deaf and dumb began to hear and speak."³

When Bakht Singh first began his work in Karachi in close association with major Protestant denominations, he was constrained to minister to the needs of sweepers who were treated like the "scum" of the earth by caste people. He noticed that even the churches were not free from segregation and discrimination based on caste.

He found many of the Protestant churches lukewarm and unconcerned about the spiritual needs of their congregations. The perpetual practice of caste and class systems turned him off from various denominations and mission organizations. He preached and practised the priesthood of all believers, regardless of their status in life. He emphasized, based on the Word of God, that every believer in Christ whether Brahmin or Dalit (untouchable or outcaste) is equally precious, equally necessary and equally important in the sight of God. He felt that the caste system was one of the worst evils practised in India. He realized the problem was deep rooted and that only through the cross of Christ, human problems both social and spiritual - could be solved.

He fasted and prayed to find a practical solution to the spiritual problem so that the local churches might reflect, radiate, and represent Christ, Who is the true spiritual Head of the Church. The goal of Bakht Singh's life and ministry

was to demonstrate the greatness and the glory of God by doing all things in obedience to His Word and by the power of the Holy Spirit. One of the most challenging messages he ever gave was 'The Return of God's Glory' based on I Samuel 4:22. "And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken." He emphasized that in order to bring back God's departed glory to the churches four spiritual conditions must be met.

- a. Pray according to the need of God like Hannah.
- b. Respect and honor the Word of God like Samuel.
- c. Do everything according to God's will and plan like David.
- d. Do God's work according to God's way like Solomon.

He encouraged his listeners to pray that the Lord would raise up people like Hannah, Samuel, David and Solomon so that God's glory would fill the church.

His vision of the church came out of his vision of the Living Lord Jesus Christ. The church consists of the redeemed people of God, which is expressed locally as a local church. The purpose of the church is to express the Living Christ, in obedience to the Word of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit of God, that in all things He (Christ) might have the preeminence. This reality has to be expressed within the cultural and linguistic background of the people so that the "foreignness" of the church may be removed, without changing the distinctiveness of the church. This distinctiveness makes the church all inclusive of all believers, of all backgrounds, all taking their part in the building up of the local church without having any distinction of clergy or laity.

This led him to plant indigenous churches on the basis of New Testament Principles practised by the early apostles and disciples. His desire was to do God's work in God's way. His intention was not to Indianize churches but to Christianize churches, where all people, regardless of their caste, colour, nationality, and language could feel at home as they

gathered together under the Headship and the Lordship of Christ on the basis of the Word of God, led by the Holy Spirit.

To demonstrate the oneness and unity of all believers in Christ, Bakht Singh began a time of open worship where every believer, regardless of his or her caste, color, sex, or background was encouraged to exercise his or her spiritual birth-right of being a priest unto God by offering up his or her sacrifices of praise and worship.

He also started an 'open' Lord's Table to which every believer was welcomed. He believed and practised that all truly born-again believers are part of the Universal body of Christ and welcomed all believers to the Table of the Lord without any question being asked. The Love Feast followed the Worship service where everyone was welcomed and encouraged. It was wonderful to see people of all walks of life enjoying food and fellowship in the Lord, where former Brahmin converts were now stooping down and serving the converted untouchables who had become part of God's family. The highly educated were serving the illiterate and vice-versa. Body life was fully in action for the blessing and the betterment of each other in love.

Bakht Singh also began Holy Convocations, nine-day family gatherings where people from cities, towns and villages, with various ethnic, caste and color backgrounds, converged together, living, eating, meeting, fellowshiping and praising God together. What love—what unity!

While several people have attempted to break down the evil practices of the caste system, particularly the plight of Dalits, Bakht Singh succeeded in uplifting Dalits through the love of Christ. In doing so, he demonstrated that only through Christ one can experience true spiritual oneness and unity of all people. In this regard he was a true spiritual and social reformer in Christ.

He was equally at home with the poor and down-trod-

den of rural India as well as with the sophisticated urban India.

Bakht Singh made himself available to people, regardless of their theological or denominational background.

Let me cite one example. In the year 1979 several Westerners who were former missionaries and pastors went to India with me to attend the Holy Convocation in Hebron, Hyderabad, India. One of them was a former missionary to South Africa. As soon as he walked into Hebron, seeing believers walking around with their Bibles and greeting each other with smiles, he said, "I have never been to heaven, but I am sure heaven is going to be something like this where people of all walks of life will be together as one family praising God."

Even though Bakht Singh had never met these visitors before, he welcomed them warmly and made them feel at home. He also requested both the missionaries and pastors among them to speak at the annual Holy Convocation. At that time, 15,000-20,000 people attended from all across India as well as a sprinkling from various parts of the world. Even though these missionaries and pastors were from various denominational backgrounds, that did not make any difference in Bakht Singh's attitude toward these godly men. He treated them as members of the body of Christ. After spending a few days there, these men were enriched and encouraged by their experience of being with Bakht Singh and the people of God at the Holy Convocation in Hyderabad, India.

In many ways his life and ministry were unique, for he waited upon God to know His plan before he did anything. Bakht Singh believed that the living Christ was the Head of the Church and therefore in everything he acknowledged His ways rather than doing things based on human traditions or culture. The following are some examples:

1) He made Christianity relevant to the people of India. The majority of Indians still believe that Christianity is essentially a religion of the West, and one could not be a Christian and an Indian at the same time. By practising Biblical Christianity, he tried to dispel such misconceptions and helped many to realize that one can be a Christian and Indian at the same time. Therefore, people, regardless of their religion, caste or class followed the Christ of the New Testament without having to follow Western culture. He applied the New Testament principles of the Church within the cultural background of the people of India without contradicting the Word of God. Whenever there was conflict between the Word of God and the culture, he allowed the Word of God to take precedence.

2) He demonstrated that one can trust the God of the Bible for every need, whether temporal or spiritual. He did not have to beg for support from any man whether nationals or foreigners. But he was open to accept any support sent to him by the people of God of their own volition. He taught believers in the local assemblies the importance of tithing and encouraged them to give sacrificially as unto the Lord.

3) He demonstrated that the New Testament Church principles transcended time, place and people, and could be applied to people of any culture, country, and language without compromising the Word of God.

4) He taught and practised the importance of partnership in missions, where East and West could be united, to fulfil the plan and purposes of God.

5) He believed and practised the centrality of the Body of Christ, the Church, where all believers are united into one Body, working together under the Headship and Lordship of Christ, to show forth His fullness, unity, wisdom, and glory.

6) He preached the Living Christ in simplicity with the

power of the Holy Spirit. He used no worldly method to attract people but relied upon God to draw them to Christ through the preaching of the gospel, which is the power of God. He called people to Christ without enticing them with any material or monetary reward. Those who responded to the gospel did so as they were moved by the Holy Spirit of God.

His evangelistic fervor was so challenging, inspiring and contagious, that it stimulated others to do the same, some out of joy and some out of envy. Bill Kline, a pastor friend of mine from Clearwater, Florida, shared with me, that during his visit to India in 1980 he ran into people who did Bible distributions to reach out to people as a competition with Bakht Singh. Bill went to India sponsored by an American based organization called "Bibles for India". During his visit, he asked one of the Christian leaders of a prominent denomination in India, what motivated him and his denomination to get involved in an aggressive distribution of the Bibles. The Indian Christian leader told him that if they did not do something, a man called Bakht Singh will gain all these people by his outreach ministry.

7. God also used him to challenge many, particularly in India, to do things in obedience to the Word of God. Although he did not initiate, many in India and abroad began doing God's work in God's way. In India today there are so many ministers and ministries which owe their spiritual foundation to Bakht Singh and are thankful to God for raising him up to inspire them to follow God in the light of His Word.

8. Like the apostle Paul, Bakht Singh did not count his life dear to himself but served the Lord sacrificially and faithfully with joy. He knew how to live in poverty and in prosperity. He was always content with what he had. One of his often quoted words were that his only complaint about the Lord Jesus Christ was that Christ was too good to him always.

He loved and cared for all and was easily approachable to all those who needed him.

As local churches began to spring up across the State of Andhra and throughout India, breaking down walls of separation and building bridges of relationship, the fire of God's life, love, light and liberty began to spread for the blessings of the poor and down trodden and all alike. As the ministry continued to spread, denominational leaders and some Western missionaries, including some evangelicals, began to be very critical of Brother Bakht Singh. Some began to brand him as "exclusive," "non-cooperative", "anti-missions" and "anti-missionaries", "sheep stealer" and so on.

"When Bakht Singh first began his labours in fellowship with, but not as a member of, mission societies, he was greatly admired for his many qualities. Many had cause to wonder at his mighty diligence and of all they saw in him pertaining to godliness. But when he began to remove things which could be shaken 'that those things which cannot be shaken may remain' (Hebrews 12:27), many walked no more with him. Most of the critics were moved by hearsay and fear, but I know not a few who have had a different story to tell after meeting the man of God in person."⁴

"I was surprised and shocked to find how the evangelical missionaries I met froze when I spoke of him, and accused him of being anti-white. But the truth is that he is not anti-white, but anti-death when it goes by the name of life, no matter what the colour of the skin."⁵

In 1956 Dr. Billy Graham invited Bakht Singh to open his Madras Crusade with prayer, which he gladly accepted, and he was on the platform not only with Graham but also with the bishop of Madras and other denominational leaders.

He worked closely with WEC missionaries and Operation Mobilization and attended the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism in 1974. As time permitted, occasionally

he attended and participated at the Evangelical Fellowship of India (E.F.I) conferences and various other conferences both in India and abroad.

It is true in the beginning of the "assemblies"—local churches in Madras, Hyderabad and in a number of places most of the initial participants of these assemblies were nominal christians from various denominations who had been converted to Christ through Bakht Singh's ministry and longed for deeper things of God which they knew were not practised in the denominations. Many left and joined these assemblies realizing that old wineskin could not hold new wine.

In fact a local pastor of a denomination in a town in Andhra filed a suit against the responsible brethren of a local assembly accusing them of being "sheep stealers". The Hindu judge who listened to the case, passed the verdict saying to the petitioner that he should find out from the defendants the things they do to attract his "sheep" and go and do the same in his church, so that his "sheep" may return and be restored.

But that is no longer true today. Most of the people who are now part of these assemblies are non-Christians and nominal Christians who have been reached through continuous evangelism by the believers of the Assemblies.

The "Vision" which Christ so clearly gave His servant, to form local churches firmly based on the New Testament teachings, consumed his whole life that he never turned right or left, but consistently laboured day and night to fulfill the "heavenly vision."

"Any other church-planter of this calibre would have let others to have made Bakht Singh a Bishop or Arch-Bishop over a thousand large assemblies and hundreds of small churches which the Lord enabled Bakht Singh to establish all over India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, but he was happy to call himself "Bakht Singh—the servant of God." What un-

swerving dedication! What humility! What a man of God! Was it any wonder that God used His servant so mightily—not only in South Asia but also around the world?”⁶

He was known to many of his evangelical contemporaries from around the world who desired to meet and fellowship with him, namely Dr. Billy Graham, Rev. John Stott, Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones, Dr. Francis Schaefer, Dr. Norman Grubb, Dr. Christy Wilson, Mr. George Verwer, Dr. Robert Finley, Dr. G.D. James and numerous others, both well known and less known. His life and ministry are reminiscent of the Acts of the apostles.

Therefore, this book has something to challenge and inspire its readers and reminds them that the same Living God Who was with the early apostles and the church is the same yesterday, today and forever. Moreover, this book is relevant for today to help people who think that Christianity is “foreign,” to understand that Christianity is Christ.

‘Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit’, says the LORD of hosts. (Zechariah 4:6)

T.E. Koshy
Syracuse, NY. USA
2003

End Notes

¹John Webster Grant, *God's People In India* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1959), pp. 2-3.

²E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ Of The Indian Road* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925), pp. 21-22.

³Dave Hunt, *God of The Untouchables* (Old Tappan, NJ: Flemming H. Revell Co., 1976).

⁴Daniel Smith, *Bakht Singh Of India A Prophet Of God* (Washington, DC: International Student Press, 1959), pp. 5-6.

⁵Norman Grubb, *Once Caught, No Escape*, (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1934), p. 150.

⁶G. D. James, *An Amazing Servant Of God*, (See Appendix B).

Significant Dates (Chronology)

1. Birth: June 6, 1903
2. Marriage: June 6, 1915
3. Departure for England: September, 1926
4. Departure from England to Canada: August, 1928
5. Conversion: December 16, 1929
6. Return to Bombay, India: April, 1933
7. The Martinpur Revival: June, 1937
8. To Madras: August, 1938
9. The Nilgiris – a special revelation: June, 1941
10. Renting 'Jehovah-Shammah': July 12, 1941
11. Purchasing 'Jehovah-Shammah': 1959
12. Cuddapah beginnings: 1945
13. Hyderabad beginnings: September, 1950
14. Acquiring of Elim: September, 1950
15. Moving to Hebron: 1959
16. Hebron Messenger: 1963
17. The Trust Document registered: 1971
18. Appointing the chosen brethren: December, 1982
19. First main sickness: August, 1986
20. His home-call: 6 a.m. September 17, 2000
21. Buried in Narayanaguda Cemetery: September 22, 2000.

Part - I

Heavenly Plan— Apostolic Conversion

Chapter 1

Bakht Singh Goes to Glory: The Home-Call of a Man of God

"...to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:8)

On Friday, September 22, 2000, a large part of the city of Hyderabad, India, came to a standstill. 'Hebron', the base of Bakht Singh's ministry since the 1950s, was the headquarters of his national and international work. Both the 'Hebron' and 'Hermon' compounds, all adjacent roads and the main road between Golconda Crossroads and Narayanguda Cemetery, were like a sea of humanity which according to some estimates numbered a quarter of a million. Shops and offices were closed. Traffic was diverted as police and law enforcement officers did their best to control the crowds that participated in this unusual procession. It took about three hours for the procession to cover the distance of three kilometers from 'Hebron' to the cemetery, and was the largest 'gospel procession' Hyderabad had ever witnessed. Weeping saints inched forward holding Bibles and Scripture banners, singing and praising God. This proved to be a wonderful witness for Christ and Him crucified! This was not a typical funeral procession but it was victory parade for Christ

triumphant, in honour of His humble servant Bakht Singh who was promoted to glory on September 17, 2000. He had served God so faithfully for more than 60 years. The Lord was greatly glorified and magnified as an unprecedented throng of saints shook the city for Christ by proclaiming the gospel as they went along. It was awesome and glorious. People desiring to get a last glimpse of the casket containing the body of Bakht Singh crowded the balconies and roofs of offices and houses and even filled the trees along the three-kilometer stretch of Chikkadpalli Road. Hyderabad had never seen anything like it, and probably never will. A funeral procession of this magnitude has seldom occurred among God's people anywhere.

Normally, a funeral procession of this extraordinary magnitude would have required the help of several hundred police to maintain proper law and order, but the procession was so peaceful and heartwarming that only a few police officers were needed to manage this peaceful procession. One local police officer who was watching the crowd said, "This is the first time I have seen so large a procession so peaceful in all my service so far."

Only a fraction of the crowd could get into the cemetery for the final service before laying Bakht Singh's earthly remains to rest. As the procession inched forward with the casket on the top of a van, one middle-aged woman who came from North India to pay respects to her spiritual father said with tears streaming down her cheeks, "All I want is to have a glimpse of his body before it is laid to rest." She expressed the sentiment of tens of thousands who could not see the body nor come close to it. Many hundreds of believers and non-believers tried their best to touch the casket. And it was reported that some who did touch the casket were healed of their physical ailments.

The unusual phenomena in nature before and after Bakht

Singh's home-call reminded us that he was a man sent from God. Just a few hours before he slept in Christ on Sunday, September 17th at 6.05 a.m, there was an earthquake in and around Hyderabad, coupled with continuous and unusual thunder and lightning. Lights went out and darkness blanketed the area for a while. Then on Friday, September 22nd, just before his funeral, as the casket was being carried out from Hebron at about 11.30 a.m. while the sun was shining brightly, a rainbow circled it for a short time. Both the earthquake and the appearance of a rainbow were reported with pictures in the local secular daily papers as they were hot news. After the rainbow disappeared, a shining ring which looked like a 'crown', appeared around the sun. Then suddenly while the funeral procession proceeded to the cemetery scores and scores of pigeons flew over Hebron.

Many people were surprised, and wondered at what these natural phenomena meant. I think that they were reminiscent of Bakht Singh's ministry and experience, reminding others that he was receiving his crown and was now with Christ.

Early in his ministry in 1935, as he faced many hardhearted people in Quetta (now in Pakistan), he prayed earnestly, 'Lord, will Thou not wake them and shake them. Shake them until they kneel down'.

At about 3 a.m. on the 31st of May 1935, while he was still on his knees, an earthquake occurred killing about 58,000 people in 18 seconds. The Lord released His power to wake people up. At the time of his departure from this world, the Lord seemed to wake up people by the mild earthquake, to get them ready to meet their Maker. For He is the same yesterday and today and forever. (For details read the account of it in the later chapters). During his ministry, Bakht Singh often preached on heavenly glory. His messages on Revelation were filled with the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and

the glory of His heavenly bride—the Church. The theme of the Holy Convocation was often “The Throne of Glory,” “The Glorious Church,” “The Rainbow Around the Throne of Glory,” etc. “As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake” (Ezekiel 1:28); “And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. (Rev 4:3)

People came from all over India and from around the world to pay respects and last tributes to their spiritual father and saint of God. Weeping saints crossing denominational, language, social, racial and all other barriers gathered together, praising God for every remembrance of this godly man, a gifted leader to the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ world-wide.

The news of Bakht Singh's home-call spread like wild fire across India and around the world where he had been known. He had been sick and bed-ridden for more than a decade, so his movements had been limited. He had been suffering with the onset of Parkinson's disease from the late 70s when he was about 75 years of age. This took a heavy toll on his health and memory towards the early 90s. Since then he had been out of touch with most people and places for almost a decade, therefore we did not expect such a large crowd at his funeral. We were wrong. People came from many villages, towns and cities of India and from around the world. More people would have come from abroad but many found it difficult to get an international air ticket on short notice. Even so, several came from as far east as Australia and as far west as the United States. The body was embalmed and kept in a portable mortuary to wait for the arrival of some of

the many close friends and co-workers of Bakht Singh from abroad.

Everyone in Hebron was pleasantly surprised to see the unprecedented throng of people who gathered where the embalmed body was being kept till the funeral on Friday, September 22nd. Seeing the masses of people who came to pay their last respects to their departed spiritual leader, the leaders of Hebron tried their best to get the largest public auditorium in Hyderabad. The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Mr. Chandrababu Naidu, was approached about this need and he graciously complied with the request. However, due to some opposition from Hindu militants, it was decided to keep the body in Hebron, Hyderabad. Although standing room was scarce, this did not discourage the masses from coming to pay their last respects to the one who had served them so faithfully. From the time of his home-call on September 17th till the day of his burial on Friday, September 22nd 2000, tens of thousands came to Hebron. Many thousands could not even get in to view the body. In those days Hebron was turned into a holy, heaven-like city as saints from various backgrounds and fellowships sang and praised God day and night, while Bakht Singh's body was lying in state in Hebron. People spent time sharing testimonies, singing songs of praise and worship, sharing words of exhortation and praying. The words of the Lord Jesus Christ, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die," (John 11:25,26) were evident in the midst of His people. The reality of these words resonated with the grieving masses who sorrowed with hope.

Letters of condolences and sympathy poured in from people of all walks of life, including the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. In his statement, Mr. N. Chandrababu Naidu expressed grief over the death of Bakht Singh and

said "The church established by Bro. Bakht Singh had become a spiritual center for people of all religions. In his death, the country lost a messenger of love and peace." Even some of the political leaders who were opposed to Christianity were among those who came to pay respect to Bakht Singh. The Andhra Pradesh council of churches expressed condolences for the death of Bakht Singh. In a press statement, Dr. Jatti A. Oliver, honorary secretary and treasurer, said, "Bro. Bakht Singh was a messenger of love and a crusader for peace, harmony and unity." Practically all the newspapers and periodicals both in English and in the vernacular in Hyderabad expressed grief over the passing away of Bakht Singh. Some said that he demonstrated that one could serve the Lord in India without looking to the West for financial and other support.

The day proved to be profitable for local business people, from public telephone booths to coffee shops and vendors of all kinds who made the best use of the opportunity by providing facilities to the thousands who came from all over India for the funeral. One merchant said, "Indeed he was a holy man. Even in his death we are all blessed and benefitted."

What is the reason for such an outpouring of love, tears and honour for this simple man of God who began his ministry as an unknown itinerant preacher about 70 years previously in Colonial India? By nature he was an introvert. All his life, he kept himself away from drawing any attention to himself. In the early days, he did not even allow any one to take his photo or to print any publicity about himself or the Lord's work through him: he was so determined that nothing should rob God of His glory. To make sure that Christ was given the central place and all the praise, he would even refuse to be introduced by anyone at any public meeting or allow his name to be announced at the meetings he spoke at, whether in the assemblies or at gospel campaigns or Holy Convocations.

When he returned to India in 1933 following his studies in England and Canada, his parents came to Bombay to take him home to lavish their love and affection upon their eldest son who had been away for seven years. If he had gone with them he would have enjoyed all the comforts, luxury and love his well-to-do parents could lavish on him. His parents told him he could go home with them to Karachi provided he would be quiet about his commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ for the sake of family prestige. But Bakht Singh refused to do so: he thus demonstrated the terms of discipleship- that he loved his Lord more than his parents, wife, child and his own life. While many Christians give only intellectual consent to the terms of discipleship, here was a man proving the cost of true discipleship by obeying the terms laid down by the Lord Jesus Christ right from the beginning of his Christian life. He proved that Jesus Christ was worthy of his total allegiance. He remained a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ till his home-call. According to the Indian custom of showing respect to parents, he gave them all the money he had on him before they went back home. He remained in Bombay penniless, homeless and hungry but full of hope and joy in the Lord Jesus Christ. He spent his first night in Bombay in a public shelter where only the poor and downtrodden would stay, willing to do anything for the sake of Jesus Christ.

During the years of his ministry, he never sought anything for himself. He lived a very simple life with only the basic necessities of life. He owned nothing except the clothes on his back and his Bible. Even his clothes were mostly given to him by others. After he came to know the Lord he never had a bank account, nor possessed any worldly goods. He had neither a car nor a bicycle. All he had was a simple bed in a small, eight by ten foot room.

Like his Lord, and the Apostle Paul, Bakht Singh was

content in any situation. He practised the admonition of Paul, "But godliness with contentment is great gain;" (1 Tim 6:6) and like Paul he also knew "... both how to be abased, and ... how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." (Philippians 4:12) He did not choose to follow dogmatically any particular lifestyle like some people do. For example, in order to identify with the poor masses of India, Mahatma Gandhi while travelling by train would use only third class. He also wore only homespun loin cloths rather than costly Indian or western clothes. Bakht Singh, as the occasion warranted, would travel third class or first class, or even by bullock-cart or on foot. He was least concerned with these things.

While Bakht Singh was as naturally at ease with the simple and poor, and could closely identify with them, he was equally relaxed and at ease with the rich and noble, both Indian and foreign. This was specially seen in his relationship with two distinguished English ladies, Lady Daisy Ogle and Miss Sinclair who came from the Christian Fellowship Center at Honor Oak in South London. Lady Ogle was a very spiritually perceptive lady who recognized early in Bakht Singh's ministry that he was a chosen instrument for India, and for the realizing of the vision of the Church which had already materialized at Honor Oak. Lady Ogle was like many of the British Raj who 'wintered' in India in her lovely Bungalow 'Silverdale' in the Nilgiri Hills. Whenever she passed through Bombay, she stayed with her close colleague Miss Sinclair at the famous Taj Hotel where Bakht Singh often joined them, feeling equally at home in those surroundings as he would in the simplicity of a poor man's hut.

In every area of his life he enjoyed the liberty in the Lord, but did not use that liberty as an opportunity for the flesh. "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not



Left to right:
Sushil Chabra
(nephew of Bakht
Singh), Srichand
Chabra (younger
brother of Bakht
Singh) and
T.E.Koshy by the
side of Casket
containing the
body of Brother
Bakht Singh at
the graveyard -
September 2000



Casket containing the mortal remains of Brother Bakht Singh being carried out of "Hebron Premises"



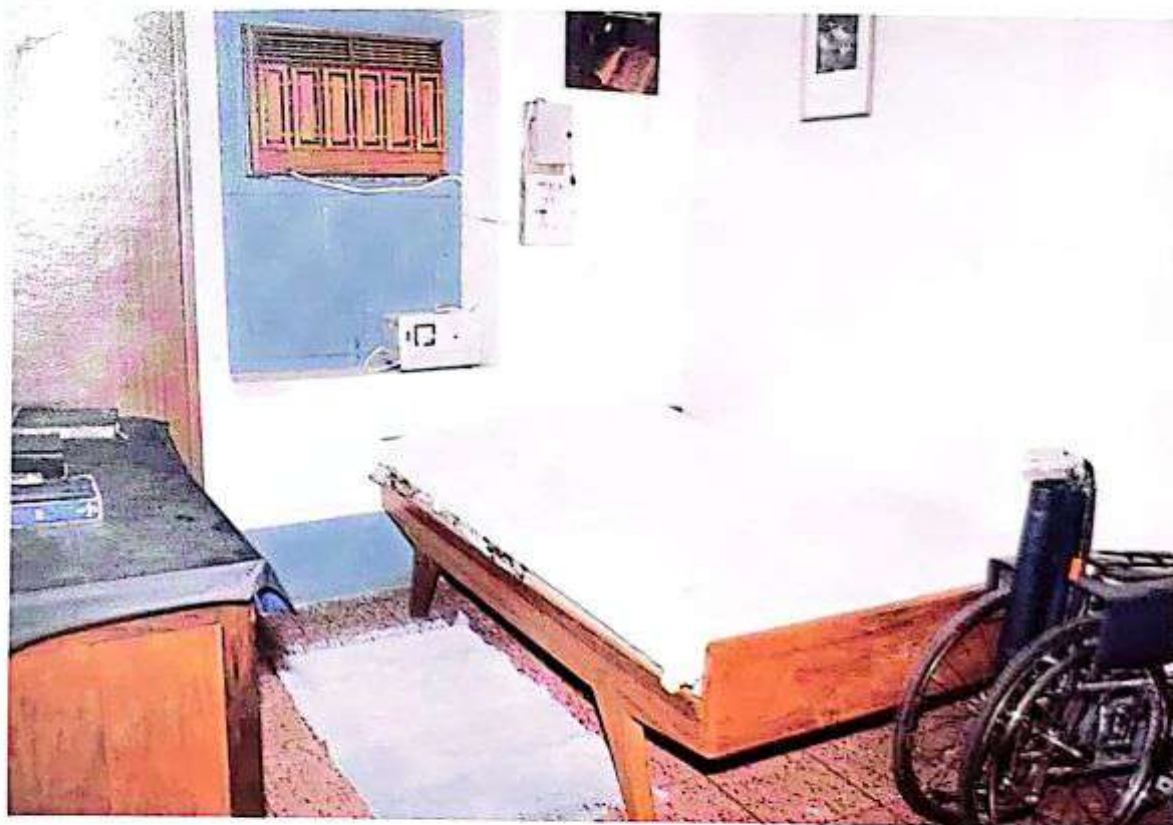
Funeral procession of saints marching to the Narayanaguda Cemetery with the casket being transported on top of a van



Rainbow
which
appeared
around the
Sun at the
time of
Brother
Bakht
Singh's
funeral
procession



The original main building in Hebron where the 8 ft. x 10 ft. room occupied by brother Bakht Singh is situated (Room shown below)





Brother Bakht Singh (Standing left) with his brother Sri Chand next to him and his parents - 1930's.



Brother Bakht Singh in England in 1927 before his conversion



34, De Crespigny Park, London, where he stayed as
paying guest - 1926



Entrance to Hebron Premises where the church moved in 1959

liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13). His life's goal was to glorify God in every thing. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). He was very conscious of seeking, knowing and doing the perfect will of God, therefore he prayed and sought His will before he did anything, whether small or big. Throughout his Christian life and ministry he lived by the threefold conditions the Lord gave him at the time of his call to the ministry in April 1932 in Vancouver, Canada. These were:

"To withdraw all his claims on his father's property in the Punjab. He would never tell any man about his material and financial needs by letter or by suggestion of any kind, but only tell the Lord.

Not to join any society but serve all people equally, wherever the Lord sent him.

Not to make any of his own plans but to let the Lord lead him day by day."

Bakht Singh's life and ministry reflected, radiated and represented the Lord Jesus Christ. His utmost desire was to lift up the Lord Jesus Christ and make sure that nothing would rob the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ of His glory. Therefore he tried to avoid any publicity and any exaltation of man at all times. The Lord's anointing was upon his life and ministry. The Lord demonstrated great and mighty works through him, just as in the apostolic days. For example, in the sweeper colony in Karachi, many people came to hear the gospel preached by Bakht Singh. Many were converted and the sick were healed. The Lord wrought mighty miracles through His servant as he prayed with a childlike faith.

Wherever he went, he felt the power of darkness fighting against the light of Christ, but through prayer and fasting, the Lord was able to conquer the powers of darkness through the ministry of His servant.

Like the Apostle Paul, Bakht Singh counted everything but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus that he may gain Him, and win India and the world for his Lord. He was willing to give up all for Christ's sake and for His kingdom. And yet at his home-call, the Lord honoured him because he did not seek man's honour, nor any thing for himself; as the Word of God reminds us, "Them that honour me I will honour." (1 Samuel 2:30) One of the retired high-ranking Government of India officials who attended the funeral said that, in many respects, the honour which Bakht Singh received from the hearts of sincere people was much greater and more moving than what he himself had seen at the funeral service of India's foremost political leaders like Mahatma Gandhi or Pandit Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India.

Why had the Lord honoured him so greatly? I think there are many reasons, but let me cite seven. His life and ministry exemplified the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ as well as that of the Apostle Paul. John 12:24-26 says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." Acts 20:24 says, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

1. He was a 'grain of wheat' that was willing to fall into the ground and die.

In obedience to the Lord's call, he left his comfort zone

and walked a lonely path of sacrifice and trial with joy. When the Lord called him to fulltime ministry in 1930, at first he resisted and told the Lord that he would give all his salary to support His work, but asked God not to make him a preacher. After two years, he finally yielded to the call, giving himself to the Lord unconditionally. Years later while he was preaching on the subject of "full surrender and service of the Lord," he broke down, recalling his own experience when he had resisted the pleadings of the Holy Spirit and had held out against the Lord for two full years with consequent spiritual loss. As the grief of that old memory flooded his soul, he cried out in self-reproach for his hardness of heart. Suddenly, emotion overcame him and kneeling down on the platform publicly (in the pandal¹) he sobbed aloud his gratitude to the Lord for His longsuffering and infinite patience and love. Responsive sobs broke out here and there all over the large tent from strong men as well as women, the aged as well as the young, till there was scarcely a dry eye in the congregation. Bakht Singh cried out that the Spirit was speaking to all, and then pleaded with everyone to yield utterly to the Lord that which they were holding back from Him. Because he was willing to spend and be spent during his lifetime, tens of thousands from around the world turned to the Lord. What a great harvest for eternity the Holy Spirit had brought about through that one life that was wholly committed to Him!

2. He followed the footsteps of His Master.

His life's motto was to seek, know and do the perfect will of God. Like his Master Who said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34), he too, followed this principle from the time the Lord called him for ministry. His only desire was to exalt The "Living Christ". He did not deviate from this goal whether to please

his parents, friends or himself. In this respect he faithfully followed the terms of true discipleship and was a true disciple of the Lord Jesus.

In 1959, during his visit to the United States, he was in St. Paul, Minnesota, staying with a friend. Bakht Singh needed a haircut, so he prayed and asked the Lord whether he should go for a haircut that day or not. He felt restrained from going. Again after a few days, he asked the Lord whether or not he should go for a haircut, and this time was constrained by the Lord to go. When he arrived at the barber-shop, the barber, by the name of Bruce, was all alone. While getting his hair cut Bakht Singh and the barber had a good conversation which led Bakht Singh to share his testimony. Then he asked Bruce if he had ever received the Lord. The man replied "No". So Bakht Singh said to him that he would be glad to show him from the Scriptures how to receive the Lord after he had finished the haircut - this he did. Bruce then knelt with him and received the Lord Jesus as his Saviour and Lord right there in his own barber salon. When they got up from their knees, Bakht Singh asked him how much he owed him for the haircut. Bruce said that he had received a priceless blessing from Bakht Singh and therefore there was no charge for his haircut. Drawing from this experience, Bakht Singh said that because he had asked the Lord and went for his haircut according to His appointed time, the Lord had already prepared Bruce to be all alone without any other customer. Bruce received salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ received a soul, and Bakht Singh received a free haircut. So there is joy and blessing in knowing and doing the perfect will of God regardless of the circumstances.

Another time, in the year 1978, during Bakht Singh's visit to the USA, some Christian friends who were meeting for Bible Study at the White House asked Bakht Singh if he would like to go and speak to the group. During that time

Jimmy Carter was the President. Bakht Singh said that he would pray about it and let them know. A few weeks later someone from Washington, D.C., called to find out what he had decided concerning the invitation to speak to the Bible study group at the White House. Bakht Singh said that he did not have any peace about it. Hearing that, the caller said at the top of his voice that this was an invitation from the White House. Bakht Singh replied, "White House or Black house, the Lord has not given me peace about going." Throughout his life, come what may, he never was influenced by the smallness or the greatness of the invitation, but always tried to do the Lord's will as best as he could.

In December, 1946, in Toronto, Canada, Bakht Singh was one of the plenary speakers at the first Inter Varsity convention. (Since then it has moved to Urbana and is known as the Intervarsity Urbana Convention). Before and after the convention he had received a number of invitations to speak at numerous conferences and meetings. The following is an excerpt of what Dr. Christy Wilson, former missionary to Afghanistan and a man who was greatly used of the Lord among evangelicals, both students and non-students in the USA and Canada, said about Bakht Singh;

I remember one time he had a whole pile of letters. They were all invitations to speak here and there and he would pray and ask God where He wanted him to go and would show him and he would go there. I remember this really upset a Christian leader in Toronto. After the Intervarsity convention, a Christian leader in Toronto invited him to speak in a big place and Bakht Singh prayed and the Lord said, "No, don't go." And so he turned it down. This Christian leader was very upset because he hadn't had any one turn him down before. But this showed me that Bakht Singh did not want honour from man but rather to do the will of God. So before he accepted any invitation he would ask the Lord

whether He wanted him to accept it or not. He wanted to find the will of God and, no matter what the cost, he would follow that."²

3. He loved the Lord more than his own life.

From his conversion to his home-call, about 70 years of his Christian life, Bakht Singh demonstrated that he loved His Lord more than his parents, wife, child, grand-children and even his own life. As a true disciple of Christ, he counted the cost and forsook all that he had for Christ. He gave up his profession as an engineer, his position as a caste Hindu or Sikh, and all his possessions, including his father's inheritance. He gave up his prestige. While he was living in Karachi, he worked among sweepers and lepers who were considered to be the scum of society: forsaking his social prestige like his Lord, he willingly served the poor and needy in Christ's love. After his conversion his only pleasure was following and serving the "Living Christ." Therefore he could say like Paul, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

4. He did not count his life dear unto himself.

He did not care for himself in terms of his needs: he lived a fully self-sacrificing life. From dawn to dusk, and even far into the night, he was available to do the service of the Lord without seeking anything for himself. While in Karachi and Punjab, he shed both tears and sweat in the service of The Master. He walked long distances and slept under trees; he drank from brooks and ate wild fruit, yet he never grumbled for he did not count his life dear unto himself. He was not afraid of anything or anybody when it came to serving the Lord.

5. He finished His course with joy.

Talking about Bakht Singh, George Verwer of OM said

back in 1991, "Bakht Singh has run the race to the very end. I think that is one of the most beautiful things about Bakht Singh he has run the race to the very end."³

In spite of all his human failings, Bakht Singh fought a good fight throughout his life for the Lord and for His Word. He finished the race and kept the faith. At no time, even during those long years when his one time robust body slowly wasted away, and his roaring, lion-like voice was finally silenced, did he ever grumble. He continued his earthly pilgrimage with full joy till the end.

6. He fulfilled the ministry which he had received from the Lord.

Bakht Singh was a man of vision. From the time the Lord gave him a fresh heavenly vision of Himself and of His Body, the Church, he remained committed to that heavenly vision. At Coonoor, in 1941 he told the Lord that he would do His will at any cost. In obedience to the Lord's will he began planting local churches on New Testament principles all across India and abroad. Like the Apostle Paul, he could say that he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

7. He demonstrated the grace of God by his exemplary life.

Throughout his Christian life, Bakht Singh was strong in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore he could say like the Apostle Paul, "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1 Cor 15:10). Though he was not a great orator or eloquent speaker, the Lord accomplished a great deal through him because he relied totally upon the grace of God. When speaking, he stuttered and stammered. On one occasion, this writer asked

him, although the Lord had used him to heal so many people physically from all kinds of ailments, why the Lord had not healed him of his speech impediment. He replied that because of the impediment he had to depend upon the Lord and upon His grace whenever he had to preach or teach, and the Lord always ministered to the audience in spite of his limitation. Therefore, he gave all the glory to the Lord for what He did through him.

When he went to the West, even though some people could not follow his accent, many said how much they were blessed by his messages. The mighty work which he accomplished both in India and abroad is the sign of God's amazing grace that was upon him throughout his life. People saw the grace of God upon his life and actions, and glorified God. His life and ministry were demonstrations of the reality of the living Christ whom he loved and followed.

Bakht Singh was also a spiritual father to tens of thousands in Asia, as well as a spiritual role-model and inspiration to believers around the world. He was India's foremost evangelist, revivalist and indigenous church-planter who founded churches based on New Testament principles. To some extent, all the five gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 were evident in him. "And he gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." No other saint of God in India was used more mightily than this man of God to turn many to righteousness. He was used of God to spiritually impact his generation both in his homeland and abroad like many others before him throughout Church history. The following are some observations concerning him made by others during the early years of his ministry:

"Bakht Singh became an all-India evangelist rather than a provincial preacher... He is an Indian equivalent to the greater Western evangelists, as skillful as Finney and as di-

rect as Moody. He is a first-class Bible teacher of the order of Campbell Morgan, Graham Scroggie, J. Edwin Orr, British Church Historian.⁴

"What impressed me most on my Asian visit was my eight days with Bakht Singh of India and his co-workers and congregations. Here was to me a sample of the coming worldwide church of Christ... In all my missionary experience I think these churches on their New Testament foundations are the nearest I have seen to a replica of the early church and pattern for the birth and growth of the young churches in all the countries which we used to talk about as the mission fields."⁵

"To this day, Bakht Singh is a foremost evangelist and preacher in India, farther Asia and in the United States."⁶

"The arrival of Bakht Singh turned the churches of Madras upside down... Crowds gathered in the open air, as many as 12,000 on one occasion to hear this man of God. Many seriously ill were healed when Bakht Singh prayed for them, even deaf and dumb began to hear and speak."⁷

The early years of his ministry were marked by mighty miracles and wonders, including physical healings and great revivals. People fell to the ground crying out for God's mercy.

After serving for seven years as an itinerant evangelist and revivalist in British India from Karachi in the North to Kerala in the south, and in the East from Calcutta to Cape Comorin in the Southwest, the Lord constrained him to launch an indigenous New Testament church planting movement that eventually saw hundreds of local churches planted throughout India, Pakistan, and parts of Sri Lanka. The movement also spread to Australia, Europe, the Middle East and even to the United States. The impact of his ministry is still being felt in different parts of the world. Because of what the Lord has accomplished through him, particularly in planting indigenous churches based on New Testament principles,

he can rightly be called the father of the indigenous church movement in the post-independent India. Being a human, he too had his flaws and frailties, but his spiritual strength far outweighed his human weaknesses. Like the Apostle Paul he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7).

The life and ministry of Bakht Singh demonstrated clearly and powerfully that the Lord is living and that His promises are true. He was an open epistle of the Lord. He practised the Word of God, which he preached faithfully for over 50 years. He was a pattern for those who would follow Christ. The Lord used him as a chosen vessel to bring about an apostolic revival in the 20th century. That is why his life and ministry are a challenge and inspiration to the members of the body of Christ world-wide. In the following chapters, we shall see the marvelous way God used this single life which was wholly committed to Him to accomplish His eternal plan and purpose both in India and around the world.

End Notes

¹*Pandal* – temporary tent primarily made with large tarpaulin and bamboo poles

²Author's interview with Dr. Christy Wilson, 1988.

³Author's interview with George Verwer in 1991 in London.

⁴J. Edwin Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings In Southern Asia* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1975), pp. 168-169 (This edition is a revision and expansion of the book, *Evangelical Awakenings In India*, published in New Delhi by Masih Sahitya Sanstha).

⁵Norman Grubb, *Once Caught, No Escape* (Ft. Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1970), pp. 149-150.

Norman Grubb :- the son-in-law of C.T. Studd, the founder of WEC and Missionary Statesman, author, and teacher.

⁶J.C. Pollock, *Earth's Remotest End* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), p. 52.

⁷Dave Hunt, *God Of The Untouchables* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1976), p. 67.

Chapter 2

A Son is Born

Punjabi Childhood

(Early years of Bro. Bakht Singh 1903-1926)

"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace." (Galatians 1:15)

Bakht Singh's paternal ancestors were devout Hindus. They also were devotees of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism.¹ Most Hindus are polytheistic, worshipping many gods. About five generations back, one of Bakht Singh's ancestors had no sons. Being a devotee of Guru Nanak, he prayed that if he were blessed with a son he would make the eldest son a Sikh. His prayers were answered, so at that time, the family began the tradition of making the eldest son a Sikh.

For generations, Bakht Singh's forefathers lived in the tiny cosmopolitan village of Joiya in the state of Punjab, which is now part of Pakistan. It had been the home for Bakht Singh's great grandfather Lala Ishwar Das, and his father, Lala Jawahar Mall. It is situated on the bank of one of the tributaries of the river Jhelum, one of the five rivers of Punjab. (Punjab means the land of five rivers.) During the conquest of Punjab by Alexander the great, he and his troops had to cross the river Jhelum, a formidable task at that time.

Jawahar Mall was a successful contractor, building irrigation canals. He was well-known and respected for his affluence and position in the village. To show his lavish lifestyle as a successful, wealthy contractor, he constructed a two-story mansion, the largest house in the 35 neighbouring villages. He and his wife, Laxmi Bai, were the wealthiest couple, not only in the village of Joiya, but also in nearly all the neighbouring villages.

Although they were greatly blessed materially and respected socially, they were saddened by the fact that after almost eleven years of marriage they had no children. Normally, Indian tradition considers it a curse not to have any children, particularly a male child to continue the family tradition. So the couple offered many prayers and went on pilgrimages, going from temple to temple, including Gurudwara. Joiya was close to Manwal, birth-place of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism. Though a Hindu, Srimathi Laxmi Bai had a real faith in Guru Nanak. She prayed often that if she was blessed with a male child, that child would be brought up a Sikh. When Srimathi Laxmi Bai did conceive, the whole family was excited, hoping the child would be a boy. They were instead blessed with a daughter, born in the year 1901. They named her Parvathi.

Even though they were blessed with a child, they were not very happy. It is a sad fact that generally speaking daughters are not appreciated in India. Prayers and pilgrimages continued for a male child. Laxmi Bai continued her vows to gods and deities, including Guru Nanak, hoping she would be blessed with a son. Before Laxmi Bai conceived a second time, a Sadhu (an Indian holy man) came by and told her that she was going to have a son, but he would not live with her. Laxmi Bai pondered over his prediction. Saturday, June 6th 1903, was perhaps the most joyous moment in the lives of Jawahar Mall and Laxmi Bai. On that day at long last they were blessed with a baby boy. In keeping with the family

tradition of five generations, they dedicated their first-born son to Guru Nanak, named him Bakht Singh and brought him up as a Sikh.

Fireworks and great celebration followed the birth of the child. Every one in the village and the neighbouring villages came to know about the birth of the child. Special prayers of thanksgiving were offered in the temples and at Gurudwara. Remembering the words of the Sadhu, however the family was afraid that perhaps someday Bakht Singh might run away from home to become a Sadhu. So they tried their very best to take care of him, constantly watching over him and lavishing on him everything he asked for. They would not say "no" to him for anything, lest they offend him and he run away from home.

As he was growing up, Bakht Singh used to spend time in Sikh temples with Sikh Granth. His parents and others thought that he might become a Sadhu. He would not play in the streets with other children but would go to Sikh temples to find peace. According to Sikh teaching, unless one finds the Satguru (True teacher) one cannot find peace. So as a child he would ask his mother, "Who is Satguru? How can I find him? Where can I find him?" These questions constantly bothered his young mind. His mother used to say, "One of these Sadhus can be accepted as Satguru". But the question he would ask her was how they can be his Satguru and how they can help him. This longing of his heart to know the true God drove him to search for the true and living God. He would spend hours reading Granth Sahib, the holy book of Sikhs.

In order to show their love for Bakht Singh, their first son, who was now 12 years old, the parents celebrated his birthday in a lavish way. This drew the attention of all the villagers. For days, that was the talk of the village. And because of their wealth, Jawahar and his family became the envy of thieves and robbers.

In those days child marriage was practised in India. Thus, in June, 1915, at the age of 12 Bakht Singh, following the tradition of the day, was married to Rambai, daughter of Sri Ram Kumar Mall. She was fifteen years old. The marriage was held in Joiya in 1915. To show off his wealth and popularity, Jawahar invited people not only of his village, but also from all the surrounding villages. He even brought ice from Lahore. The celebration lasted for several days. It was a joyous time for all in Joiya. In 1924, when Bakht Singh was 21, a son was born to them named Onkar Singh, who in time was blessed with a son and two daughters.

Bakht Singh had his elementary and high school education in a Presbyterian Mission School at Gujranwala, near Lahore (now a part of Pakistan). He went to the Government College, Lahore, for his college education.

In the year 1919, the Jawahar family was attacked by robbers. They almost killed Jawahar attacking him with an axe. Seeing that her husband was being axed, Laxmibai had enough sense to throw the key to the cupboard, where their gold and other valuables were kept, to the dacoits. When they got the key, they stopped attacking Jawahar, took all the gold, money, and other valuables, then disappeared into the darkness, leaving Jawahar bleeding. Realizing that Joiya was no longer safe for them to live after this incident, the Jawahar Mall family moved to Sargodha in the year 1920. Over time, the Jawahar family was blessed with seven more children following the birth of Bakht Singh.

Bakht Singh's thirst for God from his childhood was expressed by him, "I think God's hand was upon me from my birth. That gave me a longing to know God. Otherwise small children like to play in the street. I was not fond of playing at all. I can still picture a very small village, Joiya by name where I was born. In the village there was a small temple, a small mud house which could seat about twenty people. On the left side there was a small well with a verandah in front.

I can still remember that I would sit in one corner when I went there, and say like this, "Sadhu, Satguru, how to find him: where is he?"² He said he remembered so distinctly, "When I was yet a Sikh, praying and crying as a child, 'O God, where art Thou? Tell me how to find Thee.' Every time I prayed, God seemed so very, very far away – millions of miles away; and it seemed that it would take many re-births to get even a glimpse of Him – He was so far away."³

When he came to his school in Gujranwala, there was one man called Sunder Singh, a Sikh. He was working for an advocate and used to talk to these few boys about God. Bakht Singh spent much of his time with Sikh religious teachers. This childhood yearning to know the true and living God was so strong that it often resulted in him having disturbing dreams, which were to be fulfilled later on when he found Christ. About that experience he wrote:

"During my school days I used to have a dream. The dream was that I was climbing a high and steep hill. With great difficulty and struggle I would reach the top. As soon as I reached it, somebody would come along and hurl me down. As I fell, the sharp points of the rocks would dig into my ribs. Thus I would be in great pain, so much so that I would cry out in my dream. But in the end I would find myself lying on soft silk cushions, so soft that I would sink into them. This lying on soft cushions would give me a heavenly feeling and I would say that if one could get such joy on silk cushions, it was worth undergoing all the pain endured while falling down. When I was at the age of nine or ten I used to have this dream, but about six years ago this dream came to me, again, and the Voice said to me, This is your testimony"⁴

Bakht Singh, due to his allegiance to Sikhism from childhood, was very bitter against the gospel of Christ. Although he was educated in a Mission School in the Punjab for seven years, he never cared to know anything about Christ. Most of the boys who were studying in the school hated Chris-

tians, and they used to make fun of the Bible teachers and pastors. There was one teacher, Mr. Caleb, whom they used to ask funny questions and tease him. For five years, Bakht Singh was in the boarding house with Hindus and Muslims who lived on one side and the Christians on the other. During his stay there not once did he visit the Christian side. That gives us some idea of his bitterness towards Christianity. He did not remember much of what he learned during those days, but one thing he did remember was that he hated the Christian boys who were studying with him. Most of the Hindu boys had a similar hatred for Muslims but at least they used to play and talk freely; they never did make friends with the Christian boys.

Most non-Christians in India view Christianity as a religion of the white man from the West. If it is for India, they think it is only for the poor and untouchables or outcasts. This is due to the fact that much missionary work done in the early days was among the poor and outcasts, many of whom embraced Christianity for the sake of material gain. For example, during the time of famine in 1905, there was a mass conversion among the untouchables and sweeper class, who became known as 'rice Christians'. In many cases it was a conversion of convenience for social uplift and economic advancement rather than of commitment to Christ. Few of the converts to Christianity were from caste Hindus and the elite of society. The Protestant church in the Punjab grew from 3,823 in 1881 to 483,081 in 1947, due to accessions of sweepers and landless labourers. This trend had been true all across India.⁵ Due to these and other reasons, well-to-do caste Hindus, Sikhs and other non-Christians looked down on Christianity. They would not have anything to do with Christians. Moreover, many missionaries even in mission schools, were not evangelical nor did they share the gospel with others. Bakht Singh himself said that in the days when he was studying in the

Mission School, no one ever shared the gospel with him. Bible study and prayer were not compulsory.

Furthermore, most Indians, particularly non-Christians, formed their impressions and opinions of Christianity and Christ, based on the life-style of the British who ruled India. Most of them were only 'cultural Christians' or 'Sunday Christians' having a form of religion but denying its power. Their loose morals, contemptuous treatment of Indians as inferiors, dietary habits, social life, and other factors were very repulsive to high-caste and well-to-do Indians. It was difficult for them as non-Christians to see the difference between the 'secular' and the 'sacred'- between British officials who were mostly nominal Christian or secular, and the missionaries: for most Indians, they were the same. Moreover, most Indians hated British rulers and, for obvious reasons, considered them India's enemies and exploiters. When Bakht Singh was at the age of sixteen, an incident took place in Amritsar, Punjab, that worsened the bitter hatred and anti-Christian attitude towards the British and missionaries.

Following World War I in the year 1919, the British parliament passed an act known as the "Rowlatt Act". This was designed to repress agitation for Indian political freedom. This act angered Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders, so to protest the act, Gandhi called for a National hartal or Satyagraha. He chose April 7, 1919 as the day of his national hartal (lock out).

Unfortunately, riots erupted, the most serious of which took place in Amritsar, Punjab, the holy city of the Sikhs. A mob murdered five Europeans; attempted to murder two English missionary ladies; set fire to an Anglican Church and a mission school with pupils and teachers inside; looted banks, killing three managers. They also attacked the railway station, the telegraph station and a Town Hall. As matters got out of hand, Lieutenant-Governor Sir Michael O'dewyer declared a curfew in the city and called for troops

to maintain law and order. The troops arrived under Brigadier General Reginald Dyer who stationed pickets throughout the city of Amritsar, and issued orders prohibiting all meetings and demonstrations.

On Sunday April 13, being *baisakhi* Spring Festival day, several thousand villagers from outside Amritsar came to Jallianwala Bagh, an open space hemmed in by rows of houses, to celebrate the festival. There was only one entrance to the Bagh down a narrow alley between two buildings. Just after the gathering had begun, Dyer arrived with his soldiers. Without any warning they opened fire with machine guns on the defenseless Indians. For ten full minutes, while the trapped Indians (mostly Punjabis) screamed for mercy, the soldiers fired some 1650 rounds, killing or wounding 1516 people. This event inflamed racial hatred even more between Indians and the British, and agitated the population.⁶ This further fuelled anti-Christian and anti-missionary feelings, and Christianity in India suffered a great setback. It was a terrible turning point in the history of British-Indian relations, more decisive even than the Indian mutiny in 1857.

Growing up in that anti-Christian climate, it is understandable that Bakht Singh came to hate Christians and the Bible, like most of his non-Christian contemporaries. After he had passed his Intermediate examination, he was given a beautifully bounded copy of the Bible. He tore out the contents and kept the cover because of the beautiful leather binding. Throughout his school and college days, he remained a bitter enemy of the gospel of Christ. He was very orthodox in his own religion and spent many hours in Sikh temples observing all the religious rites. As Sikhs are well-known for their social service, he also took an active part in such work, but that did not give him the real joy and peace he had been searching for.

After graduating from high school in Gujranwala, he went to the Government College in Lahore, Punjab, with the

ambition to become a physician. In India then and even now, the first choice of most parents for their children, especially in well-to-do families, is to become doctors. But the Lord, Who had a special plan for Bakht Singh even before his conversion, changed his plan unknown to him, as he tells about it in his own words:

"For a number of years, I had an ambition to be a doctor. I therefore took science and obtained very good marks. I was sure of getting a seat in the Medical College. But in the year 1925, my father came to Lahore, Punjab, where I was studying, to buy some machines for his factory. He took me with him to the machinery agents. All the time I was watching my father who was dealing with them. Then my father returned to his hometown, telling me to make enquiries of the agents from time to time, as to when we could get the machines. I used to go every week to make enquiries. I would say, 'What about my father's order?' And they would say, 'So far nothing has happened'. One day I discovered that the agents were deceiving my father and that their ways were crooked. So I sent a telegram to my father telling him that he was being deceived by the agents, and that he would run a very big loss. Then a thought came to me, 'My father is being deceived by crooked agents. Why don't I become an engineer and help him? So I decided to study engineering in order to help my father in his factory at Sargodha. This meant I had to go to England for my engineering course.'"

After graduating from college, Bakht Singh worked for his father for a while as his father had started a cotton mill. He wanted Bakht Singh, being the eldest son, to help him in the business. However, like many well-to-do young people of his day, his ambition was to go to England for further studies. Just as for many young people of India today, going to America is a dream and a prestige issue, so for Indian young people in those days, going to England was even a greater ambition. This is because they wanted to show the Brit-

ish who ruled the country and looked down on Indians as second class citizens that they were in no way inferior to any white man. In their heart-of-hearts, most Indians looked down on the colonial West and thought that they were far superior to the British; they just lacked the opportunity to prove it.

In the absence of scholarships or financial aid for further education from England, unlike today, only wealthy parents could send their children for further studies in England. Although at first his father was reluctant to send him to England, with the help of his mother he persuaded his father to do so.

End Notes

¹Sikhism: The Sikhs are from the Punjab, the area watered by the five tributaries of the river Indus, now partly in India and partly in Pakistan. Sikhism originated in a movement of religious reform. Its founder Guru Nanak (1469-1539) was born at Talvandi near Lahore into a Hindu family of the trading community. He was a contemporary of Martin Luther, the protestant reformer of Germany.

During that time, North India was passing through a period of religious awakening. It was the age of Ramanand from South India who had come to spread his teaching in the North, and of Kabir. Nanak heard the call to a life of religious devotion and became a wandering ascetic. He was accompanied on his travels by a Muslim musician. Whether or not Nanak ever met Kabir is uncertain, but Kabir's teaching certainly exercised a profound influence on him. Kabir was a Muslim weaver from Varanasi who founded a sect which purported to adopt a stance somewhere between Hinduism and Islam. Kabir said that he was a son both of Allah and Ram. Nanak conceived a vision to build a bridge between the Muslim and the Hindu, but he himself leaned more towards Hinduism, and Sikhism eventually became a separate religion.

Nanak taught the unity of God who is yet unknowable. He condemned idolatry, and one of his successors at the end of the seventeenth century, Guru Govind Singh, rejected caste, though caste has again found its way back among Sikhs. The community was ruled by a series of Gurus who followed Nanak, The tenth was Govind Singh.

The word 'Sikh' means 'a disciple'. The Sikhs wear a distinctive dress and have their own social customs. They accept the Hindu ideas of samsara and karma, and they view themselves as the Khalsa, a chosen race of soldier-saints committed to a Spartan code of conduct and a crusade for righteousness. The emblems of the Khalsa, called the five Ks, are kes (un cut hair), Kangha (a comb), kachha (long shorts), Kirpan (a sword), and karka (a steel bracelet). The last of their Gurus transformed them into a military order, and the Sikhs are still known for their soldiering qualities. Their faith now centers round their holy book the Granth Sahib. This is a collection of material composed of the writings not only of Nanak and his successors, but of Kabir and a number of medieval Hindu saints. The Golden Temple in Amritsar is the best known of Sikh temples. Sikhs, however, are not averse to entering Hindu temples, and a Hindu family may dedicate one of their children to the Sikh religion.

²Author's interview with Brother Bakht Singh, 1978.

³Bakht Singh, *Return Of God's Glory*, (Bombay, India: Gospel Literature Service, 1969), p. 57

⁴Bakht Singh, *How I Got Joy Unspeakable And Full Of Glory* (Hyderabad, India: Hebron, 1936), p.2.

⁵Susan Billington Harper, *In The Shadow Of The Mahatma* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), pp. 180-181.

⁶John Keay, *India A History*, (New York: Grove Press, 2000), pp. 475 -477.

⁷Bro. Bakht Singh, *Looking Unto Jesus* (Secunderabad, India: B.B.C. Printers & Publishers, 1971), pp. 44-45.

Chapter 3

Bakht Singh Goes to the West

(Education, Experience and Conversion)

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." (Psalm 32:8)

Even though Bakht Singh did not know the Lord Jesus Christ personally, nor His plan or purpose for his life, the Lord knew him and loved him. Bakht Singh went to England to fulfill his dream but the Lord had different plans for him, plans which he would know later. Unknown to him the Lord was directing his path, "...his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33b)

Like most young people of his day, his desire was to go to England for further studies. About this he wrote in his testimony, "My ambition in life had been to go to England, travel around the world, obtain high education, enjoy the friendship of all kinds of people and remain faithful to my religion. Similarly, I had a desire to wear smart clothes and eat high-class food. I did not have these desires at an early age but they came later on and I was able to satisfy them all."¹

Bakht Singh's father was a successful contractor, undertaking very large contracts on irrigation canals and build-

ings. When Bakht Singh was seven years old, his father took him to the work and introduced him to an English engineer who was supervising the work. The English man said to his father, "Why don't you send your son to England?" His father said, "He is too small and he cannot blow his nose even." The engineer said to Bakht Singh's father that if Bakht Singh went to England his wife would look after him. He was not joking; he was serious. He also said to his father, "When he will come back from England he will pull down the stronghold of Brahmanism."² His father just laughed, thinking he was joking.

The words 'he must go to England' stuck in Bakht Singh's mind. So he used to tell everybody that when he grows older he will go to England. At the age of fourteen when he went to high school, he began to correspond with universities in England. His desire to go to England was so strong that he kept on gathering the prospectus from many universities; about thirty in all. These included Sheffield, Birmingham, London, Edinburgh, Manchester, and so on. He was trying his best to achieve his goal, but he was only thinking about going to England to advance his education and status in this earthly life: God was thinking about his spiritual life.

Bakht Singh's father was not in favour of his going to England. He told his son that he would give him any amount of money, as he wanted him to help in his business. He had set up a new cotton factory and told him that he was counting on him, as the eldest son, for help. But Bakht Singh would say that first he must go to England. After graduating with a B.A. he became very sad because his father would not let him go to England. He had six brothers and three sisters, yet his mother loved him more than any of her other children. So one day she said to him, "I will help you go to England, but promise me that you will not change your religion. I have heard that boys who go to England give up their

religion." As he was very proud of being a Sikh, Bakht Singh said to his mother, "Do you really believe that I would change my religion?" When he assured his mother about his loyalty and faithfulness, she persuaded his father to let him go to England. His father, being a businessman, was thinking in terms of money: his mother, being religious, was thinking in terms of religion. His father then said that he would try and send him all the money he needed, and Bakht Singh promised that he would live very economically.

All preparations for his going to England were made within a week. He had to go to Bombay to board a ship but before going to Bombay he went to Lahore to obtain his passport. Going to the secretariat office he said, "I am going to England within four days and I want a passport." The clerk started laughing, saying, "You require at least one month for a passport." Then he enquired as to how he could get his passport sooner. The clerk said, "Go to Simla and see the Home Secretary at the summer capital of India." The journey was six hours by train, so he decided to take a taxi and save four hours. But the trip to Simla by taxi was costly. Bakht Singh then looked for someone who would share the taxi with him. He found an elderly, heavysset man and his son who were willing. During the journey on the bumpy, winding road, the elderly man became sick and began vomiting. Then the man said to Bakht Singh, "This is how people get seasickness while on board ship."

After arriving in Simla, Bakht Singh left his things in a Sikh temple. He wasted one hour putting on a tie as it was the first time he had ever worn a suit and tie. He called at the Home Secretary's office, where an official said, "Young man, it will take two weeks to get your passport. You must have a Certified Investigation Department official to certify for you." Coming out of the Home Secretary's office he saw the same elderly man who had travelled with him. He asked

Bakht Singh, "Why are you so sad?" Bakht Singh answered, "I cannot get my passport. I need a CID certificate" The man then immediately contacted a CID officer and said to him, "I know this young man. I am a retired collector. I will witness for him." So Bakht Singh got his passport within half-an hour instead of one month. Bakht Singh thus reached England one month earlier than scheduled.

After arriving in London, England, in September 1926, he enrolled in a Mechanical Engineering course at City and Guild's College, London. He later joined the Imperial College, also in London. Before he began his studies, he took an exam in Mechanical Engineering and did very well, thus he was able to complete a three-year degree course in two years. So following his studies in England, Bakht Singh's father agreed for him to go to Canada to complete a course in Agricultural Engineering. While studying in London, he stayed as a paying guest in the home of one Miss Kemp at No. 34 in Denmark Hill.

When Bakht Singh arrived in England, he discovered that one could live very comfortably on eighty rupees a month.³ So he asked his friend why he wrote to tell him to come prepared to spend Rs. 300 a month. Bakht Singh said he was going to write to his father, and tell him not to send more than Rs. 80 a month. His friend then said to him, "Don't be hasty. You wait for a few months and then you will learn all about it." So Bakht Singh accepted his advice but had to send false accounts to his father, such as, "I have spent Rs. 295.56 this month", even though he had spent only eighty rupees. Thus, for seven months, he was able to save between Rs. 200, and Rs. 250 a month, so at the end of the period he had Rs. 1,600 in his bank account.

For the first three months in England he remained faithful to his religion. He kept his long hair and beard because Sikhs never have their hair cut from any part of their body.

Then he lost faith in keeping a long beard and hair but did not have the courage to get them cut. He kept them for six more months because he was afraid of what his friends would say if his beard was shaved. At last he thought of a solution. He told to a friend that he would get them cut gradually, some one day, some another day and in a month all of it would be gone. He thought that by this means he would not feel embarrassed, but what he did was to cut the beard from one side and leave the other half. So Bakht Singh said to his friend, "You may as well cut it all." When he became clean-shaven, he said, "I have become an atheist, a socialist and a free thinker, and I could soon become a full-fledged European." He then started smoking, even though as a Sikh he had never touched tobacco. He began to purchase expensive cigarettes and bought a gold case, taking great pride in showing the golden cigarette case to everyone. The next thing he did was to start drinking liquor. He bought very expensive clothes and would spend Rs. 400 for a suit, as much as Rs. 35 for a shirt, Rs. 20 for a tie and Rs. 50 for a pair of shoes. Thus his savings of seven months was spent in one month. He then realized why his friend had said not to be hasty.

Bakht Singh later recalled, "With great difficulty, I learned all the Western customs and manners." Although he never relished their food, he did learn to eat with a knife and fork. He was regular in visiting theaters, cinemas and dance halls. He had to master everything, or in other words, do as they did and live as they lived. He lived like this for about two years. As he was soon to finish his course, he asked himself a few questions - "What have I gained in England? I knew I had to learn to wear a collar and tie; to polish my shoes; to brush my hair, and to say 'Thank you' and 'I am sorry' many times a day, because the more you say 'Thank you' and 'I am sorry' the more you are considered to be cultured. I had learned to be fashionable and to drink as they

drank; in other words, I had learned how to worship my body." Then he began to ask the question, "Am I more happy than I used to be?" The state of his mind, however, told him that he was far worse, for he had become more selfish, proud and greedy. Respect towards parents and friends was gone. He had learned to tell lies politely and to deceive his parents. He had learned that one could do evil, provided he did it secretly.

He had travelled all over Europe and England; had been to museums, art galleries and movies; had worn expensive clothes; had eaten grand meals; had made friends with both rich and poor, high and low; had taken part in social functions; had indulged in amusements; had acquired as much education as he wanted; yet he was unhappy. He wondered if perhaps it was due to the fact that he was not fully civilized. So he began to ask his English friends if they were happy. He asked this question to students, professors and clerks. He used to say, "You have got beautiful homes, lovely children, extensive parks, and can get almost anything for bodily comfort. Are you happy?" Still he could not come across any one who was really happy. So he said to himself that the whole world is "vanity of vanities." He used to think if India were civilized it would become a "heaven", and that education and sanitation would remove all evils from India. Now he saw that England could not get rid of her evils by education and sanitation. Rather, he saw far more evil in England than in India. So he was convinced that culture and education could not solve human problems. He used to consider the matter in the following manner: a poor man in India uses a dirty rag to cover his wound, while a rich man in England conceals his wound with a beautiful, white bandage three yards long, neither of which, however, can remove the pus and the dirt underneath.

After arriving in London, Bakht Singh never came across

any committed Christian. No one ever spoke to him about Christ. He had joined a tennis club of 300 members near Denmark Hill and was staying not very far from the tennis club. On Sunday morning he used to go to the club to play tennis. He used to come home for lunch at around one or two o' clock. One Sunday when he came to his room at the boarding house where he was staying, his landlady, by the name of Miss Kemp, was playing some hymns on the piano. He had a key of his own and so he opened the door, came inside and heard the music being played. He did not know what it was, having no idea what hymns were as he had never gone to a church service. Miss Kemp said, "Come in Mr. Singh." She used to call him by that name. Bakht Singh sat there and she played some hymns. She said to him, "Mr. Singh, do you like this kind of music?" He replied "Yes, Madam, very nice," because he had to say something polite to her. He really liked Gramophone and Jazz music as well as Mozart 1,2,3. Every Sunday after that she would keep the door half open. She knew that Bakht Singh would be coming from his club and she should play some hymns just to win him. From then on she would give him nice pudding every Sunday. So Bakht Singh recalled, "I believe that even though she never spoke to me about salvation she must have been praying for my salvation." She became very kind to him, washed his socks, did his laundry and did all kinds of jobs for him. She ministered to his felt needs as a true Christian.

On the 11th of August 1928, he had an unusual encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, which eventually changed his life for ever. At that time he was studying Mechanical Engineering in London, at the Guild Engineering College. He was thinking of going somewhere in Europe to spend his summer vacation. Most of his friends were planning to visit some parts of Europe during the summer, but he had not yet decided where he would go. One morning early in February he

went to his college in South Kensington, London, and noticed a large poster on the notice board. His attention was drawn to a big question mark with these words, "Why not spend your summer vacation in Canada this summer?" The word Canada attracted him. Upon enquiry, he discovered that a party of 25 university students were going to Canada to take part in harvesting crops. The plan was to work on farms during harvest for six weeks to earn money and then go sight-seeing for the remaining six weeks. This plan appealed to him and he felt a strong desire to go with them. He wrote to his father to request permission, and he readily agreed. Bakht Singh gave his name to join the party. The people who were responsible for this trip took his name and the registration fee, but after a few days they wrote to him saying, "We would not advise you to go to Canada because the Canadians may not give you the same treatment as you are getting here in England." In those days, Canadians were not receiving Asians in hotels on the west coast of Canada. He replied and told them that he knew how to travel and that he would go on his own. They responded by saying, "If you are bent upon going, do not blame us if they hurt your feelings by refusing to give you accommodation in any hotel."

The party left Liverpool for Montreal on a ship named, "S.S. Montcalm," on the 9th of August, 1928. He decided to take part in every activity on the ship just to prove that he was in no way inferior to any Westerner. Taking pride for what he had learned in London, he participated in all kinds of activities such as games, drinking, card playing, smoking, dancing, etc. The 11th of August was a Sunday. That morning he saw a notice in the ship - "There will be a Christian service in the first class dining room at 10 o' clock in the morning." Till that day he had never attended a Christian service or meeting. As a matter of fact, he used to hate the Bible and

Christian services. He thought that if he did not attend this Christian service, his friends would think that he was a narrow-minded Indian, so he decided to attend.

He never had any interest either in the Bible or in the teaching of the Bible but to show that he could do what all his companions did, he went to the service and occupied a seat in the last row. When the people stood to sing hymns, he stood too; when they sat down, he sat down. When the preacher began to speak, he went to sleep. He said to himself, "I am not at all interested in their preaching. I only came to show that I, too, could go anywhere." Towards the end of the service they all knelt down to pray, but he was the only person sitting on a chair. He thought that he would never kneel down with those people who do not belong to his country or religion. He thought, "These people do not know anything about my religion. They have exploited my country. I have seen them eating and drinking, what do they know? After all, my religion is the best religion." So his national, intellectual and religious pride prevented him from kneeling down. He wanted to walk away, but later felt very awkward remaining seated while they were all praying on their knees. He thought that he could walk out, but this was difficult because people were kneeling on either side of him and he felt it was not right to disturb them. Still he did not feel like kneeling down.

Then he began to say to himself, "I have been to Muslim mosques and Hindu temples. I have taken off my shoes and washed my feet to show my respect for those places. I must honour this place out of courtesy," so just to be polite, he overcame his pride and knelt down. Bakht Singh himself wrote about this event in the Hebron Messenger editorial, dated August 18th, 1968:

"The very moment I knelt down, I felt that some divine power had engulfed me, and I uttered these words, 'Lord

Jesus, I know and I believe Thou art the Living Christ.' I kept on repeating the same words again and again. Indeed, I had been an atheist till then, and in my folly I had often said there was no God. From that day, the words 'Living Christ' somehow became very real to me. This experience left me with a strong desire to know more of the living Lord Jesus. Until then I had absolutely no idea either of the life or of the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ."

The first change that he noticed was that great joy flooded into his soul. The second was that he was repeating the name of the Lord Jesus. The Name "Lord Jesus" became very sweet to him. He used to despise that very Name, and during discussions and conversations he had made fun of it. Another change he found was that he felt one with Europeans. During his stay in London he never felt they were equal. Sometimes he felt he was their superior, sometimes their inferior. When he used to talk to the English he felt superior. He used to say that he belonged to an ancient country having an ancient culture; but when he talked to Indians he felt inferior, saying that they did not know how to eat or dress properly. Now, for the first time, he felt that all were equal.

After the service he went out on deck. There he met a man who asked him whether he was a Christian. Bakht Singh replied, "No Sir, this is the first time I have attended a Christian meeting in all my life." The man replied that going by his conversation, he thought that Bakht Singh was a Christian. He did not remember his reply.

Bakht Singh spent three months in Canada in the provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario, and everywhere he received the best treatment. That gave him a desire to go to Canada for a second time in the year 1929 to finish his training in Agricultural Engineering. During that time he stayed in the Y.M.C.A. in Winnipeg, Manitoba. There he met a friend who was a bank manager by the name of

Owel Hansen. He had a very nice shining face, so Bakht Singh asked Mr. Hansen what his happiest experience was. He had put this same question to many professors, friends and students and they had given him many different answers. But Hansen replied that his happiest experience was when he received the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour and Lord. Then he continued by saying that all who are called Christians are not real Christians. At that time Bakht Singh did not understand what he meant, but he noticed that Hansen was always very happy and had a shining face. He even heard him singing loudly in the shower! He saw that he was different from other people and he longed for what Hansen had. Then Bakht Singh requested him to lend him a copy of the Bible. Hansen was surprised at his request and said, "You are a Hindu and an Indian; and you want to read the Bible? I have heard that Hindus do not like the Bible." Bakht Singh said to Hansen, "You are right. These very hands have torn up a Bible. These very lips have blasphemed against Christ. But for the last eighteen months I have had a great love for the Lord Jesus. I love His Name which sounds so sweet to me. But I do not know yet anything about His life and teaching."⁴

Then Bakht Singh told him about his experience on the ship and expressed his longing to know more about the living Lord Jesus Christ, so Hansen gave him a small pocket size English New Testament. That same night he started reading from the very first chapter of the first Gospel on the 14th of December 1929. He kept on reading till 3 a.m. as he became engrossed in the Word of God. In the morning he found the ground covered with snow, so he remained all day in his room reading. He read continuously for three days and became fully convinced that no man could write such a book. He thought that it was God's book and he must go through it with much reverence. On the third day, De-

September 16th, 1929 he was reading St. John's Gospel and came to the third chapter, third verse and could not go further. The words, "Verily, verily I say unto you," convicted him. Just as he read these words his heart began to beat faster. He felt as though someone was standing by his side and saying the same words to him again and again, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." He always had thought that the Bible belonged to Europeans and Americans, while Indians had their own holy books. However the still, small voice of the Lord Jesus Christ made him realize that this Book, the Bible, belonged even to him Bakht Singh. Having heard that voice, he knelt down and said, "Lord, in that case I am a great sinner. I tore the Bible and spoke words of blasphemy against Thee and Thy Word, and have been living a life of shame for the past many years. Is there any hope for a man like me?" Then the Lord Jesus Christ uncovered all his sins: he found his body covered with black spots which gave off a bad smell. Then the Voice came to him again saying, "Bakht Singh, this bad smell which you are getting and the black spots which you are seeing are because of your sins." So he said, "Lord, it is quite true. I have committed these sins. I have money, but no peace; I have education, but my life is a failure."⁵

All his sins of school and college days came before him. He learned for the first time that he was the greatest sinner and discovered that his heart was wicked and filthy. His petty jealousies against his friends and enemies—all his wickedness was clear before him. His parents thought that he was a good boy; his friends regarded him as a good friend, and others considered him a decent member of society, but only he knew his real condition. With tears rolling down his cheeks he said, "Oh Lord, forgive me. Truly I am a great sinner. There is no hope for me, a great sinner." As he was crying again, the Voice said, "This is My body broken for you:

this is My blood shed for the remission of your sins. Go, thy sins are forgiven thee." He responded by saying, "Lord, these words are beyond my understanding."⁶ So he knew that only the blood of Jesus could wash away his sins. He did not know how, but believed that only the blood of Jesus Christ could save him. He could not explain the fact, but joy and peace came into his soul. He had the assurance that all his sins were washed away, he knew that the Lord Jesus Christ was reigning in his heart. The peace of God which passes all understanding filled his heart, and joy unspeakable and full of glory became his experience on December 16th, 1929 at 11.30 a.m. He kept on praising the Lord.

After two days, the same friend Hansen came to Bakht Singh and said, "It is Christmas time and it is our custom to give our friends some presents." Bakht Singh replied, "Please do not give me any presents, because I do not have any money to return any present." But he insisted and so Bakht Singh said, "Alright, if you want to give me a present, please give me a Bible as I have only a New Testament with me." So he took him to a bookstore and bought him a Bible. After he received the Bible he went to his room and started with the book of Genesis. He was so engrossed with what he read that he would spend 14 hours at a stretch reading. On the 22nd of February, 1930, he finished reading the whole Bible in less than two months. In the meantime he had also read the New Testament several times. Then he started reading the Bible the second and third time. He gave up reading magazines, newspapers and novels.

He himself testifies about reading the Word of God:

"Before the Lord Jesus came into my life I was an atheist. I said: 'There is no God!' I used to make fun of those who believed in God. I heard the Voice of God clearly, on the 16th of December 1929, saying: 'My son, thy sins be forgiven thee.'

That is how I began my walk with God. The life of God came into me, and when that happened, I underwent a threefold change of the spirit, soul, and body. I was given a quickened spirit, enlightened soul, and a cleansed body. Soon after that I began to read the book of Genesis in the month of January 1930. I found these words again and again in the same chapter: 'God said,' 'God said.' I found these words repeated 500 times and this very fragment was a blessing to me: 'God speaks, God speaks.' So I said, 'Oh, God, speak to me. I want to hear Thy Voice. I have no ambition for any other experience. The longing of my soul is that You should speak to me and show me Thy way day by day.' I believed like a child. Even though it may take some time to learn the lesson that God must speak, the fact remains that when He becomes real He does speak. A day came when I began to hear His Voice every day."⁷

The Lord Jesus Christ, whom he had hated in his ignorance, had now become his best Friend; The Bible he had rejected and burned now became his favourite book. The Lord was now beginning to prepare him to be His chosen vessel to lead many to righteousness, for His glory.

End Notes

¹Bakht Singh, *How I Got Joy Unspeakable And Full Of Glory* (Bombay, India: Gospel Literature Service, 1936), p. 3.

²Hindu society is divided into four main castes – *Brahmin*, *Vaishya*, *Kshathria*, and *Shudra*. Beyond these are technically outside caste system all together. They are called untouchables or otherwise called scheduled castes.

Brahmins have maintained their status practically unchanged throughout the centuries. They are the original priests, religious leaders and philosophers. Because of their position they still exert extensive influence in society throughout India. A few Indian Prime Ministers, including the first Prime Minister, the late Jawaharlal Nehru, were Brahmins.

³In 1925 approximately 5.537 Rupees were equal to one British Pound. Now about 75 rupees are equal to one British Pound.

⁴Bakht Singh, *How I Got Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory*, p.10.

⁵Bakht Singh, *Hebron Messenger*, August 25, 1974, 17th Issue.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Bakht Singh, *The Voice Of The Lord* (Bombay, India: Gospel Literature Service, 1970), p. 19.

Chapter 4

One Body; One Spirit

(No Believer is an Island - The role of the Global Church in relation to Bakht Singh and his ministry)

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." (Ephesians 4:4)

"The earth is The LORD's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." (Psalm 24: 1)

Our God is a global God. He plans everything from eternity and for eternity. Therefore everything that takes place both locally and globally is orchestrated by God. Unknown to us, God burdens His people in different parts of the world to pray for the work of the Lord and for the vessels whom He might choose to accomplish His purposes. We see from both the Old and New Testaments how God uses His people, incidents and circumstances to accomplish His purpose in distant lands and in the distant future. Everything that takes place is part of God's continuum. For example, behind every conversion we see people praying, in many cases unknown to them. God alone knows the role the Global Church plays in relation to every believer – both born and unborn.

According to the Word of God, every one of us has been chosen by God for Himself before the foundation of the world. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the founda-

tion of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him, in love" (Eph 1:4). Long before the birth of Bakht Singh, the saints around the world were praying for India.

"In 1898, Week of Prayer at the Moody Bible Institute was continued as a regular Saturday evening prayer meeting for worldwide revival...The burden of prayer spread from Moody Bible Institute to believers around the world. There were prayer meetings in India and East Asia, in various parts of Africa, and in Latin America. More particularly, the Chicago prayer meetings were related to a chain of prayer meetings held in Melbourne, and a prayer circle of multiplied thousands radiating from the Keswick Convention. All these factors influenced Indian Christians to pray for an awakening in India."¹

Bakht Singh was born on June 6, 1903 in the Punjab, India, while the great revival was going on in Sialkot and other parts of Punjab, North India.

In India at the turn of the 20th century the Lord burdened men like praying Hyde and others to pray without ceasing for revival in the Punjab. This led to revival in parts of Punjab in 1904, and subsequently established the Sialkot convention. "The intercessors formed the Punjab Praise and Prayer Union. Its members were committed to prayer for personal purity and power, and for a great awakening throughout India. To promote their objectives, a convention was arranged in Sialkot in the autumn of 1904."²

The Lord used many people and circumstances for the conversion, spiritual maturity and ministry of Bakht Singh. In this chapter we shall see briefly the role of the Body of Christ worldwide in his life and ministry.

While studying in London, Bakht Singh stayed in Denmark Hill, as a paying guest of Miss Kemp. She evidently was a believing Christian. She went out of her way to show Christian love and friendship toward Bakht Singh. From her

dealings with him, he thought she might have been praying for his conversion, as mentioned in an earlier chapter.

We saw how the Lord used the Anglican service held on board the ship in 1928, where the Lord first spoke to Bakht Singh while he was on his knees and he became conscious of the power of The living Christ. Then we noted how wonderfully the Lord led him to Mr. Owel Hansen, a bank clerk, whom he met at the YMCA, Winnipeg, Canada, who also impacted his life for eternity.

Mr. Hansen introduced Bakht Singh to a Mr. and Mrs. John and Edith Haywards who were his hosts from early 1930 till he left for India in April 1933. They were active members of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church. The Lord used the Haywards greatly to mature him spiritually. While in their home, the Lord taught him various important lessons, including his total commitment to the Lord; accepting the Bible as the inspired Word of God; the importance of hospitality and prayer, as well as finding God's will for everything. Moreover, the Lord ministered to his temporal needs through this loving and caring Christian couple.

The Haywards had opened their home to missionaries on furlough. This gave Bakht Singh opportunity to meet and to have fellowship with many godly people from various denominations and backgrounds. Even after he went back to India, he kept in touch with them through letters. Mrs. Hayward circulated Bakht Singh's letters for Praise and Prayer among her friends. Many Canadian Christian friends continued praying for him after he returned to India in 1933.

The Lord also used Bro. T. Austin Sparks and fellow saints at Honor Oak, London, England, to pray, to support and to stand with Bakht Singh from the time of his conversion and the very beginning of his ministry. They had a similar vision of the character and the nature of "the Church" which the Lord was to reveal to Bakht Singh later on in his ministry.

In a prayer gathering at Honor Oak, the saints began praying with much burden for India.

It is amazing to note the events that took place in Honor Oak, in the 1930s which coincided with the remarkable moving of God in India at the same time through the ministry of Bakht Singh. The Spirit of God was deeply concerned about the need of His church, burdening His church in Honor Oak to pray earnestly for India. George Patterson, one of its elders who visited India for ministry in the 1930s returned with a heavy burden for India. When he shared the prayer burden to the saints at Honor Oak, the same burden came down on them all, and they found themselves as a church crying out to God for His answer to the need of India. They lifted up to Him His purposes in relation to the nations. They pleaded with Him the promise of Isaiah 43:19, to do a new thing in India. Twice a week, over one hundred of the saints were on their knees praying for something that would glorify the Lord in India. These included Bro. Sparks, Bro. Patterson and other elders, as well as Lady Ogle. Bro. Flack and Raymond Golsworthy were also among those whom the Lord sent out later to India to join Bakht Singh for an extensive ministry in India.

Originally, Fred Flack and Raymond Golsworthy were praying about going to Africa as missionaries. But through the prayers of the church in Honor Oak for India, the Lord eventually directed and burdened them to be there instead. With the blessing and prayer support of the church at Honor Oak, they landed in Bombay on 1st of April 1933, just a week before Bakht Singh arrived there from Canada. They proceeded to Wellington in the Nilgiri Hills to help with the work at the Soldiers' home in fellowship with Lady Ogle. Late in the 1930s the Lord brought all three together with Bakht Singh for the edification of His Body. They were with him from the outset as the Lord unfolded the vision to him for the new work in India and abroad.

Lady Daisy Ogle, who came from the Christian Fellowship Center, Honor Oak, in south London met Bakht Singh in the late 1930s during his visit to Coonoor, Nilgiris. Since she had a great burden for the work in India and had shared in the vision of the church that had materialized at Honor Oak, she, along with others, were praying that the Lord might raise up His chosen vessel from India for India, to bring back God's glory in the church.

While Bakht Singh was in Coonoor, Lady Ogle invited him for tea to her palatial residence at Silverdale. She also invited Fred Flack and Raymond Golsworthy. Bakht Singh was impressed with her humility and service, for she herself served tea to her guests without asking the help of her maid. She also felt that Bakht Singh was the man of God He had chosen to bring back His glory to the church in India. Her friendship and prayerful support continued till her home-call. The Lord indeed used her significantly in the life and ministry of Bakht Singh through her prayers and practical support. Only in eternity shall we fully know her role in the work of the Lord in India, particularly in relation to Bakht Singh and his ministry.

It was marvellous the way the Lord brought Fred Flack and Raymond Golsworthy to be co-workers with Bakht Singh just prior to the planting of New Testament churches in India. In 1941, when Bakht Singh went to Coonoor to spend time in prayer to know the mind of God regarding His will for the future of the work, these men also joined him: they sought the Lord's mind together for the future ministry in India. The friendship and fellowship thus begun, greatly helped in the overall aspects of the new movement which the Lord began through His servant Bakht Singh. These men being good teachers of the Bible and in fellowship with Honor Oak in London, shared the same vision which the Lord was to direct Bakht Singh to follow. Again we see the true con-

cept of one Body and one Spirit, east and west working together for the glory of God. The Lord, Who brought them together for His eternal purpose, helped them to stand together and work together with one accord and mind and purpose for several decades to come.

Similarly, the association of Bakht Singh with Wilf Durham, an Englishman of 21, who had come to India in Sept 1933 as a radical young missionary was in God's will. Bro. Durham could not be confined to the limits of missionary imperialism: he was ready for the advent of an Indian brother, called of God, and who would fit the true apostolic features of the book of Acts. They immediately enjoyed a bonding which was to prove vital in the new movement. They shared the same vision, especially that of the character and nature of the "Church," despite their differences of opinion on certain matters. They worked together in harmony without allowing these minor differences to interfere with their service for the Lord. In 1944, Wilf Durham joined Bakht Singh in appointing the elders in Jehovah Shammah, Madras. Together a young foreign missionary and an Indian pioneer laid their hands on Bro. R.R. Rajamani, Bro. R.P. Dorairaj and Bro. George T. Rajarathnam, to lead the local church in showing forth God's glory.

As with all revival movements of the Holy Spirit there was the need for a literature ministry. This was providentially met by Wilf Durham and the newly-founded Gospel Literature Service (GLS) in Bombay (May 1943). Its vision and goal was to produce high-quality Christian literature, by Indian spiritual authors.

Even after the sudden, unexpected home-call of Wilf Durham in 1951 at the age of 39, his widow, Christina Durham continued in full support of Bakht Singh, particularly through the publication of his powerful messages in book form. She did this until her home-call in 1983.

Christina Durham had a phenomenal knowledge of the

Bible, as well as a brilliant gift for writing. As an English missionary, her knowledge of the English language ensured that the standard of the books by Bakht Singh were in impeccable English. It was through the publication of these books that the name and the work of Bakht Singh spread so widely, not only in India, but gradually throughout the world, because of the GLS marketing facilities far beyond the shores of India. In 1952, Bakht Singh joined the Trusteeship of the GLS—which was out of character for him as he worked prayerfully and unitedly with the other trustees till he could no longer serve due to his declining health.

The Lord also brought many other workers, both foreign and national, who represented various backgrounds, to stand together, and work together in mutual appreciation, respect and understanding for the fulfillment of the Lord's purpose. Mr. & Mrs. Ron Bissel, Dr. & Mrs. Angus Kinnear, Bro. and Sis. Leslie Carter, Sis. Violet Green, Sis. Helen North, Sis. Stalley, and Miss Sinclair were among scores of missionaries including those of the World-Wide Evangelization Crusade from the U.K., USA, Canada and Australia. Later, in 1964, there was a close working relationship with George Verwer and Operation Mobilization, to accomplish the Lord's purpose. As we look at the life and ministry of Bakht Singh, we can see clearly that God's purpose for the church is not to work in isolation, but to work in co-operation and unity in true spiritual fellowship, in the light of the Word of God with our fellow believers, despite minor doctrinal differences. This was true of Bakht Singh and his ministry to a large extent.

End Notes

¹J. Edwin Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings In Southern Asia*, (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1975), p. 107.

²Ibid., p. 109.

Chapter 5

A Chosen Vessel for God's Glory

"But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." (Acts 9:15)

The Lord's method is to use those who make themselves available to Him to accomplish His purpose for His glory. In the life of Bakht Singh, the Lord used different people for his conversion, and to equip and mature him for the work of God. "When God calls a man, He bids him come and die," wrote Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Following his conversion, God enrolled Bakht Singh into His school of suffering to prepare him to be the kind of vessel He wanted him to be.

Poverty:

It is not through affluence, but through afflictions that the Lord teaches and prepares His people for His glory. The Lord Jesus Christ became Bakht Singh's Saviour on December 16, 1929 at about 11:30 in the morning. From the very beginning, after his conversion, he had to face every kind of trial, the first of which was poverty. Before his conversion, his father used to send him whatever money he needed. He regularly sent him enough money for four or five months'

expenses, and when he wanted more, Bakht Singh used to send a cable and received what he had requested.

However, after his conversion, his father did not send him any money. He himself had a very big court case in the Punjab High Court. Many months passed by and Bakht Singh had no news from home. He wrote many letters and sent cables, but got no reply. He did not know what was happening in his home at that time. He wondered what had happened to his father and mother as they did not even answer his cables. He had no money left to contact them, and was living in a strange city unknown to anyone. He could not call any single person his friend. He determined that he would never go to any man and ask for help, so he thought he had better look for a job.

The year 1929 was the hardest year of depression for the whole of America, when thousands were unemployed. Following the stock market crash, Bakht Singh saw for himself people who were formerly very wealthy going from house to house selling biscuits and cakes to earn their living. People were standing in long lines at soup kitchens. He used to go early in the morning to look for a job and would spend the whole day walking into shops, workshops and factories asking, "Sir, could you give me a job?" And always the reply was, "I have no job. I am very sorry; there is nothing for you." He heard this from early morning until evening, for a period of several months. But the Lord Who takes care of the needs of His people took care of Bakht Singh's immediate needs. At first it came through Mr. Hansen, who was instrumental in his conversion and who helped him in every possible way.

Mr. Hansen, who was a tenant of the Haywards,¹ introduced Bakht Singh to them. When Mr. Hansen was hospitalized with a serious illness, he asked the Haywards to let Bakht Singh occupy his room. Later on when he died unexpectedly in the hospital, Bakht Singh remained with the

Haywards as their guest for about three years, from 1930 to 1933, till he left Vancouver for India. The Haywards, members of a Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, treated Bakht Singh as part of their family: their home was a place of training for him.

Mr. and Mrs. Haywards had a son and a daughter, 11 and 13 years old respectively. They opened their home to visitors, particularly missionaries. Bakht Singh learned the secret of prevailing prayer through the children who prayed for the needs of missionaries in various parts of the world. He also learned various valuable lessons through the life and example of the Haywards. As Mr. Haywards put it, "Bakht Singh would sit and read the Bible for hours. When something came up in the Bible, he would run down to Edith and ask her many questions. Then he would argue about the Bible and never give in. We had many discussions, and many times it came out as an argument. One day, Edith told him that he should not read the Bible any more but to get on his knees and ask God to reveal Himself to him, and open the Scriptures so that the Holy Spirit could teach him." Eventually the Lord helped him to understand the Bible as the Word of God: he thus developed a deep love and respect for it. He accepted the Bible as the Word of God from the beginning to the end, and no doubt ever entered his mind regarding the infallibility of the Bible.

Bakht Singh used to wonder why some Christians were joyful while some were not. He later found out that those who entertain doubts about the Bible did not have real joy. Sometimes he could not understand the evils he had been noticing around him, but the Bible solved all his difficulties. For two years he kept on reading the Bible. During his second reading, he came to the verse in Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." He had been suffering from nasal catarrh for many years. He had

consulted the best English doctors, but they were not able to help him. His eyesight, too, had become very weak. So he prayed, "Will Thou heal my nose and give me good sight?" Next morning when he woke up, he found to his great joy that he was healed. That revealed to him that the Lord Jesus Christ was the same yesterday, today and forever. From that time on, he had the privilege of praying for the healing of many and the Lord wonderfully answered his prayers. Throughout his Christian life he lived by the Word of God.

When the Haywards moved from Winnipeg to Vancouver, Bakht Singh went with them and continued staying with them. In Vancouver they attended West Broadway Baptist Church. On the 4th of February 1932, he was baptized there. He explains why it took him more than two years to decide to be baptized following his conversion:

"For two years, after my conversion, I never thought of baptism. I read the Bible every day. Sometimes I used to spend a whole day with the Bible, but was not baptized, thinking that it was not necessary. One Saturday morning in the month of February 1932, as I was having my quiet time, the Lord spoke to me through Matthew 3:13. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him." The Lord said to me clearly, "Are you in any way better than your Saviour?" I replied, "Lord, I never said so." He said, "Then what about baptism?" I had been thinking that baptism was not very important because I was born again and was giving my testimony everywhere. But the Lord spoke to me very clearly that He was baptized for my sake even though there was no need for Him to do so. I was baptized the very next day. That day I myself took the meeting and after the meeting I was baptized. I was filled with great joy when I came out of the water. From that day onwards, the Bible became a new book to me. I enjoyed much liberty in prayer and witnessing. Everything became new to me. I

discovered that there are fifty-one references in the Gospels and the Epistles about baptism. I put them all together and studied them.”²

One morning, he received a telephone call enquiring whether he would be able to go to speak on a certain Sunday. He replied, “Please wait for a while, I shall look in my diary and see if I am free on that day.” He was free, so he said, “I will be glad to come.” When the Haywards heard this conversation, they asked him, “Don’t you pray and find God’s perfect will before accepting any invitation to go out and speak?” He replied, “There is no need to find God’s perfect will for this matter. I am not going for my personal work, but going to give God’s message.” He was very offended and thought that they were finding fault with him, so much so, in fact, that he did not say “Good morning” to them for two weeks.

Then he began to think about this. He realized that he did not know how to find God’s will. He then decided not to accept any invitation to speak or even visit anyone until he learned how to be sure about knowing the Lord’s perfect will. He used to go to the seaside by himself and pray the whole day, asking the Lord to teach him how to find His will. From that time on, things changed. He began to enjoy real liberty in the ministry of God’s Word and had the privilege of seeing the Lord work in a deeper way wherever He commanded him to go. He thanked God for the way He taught him to wait long enough to be definite about His perfect will. He also learned the importance of seeking the Lord’s will in every aspect of his life through the Haywards. Seeking, knowing and doing the perfect will of God remained the motto for the rest of his life.

As Bakht Singh grew in the Lord, he began teaching the Haywards rather than they teaching him. While staying with them, he spent hours in the library reading the Scriptures

and other Christian books. According to Mr. Haywards, "I remember him getting the life of Paul and he was greatly enthusiastic and uplifted by this. It was an inspiration to us to see the difference in him. In a few months after his conversion, he was ready to face the world and preach the gospel". According to John Haywards, "Bro. Bakht Singh spoke in many churches. Some missionaries wanted to sponsor him but he preferred to be independent of sponsorship. We often tried to get him sponsored through Christian and Missionary Alliance Church (CMA) but he did not want to do it."

Before the Haywards were married, Edith wanted to go to India as a missionary, but she could not. The Lord instead enabled her and her husband to host, disciple and prepare a vessel for His work in India and other parts of the world. In the early 1930s, when Bakht Singh was stranded in Winnipeg and living with them as a newly converted international student, little did they realize that their guest would one day be a great servant of the Lord. He became the greatest evangelist and church-planter in India in the 20th century. Here again, we see the important role of Christian homes in discipling and preparing new Christians as effective witnesses for the Lord.

According to the Haywards, while Bakht Singh was staying with them, his mother wrote to thank them for taking care of her son. In her letter to Edith Haywards, she wrote that she had made several pilgrimages and visited many shrines in India that she might bear a son and now the son is stranded in a far-off country. Unable to support him financially any more due to their own financial problems, she suggested that the Haywards consider him as their son. Even after he went back to India, Bakht Singh kept in touch with the Haywards. Edith Hayward used to circulate his letters among close friends for prayer and praise and support his work in India.

Soon after his conversion, Bakht Singh began to attend many meetings. He used to go wherever he got spiritual food because he had just begun to read his Bible. On one occasion he went to a meeting of about eighty believers and sat in the last seat. Suddenly, Bakht Singh saw a short man coming towards him who asked him where he came from, so he told him that he was from India. After the meeting, the man announced that a brother from India was about to speak. Bakht Singh looked around to see that brother, as he was anxious to see another Indian in that place. Little did he know, however, that he was the one the man was referring to. Then the man came right up to him and took him to the front to speak. Bakht Singh wondered how he was going to do it, as he had never preached in his life and he was quite shy. They thought that he was a great preacher. He became very angry and promised himself never to go there again. He simply looked down and muttered something so softly that he did not think the man next to him could have heard his voice. All he said was that he was a sinner and that the Lord had saved him. Soon after speaking, he quickly ran out. One man, however, who was on the same platform went after Bakht Singh and said to him, "God bless you. Your testimony was of great blessing to me." This man eventually became his best friend. Even though Bakht Singh didn't have the slightest desire to be a preacher, the thought came to him that the Lord was able to use even the weakest creature.

When he went to Winnipeg, one man said to him, "Please come and speak to us next Sunday." Bakht Singh told him that he was not a preacher but the man said, "I do not know what you [will] say, but we want a man from India to speak." Bakht Singh reluctantly agreed. He did not know what he was going to say: all he knew was that he was in the church building. He began to tremble. He looked up and said, "Lord, have mercy upon me and touch my lips and enable me to

speak." He did not know how the words came, but he started slowly, stuttering and stammering, and then began to speak loudly.

Soon after he had finished, an old man with tears in his eyes came and thanked him for the message saying, "The Lord sent you to comfort me." Bakht Singh did not know how the words came to him that day. He had not read any book nor had he taken any active part in public speaking as he was very shy. But because of Sadhu Sunder Singh's reputation, they thought Bakht Singh also was a preacher. Many people began to invite him, but he refused. Bakht Singh was actually pushed into ministry. He did not have any qualification, and could not even sing one note. He said to himself, "A man who cannot sing, can he preach? A man who stutters, can he preach?" He thus had to call on the Lord before he spoke at meetings. He didn't know what he was going to say. For one full year he was pushed, but the Lord never failed. He was not saying these things to boast about himself, but to show how the Lord can use weak and helpless vessels who are fully trusting Him.

The Lord met his needs:

When Bakht Singh was travelling from England to Canada, he met some people on the ship who invited him to their home because they would like to taste some real Indian curry. It was just a friendly gathering, so Bakht Singh prepared an Indian curry for two or three people who liked it. After four months, he met them again while looking for employment in those hard days. They told him that if he was willing to work as a cook they would help him, even though he was not a cook by profession. This was his first job, so he thanked God. He made a paste from two buckets of onions. He then used that paste with butter and curry powder to make a sauce, which when cooked was very tasty. As he

worked, he realized that God was speaking to him through the onions, chillies and other ingredients. The thought came to him that believers are like onions or other ingredients used in cooking. Some are hot like chillies, others are strong-smelling like onions, and others are fragrant like spices, but when all are 'mixed' and 'cooked' by the Holy Spirit, then a sweet smelling- aroma of divine love will be emitted. In this way, God began to speak to him, and the Word of God was becoming very real to him. He knew that this was his training for future ministry. He could not say how God would use him, but he had a feeling that God was calling him for His service.

While lying on his bed one morning, Bakht Singh suddenly saw on the wall before him a map of India with a bright shining cross in the center. He heard a voice saying, "If you want to serve Me, you have to lay down your life at the cross." This took place at the beginning of March, 1930. Bakht Singh could not understand how he could ever serve the Lord, but the bright cross always reminded him that, one day, he would have to go throughout India with God's message. Still, he went on trying to get a job to take care of his needs.

Toronto policeman:

Bakht Singh received a letter from a firm in Toronto, a city about 2000 miles east of Winnipeg. The firm said that if he went there, they would give him training in agricultural engineering, something he was very keen to have. The firm was manufacturing agricultural machinery for farming, and they offered him a post in their factory. However he did not have any money to buy a ticket to go to Toronto. He knelt down and prayed, "Lord, if you want me to go there, please provide me with the railway fare."

The following morning he went to a Sunday service nearby. After the service was over, a man named Mr. Flynn

came to Bakht Singh, and shook his hand and said, "Brother, if you want to go to Toronto, I will send you." Bakht Singh had not told him anything of his desire. Mr. Flynn then asked him if he was prepared to become a Toronto policeman. He was police superintendent in Toronto and needed two policemen to go by special train from Winnipeg to Toronto. He asked if Bakht Singh was prepared to go as the return fare would be paid. He had been praying about going to Toronto and this was God's provision. Bakht Singh became a policeman for two days. He believed that when one is doing God's service, one has to watch like a policeman. He did not realize it then, but God was training him by making him a policeman. Bakht Singh had been praying for a one-way fare, but God provided for the return trip as well. He could see God's divine hand leading his steps in all this, and he began to meet many people. God was indeed preparing him for His service as His chosen vessel.

Bakht Singh went to Toronto, and even though they gave him a job as a policeman, they did not give him any wages, only his return ticket. There he was in a big city with very little money but in fact, only a few cents with which he bought a small packet of Coco. He mixed this Coco with hot water from the bathroom, and with no sugar he drank it in the morning, at mid day, in the evening and at night. He lived for ten days on that small packet of Coco, even though he worked in the work-shops and returned home very tired. Bakht Singh knew that God had a purpose and was preparing him for something. He did not understand this at that time. Those days were extremely happy days for him, even though he had to walk many miles to and from the work-shops because he had no money for bus fares. He looked back with thankfulness for all those trials because he said that the Lord became more real to him at that time.

In 1931, Bakht Singh was training in Toronto. He had to

start very early in the morning and walk a long way to work as he had no money for bus fares. He also had no money to buy food. The weather was very cold and he did not have any warm clothing. He was cold, miserable, and dejected. He thought to himself that he was better off before his conversion when he had money in two banks and could lend money to his friends, because now he had nothing. Shivering with cold one day as he was walking, he saw a church building and on a small board he noticed a fragment from Hebrews 2:18. "He is able to succour them that are tempted." Bakht Singh did not know anything about Hebrews. Having read that verse, he began to repeat it several times. He could not explain the meaning of the words, yet they were of great help to him, expelling his sorrow. He began to sing in his heart and went into the workshop with joy. All day he repeated these words, "He is able, He is able to succour them that are tempted." No matter what trouble came to him afterwards, he was comforted with these words. Even in extreme trials, these words brought much encouragement to him. Bakht Singh testified, "Like that, we have happy experiences as to how the Lord met us and how He spoke to us, and the comfort and inspiration which we receive from God's Word, we cannot receive from any man. This is the experience which I cannot forget."

Then came the winter. In Canada the winter is extremely cold, and unless one has extra-warm clothing, it is very difficult to keep warm. Bakht Singh used to pray every morning and night that the Lord would keep him warm as he had no money to buy a sweater, a muffler, a scarf, or an overcoat. He had to draw his knees up to his chest every night in order to keep himself warm. But the Lord began to speak to him in the early hours. Bakht Singh said that he could not remember any day when a doubt came to his mind. He knew there was a hidden plan unknown to him and that

was why God was allowing these hardships to come into his life.

He had to walk many miles in shoes with holes in the soles. And as everyone knows when one goes outside with holes in their shoes, they are liable to catch cold in the snow and rain. Bakht Singh prayed and asked God to give him a new pair of shoes. That day he had an appointment with a gentleman, so he polished up his old shoes and called at his office. During the conversation, the gentleman suddenly broke off and said, "Would you mind if I buy you a new pair of boots? Please do not say 'no'. Some one has given me money to buy a new pair of boots." That is how God supplied his need. He could see later that even in every small matter God began to move on his behalf because he had determined not to give any hint or suggestion to anyone that he was hungry, thirsty, or needed a garment. He was saying in his heart, "If the Lord Jesus Christ has washed away all my sins, surely He will give me the things I need without any worry. If I am suffering now, it must be for some divine plan known to God." He thus learned to trust God completely.

One morning Bakht Singh felt a very strong urge to write to his mother, but he had no money to buy stamps or stationery. He knelt down and prayed, "Lord, I believe my mother is thinking about me and I would like to write to her. I have no money to buy stamps and paper." He got up from his knees and felt in his pockets. In one, he found one small coin. Doubtful whether this coin was sufficient to buy stamps, he called a child, gave him the coin and sent him to buy the stamps. Presently, a lady came to him demanding to know why he had given the child the coin. Bakht Singh apologized saying that he was sorry but that was all he had. She then told him that it was a gold coin which she had not seen for many years. She said that years before in the Punjab she had seen a similar coin but not since. Bakht Singh questioned how a gold

coin could be in his pocket, and suggested that it must be copper and not gold. She confirmed that it was gold, and so it was. He could not tell how the coin came to be in his pocket, but that is how God supplied his need that day.

During his agricultural training he had to work on many different farms plowing the fields. In Canada, when the crop is ready for harvesting, it is cut by machines and made into small bundles. These bundles are brought in trucks to other machines where they are threshed. Bakht Singh had a farm job, where, because summer is very short, people have to work very hard to complete the harvesting in time. His work began at about 4 o' clock in the morning and continued until 7 or 8 p.m. He had never worked so hard before, but he felt that he must keep his post. One day he got very tired. There were still four hours left to work so he began to pray, "Oh Lord, please give me strength to carry out the work or else break the machine." The Lord broke the machine! The whole machine broke down and all the labourers had four days holiday while the mechanics fixed the machine. Then he writes, "But do not pray like that everyday! When you go to the workshop, do not ask God to break the machine! But there are occasions when the Lord in remarkable ways delivers us from embarrassment."

He lived among labourers and unskilled workers for about two months. Some people were accustomed to all kinds of evil ways- smoking, drinking, gambling and all other vices. There were seven of them living in a small room made for grain storage. Two of them were given one small bed and Bakht Singh's companion had the habit of sleeping at an angle in a crooked way, and he had to move quite close to the edge of the bed. He had to pray, "Oh Lord, give me some sleep." The Lord answered his prayer and gave him sleep, even though the mattress was full of lice. He knew that God was preparing him for something in the future. Having gone

through that trial, later, when he went out for gospel work anywhere in the villages in India, it did not matter where he slept. Bakht Singh said that the Lord always gave him sleep, even on a stone floor.

The Lord prepares him to be His mouth-piece:

Since his conversion, the Lord was preparing him to be His effective vessel. So far we have seen how the Lord put him through various trials of life, including mental and physical hardships. Like a good soldier of Jesus Christ, he first had to undergo much physical and emotional training through various sufferings and trials. Now slowly, the Lord began to use him as His mouth-piece by providing him opportunities to share his testimony, as well as sharing from the Word of God.

Only once in his life did he prepare notes for his sermon. Bakht Singh was asked to speak in a high school. He thought being high-school boys, they would laugh at him, so he prepared about twelve pages of notes very carefully. He went there 'assured' of giving a good message. He began by reading the first three pages. After the third page he found himself looking at page nine. He did not know how this happened, but he got so nervous that he could not find the correct page. So he put all the papers in his pocket and began to give a simple talk. From that day on, he never used any notes in preaching. He began to pray, "Oh Lord, empty me and take away my thoughts, my ideas, and give me Thy thoughts and Thy words." In schools, colleges and other meetings, God taught him what to say each time as he prayed, "Lord, take away my words and give me Thy words." Even after many years, Bakht Singh testified that the Lord never failed him.

Many people mistakenly thought that he was a well-known preacher from India, so they used to invite him to speak. When he consented, they used to come and take him

to the meeting and would enquire, "Are you Bakht Singh?" When he answered in the affirmative, they said they thought that he was a tall man with a long, flowing robe. That was their impression. Little did they realize however, as Bakht Singh testified, that he did not know a single word to say, and that he had to pray, "Lord, touch my lips, touch my tongue and give me Thy thoughts and Thy words." And the Lord always answered his prayer.

In those days, Bakht Singh was the first Indian who had university training in both mechanical and agricultural engineering from the West.

Realizing his own limitations as a preacher and public speaker, he planned to return to India, make money in the field of agricultural engineering and use his earnings to support the Lord's work in India. After much thought and planning, he came up with a plan of having a Christian agricultural model colony called "The Village of the Cross." He proposed to buy a large piece of agricultural land from the Government and develop it in the shape of a cross.

About this plan Daniel Smith wrote:

"He drew his own plans for it and published them in booklet form. At its center was to be a circular church building, and all of life was to be lived round this 'tabernacle' of the Lord. There were to be four blocks of houses for converted families. All were to be equal and everything was to be shared. The life of the residents of 'The Village of the Cross' was to be a testimony to India of Christian life and love. Other parts of the cross-shaped village were to be divided into sections for the growth of sugar cane, cotton, coarse grains, medicinal herbs, spices, vegetables, fruits, date palms and mulberry trees. The Lord was to have a tithe of all. Such was the grandiose scheme of Bakht Singh's newly converted mind.

But before he could move away from Vancouver to put his scheme into effect, another great spiritual crisis was to

change the whole pattern of his service and move him into the realm of the Lord's own purposes. The call, clear and insistent, was to preaching. With this inward and strong registration upon his spirit, there came a spiritual revelation of the inner meaning of the Cross. He now saw that Christ not only died for our sins upon the Cross of Calvary, but that the Cross demanded the identification of Bakht Singh with that death so that the power of resurrection might be released through him. This meant that 'The Village of the Cross' would be ruled out, since it represented a scheme of his own brain. His own things had to die. Thus it was that his grandiose scheme was carried to its funeral and buried before it ever came into being. From that day on, Bakht Singh was to take infinite pains to know the Lord's mind about every small detail of life."³

(See also Appendix A)

While he was staying with the Haywards in Vancouver, he was invited to speak to a small group of young people. One of the young men in the group said to Bakht Singh, "Please tell us something about Christian work in India." He spoke to them on the subject, but continuously found fault with the missionaries and their work. When he returned to his room that night, he could not pray. The Lord said to him very clearly, "Who are you to find fault with My servants? What about you? Why don't you take up the work yourself?" Bakht Singh replied, "Lord, I do not have the least qualification to be a public speaker. That is the reason I have been hesitating to surrender my life to You for Your service; I said that I would give You all my money for Your work."

But the Lord said to him, "I do not want your money, I want you."

Then he said to the Lord, "But since You want me in spite

of my many handicaps, I am ready to serve You and go anywhere You send me." That morning he knelt down and asked forgiveness and said, "Oh Lord, wilt Thou accept me? I am prepared to go anywhere whether to India, China or Africa. I am going to give up everything for Thee—friends, relatives, belongings."

The Lord said to him, "You will have to live by faith. You must not ask for anything, not even from your friends or relations. You must not ask even for a cup of coffee."

Then Bakht Singh asked the Lord, "Who is going to provide for my needs?" The Lord said, "That is not your business". After this he surrendered his life. That was on the 4th of April 1932 at 2.30 a.m. When he had thus surrendered himself to the Lord, he heard a still, small Voice saying to him, "I accept you for My service on three conditions:

Withdraw all your claims to your father's property in the Punjab, and never tell any man about your material and financial needs by letter or by suggestion of any kind. Tell it only to Me.

Do not join any society, but serve all people equally, wherever I send you.

Do not make your own plans, but let Me lead you day by day."

He replied, "Lord, I agree," and it was settled.

Soon after this, his heart was flooded with the love of Christ for all people. The Lord opened doors for him to go to all kinds of places as His witness, to Christians of all denominations, to young people in the universities and colleges, and to rescue missions in the slum areas. Daniel Smith wrote,

"Such was the movement of the Spirit in calling Bakht Singh into His grace. Bakht Singh had obtained mercy, and the love of God had been shed abroad in his heart. 'I felt I loved everybody,' he said. 'My heart flowed out even to the Westerners whom I had long despised.' From this complete

conversion and entire abandonment of his life to the Lord Jesus, there had issued a call to preach the gospel. The heart that rose from these experiences was one of uncommon strength and courage which alone sustained him in his most arduous future service. There was no divided leadership. He was to move only under the orders, command, and directions of his heavenly Lord."⁴

While in Vancouver Bakht Singh had the privilege of visiting many Indian families with the gospel. That was how the Lord trained him for His service in India.

On the 19th of October, 1932, Bakht Singh wrote to his father about his conversion. On the 15th of November, Bakht Singh prayed that the Lord might send someone to his father to explain the letter which he had written about his conversion, as it was long and he had given many references from the Bible. On the same day his father went to see the American missionary in his hometown. On the 21st of November, 1932, when he got the letter, he went to see the same missionary with whom he had become acquainted and said to him, "I have this letter containing many references from the Bible. Can you explain them?" The missionary gave him a Bible in Urdu and explained to him how to look up the references. After looking up all the references, he was convinced that his son's conversion was according to real conviction. He therefore replied to his son saying that he had no objection, and that he was pleased to know that he was happy in his faith.

Vancouver is a famous seaport. While he was living there, he had the privilege and joy of preaching the gospel to Negroes, Japanese, Chinese, Italians, Hungarians and other nationalities from many countries.

Bakht Singh prayed, seeking the Lord's plan for his future. The Lord said to him, "I want you to leave for India on the 6th of February, 1933".⁵ Bakht Singh went to the ship-

ping office and enquired if there was a ship leaving Vancouver for India on February 6th. They told him there was a ship leaving on the 6th. The person in charge took down his name saying that he could pay the fare on the day of sailing. He consequently informed his friends that he was leaving for India on the 6th of February. They promptly arranged a farewell gathering on the 4th of February. The day before the gathering, they knew that he had no money for his passage to India, so they cancelled the farewell meeting in spite of the fact that Bakht Singh had told them that he was going as the Lord had directed. The Lord had spoken to him, and he knew that He would provide his passage money in time, but they did not believe.

After two days he received more than the amount he needed for the passage, and, as the Lord had revealed, on the 6th of February, 1933, he sailed for Bombay, India. The Lord gave him a wonderful time at Vancouver, Yokohama, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore, and he found that the Lord had gone before him to all these cities and had prepared friends for him. He found, according to the Lord's wonderful promise, that there were friends everywhere, and he proved the truth of the Word of God which says, "[He] guided them by the skilfulness of His hands." (Psalm 78:72) To learn how the Lord turned Bakht Singh's trials into triumphs for His glory will be the subject of the chapters that follow.

End Notes

¹It is remarkable how the Lord provided for the spiritual, physical and temporal needs of Bakht Singh in the early days of his Christian experience. The Lord's guiding hand led him continually. John and Edith Haywards of Lipton Ave, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, took Bakht Singh into their home as a member of their family. They were his hosts from 1930-1933, from his conversion to his departure for Bombay, February 6, 1933 from Vancouver, Canada. This home was a

home away from home for him, and they were like his parents. He used to call them "Dad" and "Mom".

²Bakht Singh, *The Strong Foundation* (Hyderabad, India: Hebron, 1972), pp. 8-9.

³Daniel Smith, *Bakht Singh Of India, A Prophet Of God*, (Charlottesville, VA: Christian Aid Mission, 1957), pp. 37-38.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁵Bakht Singh, *How I Got Joy Unspeakable And Full Of Glory* (Bombay, India: Gospel Literature Service, 1936), p. 34.

Chapter 6

Itinerant Preacher: Bombay and Beyond

(Years covering 1933 to 1935)

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye." (Psalm 32:8)

When Bakht Singh arrived in Bombay on April 6, 1933, his parents welcomed him with tears of joy. But soon their tears of joy turned into tears of pain and agony.

Following the excitement of meeting his son, Bakht Singh's father took him aside and said to him that as far as he was concerned he had no objection to his becoming a Christian because he was old enough to decide to follow the religion of his choice. However he had one request which was that while Bakht Singh was with them in their home town of Sargodha, he should keep his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ secret. To this Bakht Singh replied that the Lord Jesus Christ was his life, and he could not live denying Him any more than one could live without breathing. He said that the Lord Jesus Christ was the very breath of his life, and that he had given his whole life to Him for His service. His father was visibly shocked to hear that his son had not only become a follower of Christ, but more than that, he had become a full-time preacher.

Controlling his anguish and anger, his father went on to

say that Bakht Singh should find a good-paying job, at least for a short time, so that people might know with what great sacrifice he had given his life to serve the Lord. Moreover, his father said that he, being the eldest son in whom he had invested a lot of money for his education, should take up a job to support his brothers and sisters who were all still young and studying. Because of the long court case previously mentioned, his father had lost most of his wealth and the family had been going through severe financial difficulties. But Bakht Singh told him that if one soul was lost through his disobedience to the Lord's call, that would be, in His eyes, worth more than the whole world. Furthermore, he assured his father that the Lord would take care of his parents and supply the needs of his siblings. (By God's grace, all his five younger brothers and three sisters were able to complete their studies and find excellent jobs.) The Lord indeed honoured Bakht Singh's faith and heard his prayers on behalf of his parents and siblings.¹

When his father realized that Bakht Singh would not change his mind, he told him that he could not go home with them, even though he had been out of India for about seven years. To show respect to his father, Bakht Singh gave him all the money he had and kept nothing for his room or board. Before the sorrow-stricken parents boarded the train at Victoria Terminus in Bombay to return home to Sargodha, his mother pleaded with him again, sobbing, "My son, I offered many prayers and shed tears before you were born. I brought you forth with great expectation. Please, for my sake, can't you keep quiet about your faith at least for a while when you are with us? Please, please?" she begged.

Bakht Singh also cried and said, "Mother, I love you so dearly, but how can I deny my Lord Who gave His life for me?"

The words of the Sadhu, who told her before the birth of

Bakht Singh that she would be blessed with a son, but, that he would not stay with her, pierced through her heart. That prediction was now coming true, but she could not bear it. It was a painful parting both for the parents and the son. While they were pleading with him to keep quiet about his faith in Christ at least for a while, the following words of the Lord Jesus Christ came to Bakht Singh's mind, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." (Matthew 10: 37-39) "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26, 27)

Seeing his unwavering commitment to the Lord, and his refusal to comply with his parents' request to keep quiet about his faith for a short while during his stay with them in his home town, the brokenhearted father humbled himself: he took off his turban and placed it at the feet of his son, begging him to change his mind. This act is very humbling for anyone, particularly for his father, but in order to have his son with them, his father was willing to do anything. Until this event only Bakht Singh's parents were aware of his conversion to Christ. They did not share this with any-one else because conversion to Christianity was considered to be against family prestige of the well-to-do high-caste Hindus, Sikhs and other non-Christians in India. Many non-Christians in India, even today, think that Christianity is essentially a "white man's" religion, and that only the low-caste and out-castes follow Christianity for social and material gain. Some even today, think that one cannot be a Christian and

an Indian at the same time. That is why, after 200 years of missionary activities, Christianity has not been able to make a serious mark on Indian society.

After the train disappeared from sight, Bakht Singh, wiping his tears, stood on the platform asking the Lord for guidance. Rejected by his parents, penniless, homeless, helpless, yet with hope, he looked to the Lord of Heaven, then remembered His Word, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up." (Psalm 27:10) As he waited upon God, the words of the Lord, which he had heard in Vancouver, came to his mind, "Do not make your own plans but let Me lead you day by day. Tell no man about your material or financial needs, either by letter or suggestion of any kind. Tell them only to Me." The Lord, Who is not only a covenant-making but a covenant-keeping God, directed him to a public shelter for his first night in Bombay. He went and kept his baggage in a public shelter, where he was given a free room for a week.

Then he began witnessing for Christ in the city of Bombay by distributing gospel tracts. Some, who were interested to hear about the Lord, offered him a cup of tea while he shared with them his joy in the Lord. Sometimes that cup of tea was his food for the whole day. And even though he did not have any proper meals for many days, he didn't feel the pangs of hunger, for the joy of the Lord was his strength (Nehemiah 8:10). As he went around serving the Lord, homeless and foodless and friendless, parent-less, wife-less, the words of the apostle Paul rang in his ears, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?...It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." (Romans 8: 32-37)

As he was praying to the Lord concerning where he should go from the public shelter after being there for a week, the Lord brought to his remembrance the contact he had made in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1928, when he was invited by a friend to go with him and some other friends to see the beautiful lakes of Scotland. This friend had been staying in Edinburgh. Since Bakht Singh was having holidays at that time and loved to travel and see places, he welcomed the opportunity to go with his friends to Scotland. After going around enjoying the lakes of Scotland, they returned late at night to a boarding house where his friend was staying as a paying guest. The following morning when he woke up, he was surprised by the smell of onions being fried as though someone was preparing Indian curry. As he went into the kitchen, he was greeted by a missionary lady, Mrs. Maclane, who was in fact preparing Indian curry, so Bakht Singh offered to help her. While he was doing so, she enquired as to his whereabouts and invited him to visit them when he returns to India. She told him that her husband was a professor at Wilson College in Bombay, and that they would be very glad if he would visit them when he passes through Bombay.

Suddenly he remembered meeting Mrs. Maclane in that guest house in Edinburgh, as well as her invitation to visit them. He went to the college to pay a courtesy call, but he was told by the watchman that they had gone back to Scotland. As he was about to leave, the watchman said, "Sir, there is another missionary here whom you can meet." And even though he had no special reason to see him, he decided to go anyway. His name was Mr. Warner, superintendent of the Methodist Mission in Bombay. Mr. Warner was very glad to

see him. After hearing his testimony as to how the Lord Jesus Christ had changed his life, he told Bakht Singh that there was a great need for speakers as it was Easter week and that there were special meetings in a number of places in and around Bombay. This gave Bakht Singh a wide, open door for ministry and a great burden for Bombay because, wherever he went, he saw huge multitudes in need of the loving Saviour. Mr. Warner also offered him a room at the Robinson Memorial Church facility in Byculla, Bombay. That was the residence of both the superintendent and the Bishop of the Methodist churches. Through this contact the Lord gave Bakht Singh many future contacts, one of which was with Bishop Bradley, a very godly man whom God used for the future ministry of Bakht Singh in different parts of India, particularly at the Sialkot Convention, Sialkot, Punjab.

About this contact Bakht Singh said:

"During the same time, I met Bishop Bradley, one of the main speakers of Sialkot Convention in West Punjab. I had many opportunities of having fellowship with him and I got to know him very well. Through his influence, I was invited in the same year to speak in the Sialkot Convention, which in those days was one of the large conventions in Punjab. I accepted his invitation and that gave me an entrance to almost all parts of Punjab. Even though I had returned to India with no plan of my own, and did not know where to begin and what to do, the Lord had spoken to me very clearly not to make my own plans and not to use human wisdom to get an opportunity to speak any where. The same person gave me a letter of introduction to a co-worker in Karachi, where I had the privilege of serving the Lord for seven years. From there, I had the honour of taking the gospel to many parts of Sindh, even to remote villages. All this began through onions. Indeed, His ways are past finding out! It is a great joy to be governed by God from His throne day by day, step by step."²

For the first three weeks or so after returning from Canada, Bakht Singh was extremely busy witnessing for Christ in Bombay. Even though he didn't make his needs known to anyone, the Lord provided for him in wonderful ways. The Lord's promise in Matt. 6:33 became a reality in Bakht Singh's early Christian life and ministry. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." He maintained that commitment throughout his life and ministry.

Bakht Singh's ministry in Karachi:

While he was living and working in Bombay, Bakht Singh received a letter from his sister inviting him to Karachi. She wrote to him, "I have heard that you have come back. Will you come and see me?" She did not know that her brother had become a Christian. She thought that he was merely looking for a job in Bombay. So he went to Karachi to see her.

Before he left Bombay, he told Bishop Bradley that he was going to Karachi. The Bishop told him they had some missionaries working there, one of whom was an American, Mr. Gray. He was a district superintendent of the Methodist churches in Karachi. After visiting his sister, Bakht Singh went to see Mr. Gray, who was very courteous and friendly. He wanted to know why his visitor had come to see him. Bakht Singh gave him Mr. Bradley's letter of introduction. Mr. Gray told him to go and see Rev. Shabaz, the Indian pastor of the United Methodist church. But Mr. Gray did not spend much time with Bakht Singh, who was hurt and offended at Mr. Gray's attitude toward him. So he did not feel like seeing the Indian pastor. He thought that at least Mr. Gray could have said a few words, so as he was going out of the gate, the Lord spoke to him, saying, "Why are you so proud? Go and see the Indian pastor."

Rev. Shabaz was living behind Mr. Gray's compound. He

went to see pastor Shabaz. But as Bakht Singh arrived he found that pastor Shabaz was down with fever that day. The pastor then said to Bakht Singh, "Brother, the Lord has sent you for my sake. Today is Saturday, tomorrow is Sunday and I have no-one to preach. Will you kindly preach for me tomorrow?" That was Bakht Singh's first church meeting in India. Previously, he had been speaking to small gatherings. He preached in Hindi, and was asked to come again. So he went back the next Sunday. Shabaz said that there were 5,000 nominal Christian Punjabi sweepers with nothing being done for them spiritually because they were all drunkards, spending a lot of money on drinking and gambling. Someone from the church used to go and collect money from them but not for any special ministry. Many of them had changed their religion to Christianity through a mass movement.

Bakht Singh then began working among the sweepers in Karachi. Most of these people were low-caste Punjabis. They were living in Muhallas (slum-like communities). Meetings were held in an open space in the streets with open sewers. One day they brought a young man on a bed. He was a college graduate and was suffering with a high fever, but he had a desire to hear the message. These Punjabi sweepers sang very sweetly. Even though they were the worst kind of people, Bakht Singh could feel that there was something there for the Lord by their singing. After a few days, he thought of going to see the young man who was suffering with fever. He went looking for him, but he was told that he had died.

Bakht Singh felt very sad and went to see the young man's parents. They were all sitting in the street surrounded by men trying to console them. He told them that he was very sorry that their son had passed away. It was a great thing for these poor people that their son was a college graduate. Bakht Singh

then took his Bible and gave a short message. They told him that they felt happy that he had come and shared God's Word. Nobody usually bothered about them, whether pastor or preacher: they were only interested in money. Bakht Singh was the first man who began to work among them spiritually. They invited him to come again, so he began to go every evening. They would come onto the street and gather around him, and the Lord began to save souls.

They told him that there were 5,000 Punjabis living a life of shame but nobody cared about them. Bakht Singh began holding regular open-air preaching sessions and visited all these people who were Christian in name only. They were the product of a mass movement during the great famine of 1905 onwards. Eventually, some were born again among the sweepers.

Then Bakht Singh began early morning Bible study and prayer meetings for these sweepers. They started at 4 a.m. because they had to go to work, sweeping the streets and cleaning public toilets early in the morning. They would kneel by their baskets and brooms and sing Punjabi songs. When they went to work, they kept on singing while they swept the roads. That was where they began to compose Punjabi songs. The first couple of songs were composed by these Punjabi sweepers. These born-again Punjabi sweepers were inspired. They were simple folks singing simple songs, but they were full of life. These songs were both devotional and inspirational.

Bakht Singh began preaching in the open air twice a day in different parts of Karachi with the help of these 'singing saints'. He went to all the localities where these sweepers were living and would often visit them in their homes. Whatever money they collected they gave to Bakht Singh. He would not take any money for himself but pass it on to the pastor. People invited Bakht Singh for food in their homes.

In the early days in Karachi he stayed with his sister who offered him a small room. When she heard that he was preaching in the bazaar, working among the sweepers and going to the church, she wrote to her father saying, "Things are dangerous, please come soon to Karachi." So their father came. Until this time, only the parents knew of their son's conversion to Christ. Bakht Singh's wife also came to see him. When she was convinced that he would not renounce Christ, she left him, never to see him again. His son didn't come to see him either. It was a painful parting for Bakht Singh.

Shortly after father's arrival there was a family gathering in his sister's home. His sister, brother-in-law, brothers and his father became very angry and began to abuse him. She said to him, "You have left a high and noble religion and have become an out-caste."

To that, Bakht Singh replied, "I am worse than an out-caste because you cannot see the state of my heart. The Lord Jesus has told me that I am the greatest sinner."

When he said this, his sister became very angry and started to speak against Christ. His father asked Bakht Singh for his Urdu Bible, so he gave it to him. He began to read certain passages from the New Testament. "We sent for you to reprimand him, but you are preaching for Christ," the sister said to their father.

Their father replied, "You have no right to say anything against the Lord Jesus Christ because you do not know anything about Him. You can say what you want against your brother but do not say anything against Christ."³ They were all very surprised and the meeting came to a close.

The next day, Bakht Singh's father attended a church service. Afterwards, while they were walking in the street, Bakht Singh met a Sikh whom he had the privilege of bringing to Christ. This man related his experience to his father. His father said to him that when he had left his son in Bombay

he became unhappy and so went to see sadhus and sanyasis⁴ to ask them how to get peace. All of them, however, said that it was a difficult thing to achieve.

His father used to visit a well near Amritsar in Punjab which had 84 steps. It was believed that if someone said 84 prayers on one step one day then on the next step the following day and so on for 84 days, one would attain salvation. Bakht Singh's father did this, but he received no peace. One Sunday, his father happened to pass by a church in Lahore. The service was about to commence, so he went in and occupied a back seat. Just as the service began, he saw a great light and cried, "Oh Lord, Thou art my Saviour, too." When he had said this great peace filled his soul.

His father had a case against his partner who had swindled him. It lasted for about ten years and cost him a great deal of money, time and strength. However, when he was born again at the age of 72, Bakht Singh's father destroyed all the papers saying, "Thank God that He made me poor so that I could find Christ." After that, Bakht Singh had the joy of going to his home town of Sargodha many times and conducted several meetings in local churches. The hatred that his family once had against him was gone.

Before leaving Karachi, his father said to him, "You can come home whenever you want." So Bakht Singh went home. All his friends and relatives came to see him, but from morning till night they continued to reprove him. Although everyone had something negative to say, he kept quiet. Afterwards, his father said to him, "Why don't you give your testimony in the church?"

The Indian padre in the local church would not agree. He said, "You have so many relations and friends in this town it would be dangerous, as they are bound to create trouble." Then Bakht Singh responded, "I am prepared for everything."

Meetings were held in the newly built church build-

ing, and people of all classes came. There was hardly any room for the crowds either inside or outside. Bakht Singh then gave his testimony. After the meeting was over, many people gathered around him and said, "We want to ask you some questions," so Bakht Singh agreed. The first question was, "Does your religion allow you to disobey your parents? When your father had spent Rs. 25,000/- on your education, surely it was your duty to ask his consent before you became a Christian. Look at your father, he is broken-hearted. Do you call this love?" Bakht Singh was about to answer but his father spoke up. His father had a loud voice and said as loudly as he could, "I am not brokenhearted at all. Why do you drag my name into it? I am convinced that my son has real peace. Before you ask any more questions, I want to know whether there is anyone standing here who can say that he has eternal peace in him. I know that my son has real peace. Please come forward if you have. I will not allow anyone to ask these questions unless he has real peace." When the people heard this, they looked at Bakht Singh and his father and dispersed one by one.

The Lord's dealings with his parents and siblings:

Bakht Singh had a dream in October 1945. He was standing on the bank of a wide river and he saw his father standing on the other side. Then he saw his father swimming toward him. When he came near to where Bakht Singh was standing, he was out of breath, so he pulled his father out of the river. After this dream, Bakht Singh woke up and prayed, "Lord, tell me the meaning of the dream."

The Lord said to him "The time of your father's departure is near. He is not ready, go to him."

So he went to Punjab from Madras and asked his father, "Father, has the Lord in anyway spoken to you?"

His father said, "Yes, He has spoken to me to come to Madras and give my testimony and be baptized." He had been avoiding baptism for more than two years. He went to Madras in December 1945 and on a Sunday was baptized along with 45 other people. He gave his testimony, which was translated into two languages and lasted for three hours. Bakht Singh himself baptized him. That was one of the happiest days in Bakht Singh's life who, with a beaming smile, called his father "brother" as he baptized him.

A great change took place in his father. He came out of the water with a shining face and said, "I never knew that it is so wonderful to obey God like this." Thereafter, he sat for hours and talked with Bro. Nevaskar, Bro. Dorai Raj, and Bro. Rajamani about the truths related to the church.

The following Sunday, Bakht Singh told him, "You are an old man. You can't sit long in the meeting. Meetings will go on for five or six hours. We begin at 10:00 and end at 4:00; you come when you can and sit for a little while."

His father simply replied, "No, I want my full blessing: I will come at the beginning." Then Bakht Singh said, "Alright, we will give you a cushion and you can sit there." He did not want a cushion either, and repeated, "I want the full blessing." Bakht Singh asked if he wanted a chair, but he refused that also. Bakht Singh then told him that if he was hungry or thirsty he could go upstairs and find some food or drink. To that his father said that he did not want any food or drink. He sat in front of Bakht Singh for the entire six hours to take part in the whole meeting. He was so happy.

After the meeting was over there was open-air preaching, and he went with them for this to Tambaram. He had such joy through obedience to God's Word. Obedience brings new joy. Then, a few months after his baptism, Bakht Singh's father was called to Glory on July 3, 1946, while Bakht Singh was in Scotland.

His mother also came to know the Lord Jesus before she passed away. In 1964, when his mother was about 88, Bakht Singh went to see her. While he was with her she said to him, "My son, I don't regard you any more as my son only: you are my teacher: I am not ready. Please prepare me for my homecall. My time is near." Hearing this, Bakht Singh shared with her from the Scriptures how to be born again, to get ready to go to heaven. She prayed to receive the Lord Jesus as Saviour that day. Just before she passed away in 1965, Bakht Singh was at her bedside, and asked "Mother, your time is near, are you ready? Do you have peace?" With great peace shining on her face, she passed away.

Some of his siblings also received the Lord and were baptized. Others have great respect for the Lord, and hopefully, someday, they, too, will make a commitment to Him.

Bakht Singh resides at CMS facility in Karachi:

When his sister turned Bakht Singh out of her home, the Lord opened another door for him, providing him a room at the Christian Church compound CMS, Mission Road, near the civil hospital in Karachi. Psalm 27:10 says, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up." The Lord also provided for his meals through different sources, as he himself put it: "Breakfast in one place, lunch in one place, dinner in another place. Whoever invited me, I would go happily and eat what was given to me with thanksgiving."

Bakht Singh and his co-workers used to go out making contacts, selling gospel booklets and giving out tracts to people on the streets of Karachi in 1933. One day, Bakht Singh offered a gospel booklet to a man called Lekhraj, who said to Bakht Singh, "Why do you give us these tracts? Go to your own Christians and first of all change them." He went on to say also, "In which way are they better? We have no

peace, they have no peace; they smoke, we also smoke; we go to cinema, they go to cinema; they fight, we fight. How can you say you are better?" He also said, "Show me one real good Christian in the whole of Karachi and I will be a Christian today."

What a challenge! At that time there were more than 18,000 Christians in name in Karachi - 5,000 Protestants and 13,000 Catholics! How could Bakht Singh show him one real Christian in that extremely worldly place? That gave the burden of prayer to Bakht Singh. He used to fast and pray every Wednesday by the sea side. He used to pray like this, "Lord, that man gave the challenge and You give me the answer." Bakht Singh believed that his God had the answer: the Lord Jesus had not changed. It was during that period that Bakht Singh and a colleague started praying the whole night for the salvation of the nominal Christians in Karachi, and for other conditions in Punjab. They regularly prayed for two or three years like this until about 1937.

Bakht Singh began his work in Karachi with six annas. With that money he bought twelve gospel booklets. These he sold and with the proceeds bought some more. Soon he kept on buying and selling gospel booklets. If anyone wanted to know about Christ, he used to take him under the shade of a tree and tell him about the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Lord began to work wonderfully.

Extraordinary prayer brings extraordinary results:

Like his Master, Bakht Singh was a man of prayer. Before he did anything, he spent sufficient time in prayer. That was his spiritual principle throughout his life. Over the years, people who visited him and observed his work in India often asked the question, "Bakht Singh, what is the secret of success of your ministry?" His answer was simply, "Prayer." So the work in Karachi began with all night-prayer.

About those early days of prayer, one of his co-workers Raymond Golsworthy wrote:

"During those very early days I had the privilege of accompanying our brother to Karachi and sharing in weeks of morning and evening meetings at the large 'Anglican Church'. In spite of the very difficult situation there, God's anointing was very evidently on our brother, and large numbers were being challenged and blessed. Then, early one morning, brother said to me, 'Let us go and pray together down on the sea-shore.' I readily agreed and off we went. Brother seemed to be no stranger to the area, and he took me straight to a stretch of beach which seemed to be more or less unknown to others, and we immediately knelt down in the sand. It was the cold season in Karachi and, to this day I remember how the warmth of the sand was very welcoming and comforting. Then Bakht Singh began to pray, sometimes in English and sometimes in Urdu. I found myself sharing deeply in his burden as he spread out the need of the whole area before God, and pleaded for a merciful entrance of God's Light. Also, as the Holy Spirit moved, he remembered by name those countless individuals who had asked him to pray for certain, particular, personal needs. His intercessions were sometimes interspersed by pauses, and I had the sense that our brother was somehow 'watching God' and listening for His responses. I knelt along side our brother all through that day, occasionally praying myself and trying to express what was on my own heart at that time. It was, indeed, a day I shall never forget – and to God be the praise."⁴

Seeing his excitement and evangelistic fervour, the CMS church in Karachi licensed him to preach. He worked very closely with Rev. C.W. Haskell, a CMS missionary, and other national workers in Karachi, Quetta, and other places in Sindh and Punjab in 1934 and 1935.

There was a leper colony near Karachi called Mangopeer

where there was a hot-water spring. Nobody ever tried to evangelize these lepers. So Bakht Singh used to hire a bus and take all those sweepers and some other born-again people to do gospel work on Sunday afternoons. In those early days, Bakht Singh used to spend three weeks in Karachi for the gospel work in the streets and villages, and three weeks in Punjab for gospel meetings. All the literature and Bibles they had were soon gone. All the other workers were volunteers and those who were born-again joined him one by one.

Bakht Singh's first co-worker – Imam Din:

There was a man called Imam Din, a sweeper who worked for a missionary. In 1934, many were born-again among the sweepers and Imam Din was the first convert of Bakht Singh: he became his first co-worker.

One day he came to Bakht Singh and said, "The Lord is speaking to me to be your co-worker". He had been sweeping in the missionary bungalow where Bakht Singh used to take Bible studies in one corner of the verandah and he would be sweeping in another corner listening. One day Bakht Singh was taking the study of Acts 16:31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, thou shalt be saved and thine household." Through that the Lord spoke to him and he said that he wanted to be his co-worker. Imam Din really changed, but Bakht Singh kept on telling him to wait for a while.

On one occasion Bakht Singh asked him to take gospel booklets with him to sell. In those days, the gospel booklets were in different colours: green for Matthew, red for Mark, blue for Luke, and yellow for John. Bakht Singh repeated the same thing to him several times. Imam Din had a nice beard like the Moslems. One man who thought he was a Moslem convert because of his beard, asked him what he was before he became a Christian. He said, "Sir, I was a donkey."

"What do you mean? You mean to say all those who don't

know Christ are donkeys?" The man also said to him "Am I a donkey?"

Then Imam Din said, "Not you sir, only those who do not know the Lord, they are fools." The man was put to shame and bought four or five gospel booklets from him. Very simply Imam Din would walk into Moslem homes and Hindu temples to sell gospel booklets and share the Lord Jesus Christ. He was very simple yet fearless.

One day he came to Bakht Singh and said, "I have got some guests coming in so lend me an electric bulb." Bakht Singh gave him a bulb. At night he came back to Bakht Singh and said, "The bulb was no good. It did not work." He asked Bakht Singh to go and see. When he went, he saw the bulb hanging by a cord. He was very simple, but God spoke to him. He used to be a chain-smoker, but he gave up smoking completely and all the bad habits. He gave up his job, too, and began to trust God for everything. His whole family, his wife and his brothers, came to know the Lord Jesus through him.

Before long, Bakht Singh had a dozen such men: one by one they were born again and became his co-workers. They all looked to the Lord in faith for their every need. Whatever gifts the Lord gave him, Bakht Singh shared with them. Someone asked Bakht Singh if at any time he felt why God was not giving him more educated people as his co-workers. Bakht Singh replied that first he prayed, asking Him to give some graduates as his co-workers. Some graduates did come but there were no results. However, through these simple folk, Bakht Singh had openings among lepers, among village folks, in the streets and all over. Through it all, the Lord taught Bakht Singh simple faith and the burden of prayer.

When he first saw the condition of the lepers- how they were neglected and exploited for money, he was burdened to pray for them the whole night. The burden began when he

saw their spiritual barrenness. Bakht Singh said that something must be done among them. They were like the scum of society. As they prayed the whole night, the Lord began to work among them. People were healed both spiritually and physically. Many came out to serve the Lord.

Then the burden began to widen for Punjab and other places. Pastors and missionaries were greatly encouraged by seeing large numbers coming for meetings as never before. This also began to increase the membership of the local churches. For part of 1933, 1934, and 1935 he spent in Karachi and various parts of Sindh. They started going from village to village, places where no-one had ever gone before with the gospel. Many were born again in these villages, and were baptized only by sprinkling. They joined the CMS church.

Spiritual and physical healings:

Bakht Singh was very happy to see that many souls were turning to the Lord as He was working so mightily. Even though they were poor and belonged to the low caste, he felt one with them. He used to sit with them, eat with them and spend hours with them. When they were sick and needy, the Lord healed many people. That is how the work of healing began. These sweepers began requesting Bakht Singh to pray for their sickness. He had silently prayed that the Lord may give him the gift of healing, but he never told anybody about it or mentioned it in the meetings. They themselves began to invite him to pray for the sick among them. God healed them straightaway. Many were healed, but he never made this public. Years later he would ask the Lord to take that gift away as many were coming to be healed physically and not spiritually.⁶ This taught him simple faith because these sweepers had very simple faith. In fact, these born-again sweepers really trusted in the Lord, and their simple faith encouraged Bakht Singh also. Many of them would come for

the morning Bible study where he would teach them Bible stories. They would then go back to the slums and tell the same stories to the children and to the women folk. Thus through them, many were born again in different localities all over Karachi, Punjab, Jhansi and other places. Some of these born-again sweepers went to Methodist churches and some to CMS.

One of Bakht Singh's co-workers, Mr. Phinehas, was born and brought up in Quetta. He came to know the Lord Jesus as a teenager and became very zealous for his Lord. He came to Karachi and lived at Christ church compound as a member of the church. When Bakht Singh came to Karachi, Brother Phinehas came in contact with him and found something similar in him. He began to spend a lot of time with him. After some time, he resigned from the mission and became a fulltime evangelist, like Sadhu in Sindh Province. This province was the most backward and neglected part of Pakistan in those days, but this man of God never gave up. He continued to be a bold and powerful witness to all people, nominal Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. He made many visits to the Sindh area with Bakht Singh between 1933-42. There was an Anglo-Indian brother named Frank Wilson, who used to work at the railways in Karachi. He also worked with Bakht Singh in those early days.

As many sweepers were born again in Karachi, church attendance began to increase. Bakht Singh asked the pastor to enlarge their sanctuary, but was told that he did not have money to do so. So Bakht Singh raised the money and enlarged the annex to the CMS church in Karachi. Mr. Chandy, a customs officer originally from Kerala, also worked with Bakht Singh very closely from 1934 to 1936. Due to Bakht Singh's evangelistic activities, membership doubled and income more than doubled, but he received no co-operation in evangelism or for any spiritual work. Some women, however,

like Miss Carey, Miss Fitzroy and others, fully co-operated. At the end of 1936, Bakht Singh, along with Chandy and later on Phinehas, came out of CMS because they could not work under the system. From the middle of 1936 Bakht Singh began to work independently as an itinerant preacher without joining any society or denomination.

From suicide to salvation:

Bakht Singh was going through the Bazaar one day, and a young man was coming towards him. He tried to stop the stranger, but he would not stop. The more Bakht Singh urged him, the faster he walked. At last he said, "What do you want?"

Bakht Singh replied, "I am a Christian and the Lord has saved me. I want to tell you how I was saved."

The man responded, "I don't want your religion. I am sick of life and intend to commit suicide by jumping into the sea."

To this Bakht Singh urged, "Well why not wait until tomorrow. A few hours more or less won't make any difference."

To this suggestion he agreed, and Bakht Singh took him to a small park where he read some verses from the Bible to him. That young man said that he felt better and could wait till the next day. He wanted to know if he could see Bakht Singh again the next day. Bakht Singh agreed to meet him in the same park, and after a further chat, the man could commit suicide if he wanted. After the chat, however, he said he no longer desired to end his life: he now wanted to know more about the heavenly joy of which Bakht Singh had spoken. This is how the Lord, in a remarkable way led souls to him.

Early one morning at about 1:00 Bakht Singh was feeling very tired. As he went to bed, he heard a Voice saying to him, "Rise and go out." Bakht Singh answered that he was

tired and his legs were aching and he was feeling sleepy. But the Voice came again, "Arise and go out." With much grumbling, Bakht Singh put on his coat. In the pocket of his coat there were always tracts in various languages for the cosmopolitan peoples of Karachi. He went out and as soon as he did, he found two young men walking in front of him. He called them and said, "Please stop. I have something to tell you." When they came near, Bakht Singh told them how he was going to lie down, but the voice of God told him to go out, and that he felt that God had sent him out. They said that it must be God's voice because it was such an unusual hour to go out. They then asked Bakht Singh to give them the message. Bakht Singh opened the Bible and read some verses, then told them of his conversion. One of the men, by the name of Kulkarni, said, "I know God has sent you for my sake. I was unhappy and have longed for a Bible. Could you give me a Bible?" He bought a Bible and received the Lord Jesus Christ. What a joy for Bakht Singh to find these people with spiritual hunger in India!

Miracles of God's guidance: Miracle of speaking in Sindhi

By prayer, Bakht Singh again found out that he must go to a very small village about 155 miles from Karachi. He asked a friend to accompany him, and the two of them set out on the journey. The language of that province is Sindhi and Bakht Singh knew only a few words of colloquial Sindhi. It occurred to him that there were many Moslems who knew both Sindhi and Urdu, so he thought that perhaps he could find someone willing to translate for him. On arrival at the village, Bakht Singh asked to speak with someone who knew both Sindhi and Urdu. They were told that there was a Muslim who knew both languages, but when they enquired of his whereabouts, they

were told that he had died the previous night. Bakht Singh said that he was no good to them!

Then they asked God what they should do. Bakht Singh and his friend went together to the dry river bed and prayed for about two hours, at the end of which their clothes were full of sand. The Lord said to Bakht Singh, "I want you to go and speak in Sindhi."

Bakht Singh said, "Lord, how can I speak in Sindhi? I know only a few words."

But the Lord said, "Go and speak."

The two men then went into the village and gathered a small crowd. Bakht Singh told them that he regretted not knowing their language fluently, but when he started preaching, the thoughts and words came, and Bakht Singh did not know how. They could see God's skilful hand leading them.

The next morning, the Voice came again to him, "Cross the river and go to a village named Bano." They crossed the river in a boat and at about sunset, they came to the small village. They went to the village center where they both sold gospel booklets on different corners. A Moslem came and addressing them in angry tones, asked them, "Why have you come to this village? You Christians cannot preach about heaven here."

They told him that they had not come there by themselves, but were sent by God. They had heard the Voice of God and had come to give God's message. They said that they were not missionaries, but had only brought God's message. Then he enquired as to where they were staying. Bakht Singh told him that they were to stay where they were standing. This Moslem man then asked about their food. Bakht Singh replied that they did not know. The Moslem man invited them to stay in his house and he would invite the people to hear God's message. He even offered to translate for him. Bakht Singh thought that he might be trying to snare them,

so he prayed and God told them not to be afraid but to go with him. The man had a large compound around his house, and, after giving them food, he brought chairs out into the compound and sent his servants to call the villagers. The headman of the village translated the message.

After Bakht Singh had finished the closing prayer and all the people had gone home, a Moslem policeman came up and said, "Could I have a quiet talk with you? I have been waiting for more than five years for someone to come and explain to me about the Lord Jesus Christ. Somebody gave me a Gospel of Luke which I have read many times. I cannot understand it. I am so thankful you have come to my village." For hours that night the man sat and listened to every word and afterwards bought a copy of the Bible in Urdu.

Crucible of Testing:

Bakht Singh and his friends travelled to many villages of the lonely desert of Sindh where no missionary had ever gone to preach the gospel. What a joy it was to travel those narrow roads and visit those tiny villages, even though they had to experience many hardships. After walking thirty miles from Bano, they entered one of these small villages and, feeling very hungry, they went to the village bazaar. However, none of the shop-keepers would sell to them rice or wheat at any price because they were Christians. With much difficulty, they were able to get some red rice flour which they made into two big chapattis (Indian type of bread made of wheat), but they had nothing else to eat with that. After asking the shopkeeper he gave them some ghee (melted butter) which contained sand and grit, and is usually given to camels and donkeys. He gave it only to test them. So with the red chapattis and gritty ghee they prepared to walk another ten miles. And even though it contained sand, they enjoyed every bit of it because they were very hungry.

Bakht Singh and his colleague went to another village and prayed, "Lord, if there is a Christian here, please lead us to him." A little village boy offered to take them to the house of a Christian. They met the Christian and he gave them some food to eat. They told him that God had sent them there to tell the gospel. He accompanied them and they conducted a meeting in front of a Hindu temple. Although they walked over thirty miles, they were greatly burdened and after a word of prayer, they gave God's message. They did not know how many Bibles were sold that day, but many people came to buy them. Remember all these plans were given to them by prayer, day by day.

From there they went by prayer to another small village called Joishai, inhabited by men who work on stones. In one night quite a number of people came to the Lord as He began to draw them to Himself.

God opened the door to many parts of Sindh. One by one they visited the province of Sindh. These are the most barren in India for missionary work, and for 70 years no work had been done there. Only about 20 Sindhis had become Christians, but some had gone back to their old religion. It was in this barren region that the Lord led Bakht Singh with the skill of His hand. They spent hours and hours walking in the streets of Karachi, Hyderabad (Sindh) and other towns. Bakht Singh knew that the Lord was preparing and teaching him through these hardships. These experiences became his joy.

Later on they came to Chikarpal. Early one morning he heard a Voice telling him to send someone to a neighboring place called Jak Baar, which is a small town on the way from Quetta to North India. The Lord told him to send someone with an Urdu Bible to that village. Bakht Singh then called his friends and instructed them to go to the village, and be sure to take Urdu Bibles. They said that it was a Sindhi vil-

lage and doubted if anyone would know Urdu. Bakht Singh said that he did not know, but that was the Lord's desire.

That morning, they started for the village and took a small box of books. They left their box of books somewhere and went walking in the Bazaar to sell the gospel booklets. They had only gone a few yards when they met a young man named, Mohammed Hussein, who asked them for an Urdu Bible. They told him that they had some in their box somewhere else, and if he would wait they would bring it. He enquired about the price, paid them and took them to the hotel where he entertained them with cakes and tea, as his way of thanking them. The same man later came to Bakht Singh and told him that he was a carpet merchant who had visited Sindh for business purposes. He had been waiting for an Urdu Bible for many years and was so happy that one was now available. He came to thank Bakht Singh, stayed for two days, and came to the Lord Jesus Christ. He was baptized in Allahabad some time later. God leads by His skilful hand. Bakht Singh was sure that God would never leave anyone alone. He will lead us day by day. They proved Him in so many ways.

Quetta earthquake:

The Lord opened many doors for Bakht Singh to preach His message and teach from His Word in different parts of colonial India. In keeping with His promise, God led him step by step as he remained committed to the Lord. For example, the Lord opened a door for him through an Irish believer named, Mr. Loughheed, a British military officer who was converted to Christ in Australia. In December, 1933, he came to Karachi. His host had arranged a meeting for him among the Punjabi sweepers in one of the slums of Karachi, so he was looking for an interpreter. Bakht Singh offered to interpret for him as he knew Punjabi, which was a local lan-

guage. When they reached the meeting, to their dismay, they discovered that no-one came: they had all gone to attend a wedding instead. Mr. Loughheed was very disappointed. But God's over- ruling hand was there in cancelling that meeting. As the two men walked back together, they shared their experiences and became very close friends in the Lord. The Lord used this friendship for future meetings both in Quetta and later on in Poona and other places. In 1934, when Mr. Loughheed was serving in the military at Quetta, he invited Bakht Singh for a gospel campaign. Thus Bakht Singh was in Quetta for 19 days as his guest. Meetings were arranged through the CMS church, and the Lord used Bakht Singh for the salvation of many during that time.

Then in May 1935, Mr. Loughheed again invited him to Quetta. He had a burden for the people there because it was like Sodom and Gomorrah. As Bakht Singh had several pressing invitations from different parts of Punjab and South India for gospel meetings, he was reluctant to go to Quetta because he had already been there for nineteen days in the previous year. He thought it would be more profitable to go to some other place. But as he prayed, the Lord kept on saying to him, "You go back to Quetta." The Lord's ways are always higher than our ways; our safety is to be in His will.

The more he prayed, the more peace he had from the Lord to go back to Quetta for gospel meetings. To his surprise, he found that they had arranged special meetings in the military church building. That was the first and the last time they ever had revival meetings in a military building in Quetta. They arranged meetings during the first week for Indians and the second week for the British soldiers. The Lord began to work mightily. People came from different places, and as there were no buses, they had to come on foot or by horse cart. Even though the fare was expensive for some, large numbers came for every meeting. He began the cam-

paign on the 4th of May, 1935. Bakht Singh was greatly burdened by the spiritually luke- warm condition of the people who were complacent and worldly. Quetta truly resembled Sodom and Gomorrah.

Then an earthquake occurred on the 31st of May, 1935 at 3:00 in the morning. An estimated fifty-eight thousand people were killed in eighteen seconds. They had quite a big gathering the night of the earthquake. In his preaching Bakht Singh had urged the people that God wanted them to come to Him, and that those who wished to respond and be saved should remain behind for prayer. Fifty-eight people one by one, prayed with great conviction, repenting and asking God to forgive them. A little after midnight, Bakht Singh was in his tent feeling worn out, but he could not sleep. The Lord told him to pray for those who went away without finding salvation. Again Bakht Singh knelt down and began to pray, "Lord, wilt Thou wake them and shake them. Shake them until they kneel down. Those still in their sins, wake them and shake them." At about 3:00 in the morning Bakht Singh was assured that God had heard his prayer and he had peace.

The earthquake occurred at 3:00, just as if somebody came and shook the whole place. Bakht Singh thought that it was not an earthquake but God answering his prayer and shaking the people. His friend next door was actually thrown from his bed. Men and women were crying and shouting, but Bakht Singh stayed on his knees.

After half an hour, his friend came into his tent and told him that there had been a terrible earthquake. The walls of the neighbours' houses had cracked and everything had fallen down. However, nothing had happened to the tent where Bakht Singh was staying. He asked his friend to join him in prayer and they continued in prayer until 5:00 in the morning. They told the Lord that they did not know what had happened, but asked Him to save the souls of those who de-

sired to be saved. Then they went out to see the damage. All the buildings, mud, stone and brick had crumbled and were in heaps. It was a very sad sight with people hanging heads downwards, some with legs and arms cut off. Among non-Christians ninety five percent were killed and among Christians, only eight. Bakht Singh himself went round and took stock. Out of those who had come to the meetings, only two were killed. Among the non-Christians, many had their legs, arms and backbones fractured, but among the people who came to the meetings there was not a single fracture. That is how the Lord watches over His children.

Bakht Singh and his friends stayed there for about two weeks, going about giving out gospel booklets and doing rescue work. Those who escaped had to live in filthy grain store-rooms with nothing to eat, no shop to go to and no clothes to wear. They had to use any old blanket to cover the children but some had none. Bakht Singh prayed, "Lord, will You not give us at least four or five old blankets for these poor children?" The next morning Bakht Singh met a man named Mr. Evans, a military chaplain, who asked him if he wanted some blankets as he could help him to get some. Some military people had sent him brand new blankets and Bakht Singh could take as many as he wanted, so he took seventy-two. He asked for only four or five, but God gave him seventy-two blankets – and they were all woolen blankets.

One evening, Bakht Singh saw a mother with her child who was crying very bitterly. She told Bakht Singh that the child wanted milk, but it was too late to get any and there were no shops. Bakht Singh prayed, "Lord, that child is asking for milk, tell me where to go."

The Lord said, "Go in that direction."

Bakht Singh went in the direction indicated. He met a person named Dr. Oliver, who asked him if he would like to have some milk as there was a good quantity in the hospital.

Bakht Singh asked the Lord for one cup, and He gave him a gallon of milk.

A lady came to Bakht Singh the next morning. She was crying and told him that she was very hungry and had nothing to eat, could he give her something. Bakht Singh told her that the Lord could supply her need and prayed, asking for food for the lady. The Lord told Bakht Singh to go in a certain direction; when he went, he found as much food as he required in a tent. Thus the Lord supplied the lady's need.

In Quetta, Bakht Singh used to go out in the evening, helping people in need. One day, he met a lady looking very sad and she told him, "Brother, what can I do? Here is my small girl (about six or seven years old) and she has no clothing."

Bakht Singh told her that he would help her, and then he prayed. "Lord, this lady has no clothing for her daughter. What should I do?"

He heard a Voice telling him to go in one direction. Bakht Singh walked in the direction he was told by the Lord and crossed the railway track where a lady, Miss Franklin, was coming towards him. She was working among British soldiers and their families. She had some parcels with her and said to Bakht Singh, "Brother, do you want some clothes for children?"

Bakht Singh felt that one parcel was meant for him, so he took it. Without opening the parcel, he gave it to that lady, telling that it was for her daughter. When she opened it, she found clothes and shoes the exact size for the young girl. Bakht Singh then knew that God was looking after them.

On another occasion, in Karachi, a man came to Bakht Singh in the year 1936 and told him that he had no money to pay his house rent. Bakht Singh invited him to sit down and he would pray for him. He went into his room and prayed, "Lord, this man has no money; what to do now?"

The Lord said to Bakht Singh, "You have 12 rupees in your suitcase, give it to him."

Bakht Singh knew that he had 12 rupees which he was keeping for his train fare to Ajmer, where he was invited to a convention. He had to leave after two days, so he said to the Lord, "I must go to Ajmer, how can I give this away to this man?"

The Lord said to him, "This is My money and not your money."

So Bakht Singh took that money and gave it to him: it was exactly what he needed, 12 rupees. The man was very happy.

The day came when Bakht Singh had to go to Ajmer. He was not sure what to do or where to go. At first he thought that he would go to his sister and look very sad, and then she would ask what was the matter. Bakht Singh thought that he would then say that he had to go to Ajmer. She would then give him the money to go there, but the Lord did not allow him to do that. Then a second thought came to him - he would send a telegram saying that he was sorry that he could not go to Ajmer. The Lord however, reminded him that he had promised to go, therefore he should go. The Lord did not allow him to go to any one or cancel the plan.

By faith, Bakht Singh packed his suitcase and went to the railway station without having any money. He then went and stood in line at the booking office. As he was waiting, a man came to him and asked, "Are you Mr. Bakht Singh?"

Bakht Singh answered, "Yes."

The man gave him a cover and said that it was for him: then he went away. When he opened the cover, it contained exactly 12 rupees. Bakht Singh did not know who the man was. He disappeared before Bakht Singh could thank him.

Once, in 1935, while in Karachi, Bakht Singh was praying and asking the Lord where to go that morning for an

open-air preaching session. The Lord told him to go to Soldier Bazaar. Bakht Singh called his friend and told him that the Lord wanted him to go to Soldier Bazaar. Bakht Singh always took somebody with him. The friend said that it was very hot and they could go the next morning. Bakht Singh, however, said that they should go immediately because someone was waiting for the gospel. A team of six or seven walked about three miles to Soldier Bazaar. They stopped near a shop where they stood, sang a song and began to speak. The shop owner said, "I am a Moslem. This is my shop and I cannot allow you to speak here."

Bakht Singh said that they would not force him, but warned him, "On judgment day, you must give account to God. Someone came to your door and you refused the gospel."

The team moved to the next place where they started to sing and preach. A policeman came and said, "This is a police station, you cannot preach here."

Then Bakht Singh thought, "The Lord said to go to Soldier Bazaar. Where is the Soldier Bazaar?"

The Lord told them to go further. They went near a Hindu Temple and the Lord said, "You stop here."

They stopped, stood there and sang songs. Bakht Singh gave the message and then prayed. A man by the name of Amarnath came running from the Temple. He said, "God has sent you for my sake. My name is Amarnath. I am a graduate from Punjab University. I have been going about in search of peace for four years. I still have no peace. Kindly help me. I have tried many places, longing to see good Christians, but do not know where they are and how to search for them. When you were singing, I felt in my spirit that you had something for me." He went with them, got a Hindi Bible and soon was born again.

From that time on, Bakht Singh only decided where to

go, when to go and how long to go by prayer and waiting upon God. These incidents remind us of the accounts in the Acts of the Apostles. For example, Paul was being led where to go as well as Philip, Peter and others. In short, the works of the Holy Spirit and miracles are not over – they continue. He is here to guide His people to assist the Lord in building His Church according to His divine plan and purpose, and thus prepare a Bride for the Eternal Bridegroom. We shall see in the following chapter how the Lord used Bakht Singh to bring about mighty revivals both in North and South India.

End Notes

¹Bakht Singh had three sisters and five brothers – Parvathi, Elder to Bakht Singh was married to a business man and they were well placed in life. His younger sister, Rani Devi, was also married to a well-to-do business man.

Amar Nath retired as a military captain - Sri Chand, after holding high office in the federal Government, retired as President of New Delhi Municipal Committee and received Padma bhushan, for recognition of his meritorious service to the Federal Government.

Another brother, Pran Nath, also was well placed in life and retired as an executive with Atlas Co. Another brother, Harbans Lal, was foreman in the army vehicle workshop. His youngest sister, Raj Rani, married and her husband retired as joint secretary to the Government of India. His youngest brother, Inder Raj, a business man, is now living in Delhi. The Lord blessed all his siblings and their families. They all came to respect and honour Bakht Singh for his commitment to Christ and his service for Him. They were very proud of him being a mighty instrument in God's hand to accomplish His purpose.

²Author's interview with Bakht Singh, 1978.

³Bakht Singh, *How I Got Joy Unspeakable And Full Of Glory*, p. 16.

⁴*Sadhus* and *Sanyasis* are Hindu priests.

⁵Raymond Golsworthy, "He Taught Us To Pray," *Special Edition Of The Hebron Messenger*, Sept. 2000.

⁶Author's interview with Bakht Singh, 1978.

Chapter 7

The Place of Glory: Martinpur and Beyond

"Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things." (Joel 2:21)

True Biblical revival is the work of God and not of man, though God uses men and women to accomplish His purposes. There are prerequisites to revivals—agonizing, prevailing, consistent prayer, a renewed hunger—for the study of the Word of God, implicit faith in the Lord, and total obedience to do the will of God.

These were very evident in the life and ministry of Bakht Singh. He and his team members would spend days and weeks in prayer. He was a chosen vessel of God, whom God used in unprecedented ways in the history of the Church in India to bring about revival that swept across the country for about ten years.

When the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ loses her life and spiritual vitality, Christ, the Head of the Church revives His people through chosen instruments. God is the author of revival. True New Testament revival is when the heart of God touches the heart of man by the power of the Holy Spirit

as man truly repents in brokenness and in ashes and rejoices in the mercy and forgiveness of God. Such men and women hate sin and love God – where the life of God flows freely for all to see. That is true revival.

From 1936 onwards, the Lord brought about mighty revivals in many villages, towns and cities. From the north of India, Punjab (now part of Pakistan) to Kerala in the south, the fire of revival broke out and spread to more than 70 places in the course of ten years. Tens of thousands turned to the living God. India had never experienced such a mighty revival before, and has not since. In a way, the Lord began answering the prayers of many of His servants who loved and prayed for the people of India, such as Praying Hyde, in the North, Lady Ogle from England, Amy Carmichael, Pandita Ramabai and many others both in India and abroad. At the turn of the century, a company of missionaries met together at a Southern Hill station, Kodaikanal, and decided that the time had come to pray definitely for a ministry to awaken the Indian Church. They issued a prayer circular and sent it to Britain, America and Australia to mobilize believers for intercession.

A prayer movement began and gathered strength. John Hyde, from his arrival in India in 1892, devoted himself more and more to intercessory prayer. Praying Hyde, with a group of friends, spent days and nights in prayer for an awakening throughout India, in all its provinces.¹

In January 1936, when Bakht Singh was only 32 years old, he was invited to conduct a small camp in a place called Pathankot in Punjab just north of Amritsar. After taking five meetings a day, he went to his room feeling very tired, too tired to pray. He wanted to lie down and sleep. After about an hour or so just after midnight, he heard a knock on the door and a Voice. He wondered who was knocking on the door at that late hour and asked who was there. There was

no reply- only a second and a third knock. Then the Voice said, "Get up and pray." But he could not pray, he felt so tired and drowsy. Sitting on his bed, he said, "Lord, have mercy upon these people." This happened for four or five consecutive nights. He could not sleep for five nights and spent time in prayer asking the Lord to have mercy on the people. On the sixth afternoon, a Sunday, he took charge of the meetings held in an American Presbyterian Church. Before the people left at the end of the Sunday service in the afternoon, Bakht Singh told the people to come back for the evening meeting. Usually, very few people would come for the evening meeting, a lot less than for the morning service. That evening they all came back. Then he said, "If anybody wants to give a testimony, please feel free to share."

One young girl of nine or ten years, stood up and gave a very clear testimony, saying how the Lord Jesus Christ had forgiven her sins and given her grace to repent. She went on to say that she believed the Lord Jesus Christ had forgiven her sins. She also put things right by asking forgiveness of teachers and fellow-students, and now she had found true peace. More than ten girls stood up and shared their testimony.

There was a boarding school nearby and one teacher by the name of Miss Massey got up. She said, "It is too good to be true. Please pray for me." As they were sharing testimonies, Bakht Singh continued praying for them, saying- "Lord, have mercy upon these people. The work You have begun, may it continue."

Suddenly, Bakht Singh heard a sound like somebody whipping people. The entire congregation began to weep, and continued weeping. Bakht Singh opened his eyes and saw people falling on the floor under the benches, crying and trembling, some rolling on the ground saying, "Lord, have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me."

This went on for about three to four hours. Bakht Singh then asked all those who were born again to raise their hands. Many hands went up. Bakht Singh then said, "We won't close the meeting until all are given an opportunity to repent of their sins and be born again."

This went on until 2.0' clock in the morning. The meeting lasted for 10 hours until all were born again. They had a similar experience in Pathankot at the beginning of September the same year.

In June, 1936, at the Presbyterian Mission Middle School, in Sangla Hill, the Lord moved in unusual power among both the students and teachers. Sangla Hill is 50 miles from Lahore in the district of Sheikhpura. Bakht Singh was the guest of Miss Jameson, a British missionary who at that time was in charge of the School. Bakht Singh was there for several days. Miss Jameson wanted to observe his life-style. Whenever she checked on him, she found him praying on his knees. She told other members of the staff that whenever she saw him, he was praying on his knees. (Bakht Singh's life was a challenge and inspiration to Miss Jameson, and her spiritual life was greatly revived and strengthened).²

When Bakht Singh was invited to conduct meetings for the girls at the middle school at Sangla Hill, he was apprehensive because he had no experience in conducting meetings for children. He had spent most of his time in open-air work on the streets of Karachi and other parts of Sindh, primarily among sweepers. He was more used to preaching in the open than to conducting meetings in schools, in public buildings and churches. However, after repeated requests, he decided to conduct children's meetings. He prayed for the campaign to be held, for he knew that unless he prayed there would be no spiritual results. Bakht Singh and two colleagues went for the campaign and spent much time in prayer—sometimes whole night.

Before the meetings began, Bakht Singh asked Miss Jameson, who was in charge of the school, not to allow children under 10 years of age to attend any meeting because it might be too long for the little girls who would feel tired and restless. Meetings were primarily meant for the older school girls and the teachers. The meetings were held every evening in the school hall but nothing worth-while happened. They did not feel conscious of any response, either from the girls or the teachers. He was not sure whether they were born again or not. That gave them a greater burden for prayer.

One afternoon during the campaign, the headmistress, Miss Lal, walked around the compound on inspection and found a group of small girls of less than 10 years, all on their knees in a small room. One girl was sobbing. When questioned, she said that God was showing her sins, which were terrible sins to her, and she wanted to be forgiven by God. On hearing this, the headmistress returned to the hall where the meetings were held. During the meeting, when Bakht Singh asked if any-one would like to testify, the headmistress related the incident of the young girl and said that God had rebuked her through it. That girl was far more concerned about her salvation and was anxious to be saved, but here she was, the headmistress, and did not have the least thought of her salvation, and was wasting her life. When she had said this, she broke down and wept. Some girls cried too: even the hard-hearted ones wept.

A total of twelve girls were from Martinpur, a village located about 20 miles from Sangla Hill, studying at the school. One of these girls, named Hamida, stood up and confessed that she was very wicked. She had now repented, and asked the others to pray that the Lord would forgive her. In the same way, other girls confessed their sins and prayed for forgiveness. Hamida went on to say that she had come from a very wicked village called Martinpur, and requested

everyone to pray for that village. That afternoon, all of them prayed for Martinpur. That was the first time Bakht Singh had heard the name Martinpur. He did not know where it was, so he asked their teachers. He was told that it was a Christian village about 20 miles from the school, where there was strife, quarrelling and sin. He asked if he could accompany the girls on their return to the village. He did so and obtained more information about the village. He was very shocked to learn that there could be so much sin among Christians.

Revival in Martinpur: Fire falls from above

In June of 1937, Bakht Singh was invited to conduct meetings for a week in a village called Youngsonabad, one-and-half miles from Martinpur. Both Youngsonabad and Martinpur were known as Christian villages. Youngsonabad was established by a Scottish Presbyterian Missionary named Mr. Youngson, and Martinpur was established by Samuel Martin of the American United Presbyterian Church. Most of the converts were the result of a mass conversion of low-caste idol-worshippers in the early 1900s during a time of great famine. Very few Muslims, Sikhs or caste Hindus had been converted. The two foreign missions helped these people, not only spiritually, but by opening schools, colleges, and hospitals to aid them educationally, socially and economically.

In the early 1900s, the British Government was trying to develop large tracks of waste land in Punjab, India. Dr. Samuel Martin, who was greatly concerned about the temporal needs of these poor converts from the Sialkot area, approached the government and arranged for the land to be allotted to 70 families, on condition that they would migrate to these waste-lands, develop it for agriculture, and build villages and towns. The government, for its part,

helped the new settlers by digging a good canal system for irrigation.

These families migrated from the districts of Sialkot, Gurdaspur and Gurjanwala, and settled down in their new village, which was named Martinpur in honour of Dr. Samuel Martin. By the 1930s, as materialism and worldliness began to influence the villagers, (who, like the Israelites had forgotten the God of their fathers), jealousy, hatred and immorality became the way of life in these villages.

"When the Chenab Canal was opened (1887) and our Mission applied to the government on behalf of our Christian farmers, that they might share in the distribution of land, Dr. Samuel Martin was appointed the Mission's agent, and through his efforts, a track of land was given to him for the Christians. This bordered on our Mission district of Sheikhpura. On this land were settled about 400 Christians. The different Mission districts gave of their best men, those who could supply the oxen and other things necessary for taking a piece of land, building a house on it, having enough to live on until a harvest could be produced, and work on the land according to government requirements.

Each of the 70 families were given some land as a means of livelihood, where the families did the farming and supported themselves. Compared to many Christians in other places in Punjab, the Christians in Youngsonabad and Martinpur were fairly well-to-do, due to their farming and income.

An evangelist was stationed there to care for this Christian community. Later, a congregation was organized and a pastor, Kathu Mall, was called and supported by the people. Schools for boys and girls were opened very early in the history of the village, and for all these 43 years, the work has been carefully fostered by the Mission. Today we have co-education in the village, with both men and women on the teaching staff, and an enrollment of 360 boys and girls.

By the nineteen-thirties, many of these second and third-generation Christians forgot the God of their fathers and had become very carnal, immoral, worldly and materialistic. They had a form of religion, but denying the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5).”³

A few people from Martinpur attended the meetings in Youngsonabad, who invited Bakht Singh to come to Martinpur. He refused however, saying he was too hesitant to go where there was the kidnapping of girls, the selling of liquor, men having two and three wives without the least conviction of sin as well as numerous court cases. Moreover, in Martinpur, there were three groups among the Christians. One was against the pastor; another was in support of the pastor, while the third was neutral. Compelled by the allegations against Pastor S.L. Joseph, the majority of the villagers were also opposed to the headmaster, Mr. Jacob, of the village middle school, and demanded his removal. The whole village was in turmoil.

Such a situation required handling by a stronger and older person who had more experience, whereas Bakht Singh was young (34). Everyday they pressed him to come to Martinpur. Finally he agreed to go on one condition- he could stay in Youngsonabad, have the meetings in Martinpur, then return to Youngsonabad at night because he had no desire to spend the night there. Finally they agreed.

Lal Din, who was converted to Christ during the revival in June, 1937, wrote the following about his own condition in Martinpur:

“My father, who was a muslim for some benefit, had declared himself a Christian. But I did not even believe that there was a God. I only thought of eating, drinking, and enjoying myself. I said, ‘Who knows what comes after death?’ The village in which I was brought up was a Christian village. When I was in the village I professed to be a Christian,

but outside, I said I was a Moslem. My father's people were Moslems. There was a Mission working in my home village, in which was a Christian church. I was full of pride, and not believing what the pastor had to say, I joined the party in the village which was against the pastor. We organized to fight the Mission and the pastor. I was made the vice-president of this organization. My work was to harass the Christians. My manner of life made me jealous of those who had found peace with God. I did not know what Christianity was. I did not know what religion was. To me, life consisted of eating, drinking and enjoyment. Who knew anything of what happened after death?

I used to get the children of the village to throw stones on the house of the missionary and pastor. On one occasion I caught the pastor and beat him with my shoe."⁴ (In India, the meanest and most humiliating thing that you can do to anyone is to beat him with your shoe.)

While Bakht Singh was travelling to the village, he saw four to five elderly people sitting under a tree smoking (hubble bubble). Mr. Jacob, then headmaster of the UP Mission School in Martinpur, was also among them. They called him and said sarcastically, "Who are you, and why have you come here?"

Bakht Singh said that he had just come to pray for the people of Martinpur.

They said, "Pray? You pray the whole night, nothing will happen here. Many have come and gone. Don't waste your time." That was a real challenge to him.

When he arrived, the local pastor, Rev. Sohan Lal Joseph, welcomed Bakht Singh. Because of the good response to attend the meetings, these were held in a school compound where a large number had gathered. Many of the people were not the least interested in hearing the message. Even while the meeting was in progress, some were smoking, laughing,

mocking and joking: small groups of people were scattered all over the place chatting and laughing. It was difficult to control them and even to ask them to remain quiet. Bakht Singh did not know what to do- a good crowd but no interest in the message. He had never seen such opposition and ridicule in his ministry before.

From the 4th to the 8th of June, he agonized in prayer. Bakht Singh could not sleep even for one night as he fasted and prayed. He did not talk to anyone; he only asked God to have mercy on the people.

Bakht Singh had preached on the story of Lazarus in John ch. 11. Lazarus had been dead for four days. He was smelling. Then he said, "How many years have you been dead? How badly do you smell? May be 20 years, 30 years or even 40 years you have been dead."

On the 14th night, Bakht Singh told the people that that was to be his last meeting as he was going away the next day. Then he said, "Will you please stand for prayer." All got up to pray. While he was praying, one man standing in front of him fell down. Bakht Singh thought that he had been stung by a scorpion. Almost immediately, a second man fell down, then a third and a fourth. Soon all the people started to roll on the ground, pulling their hair, beating their chest and crying out, "Oh Lord, have mercy on me: I am a great sinner." This continued for 4-5 hours. One of the elders came running and said to him, "Please stop this."

Bakht Singh said, "I did not start it."

The people wept and wept until 3 a.m. repenting of their sins. That night, some people actually saw the fire of God falling. A man who was watering his field said that he saw a ball of fire falling to the earth. Men were thrown on the ground. Some in great agony and true repentance cried bitterly, throwing dust on themselves and cutting themselves

with stones and pleading with the Lord for mercy. There were more than 1500 people at that meeting.

Both the village pastor and the headmaster were among those who repented and trusted in the Lord Jesus for salvation. The voice of forgiveness soon echoed throughout the village instead of the voice of fighting.

A leading elder of the congregation, who was very much opposed to Bakht Singh, was in a field taking care of his sheep when he saw fire falling from heaven on the village. He left the field and came to the meeting without delay. He also repented and accepted the Lord as his saviour. He then put things right with Bakht Singh. That working of God went on for the whole week. Conviction among the people was such that they went from house to house, from person to person, reconciling with each other. During those days people were burdened with prayer and many could be seen kneeling and praying all over the village, as well as in the fields. The men who had been smoking, "Huka – Huble – Buble"⁵ and had mocked Bakht Singh when he first came to the village were also convicted; they broke their "Huka" and burned them.⁶ They organized a procession and then spent a whole night in prayer and worship.

Bakht Singh suggested that they have a thanksgiving service and love feast. People joyfully brought of their substance and there was no lack. Some gave their ornaments; some their chickens; others their goats or grain, etc. Over three thousand people came to the thanksgiving service followed by the love feast. The whole village turned into a village of love, life and peace. During the procession, the cheering crowd adorned Bakht Singh with garlands of sweets and red roses. He stayed on for several weeks in Martinpur, conducting morning Bible studies and special meetings in the evenings. Almost everyone in the village came to know the Lord Jesus. The villagers even had a bonfire, burning every-

thing that was not of God. It was like the account in Acts chapter 19.

The following is an account of Sister Ulfat Chamar Lall. She was born on November 15th 1921, and her parents were members of the United Presbyterian Church. She was born again in June, 1937, at the revival. According to her, Mr. Hari Lall and Hira Lall invited Bakht Singh to Martinpur for the meetings. When the revival broke out, she was away at school. She came home for the week-end and attended the Sunday service where she saw girls sitting in the front singing and praising the Lord, by clapping their hands. At first she was put off, saying, how could they do such a thing, girls clapping and singing. She went to the evening service where Bakht Singh spoke on the cross and the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. He quoted the words of the Lord Jesus - "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do." While he was preaching, she said, "I saw my sins. I saw Christ coming down from the cross toward me with His heart in His hand. I started crying, repenting of my sins." She went forward that evening and received the Lord Jesus Christ as her Saviour and Lord.

Her husband, who was the headman of Martinpur, came to know the Lord Jesus in 1938, and worked closely with Bakht Singh until his death in 1990. They have continued to be very actively involved in the local assembly and the Lord's work, both in Martinpur and other parts of Pakistan.

The following is the eye witness report of Lal Din, who terrorized the village before his conversion during those special meetings:

"In June, 1937, I had taken leave from the army and was at my home. The Christians were holding meetings in the church of that village. I also attended some of the meetings. On the 11th of June they were having a meeting in the morning. Around 9 o'clock, a friend of mine and I went to

the building. Inside, there was a nice carpet to sit on. It was the custom for everyone to sit on the floor there. The Christians would all leave their shoes and sandals on the verandah outside and enter in with bare feet to worship God. But my heart was still filled with pride, and so, being too proud to enter inside and sit on the floor with others of the village, [I]sat on the verandah wearing my shoes. The Christians were singing songs in their own native tongue called 'Punjabi'. (They love to sing, and the music thrills one to hear. It makes one feel like dancing with joy). My friend and I had planned to leave before the meeting was over, so no-one would know that we had been listening. But between 10 and 11 o' clock, a Voice said to me, 'Enter the building.' I refused, but my body began to tremble. Again, the Voice said to me, 'Enter the building'. I could not understand why this Voice kept speaking and forcing me to go inside. I finally told my friend that something was forcing me to go inside. He only laughed at me and said, 'Our plan is to leave before the meeting is over so no one will know we have been here. How can you go inside?'

"A third time that Voice came to me, and this time with great force. My body began to shake harder and a commanding Voice said to me, 'Enter the building'. Then a power lifted me up and forced me inside. That was not of my own power or strength. I would have never gone inside of myself. But that power forced me in, and it was not in my power to resist. I walked about halfway through the building when I saw a great light at the front of the building. I fell down on my face before that light and began crying out to God shamelessly. The sins of my whole life seemed to pass before me. The light of God burned into my heart and brought before me all my sinful past until I was forced to cry out for mercy. My hands were clasped together in the manner of my people, which shows a humble spirit. I was crying out without shame,

'Lord Jesus Christ, Thou art the Saviour and I am the sinner. Hast Thou any place for me?'

"A soft, calm voice as from one standing beside me answered, 'I shed My blood on the cross for the remission of your sins. Accept Me as your personal Saviour.'

"Without any shame, I accepted. I said, 'Lord, I accept Thee as my personal Saviour. Thou didst die for me. Thou wast buried for me, rose again and went to heaven and are coming again for me'. Then the same Voice spoke again to me saying, 'If you really are sincere, ask the pastor's forgiveness.'

"The pastor was the man I had beaten with my shoe, and I promised myself that if I meet him again I would beat him. I had been the cause of much trouble to this pastor. But, by the grace of God, I was humbled and asked the pastor's forgiveness. He was so overcome when I asked him to forgive me, he began to cry like a child. From all over the building, people began to cry and confess their sins, asking forgiveness one of another. There were nearly two thousand so-called born-again Christians gathered there. Some mighty power took control of that building and ... 'The Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon all of them.' (Rev 11:11)

"John 16:8, 'When he (The Holy Spirit) is come, he will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.' The Holy Spirit was in that meeting and the confession of sin and asking of forgiveness continued for nearly two hours. The whole building was controlled by some mighty power. No-one went out, not even for food, but all kept crying to God for cleansing, for forgiveness, for straightening [out] of past offences. God met with us in that Presbyterian meeting and lifted the burden of sin from my heart. At about 3 o' clock in the afternoon, a man stood up and began to sing, in the beautiful rhythm of the Punjabi language-Psalm 47,

'Oh clap your hands, all ye people, shout unto God with the voice of triumph.'

"With one voice, the whole congregation picked up the song until the building echoed and re-echoed with the sound of praise and rejoicing. The angels in heaven lifted up the strain and even the courts of heaven echoed and re-echoed with the song of rejoicing. Luke 15:10 says, 'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.'

"The joy that filled the hearts of God's people that day was so great that they could not contain it. After singing the song, they went out into the village in procession. Forming a line, two by two, or three by three, we went along the streets singing songs of God, and preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ on every street corner, telling to all the joy that comes in knowing Christ as your personal Saviour. After preaching the gospel on every street corner of the village, we returned to the church where together we knelt down and prayed; the Lord filled me with joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Peter 1:8); He made me a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17); He fulfilled His promise of Jeremiah 33:6,7, 'I will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth'. That day, the peace that I had been searching for so long entered my heart, and I was filled with the joy of the Lord." ⁷

What man cannot do in 1000 years, God can do in a few moments. Through His mighty work, God transformed that village of spiritual darkness into a village of light, peace and joy. Even after sixty years, you can still find the fruits of that revival in Pakistan, India and many other places.

Years later Bakht Singh wrote about the Martinpur experience in the Hebron Messenger, dated December 25th, 1983, as follows:

We decided to have[a] love feast at the end of these meetings. When the news of a love feast went round in the neigh-

boring villages, we had almost double the number[of people] which was more than 5000. So the elders of the village came to me and said, 'These people are our guests and we do not want to send them away hungry. Our joy is so great that we will give them all our food.'

I said, 'They have come for the sake of [the] blessing which God has prepared. So first of all we will have the meeting and then we all will eat.'

We had the meeting, and before they started serving the food, I prayed, 'Lord, bless the food and multiply it.' We told the people that they could eat as much as they wanted, there was no restriction. They were all filled and still much food was left over. We distributed it to all who came late. Since then we have had several love feasts after revival meetings and we announce that all should stay for food after the meeting. There has never been any shortage of food any time. The Lord taught us many lessons in that week. As long as we kept our eyes upon the Lord we saw blessings. When we began to look at ourselves, there were many problems."⁸

The spirit of revival impacted almost everyone as it permeated the life and behavior of the people. One could see the evidence of the spirit of prayer everywhere, no matter where, whether it was in the fields or in school. People of all ages were praying day and night, and some older people were praying in groups. From that time on, the Lord began to do a new work in that village. Many young men went from that village to preach the gospel throughout Pakistan and in other parts of India. Years later in 1952, the Lord raised up a local church in that village patterned after New Testament principles, spearheading the spread of similar local churches all across Pakistan. For several weeks following the revival, about seventy young people who had a deep love for the Lord and compassion for souls went from village to village preach-

ing the gospel. The moving of God began to spread to about 35 to 40 villages.

From Martinpur, they set out with 70 young people to Sialkot, which was about 150 miles away. They went singing and praising the Lord, trusting Him for their every need. They stopped in every village along the way, singing, sharing their testimonies, and proclaiming the gospel to those who came to listen. They ate whenever someone gave them food, and slept wherever they were given shelter. When they went to Malwall, a Sikh village, they had a big, open-air meeting. Bakht Singh told the people there that they were Christians and they talk to God; they do not pray as non-Christians do.

One old man then got up and said, "You say you Christians know how to pray. Please pray for rain." They had not had rain for some time.

Bakht Singh accepted the challenge, then he knelt down and said to the Lord, "Lord, the old man says he wants rain, please send rain."

After he got up from his knees his friend, Mr. Chandy, the customs officer from Karachi, said to him, "Brother, you made a mistake. If rain comes we have no umbrellas. We have to go to the next village for the next meeting, and we will all get wet."

Bakht Singh said that he could not change his prayer. After a while the rain did come: it just poured. As a result they did have to walk in the rain to the next village for meetings. The news spread, and from then on people began to invite them, "Come to my village; come to our village." They would arrange for food and a place for them to stay. For about seven weeks they went from place to place in Gujarwalla, Sangala Hill, and many other villages.

Finally, they arrived in Sialkot for the convention. Along the way people stood on both sides of the road and were healed, whether they were Moslems, Hindus, or nominal

Christians, all were healed. As they marched through the village sharing the gospel, people stood on both sides of the road saying, "Please pray for me. Please pray for me."

How to pray for everyone? Bakht Singh would just pray, "Lord, have mercy on them and heal them," and they were healed instantly. The news of the miraculous work of God, in both physical healing and a spiritual out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, began to spread everywhere.

The Lord also met their every need. For example, after they prayed for rain in the Sikh village, they had to walk for several miles to reach the next village. They got soaking wet and some people began to shiver with cold. One of the young men then said to Bakht Singh, "Brother, please pray for some nice hot tea."

Bakht Singh said, "Don't worry, the Lord will provide."

As they were approaching the next village, a young boy came running and asked Bakht Singh if he was Bakht Singh. When he said "yes," the boy said, "Please come. My parents are waiting for you."

When they went to the house, they found a big earthen vessel full of boiling water, so they got nice hot tea. The Lord wonderfully took care of them like this all along the way.

Lal Din, one of the 70 who went to Sialkot on foot, narrates his personal experience:

"I felt that the Lord was calling me to give up my home and job and follow Him. So, I decided to put myself to a test. There was a convention at Sialkot, a distance of about 150 miles from my home. A group of 70 of us decided to walk bare-foot to that convention. I had never gone bare-foot. It would have been a shame for the son of the 'Headman' of the village to go bare-foot. In Matt. 23:12, I read that 'he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.' This, I thought, was one way for me to humble myself. So I joined the group. We planned to stop at the villages along the way and preach the

gospel. The sun in India is very hot and the ground burns under one's feet. Not being accustomed to going bare-foot, my feet were very tender and burned very much. I decided that if I could go on this trip, I would be able to deny myself and follow the Saviour, and serve Him. After we had gone some distance, a friend, feeling sorry for me, brought his bicycle to ride, saying that he would follow with the party on foot. I accepted the bicycle and rode along happily for a distance, and then I came to a very sandy part in the path. Sand is not easy to walk in at best, but now I was forced to push the bicycle through the sand also. I got down from the bicycle and began to push it through the sand. It was a long distance and my feet began to burn. After pushing the bicycle for some distance, I became very tired. Then I began to think of my promise I had made to God. By taking the bicycle I had thought to make my way easy, and I had failed to keep my promise to God. With great difficulty, my feet burning and my heart condemning me, I finally reached the village where I was to meet the party. As soon as I met them, I gave the bicycle back to my friend and asked God to forgive me for having broken my promise to Him. Then on, I kept my promise to God and walked the full 130 miles. As we passed through the villages, we would stop and preach the gospel. When we were tired, we would lay down and sleep on the ground no matter where it might be.

We completed that journey on the 19th of September, 1937, after walking 10 days. But I am glad to give witness here of the great faithfulness of God. My feet did not swell; there were no blisters, and not one thorn pricked my feet. These things made me to recognize His power and never-failing grace. 'When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee' (Isa 43:2)."⁹

The news of the revival and miracles began to spread far and wide. Bakht Singh, who had been an unknown itinerant preacher, had now become a household name among the Protestant Christians all across India.

After serving the Lord in close fellowship with Methodist and CMS churches in Karachi and other parts of Sindh, in the province of Baluchistan, Bakht Singh realized that he was greatly restricted in his evangelistic activities as their denominational structures seemed to hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in the light of the Word of God. Therefore, he decided to serve all equally as an itinerant evangelist, rather than associate himself too closely with CMS or any other denomination.

To know the will of God for his future ministry, Bakht Singh and his co-workers waited upon God in prayer and fasting. The Lord answered his prayer and began to use him mightily.

Sialkot Convention and Bakht Singh's Ministry:

The Sialkot Convention was started in 1904 by "Praying Hyde" and others to experience the deeper life in Christ. This was the result of years of prevailing and persevering prayer by Hyde and his co-workers.

God laid a great burden of prayer upon the hearts of John N. Hyde, R. M'Cheyne Paterson, and George Turner for this wonderful convention. There was a real need for a yearly meeting for Bible Study and prayer, where the spiritual life of Christian workers – pastors, teachers, and evangelists, both foreign and native, could be deepened. The church life in the Punjab (as indeed in all India), was far below the Bible standard: the Holy Spirit was so rarely honoured in these ministries that few were being saved from among the Christless millions. Sialkot was selected for this gathering, and 1904 became memorable as the year of the first Sialkot Convention.

Before one of the earliest conventions, Hyde and Paterson waited and tarried in prayer for a whole month before the opening date. For thirty days and nights, these godly men waited before God. Do we wonder that there was power in the convention? Turner joined them after nine days, so for twenty-one days and twenty-one nights, these three men prayed and praised God for a mighty outpouring of His power. Three human hearts that beat as one, as the heart of Christ, yearning, pleading, and agonizing over the Church of India and the myriads of lost souls. Three renewed human wills by faith linked themselves as with hooks of steel to the omnipotent will of God. Three pairs of fire-touched lips that, out of believing hearts shouted, "It shall be done."¹⁰

By the thirties The Sialkot Convention had become the largest Protestant convention in North India. It was well-known all over the country. Several thousand attended this annual convention. Christian leaders, including pastors and bishops as well as lay people, came from everywhere regardless of their denominational differences. People came from as far south as Kerala and north west as Karachi. For example Bishop Abraham of the Marthoma Church of Kerala and D. Samuel of Madras were also speakers at this prestigious annual convention.

Bakht Singh first attended the Sialkot convention in 1933. At that time, something remarkable happened. Bishop Bradley of the Methodist Church of Bombay was scheduled to speak, but because he could not arrive in time, the organizers requested Bakht Singh to speak instead. Later, the bishop arrived, and when he heard that Bakht Singh was asked to speak in his place, the bishop joyfully approved and allowed Bakht Singh to speak.

From 1933 to 1940, the Lord used Bakht Singh very mightily to stir up the participants of the convention. People who heard him at the convention invited him to their churches,

towns and cities, including Bishop Abraham of the Marthoma Church of Travancore and D. Samuel of One-by-One band ministry of Madras. In 1937, following the Martinpur revival, Bakht Singh and the young people who went with him, electrified the convention by their presence and participation. That year, Bakht Singh spoke on the text "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5) He preached with the anointing of the Lord and shared the salvation message, challenging people to be born again. When he gave the altar call, many came forward to receive the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and Lord. Due to his participation at the convention and the way the Lord used him at Martinpur for the mighty revival made him well-known, and invitations for him to speak poured in from all over India. He was one of the most sought-after convention and revival speakers at that time.

Miss Eleanor H. Lewellyn, who was a participant at the 1937 Sialkot convention where Bakht Singh spoke, wrote the following:

"A slight, boyish figure in white stands on the platform in the great tent at the Sialkot Convention. Under the shelter of a huge canvas, seated on red mats of the Punjab market, are three thousand Christians of every Protestant denomination from all over the province. In the circle of light just outside the tent and on into the darkness, as far as voice can reach, other silent listeners, Christians and non-Christians, are seated on chairs or mats or standing, leaning on their bicycles. Near the central pole is a village group with organ, tongs and drums. They comprise 'Jatha' that has marched with Bakht Singh 150 miles from the village of Martinpur to the convention. Their faces glow as they burst into song.

Thy drops of blood I gather to my breast,

A chain more precious far, than pearls from market place';

Their eyes light up as Bakht Singh tells of the Lord's dealing with stubborn hearts. In his native Punjabi, his strong voice with its husky throaty notes vibrates the air.

There are keen eyes set in that sensitive face. They reveal a deep interest in his fellowmen. One longs to carry to him that spiritual problem that has been troubling. One is sure of sympathy and understanding. He can be critical, too. The leaders of the church, pastors, teachers, and missionaries who have become self-indulgent, careless, lazy – who do not feed their sheep, have felt the scorn of his eloquence. His youth has made his criticism hard to take, true though it has been. But his youth, his sincerity, his self-denial, his earnestness, his devotion to Christ, and his willingness to spend and be spent for Him and for India, made Bakht Singh Chabra one of the most potent human instruments towards revival in India today.¹¹

In the following chapter we shall see how the Lord opened doors for Bakht Singh to minister in various parts of India, including Jhansi, Agra, Pune, Madras, and even as far south as Travancore (Kerala).

End Notes

¹J. Edwin Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings In Southern Asia*, pp. 108-109.

²While the author was ministering in Southall, outside London, England, among Punjabi immigrants, Miss Jameson used to visit. She was tall and lean but frail with age, yet she had a real passion for souls. I used to visit Southall during 1963-64. Then, during my visit to Pakistan in the year 1993, I had the privilege of meeting Mrs. Michael Clement – also known as Martha Raju Mall Clement. She was a teacher when Bakht Singh visited Sangla Hill in 1936.

³From the reports of Elic Williams and Yaqoob Inayat of Martinpur.

⁴Lal Din, *What God Can Do!* (Quilla, Sheikpura, W. Pakistan: Lahore Bible Institute, 1966), p. 3.

⁵One kind of locally made pipe for communal smoking.

⁶Author's interview with Alfred Lal Din, one of the men who was at the revival meetings.

⁷Lal Din, *What God Can Do!*, pp. 7-10.

⁸*Hebron Messenger*, December 25, 1983.

⁹Lal Din, *What God Can Do!*, pp. 10-12.

¹⁰Francis A. McGaw, *Praying Hyde*, ed. Captain E. G. Carre (N. Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 1982), p. 11.

¹¹Mrs. Eleanore H. Llewellyn, *Unforgettable Disciples-Bakht Singh Of India* (USA: Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, 1942), pp. 81-87.

Chapter 8

Revival that Swept Across the Sub-Continent

"And the Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region." (Acts 13:49)

Bakht Singh became a household name among Protestants in Punjab and across the country immediately following the mighty revival of Martinpur in 1937. The fire of revival that fell upon that village was to spread all across the Sub-continent of India. Through his anointed preaching at the Sialkot convention following the Martinpur revival, he became well-known among Christian leaders all across India. Invitations to speak poured in from all over the country. Bakht Singh, however, never went anywhere looking at the size of the congregation or 'the fame' of the meetings; he always sought the leading of the Lord.

After much prayer, the Lord led him to Jhansi, Agra, Ludhiana, Poona and on to Madras, then further South to Travancore (Kerala). Everywhere great crowds thronged to hear this young, fiery, fearless, outspoken Sikh convert to Christ, who preached the Word with power and authority. Sinners were converted, saints were strengthened, and the sick were healed at every meeting. The fire of revival began

to sweep across India as the Holy Spirit led this humble servant who preached Christ and Him crucified. His meetings and Bible-based, Spirit-anointed messages were like refreshing rain in the spiritually parched land of his birth.

He was very zealous for the Lord and spoke against any teaching or practice that was contrary to the Word of God. In the 1930s, modernism, the Oxford Group¹, Syncretism,² religious pluralism,³ and other liberal teachings⁴ were influencing the church in India, particularly through some of the western and national missionaries. In the late 30s, India's struggle for political independence had reached its zenith. Mahatma Gandhi, who was revered and honoured not only as the undisputable leader of the political freedom struggle, but also as a 'saint,' had acknowledged Christ as a 'Supreme model' of passive resistance and a great moral teacher of the sermon on the mount, but not as the only Saviour of the world.

Gandhi had long believed that all religions were merely different roads converging to the same point, and conversion from the religion of one's birth to another was an offense. ... Gandhi disapproved of Christian missions that went beyond social work – education, medicine, and the like – into the realm of religion such as confession and commitment.⁵

Mahatmaji is greater than Krishna, greater than Buddha, Mohammed or Christ, for he has in him the combined goodness of all the four.... 'If Christ were again incarnated, he would come just as Gandhi has come'.... Mr. Gandhi wrote his own religious outlook: 'In my religion there is room for Krishna, for Buddha, for Christ and for Mohammed. I felt that to me, salvation was possible only through [the] Hindu religion. I find solace in the Bhagavad Geetha and Upanishad that I miss even in the sermon on the mount.'⁶

Bishop Henry Whitehead of the CMS Church of South India, was a close friend of Mr. Gandhi and an outspoken supporter who arranged many meetings for Gandhi to ad-

dress. He arranged a missionary conference in Madras where Mr. Gandhi spoke to nearly all the missionaries of Madras. Referring to Mr. Gandhi's address at the conference, Bishop Henry Whitehead reported, "He represents in rather an extreme form, the modern reaction against Western influences and Western civilization in India, and naturally he is opposed in principle to all proselytizing on the part of the missionary.Mr. Gandhi's ideal was that Hindus should retain their own religion, but reform its abuses."⁷

Men like Whitehead admired Mr. Gandhi and elevated his stature to almost that of Christ Himself by saying, "I frankly confess, though it deeply grieves me to say it, that I see in Mr. Gandhi the patient sufferer for the cause of Righteousness and Mercy, a truer representative of the crucified Saviour than the men who have thrown him into prison and yet call themselves by the name of Christ."⁸

Influenced by the towering personality of Mahatmaji, who cast his shadow upon the people of India, many national and foreign missions were reluctant to preach the exclusive claims of Christ for the salvation of mankind.

For example, at the 1938 International Missionary Counsel Conference at Tambaram, near Madras, a new generation of Indian clergy and laity were highly critical of Western missions "...a new generation at Tamabaram, content to preach Gandhi's ethical Christ of the Sermon on the Mount and to engage in Christian charitable projects but increasingly reluctant about preaching the Supernatural Christ of the Cross, i.e, atonement for sin, the resurrection and Pentecost. A church for social reform rather than evangelism was the goal and symbol of this new attitude."⁹ At that time, most denominations, both national and foreign, preached a social gospel devoid of the gospel of Christ as revealed in the Word of God.

Bakht Singh travelled across the nation upholding the

Word of God and preaching Jesus Christ, even with such odds against him. The Lord who said, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," (Matt 16:18) raised up Bakht Singh at such a time as this to be His mouth-piece to call people back to God and to His Word. Undaunted and uncompromising, he fearlessly exalted the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour, and called people to repentance in the light of the Word of God. His outspoken stand for Christ on the basis of the Bible was often misunderstood and severely criticized both by liberal and evangelical denominational leaders. Even some of the evangelical missionaries were highly critical of him and turned against him.

"I was surprised and shocked to find how the evangelical missionaries I met froze when I spoke of him and accused him of being anti-white,"¹⁰ wrote Norman Grubb. When this writer was in Swanick, England, in 1965, Rev. John Stott (former senior minister of All Souls Church of Langham Place, London) asked whether I knew Bakht Singh of India. When I said, "Yes," he asked me why he was anti-missionary and anti-white. I told him that he was not against any missionary. The truth was that he was neither anti-white nor anti-west, but anti-sin and anti-death when it went under the name of Christianity, no matter what the colour of a person's skin or nationality. He denounced sin and hypocrisy, and it did not matter where it came from. Later on that same year, when Bakht Singh came to England, it was my privilege to introduce him to Rev. Stott at his residence in London, where they became better acquainted with each other and eventually good friends. In July, when this writer and Bakht Singh went to the Keswick Convention, the writer took him to the speakers' lounge. When Rev. Stott saw him, he got up and greeted him saying, "Brother Bakht Singh, what a thrill to see you again." He then introduced Bakht Singh to Canon A.T. Houghton, who was the chairman of the convention that

year. He asked Bakht Singh to share his testimony at the convention, which he did.

About his fellowship with the Lord's saints at Keswick Convention, Bakht Singh wrote in the editorial of the Hebron Messenger of August 1st 1965:

"I must thank you all once again very sincerely for your faithful prayers for the ministry which is being fulfilled during these days in different parts of Europe. Indeed, it is a real privilege to labour together in His vineyard, in order to gather the ripened harvest, and also to encourage and strengthen fellow-believers and fellow-servants of God who are scattered all over the world. What a joy we miss by not understanding our oneness and mutual dependence upon one another, and not realizing that we are fellow-believers, co-workers and members in the one body of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head".

Revival in Poona:

"Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it:" (Rev 3:8)

Invitations for special meetings had come from various parts of India, including Poona. Mr. Loughheed, the military officer who had invited Bakht Singh to Quetta in 1934 and '35, was transferred to Poona cantonment in 1936. After he had arrived there, he sent a pressing invitation to Bakht Singh, requesting that he come to Poona for special meetings.

After much prayer to find the Lord's perfect will, he went to Poona in the month of April, 1938, along with another brother; they both were utter strangers there. When his friend Mr. Loughheed, met Bakht Singh at the Poona Railway station, he told him that he had no plan for any large meetings and was depending upon the Lord to guide them day by day. Hearing this, Bakht Singh said to him that that would suit

him because he wanted to make sure of God's plan for every meeting: he did not want to be bound by any human plan or strategy.

In the first few meetings held in Nanapet Poona, only about twenty people came. The condition of Christians in Poona at that time was very sad. They were full of strife, worldliness, unbelief and indifference. Seeing this, Bakht Singh and his friends had a heavy burden to pray for Poona, so they decided to have a whole night of prayer to claim God's promises. When Bakht Singh made the announcement, one committee member told him that he did not believe in such kind of prayer, so he told the watchman to lock up the church building. They began to pray anyway outside the church building in an open space. As they were earnestly praying, the people passing by were curious and came to see what was happening.

The next Sunday, the meeting was held in Christ Church of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The building was packed to capacity. The Lord began to break hardened hearts and a mighty revival broke out. The Spirit of the Lord came like a flood just as we read in Isaiah 44:3: "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."

Soon Christians of all churches started attending. As the meetings continued for more than a month, many were saved. A gospel procession went through the main streets of both the city and cantonment area as thousands of Christians took part, singing, praying, witnessing and distributing tracts. That part of the city of Poona had never witnessed anything like that before as the fire of revival continued to spread. This was the beginning of the revival in Maharashtra area, and subsequently to the establishing of New Testament type assemblies.

Nineteen nights of prayer at Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission, Kedgaon:

In the month of May 1938, prior to his going to Madras and Kerala for three-month gospel campaigns, the Lord burdened Bakht Singh and members of his team to go from Poona to the Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission at Kedgaon for a time of all night prayer. At the Mukti Mission, the staff, children, and adults, numbering about three hundred, mostly women, joined the special time of all-night prayer which lasted for 19 consecutive nights except for only two days break in between. Bakht Singh divided the saints into various groups, with each group praying earnestly for revival in different parts of India and other parts of the world. They all persevered in prayer, interceding for a mighty work of God. As a result of these nights of prayer, the Lord worked in many parts of South India, particularly in Madras, eventually establishing 'Jehovah-Shammah' and other assemblies based on New Testament principles. Through these experiences, the Lord taught Bakht Singh the secret of the power of all-night prayer.

A revival broke out in Mukti, and many were born again as people put things right with one another. The Lord brought about both spiritual and physical healings.¹¹ In some respects, the times of all-night prayer were the hallmark of his ministry. Bakht Singh believed the reason for the unusual blessing at his meetings in Madras and other southern parts of India was due to the whole nights of prayer at Mukti. He learned that when the women pray, heaven is opened in an unusual way.

Through the revival in Poona, the Lord opened other doors for gospel meetings in many parts of Maharashtra, Gujarat and South India. And those who were born again or renewed at those meetings were mightily used of the Lord to put forth His claims in all kinds of places. His Kingdom thus began to be extended beyond all expectations.

At the invitation of Bishop Matthew Abraham of the Marthoma Church whom he met at the Sialkot convention in 1934, Bakht Singh went from Poona to Travancore. He was the guest speaker in the Marthoma churches in Travancore (Kerala). He went together with Mr. Chandy for the months of June and July of 1938. He travelled all across central Travancore speaking in various churches with large numbers of people attending the meetings everywhere. Since then, he visited Kerala several times at the invitation of the Brethren and other Christian groups. In 1948, Bakht Singh and his team visited central Travancore at the invitation of Mr. Chacko of Punalur, where this author as young boy heard Bakht Singh for the first time. Little did he realize then that, one day, this author would be his co-worker and biographer.

From Travancore, Bakht Singh went to Coimbatore at the invitation of Sanyasini Ponnamma, a mighty woman evangelist of Travancore, to speak at a Gospel Convention sponsored by her. At the convention, the Lord led Bakht Singh to Moses Dawn of Coimbatore, and Arogya Swami Williams of Coonoor, both of whom eventually became two of his loyal and faithful co-workers till their deaths.

At the convention, Moses Dawn of the Assemblies of God was Bakht Singh's interpreter. People from the A.G. Church started coming to the convention to listen to Bakht Singh. Consequently, the strength of the congregation at the A.G. Church meetings began to decline. Seeing this, the A.G. Church missionary did his best to prevent his people from going to the convention. He told Moses Dawn, who was his employee at that time, not to interpret for Bakht Singh. Moses Dawn, who was greatly blessed by the Bible-based, Spirit-anointed messages of Bakht Singh declined to comply with the missionary's order and left the A.G. Church.

Moses Dawn waited upon the Lord to know His will for

his future. Then he had a vision. In the vision he saw a field ripe for harvest and a man harvesting grain. The reaper, he noticed, kept on moving from a northerly direction as he reaped. Moses Dawn thought, "How can one man harvest such a big field of ripened grain?" Then he heard a Voice saying, "You join him in reaping the grain." He again waited upon the Lord in prayer and the Lord confirmed clearly to him that he should join Bakht Singh and minister with him. He was a good Bible teacher- particularly in prophetic studies, a composer, singer and Tamil interpreter. Moses Dawn composed and taught people several songs based on Scriptures and messages given by Bakht Singh. Bakht Singh encouraged people, rich and poor, literate and illiterate to own a personal Bible and carry it with them everywhere.

Moses Dawn composed appropriate choruses, viz:

"What a wonderful treasure
Gift of God without measure
We will travel together
My Bible and I."

What Sankey was to D.L.Moody, Moses Dawn was to Bakht Singh. He served the Lord with Bakht Singh till his death in 1977. His wife Lilly Moses is now 89 and serves the Lord through 'Jehovah-Shammah.'

Arogya Swami Williams, known to many affectionately as "Brother Willy," was converted to Christ through the ministry of Sanyasini Ponnamma during her Gospel Convention at Coonoor. When Bakht Singh was in Coimbatore he came to assist at the convention. At the convention, he was led of the Lord for full-time ministry. Having resigned his secular job in Coonoor, he joined Bakht Singh as his co-worker. He was a gifted open-air evangelist and a hard worker for the Lord and served the Lord faithfully and sacrificially all across India till his home-call in 1964.

From Coimbatore, Bakht Singh went on to Madras in Au-

gust, 1938, at the invitation of D. Samuel of One-by-One Band, whom he first met at Sialkot in 1934. Mr. Samuel had been urging him to come to Madras for some special meetings. Bakht Singh was in the city of Madras for 19 days, where he first spoke at the Methodist Episcopal Church on Ritherdon Road. Moses Dawn was Bakht Singh's Tamil interpreter in Madras.

R.R. Rajamani had this to say about his first meeting with Bakht Singh:

"But here was a lean, unimpressive young man with neither moustache nor beard, nor dressed up like a great preacher in tie and collar, and no shoes either, but bare-foot and simply clad. I felt sure that, just as I had been disappointed in so many preachers before, so I would now be disappointed in this man also. At that moment he said, 'Let us pray.' The huge crowd who were present knelt down and out on the fringe I, too, got to my knees. But somehow, as I knelt with the praying throng, that man's prayer went deep into my heart... If a man can pray like that, I thought, he must truly be a man of God."¹²

During those 19 days, Bakht Singh's great burden was to speak on prayer. Everywhere, he challenged people to pray. He also challenged them to spend time in all-night prayer. That gave the Christians from various denominations, who came to hear him, a great prayer burden for the city. Through these meetings, the Lord began a deep and new work in the hearts of many lives. One Saturday, Bakht Singh announced a night of prayer at Red Hills Lake. Many joined him for that night of prayer, where they wrestled in prayer through the night, asking the Lord to do a mighty work in the city of Madras.

Through those special meetings emphasizing prayer, God spoke to tens of thousands of people. Many nominal, lukewarm and discouraged Christians of various denominations

were born again. Many rededicated their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ. R.R. Rajamani and R.P. Dorairaj were among those who rededicated their lives during that time. George T. Rajarathnam and his wife, who were members of the CMS, Tucker Church on Broadway, were also born again at the 1938 meetings. The Lord would use these three men along with Bakht Singh to do a new work in Madras in the days ahead.

The eyes of many Christians in Madras were opened to see what God can do when his children pray. The wife of Rajamani, Navaneetham, was also one of the many who accepted the Lord during the 1938 campaign. And it was through prayer and the special messages by Bakht Singh emphasizing prayer that the Lord transformed Rajamani's life for ever. He changed him from being a discouraged Christian into a delightful Christian whom the Lord would use greatly in the city of Madras to do great things for His glory. The fire that God had kindled in the people's hearts went on burning even more fervently long after the departure of Bakht Singh to the Punjab.

"Prayer meetings started here and there all over the city. Groups met for prayer at midday as well as in the evenings. In several places all-night prayer meetings were arranged on Saturday nights and hundreds used to gather. The spirit of supplication was upon people as never before. People came under great conviction of sin and many turned to the Lord."¹³

"The great revival of prayer continued for two years from 1938 - 1940. It created much hunger and thirst after righteousness in many hearts, not only among folk in Purasawalkam and Vepery where it began, but in other suburbs of Madras also."¹⁴

The Lord used these prayer gatherings of the saints, where they prayed with great agony and perseverance, to

do a mighty, unprecedented work for the glory of God in future days.

As the spirit of the Lord began to move in the hearts of the people in a new and mighty way through the prayers of His people throughout the city of Madras, it became necessary to arrange follow-up work to minister to those who were newly converted or had recommitted their lives to the Lord Jesus.

D. Samuel invited the help of Rajamani, Dorairaj and others in the follow-up work. He arranged Bible studies for them in the London Mission Chapel at the end of 1938. The first of a series of retreats was held in a big rented house at Aminjikarai on Poonamalle road, west of the city. Two young English missionaries, Alfred J. Flack and C. Raymond Golsworthy, came in turns from Wellington in the Nilgiris to Madras to teach the scriptures. The Lord used them mightily through the word of God to stir them to pray and labour towards the coming of the Lord. The Bible teaching continued there and in other churches in the city for over a year. From time to time at Aminjikarai, they also had worship and breaking-of-bread on the Lord's day.¹⁵

From Madras, Bakht Singh went back to Punjab for ministry in various places. Following the Sialkot Convention in September, where he again spoke, he went to Jhansi in October 1938.

Jhansi:

The Lord used Bakht Singh mightily during the meetings in Jhansi (Uttar Pradesh) where He did an unusual thing. A small girl asked her father, who was a nominal Christian, to take her to the meeting, but he would not. Then one night, he decided to take her to the meeting. After dropping her off, he went out as he did not want to attend the meeting. Bakht Singh got up to preach that evening, but he did

not have any liberty to speak. He had prayed and prayed, but he felt blank. He said to his friends that he had no message, so more than four hundred people who were there in the congregation began to pray. After praying for a while, they sang some songs but still no message. So they continued in prayer.

While they were praying, the father of the little girl got up saying that he was her father and, "Because of me you have no message. I am a wicked man. I am a drunkard. I have tried to kill my wife. I do not like to go to any meeting. But my daughter has been insisting to come to the meetings. Just to please her, I came. God told me to carry my Bible, but I have no Bible. God spoke to me that I was a great sinner. And because of my presence in the audience you could not preach any message."

Saying this, the man sat down. After hearing the man's confession, everyone began to weep. The man prayed with tears to receive the Lord Jesus Christ. That was the beginning of the revival in Jhansi. Schools were closed so they could have meetings morning, midday and evening, continuing the whole month of October.

Agra:

Following Jhansi, Bakht Singh ministered in Dehradun and in various parts of U.P. and Punjab. Then in March of 1939, at the invitation of a joint committee consisting of CMS, Methodist and Baptist ministers, he went to Agra for a few weeks of special meetings. The meetings were held in St. John's Church building, while Bakht Singh and his team stayed in a tent outside the church building. Many were converted to Christ during these special meetings in Agra. Prominent among them was Noel Barrow, who later on became a close associate and co-worker of Bakht Singh. He served the Lord faithfully in different places, the last of which

was in the House of Worship at Vellore. The Lord used him mightily to touch and transform many lives till his home-call in August 1981.

During 1939 and 1940, the Lord used Bakht Singh mightily in many places including Youthmal, Massouri and Miraj conventions, for the edification of His Body and for the extension of His glorious Kingdom. The fires of revival that came from heaven in 1937 in Martinpur swept across India, spreading from Punjab in the north to Kerala in the south.

Early in 1940, in answer to the prayer of saints in Madras, the Lord led him back to Madras.

Fasting and praying:

Prior to going to Coonoor at the invitation of Lady Ogle in May, 1941, Bakht Singh had visited Madras three times for special meetings. The first was in August of 1938 when the burden was to challenge people to pray. His anointed messages on prayer encouraged and inspired many throughout the city of Madras to pray until the Lord brought him back to Madras in 1940.

People of various Christian denominations gathered together in church buildings, homes, and under trees for these special meetings. This season of prayer not only revived the people of God, it also awakened a deeper hunger for God and the desire to do His will at any cost as never before. The Lord was preparing a people for Himself out of every denomination and group and fellowship throughout Madras. In order to meet the spiritual needs of the believers, D. Samuel invited the two young Englishmen from Wellington in the Nilgiris, Alfred J. Flack and C. Raymond Golsworthy,¹⁶ who had come to India sent from the Honor-Oak fellowship in London, England. In India, they had been working in fellowship with Lady Ogle. They helped with special Bible studies which were held in the London Mission Chapel.

As Rajamani puts it, "They taught us how the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was to have power in our lives, and they stirred us to pray and labour towards His coming. The Bible teaching went on there and in the city churches for over a year. Once or twice at Aminjikarai, we all broke bread together on the Lord's day without in any way affecting our church membership."¹⁷

When the time was ripe, in answer to the prayers of the saints in Madras, Bakht Singh came to Madras on his way to Punjab. About that visit and the gospel procession which shook Madras, Rajamani has this to say:

"At the beginning of 1940, Brother Bakht Singh passed briefly again through Madras on his way to the Punjab. We were resolved to make the most of the occasion, so we organized a special procession of witness on the Saturday afternoon. A huge crowd gathered at the London Mission Chapel, Mukathal Street, until it became the largest such gospel procession Madras had ever seen. Walking three abreast the children alone occupied about a furlong (220 yards). The whole procession extended to a mile in length with more than ten thousand people taking part, all singing out [a] few simple Hallelujah songs. All the denominations joined in, and when at length we all reached the Methodist Church compound, Brother Bakht Singh gave us a stirring message."¹⁸

Many in Madras strongly felt the Lord has chosen Bakht Singh to do a new work there. With that in mind, they continued their prayer to the Lord that the Lord may bring him back to Madras again. About this Rajamani has this to say.

"During these days of waiting on the Lord, this was literally fulfilled. God's power was upon His willing people. As our cries went up to His Throne of Grace, we began to feel sure He would answer by sending His servant back to preach His word to us again. He was God's chosen messenger for that hour. Indeed, I now believe that if, like Jonah,

he had declined to come to Madras and had gone elsewhere, God would have used some kind of fish to collect him and bring him to us!"¹⁹

Finally, at end of July, 1940, in answer to the prayers of His people, the Lord brought Bakht Singh back to Madras for a three-month special campaign. He came with a heavy burden to preach on the importance of the Word of God. During his previous visit in 1938 his burden was to preach on prayer; this time his burden was to preach the Word of God. During those three months, he preached in almost every denominational church in the city, with thousands attending for every meeting. He began once again with a series of meetings at the Tamil Church building on Ritherdon Road where he emphasized the importance of the Bible as the infallible, inerrant, inspired Word of God, and exposed the error of those who questioned its authority.

At the beginning of every meeting, the congregation was asked to display their Bibles by raising them above their heads while singing a Bible Chorus; this made them ashamed if they had not brought one. Bakht Singh would say loudly, "You should feel ashamed 174 times, because in Psalm 119, out of 176 verses there are 174 references to the Word of God, and if you are a Pastor or Christian leader, you should feel ashamed twice more, that is 348 times." Those who did not have Bibles were encouraged to buy their own. Hundreds of Bibles were sold at every meeting with the co-operation of the Bible Society, until Bibles in all the major languages, namely, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and English, were gone. When the Bible Society sold out of Bibles, people went looking for them even in the secondhand book stores.

The Lord brought such a hunger for the Word of God in the hearts of the people that they began to read the Bible as never before and always carried it with them to their churches instead of just bringing a hymn book and a prayer

book. As Bakht Singh preached the Word, the Holy Spirit of God brought conviction of sin and repentance. At every meeting, everywhere, many gave their hearts to the Lord Jesus and were born again through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Wherever he went, whatever the denominational church buildings in which he spoke, large crowds thronged to hear the Word of God preached by His anointed servant. One night at the CMS Tucker Church the crowd was so large that many could not get in. In order to make more room for people to sit, Bakht Singh requested that the benches be moved aside so that they could sit on the floor. He also told the children to come up quietly to an area in the church sanctuary where only ordained ministers were allowed to go. This "desecration", however, shocked the church elders, who reported the matter to the Bishop.

That night, Bakht Singh challenged them, "Bishop or no bishop, the Lord has sent me to preach and I must deliver His message. Do not you adults smoke and indulge in other things that defile the House of God far more grievously than the presence of these innocent children in the church sanctuary?"

He feared no man and spoke out courageously as the Lord had commissioned. Through the clear preaching of the unadulterated Word of God, he exposed the worldliness, carnality and hypocrisy among the nominal Christians, both clergy and laity. He also taught the people to respect, honour and fear God. One day at a meeting in Purusawalkam, he saw a man in the congregation smiling across at the women. He stopped speaking, walked to where the man sat and rebuked him sternly. He did not allow anyone to behave unseemingly in any meeting, whether adults or children.

Wherever he preached, the people flocked to hear him. No notices or handbills were necessary. He would have none, but the news was passed on by the word of mouth and people

came by the hundreds. Even though those were the early days of the Second World War and people were facing many practical problems, people came nightly in large numbers. Meetings would last for three to four hours, sometimes till 11 p.m., but still they kept standing. It was unbelievable. No mere man could have brought that about; only God could create such hunger for His word.

People attended his meetings with great eagerness and expectation; nothing would discourage or turn them away. For example, during the time of special meetings in the Scottish Church of Saint Andrews in Avathanapapier Road, Choolai, in October, during the monsoon season, a very large crowd, far more than the church could accommodate, had gathered. After prayer, Bakht Singh decided to hold the meeting out in the open. Suddenly, it began to rain very heavily. He urged the people not to stir but just to protect their Bibles by putting them under their clothes. He himself continued to preach with his Bible wide open. People just sat on the ground in the pouring rain with the water running beneath them. Although soaked to the skin, they continued listening to God's Word. There were mothers with babies in their arms, yet no one moved until the meeting was over, and no-one was anxious to conclude it early.

People hungered and thirsted after righteousness and the Lord filled them with His Word. The Lord not only healed them spiritually, he also healed their physical sickness, as Rajamani writes:

"There were wonderful answers to prayer. The sick were prayed for and some were healed. A leper one day asked permission to give a five-minute testimony at a meeting. The previous week he had sat huddled in a blanket in the corner of the church with two leprous sores on his leg. Treatment over a long period had failed to heal him and he had been given up as hopeless. He asked to be anointed and prayed

for, and now was completely restored with no trace of his disease."²⁰

The deaf and dumb were healed completely. A Gujarati child was suffering from leprosy and no doctor could cure it. So they brought the child to Bakht Singh for prayer. Bakht Singh said to the parents that if they would accept the Lord Jesus as their personal Saviour and Lord, God could heal their child. He anointed the child with oil and prayed. The child was healed immediately. The parents and relatives were surprised. They not only gave their hearts to the Lord but also thanked God for His faithfulness.

Another woman had an issue of blood for many years and no doctor could heal her either. Brother Bakht Singh anointed her with oil and she, too, was healed completely. There were many other cases of physical healing, but Bakht Singh never publicized them or ever held a healing campaign. People came quietly asking prayer for healing; he prayed in faith and the Lord healed them. As the Lord was with the apostles about two thousand years ago, He was with him also, for He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Bakht Singh did not use any human methods to attract crowds, but totally depended upon God through extraordinary prayer, often praying throughout the night. Prayer was one of the hallmarks of his life and ministry from the very beginning. On Saturdays, in preparation to the Lord's day, prayer went on all night. Through this means, without any advertisement, the Holy Spirit brought together large masses of people to hear the gospel. Bakht Singh believed that God's work needs no human publicity. He followed the method practiced by the apostles in the book of Acts.

Another characteristic of his ministry was the gospel procession. On Saturday morning there would be processions of witness in which pastors and congregations took part, often

several miles in length and at times, numbering more than 12,000. With children leading, women following and men at the rear, they passed through the streets singing, "Hallelujah to Jesus," encouraging believers to live simple, holy lives. In Madras, for example, many of the men wore plain white shirts and women white sarees.²¹ During those days, white sarees came to be known as "Bakht Singh sarees," and often sold out as they were in great demand all over Madras. There was great joy in the city. You could hear people singing everywhere. Non-Christians were amazed. One Hindu gentleman remarked that Madras had become a Christian city. Yes, the Lord was using His servant to turn Madras upside down for His glory, just like He used the early apostles and believers to turn their cities upside down for His Name's sake. It was indeed an apostolic revival; God was showing forth His glory through His people. "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." (Acts 17:6)

One of the characteristics of his ministry was the all-night prayer meetings. It was arranged in a bungalow by Red Hills Lake, near Purushawalkam, and several hundred attended. During these meetings, people came under deep conviction of sin and would confess it with tears. One evening they had a large bonfire to burn things such as sinful books, magazines, photographs and other articles which had any savour of sin; these were brought by the people and thrown into the fire. It reminded us of the account in Acts 19:19, "Many of them also which used curious art brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver."

In his messages, Bakht Singh would not only challenge the people to love God's Word, but also to obey His Word in its entirety. He gave them the whole counsel of God from the Word of God without fearing anyone. For example, most denominations where he spoke did not practice "believer's

baptism" as taught in the Word of God, so he began to emphasize the importance of believer's baptism. One day, a Hindu girl who had given her heart to the Lord, approached Bakht Singh asking for baptism. This created a new situation, as neither Bakht Singh nor his team members had baptized anyone. Moreover, denominational leaders were opposed to believer's baptism, so he sought the counsel of his fellow workers. They prayed together about it and consulted other men of God. Meanwhile, several young men who had come with Bakht Singh from Punjab, also asked if they might be baptized and thus obey the Lord in public witness. It was agreed eventually and they all including the girl, be baptized, thus obey the Lord in public witness, at the Cooks Road Baptist church, Madras.

Bakht Singh spoke fearlessly to the pastors and missionaries, pointing out their failure to follow the whole counsel of God in the light of the revealed will of God. Some appreciated it, while others found it difficult to take. Nevertheless, they invited him to be among them because their congregations needed and wanted his preaching. His messages were welcomed at that time by nearly the whole community.

He challenged his listeners to live a life of holiness and separation from the world. He lived totally for the Lord and made every effort to please Him; he demanded the same of others. On one occasion, for example, he was invited to lunch by a Christian brother. Desiring to make a better show, this man had arranged for the meal to be held in his son's house. All had been prepared, but on entering the room, Bakht Singh saw the walls covered with suggestive cinema pictures of partially-clad women. He called the man of the house and asked, 'Is this a Christian home? If you do not take these pictures down and destroy them now, we cannot eat here.' But the man was proud and took offence. Bakht Singh then left, leaving the meal untouched.

Devasagayam, who became one of the elders of 'Jehovah Shammah' later on, wrote of his experience with Bakht Singh in relation to believers' separation from the world. In those days, Bakht Singh felt that wearing jewellery and showy, colourful, expensive clothes were signs of worldliness. He wanted believers to be examples of their inward separation being expressed outwardly. Devasagayam invited Bakht Singh to his house for lunch. He also invited his relations for lunch to be with Bakht Singh. When Bakht Singh came and saw the wife's jewellery, he told her that unless she removed it all he would not take food in her house. She told him that she would pray with her husband about it and decide. Bakht Singh had lunch and went back to the place where he was staying. After he left, she prayed with her husband and removed all her jewels as she had promised. They brought them to Bakht Singh to be sold, and the money used to pay for Bible distribution.

Another unusual aspect of his ministry was to have a united love feast. Towards the end of his three months special campaign in Madras, Bakht Singh announced that he would have a united love feast. It was to be held at Balfour hall, Kilpauk, Madras, and all were invited to come. He asked families to bring enough food for themselves and for one extra person. All were asked to come singing to the place of meetings.

About that experience Rajamani writes:

"Accordingly, that morning, I started out with my wife and three small children. We put our food in a rickshaw and walked beside it in single file. I played on my violin. Navaneetham, who was one with me in everything, joined me as I sang at the top of my voice, and the children added their voices to the chorus. Everybody in the neighborhood knew us. No doubt they thought I had gone mad. As we walked along singing, others bound for the meeting came

out of their houses and joined us. By the time I reached the hall, I had quite a procession behind me, all singing heartily:

'Hallelujah to The Lamb
Who died on Mount Calvary;
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Amen.'

It is hard to believe now that such things really happened. I tell you, the Lord's people were willing to be fools for Him in those days.

More than twelve thousand gathered on the open maidhan (open place) for the love feast. When we reached the hall, I went into the building to see how the contributions of food were being stored. Volunteers were emptying the baskets of rice into a room. I could not believe my eyes. There was a huge heap of rice, ready cooked – and the best kind of rice too. Then I looked at the cutlets, another great heap. Elsewhere other volunteers were already preparing the vast quantities of Sambar (curry with lentils and vegetables) needed for so great a crowd."²²

Bakht Singh then asked volunteers to serve the food and two hundred smiling saints came forward to serve. Many of the things that the Lord did through His servant reminded some of the life and ministry of the early church. For many, they were new, as they were so clearly the Lord's doing and not man's.

Following the three months of special gatherings, before they left for Punjab, thousands gathered at the central station in Madras to see him off. As Rajamani writes, "It became impossible to move and he could not even reach his compartment because of the crowd. The train had to be delayed while two young men carried him shoulder high through the crowd and put him in the carriage. As the train moved people cried 'give us a parting verse'. He shouted, 'The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; and it shall never go out.' (Lev 6:13)"²³

Revival Blessing in Gujarat 1941, Gerald I. Garner :

It is the working of the Holy Spirit of God in and through the hearts and lives of men and women, the living stones of His church, that brings real "growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (II Peter 3:18) This working of God's grace was singularly made manifest in the Gujarat branch of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church of India in 1941, through the ministry of Bakht Singh.

Recording the meetings conducted by Bakht Singh in Ahmedabad, Mrs. Brabazon writes: "Up to 2000 people sat night after night in reverent silence from 8:00 often till midnight. Then, the buses having stopped at 10:00, they walked home carrying sleeping babies and leading sleepy children. Some walked five to eight miles, but returned the next night. Hundreds of people arose to their feet to ask for prayer. There was much confession of sin, and conversion both among nominal Christians and Hindus. The whole Christian community was stirred with non-Christian inquirers. The churches have been filled for many weeks and one has felt in them the hallowed presence of Jehovah God. Prayer groups have been formed in many localities and revival fire has spread to towns and villages for miles around. Surely 'He smote the rock, the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed'." (Psalm 78:20)

Immediately after the meeting at Ahmedabad, the great concourse of Alliance people in company with many Gujarati-speaking people of other denominations convened at the historic camping place at Mehamadabad for the scheduled annual meetings. Excerpts from the report of these meetings as furnished by Mr. Helfers are inspiring: "The Gujarat Synod of the Alliance Church asked Bakht Singh to come for special meetings. Brother A. I. Garrison also joined us and gave old-fashioned messages bringing out the Alliance em-

phasis from the Word. The brilliant pastor of another denomination who interpreted for Bakht Singh received the assurance of his salvation during one of the meetings when Brother Garrison spoke. At the camp gathering, the day began at five in the morning when a bell rang calling people to pray in the church. There were meetings lasting throughout the day and late into the night. When people were not in the meetings they were somewhere on their knees reading Scriptures. Those who had come without Bibles soon bought them. One woman came to me at 2:30 in the morning for a Bible.

"On Sunday morning the church was crowded so that every available space on the floor and the platform was taken. Brother Garrison brought a powerful message on the coming of the Lord in the light of present world events. After the message, the Lord's supper was served to the large audience. The service was conducted with the aid of ten pastors and two elders, so that all were more conscious of the Lord's presence rather than the mechanics of serving more than a thousand people.

"The afternoon meeting began at 3:00 and the people were still coming in crowds from the city by train. Bakht Singh was to address both the afternoon and evening meetings. The church was full to overflowing. The message- "The Necessity of Being Born Again," came to a remarkable climax at the appeal towards the close. People all over the church stood almost en masse in response. When Bakht Singh prayed the Spirit of God fell upon the audience and all, simultaneously, began to pray in earnest. People prayed with outstretched hands, or on their faces before the Lord. It was one 'huge altar service,' each praying audibly for themselves. It sounded like a great Niagara of prayer. No leader was needed, nor could anyone stop the mighty breaking up of the depths of human nature.

"They all prayed until victory was assured. When the

spirit of rejoicing broke upon us, the Presbyterian and Methodist pastors led us in singing a Salvation Army hymn on "cleansing by the Blood of Christ" at the top of their voices. Time passed unheeded. No-one moved out. People wanted God. There they were – Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Salvationists in an Alliance camp meeting – all seeking God.

"People's suppers had long since turned to charcoal, if they were on the fire. But the meetings went on. One at a time was permitted to speak briefly. Bakht Singh would quote a Scripture text, with reference, immediately after a person had testified. The afternoon had passed into evening, and evening into night. It was 1:30 in the morning of the next day when the meeting finally closed. The rest of the night was spent in prayer or in discussing what God had done for them. In the morning light, the people dispersed, carrying with them the fire of God."²⁴

Similar revival broke out in numerous places, the Holy Spirit using Bakht Singh as His instrument to renew and revive the people of God in India by ushering in the Kingdom of God, while that of the British Raj in India was coming to an end.

In 1941 Bakht Singh returned to Madras as led by the Lord. We shall see the impact of his meetings and the beginning of a new work which the Lord led him to start in Madras in the following pages.

End Notes

¹The Oxford group, or, Moral Re-Armament is a religious movement founded in 1921 by F.N.D. Buchman an American, who defined its aim as a programme of life, issuing in personal, social, racial, national and supernatural change.

The Group claims to be neither a church nor a religious institu-

tion, and tries to stay off denominational preserves by using no influence to stimulate change of membership from one type of religious faith to another. Its techniques can be adapted to vitalize the members of any religious faith. Perhaps the best way to describe the situation is to say that institutional membership is simply extraneous to the Oxford Group. It makes no difference whether a person is Protestant or Catholic, a good church member or a poor one, a Christian or a pagan. And all of this is in spite of the fact that the roots of the movement and its leadership have been Christian, Protestant, and evangelical.

The Four Absolutes: The ethical programme of the Group is epitomized in the counsel of moral perfection defined by the Four Absolutes of perfect honest, purity, unselfishness, and love.

The movement as we knew it, allowed no place for the redemptive work of Christ, who seemed less important to the average person than Buchman himself. (The Oxford Group – Its History and Significance, by W.H. Clark, pp. 26, 30, 153) In the 30s and 40s in India, many Christians, both clergy and laity, were influenced by this group and this was a great hindrance to the gospel.

² The combining of teachings from various religions, both Eastern and Western.

³ All religions lead to the same goal.

⁴ There were many, particularly the liberal theology of German theologian Rudolf Bultman's book, New Testament and Mythology (1941) heralded the beginning.

⁵ Susan Billington Harper, In The Shadow of The Mahatma – Bishop V.S. Azariah and The Travails of Christianity in British India (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), pp. 295-296.

⁶ P.V. George, The Unique Christ and Mystic Gandhi, (Tiruvalla Travancore, S. India: The Malabar Christian Office, 1930), pp. 23-26.

⁷ Susan Billington Harper, In the Shadow of the Mahatma, p. 294.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 293-294.

⁹ Ibid., p. 242.

¹⁰ Norman Grubb, Once Caught, No Escape (Ft. Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1934), p. 150.

¹¹ (Mukti Mission was founded by Pandita Ramabai, who was converted to Christ as a young Hindu widow. Later on the Lord led her to establish a home for young, destitute widows and orphans, particularly girls.)

¹² R.R. Rajamani as told to Angus I. Kinnear, Monsoon Daybreak, (London: Open Books, 1971), pp. 59-60.

¹³ Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 63.

Brothers R.R. Rajamani and R.P. Dorairaj of Madras were the grandchildren of John Christian Arulapan (1810-1867) whom the Lord used as a pioneer evangelist in Christianpettah, Tamilnadu. In 1938, during Bakht Singh's ministry, these men were greatly blessed and began to take the initiative for Bakht Singh's future meetings. The Lord eventually brought R.R. Rajamani, R.P. Dorairaj and George T. Rajaratnam together as co-labourers with Bakht Singh. They laboured together with the Lord to establish 'Jehovah Shammah' and subsequently other assemblies both in India and abroad. They laboured together till death separated them.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁶Alfred J. Flack and C. Raymond Golsworthy served the Lord in India and abroad along with Bakht Singh more closely than anyone else, particularly in the early years of the ministry. Through these English missionaries from Honor Oak in London, Bakht Singh was introduced to Austin- Sparks and numerous other believers from around the world, for their mutual learning and edification.

¹⁷R.R. Rajamani, *Monsoon Daybreak*, p. 63.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 65.

²⁰Ibid., p. 69.

²¹*Saree*, is a piece of cloth measuring six yards (five and one half meters) wrapped by Indian women around themselves as their dress.

²²R.R. Rajamani, *Monsoon Daybreak*, p. 71.

²³Ibid., p. 72.

²⁴Jane Elizabeth Kerr, *A History Of The Christian And Missionary Alliance In Gujarat State, India* (1942), pp. 37-38.

Part - II

Heavenly Vision— An Apostolic Revival

Chapter 9

Jehovah Shammah: A New Beginning

"Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:19)

Our God is a God of new beginnings. While the sun was about to set on the British Raj, the Son of Righteousness was arising brightly in India through the labours of Bakht Singh.

The goal of evangelism is the Church, and the task of the Church is evangelism. The great commission includes the planting of New Testament churches. A major purpose of the Church is to show forth Christ's fullness, unity, wisdom and glory. God, Who is sovereign, orchestrates everything to fulfil His eternal plan and purpose. Everything that takes place, therefore, whether secular or sacred, has a purpose—for history is His story.

In a previous chapter, we have seen the account of the ministry and the work of the Holy Spirit of God among the people of the city of Madras, South India during the anointed ministry of Bakht Singh in 1938 and 1940. The Lord used His servant to impact the city of Madras as never before. In 1940, during his three-months campaign from July to September,

the Lord spiritually impacted the people of all denominations and groups, affecting people of every walk of life. There was great joy in the city. One could hear the singing of hymns coming out of the houses in all parts of the city as families began the habit of conducting family prayers. A Hindu gentleman was overheard saying "It seems as if Madras has become a Christian city".¹

Special follow-up Bible classes were arranged to feed the new believers and to build up those who had newly recommitted their life to Christ. Brother Flack and Brother Golsworthy took turns teaching. When the need of accommodation for this purpose arose, the Lord miraculously provided it with the use of a very large and suitable building made available to them rent-free by a Hindu landlord.

Following the Madras campaign, Bakht Singh went back to Punjab and other places in North India. It was then that a new element appeared in the situation in Madras which was to have profound repercussions. A few of the denominational leaders became alienated from the gathering of these new believers because of jealousy and suspicion, as these leaders began to feel that something was happening which was not under their control, and they were afraid. There was no need to fear because there was no spirit of rebellion or alienation in those earnest believers. But suspicions began to crystallize among these local pastors and some of the liberal, western missionaries that their position and authority were being undermined.

Bakht Singh had spoken fearlessly about the unscriptural practices taking place among them in the Name of Christ. He spoke against the inconsistencies and hypocrisies prevalent among Christian leaders and nominal Christians, and challenged them to do all things according to the Word of God rather than on the basis of men's traditions and their man-made constitutions.

To some, his preaching seemed to be arrogant and judgmental and that offended some of the bishops, pastors and leaders of some western missionary institutions. Moreover, they began to criticize and oppose the spontaneous gatherings for prayer, Bible study, testimonies and open-air meetings. They also spoke against those who had been ministering among the churches, through whose ministry so many of their people had come to a new knowledge of the Lord, and whose lives and homes had been wonderfully transformed.

Just as their fears were unfounded, so the actions they took were misguided. The religious leaders of the churches in Madras at that time took steps to put out the "fire" of spiritual awakening and revival which was troubling them. In November of 1940, they met together to discuss the situation. They unitedly closed the doors of all their churches to Bakht Singh's ministry. Out of this action, a crisis arose, hardly expected and certainly never planned on the part of new believers. Those who had been so mightily blessed and transformed by the ministry fulfilled among the churches, but who were now to be deprived of any more of it by the decree of the pastors and others in power, felt the injustice of this keenly. They began to feel that history was being repeated and that the words of Christ, "they shall put you out of the synagogues," (John 16:2) were being fulfilled.

When Bakht Singh heard about this action of the pastors in Madras, he was not overly concerned, because he never thought that the Lord would want him to return to the South for any length of time anyway. He knew that the Lord would take care of them, and felt that the believers at Madras would just have to look to the Lord to help them sort things out. He felt that his ministry was in the North of India.

Some time later, while ministering in Miraj (Maharashtra, Central India) in March 1941, he was physically exhausted by the continuous travelling and ministry. One day as he was

having his quiet time, the Lord spoke to him from 1 Kings 17:9, "I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." The Lord, Who knew his need, was reminding him to come apart and rest for a while. A few days later he received a letter from Lady Ogle, inviting him to Silverdale at Coonoor for a time of rest as her guest. That invitation was a confirmation from the Lord for him to go to Coonoor, South India. After much prayer, he decided to go in May 1941, for an extended time of rest and waiting upon the Lord to know His will regarding his future ministry.

The route to Coonoor lay via Madras. During his eight months absence from the city since his campaign in 1940, Satan had been working extra hard to nullify what God had done during the great Madras awakening. The antagonism of the church leaders there had only succeeded in alienating the confidence and respect of hundreds of their people who keenly felt the injustice of the ban on their ministering in their churches. "Why should the people in the churches be arbitrarily deprived of something which has proved to be of unspeakable blessing to them, and of which they were hungry for more?" By this time, many had quietly and individually resolved whatever their church authorities might say, they would refuse any kind of bondage. They were determined to be governed by the Word of God, as more and more of its truth was revealed to them.

Bakht Singh sent a telegram to Rajamani and Dorai Raj informing them that he would be passing through Madras on the 13th of May on his way to Coonoor, in the Nilgiris, and asked them to meet him that morning at Madras Central Railway Station. The news of his coming spread like wildfire. Excited about his arrival, the brethren prayed and decided to arrange a public meeting for him on that day. They approached the authorities of St. Andrews Church of the CMS where Dorai Raj and Rajaratnam were active members, but their request was turned down. When they asked for the reason they were

told, "We, in the Indian Ministers Conference, have met and passed a resolution that never again make any place available to this Punjabi preacher."²

Hearing this, the brethren were greatly shocked and distressed. They prayed and discussed the matter as to what they should do at great length. They said they would rather obey the Lord and His Word than to be subject to man's ordinances and traditions. They even felt like resigning their memberships from their respective churches. The important and immediate question was—where to go, as they could find no alternative meeting place. In their distress, they cried to the Lord, Who through it all, was working His plan and purpose to do a new work in Madras.

When the train pulled into Madras Central Station, Bakht Singh was pleasantly surprised to find a large crowd of people on the platform with their Bibles to meet him. He was more surprised to read the blazing words on a large banner they were holding aloft, "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2). The cheering crowd pleaded with him, saying, "Although our pastors do not want you, we want you. Please come and give us God's Word!" They told him that they knew of a suitable piece of land where they could erect a pandal (a sheltered structure) to hold meetings.³

They begged him to stay in Madras and conduct another campaign. However, he had no peace in his heart about this proposal. He sensed that there was danger in having such a campaign without definite guidance from the Lord. He also sensed, that some of these friends, in their new-found faith, were perhaps a little more zealous than wise, and were wanting to have these meetings just to express their defiance of those who were unhappy about the revival. It savoured of competition and rivalry somehow. Bakht Singh thus declined to halt his journey at Madras and planned to proceed to

Coonoor, but due to the insistence of the saints he agreed to stop for one meeting.

The believers took Bakht Singh to the home of D. Samuel. Reverend Vedanayagham, pastor of Harvard Memorial Church, loaned his facility for the evening meeting where Bakht Singh spoke for three hours from Psalm 119. He did not mention anything about starting a new work nor did he encourage them to come out from the denominational churches. In fact, he had no intention of starting another church to meet the spiritual needs of the believers who were like sheep without a shepherd. He departed for the Nilgiris, leaving the brethren confused in heart⁴.

What a sad turn of events! The very church pastors and elders who had once welcomed him into their pulpits where he spoke to packed audiences, now rejected and despised Bakht Singh because of his stand on the Word of God. But God works out everything to fulfil His ultimate plan, and turned this apparent trial into a glorious triumph.

As the train slowly pulled out of the central station on its way to Mettupalayam with Bakht Singh and his team on board, the saints in Madras waved "good bye" with tears streaming down their cheeks.

Coonoor is a hill resort nestled among evergreen pines surrounded by the blue mountains of Nilgiris. (Nilgiri means blue mountains.) When he arrived, Lady Ogle welcomed him from the sweltering heat of the plains (the temperature in the month of May in the plains usually rises above 100 degrees Fahrenheit.) to the comfort of her palatial home at Silverdale. This was going to be his "Mount Sinai," where he, along with his team members, would be waiting on God for the next forty days or so to know God's will, and plan for the future ministry in India, particularly in Madras.

Bakht Singh was very impressed with the loving hospitality of Lady Ogle, which she lavished on him. One afternoon, for

example, even though she had maids, she herself served him tea and made him at ease. She had been praying, for him, for she knew that God's hand was upon him, and that he was a vessel chosen by God to do a new work in India.

While in her home Bakht Singh renewed his fellowship with Brothers Flack and Golsworthy. The Lord used them greatly to help him understand some of the deeper things of God, particularly the church and body life, including the controversial practice of laying-on-of-hands. Fully convinced of its significance and importance, and at his request, Brothers Flack and Golsworthy laid their hands on Bakht Singh in Coonoor, in June, 1941.⁵ They also joined him in prayer, seeking the Lord's will for the next course of action in Madras. They had no intention of reproducing the Honor-Oak fellowship in India. They were willing to fall in line with what the Lord was going to do through his chosen vessel, Bakht Singh. They knew from the time they first met him in 1940, that the Lord's anointing was upon him, and they were willing to link up with him as the Lord led. The time they spent together in Coonoor was a real turning point in the history of the Lord's work, both in India and abroad.

In Silverdale, Coonoor, he spent sleepless nights, wrestling with the Lord to know His will to meet the needs of the newly converted and re-dedicated people of God. He also realized that the deep mysteries of God cannot be understood fully by reading or research alone, but only through revelation. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Cor. 2:10) "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." (Eph 1: 17) "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery." (Eph 3:3) While there, he spent time alone, as well as with others in prayer.

The Lord gave Bakht Singh a never-to-be-forgotten time

at Coonoor. It was destined by God to revolutionize his life and ministry. For the two months of May and June, 1941, the Lord sovereignly brought a few of them together to wait upon Him. Brothers Fred Flack and Raymond Golsworthy were among them. Being new, young missionaries, they were greatly concerned that any decision they made would have far-reaching repercussions. If they decided to join Bakht Singh to start a new fellowship or local church to meet the spiritual needs of the people in Madras, then all the doors of opportunities in denominational churches would be closed for them as well. But they decided to do God's will at any cost. They also wanted to find His will concerning several matters that were upon their hearts. In particular, they wanted to know His mind on the question of effective follow-up work, and of course, what to do about the very critical situation in Madras. Regarding the latter, they could see that unless something happened and God intervened, many of the converts there would soon either be ensnared by sects holding false doctrine or else backslide.

Regarding follow-up work, it was a matter of preserving the fruit of their labours. During the ten years that Bakht Singh had been serving the Lord in India, beginning in 1933, he had seen large numbers of new converts backslide within a few months of conversion. From 1936 onwards, the Lord had been blessing him with wonderful revival campaigns in various parts of India. During the six years until 1941, he had seen great revivals in more than seventy centres in North India, not to mention Madras or other places in the South. He has seen people trembling and crying out for mercy to God, as they became convicted of their wretched condition before Him. He had seen them rolling on the floor in agony, and hiding under pews and benches in terror because of their sins in the sight of God. When the power of God was released in a meeting, it would seem as if a mighty unseen Hand was thrashing the people with a whip. They would beat upon their chest as they

cried out to God for forgiveness. Many were gloriously saved and transformed in those meetings. They would often have scores or hundreds of converts, and at times even several thousands during campaigns. People still talk about those days.

However, what was bothering him was that he could not see much lasting blessing. In every place and in every congregation, people were greatly refreshed and revived during the campaign, but when he went back to visit perhaps a year later, much of the blessings had leaked away, and the new converts were hardly to be seen. Out of the thousands who responded to the gospel message during those revival campaigns in towns and cities all over North India, very few went on with the Lord. As the years went by, he became increasingly conscious of the danger of believers going astray through falling back into sin, worldliness, or into wrong doctrine due to the lack of true spiritual 'atmosphere' and nourishment in the churches of the various denominations and missions where they had left them. "It was like putting the living chicks under dead hens," he once said.

For years he had consoled himself by thinking that he, as an evangelist was responsible simply to evangelize and lead people to Christ. He reasoned that if the converts subsequently went astray or backslide, the fault was not his, but that of the local leaders and pastors. They would be the ones who would have to give an account to God for neglecting their responsibilities. Bakht Singh had always considered that his personal responsibility ended with the revival meetings, Bible studies, and prayer-fellowships. This had now become a concern that lay heavily on his heart, and he had to have God's answer. He felt strongly that God's work must be done in God's way in order to have lasting fruit.

It was with these matters upon his heart that he, along with others, began waiting on the Lord at Coonoor. They prayed for many hours, and sometimes whole nights. They decided

that they ought not to spend any more time discussing their problems, knowing that too much discussion often prevents them from finding God's will. As soon as they gathered they would get down on their knees and pray one by one, asking God to reveal His plan for them in their service for Him in India and in particular for Madras, where scores of "babes in Christ" were now waiting, looking to them to lead them.

Bakht Singh waited on God and prayed for days, but nothing happened. He knew now, that the Lord was waiting for his human thoughts and prejudices and preconceived ideas to melt away. As Bakht Singh and his co-workers continued to wait on the Lord, they found Him beginning to speak to them. As he read through the Acts of the Apostles, the Lord began to show him that evangelists had a responsibility, not only for the conversion of sinners, but also for their subsequent spiritual growth. Those who "begot" spiritual children were obliged to accept the responsibility of "parenthood", to see that the needs of their "babes" were properly taken care of. He fully realized for the first time that the Great Commission was not fulfilled merely with the saving of souls. He saw from Matt. 28:19,20 that the Lord Jesus had commanded His disciples to "Go....make disciples....baptize....teach...", and that this is one inclusive command which must not be divided.

This started them earnestly searching the Scriptures. The result was for them, the startling conviction that unless they, as God's servants, fully performed their service to the people, converts would face difficulty in growing properly. This in turn drove them urgently to prayer to know the Lord's way and will. They did not know what the Lord had in mind for them. They only knew that it was imperative that they wait on Him, refusing to make the slightest move till the next step in His plan for them was unmistakably revealed.

As each day passed, Bakht Singh personally began to

comprehend more clearly what the Lord was requiring of him. But the revelation was progressive and he was hesitant because he could see quite clearly something of what it was going to involve. Up to that point, he had ministered to all and had been received by all. His desire was to serve all. He prayed that no door would be shut to the gospel or the message that God gave him and others, such as Brothers Flack and Golsworthy who had been greatly used of the Lord in follow-up Bible studies in different places and denominations following his campaigns. He could now see, however, that if they themselves were going to take up the responsibility of caring for the converts in Madras, then it would mean that those whom they had always thought should be responsible for this task – local pastors and church leaders were not going to be very pleased with them. The result of that would almost certainly be nothing less than closed doors!

He had at that very time a stack of about 400 letters from various churches, missions, and individuals, containing pressing invitations to come and conduct revival meetings and campaigns for them. One such letter, for example, was from Burma, a very long one, with the signatures of many pastors, requesting a visit to their country to conduct campaigns for them. There were open doors for ministry all over India. He felt that these were all valuable opportunities to serve the Lord and help so many needy people that he must, on no account, do anything that would make people suspicious, and thus jeopardize these open doors for ministry. If it became known, or even rumoured that he was associated with a new movement in Madras, many of these doors would certainly close.

Bakht Singh thus found himself locked in a grim impasse with the Lord. At last, one sleepless night, he yielded. Deep in his heart, he knew what the Lord required of him. He got up, rolled up his bedding, and went to prayer, knowing he must settle this matter once for all. He prayed,

"Lord, I am ready to do Thy will. I promise Thee now, I am prepared to pay the price and obey Thee fully. Whatsoever Thou mayest demand of me, I will do it. I am willing to serve Thee anywhere, even in Madras. Thou canst use me to save one soul, or a multitude, I leave that to Thee. Even if it should cost all my friends to become enemies, and all these doors of opportunity to close, and I am no longer invited anywhere for meetings, and I am misunderstood and reviled on every side, I am ready, at any price, to do Thy will. Oh God, do Thou only give me the assurance that Thou Thyself art leading me!"⁶

As soon as he had prayed this, these words suddenly came to him, "BEHOLD, I WILL DO MARVELS." (Ex. 34:10) It was as if someone was standing beside him and was saying to him, "I will do marvels; I will do marvels!" As Bakht Singh continued to wait on the Lord that night, He brought to his attention in an unmistakable way the words of Acts 26:19, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:" and 28:30,31 "Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching... those things which concerned the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence."

There were other promises also which the Lord gave him that night. From these words he could see clearly that the Lord wanted him and his co-workers firstly, to rent a house in Madras, and secondly, to be freely available at all times to those who would come desiring to know more of His great Salvation. From that day on, the Lord began to make His plan more and more clear to them. During the next few days, the Lord gave him more than 70 other promises confirming His will, that they should begin a new work that should show forth His fullness and reveal His glory.

To be really sure about the Lord's perfect will concerning the ministry, he spent twenty-one days in fasting and prayer, along with some of his co-workers, while in Coonoor. He was not sure what exactly the Lord wanted him to do in Madras,

but He had guided Bakht Singh to return to Madras. At first, he had strongly resisted settling down in Madras, but the Lord insisted. In the end, Bakht Singh fell on his face and said, "Lord, I will go to Madras," and as he did so, his heart was flooded with the joy of the Lord. Bakht Singh asked the brethren who were with him whether they were willing to stand with him at any cost. They all agreed.

Immediately after knowing that it was the Lord's will for them to return to Madras, he informed Rajamani, Dorai Raj and Rajarathnam that he was going back to Madras. He also asked them to rent a house for them.

While Bakht Singh and some of his co-workers⁷ were praying in Coonoor, the saints in Madras were also praying for the Lord's guidance concerning their future. Some of them were insisting that Bakht Singh do something to shepherd the people who were hungering and thirsting after God. While Bakht Singh was waiting on the Lord to find God's will for the future, Rajamani, Dorai Raj and Rajarathnam resigned their membership from their local denominational churches. They too were praying and waiting on the Lord to do something new according to His Word.

The believers at Madras had felt for sometime that this was the Lord's plan. By this time, the Lord had raised up leaders among them and they were pressing Bakht Singh to come, but he could not bring himself to think in these terms. However, the Lord Himself had convinced him, and he now knew that it was indeed His will. Would they be accused of being schismatic or making division? Would they be shut out of all the churches in Madras? Almost certainly. But they must be faithful to the Lord, to His Word, and to His people. Their primary consideration therefore was that they should not be "Disobedient to the heavenly Vision." Fundamentally, it was not circumstances, nor the fears and prejudices of men that had brought them to that. Nor was it the Christian pastors;

they did not blame them. Rather, it was the rigidity of lifeless, sectarian Christianity which resisted the Word of God and its ever-renewing work that led to the crisis.

It was the message of the spiritual and heavenly nature of the church which provoked resistance and opposition leading to the crisis. While every true Christian accepts the fact of the Church as one Body, the "Body of Christ," sectarian was the denial of that "one new man," in which there is "neither Jew nor Greek... bond nor free ...male nor female!" (Gal 3:28) The Lord had shown them that this was to be the basis of fellowship and function for the accomplishing of the work of God.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:13)

"Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free: but Christ is all, and in all." (Col. 3:11)

The Church was a living organism to be expressed and demonstrated as Bakht Singh had taught in all the churches in Madras. The "closed doors" signified not so much a rejection of men but rejection of this message; a refusal to apply the Word of God. What should they do? Would they be faithful to the Word of God and "heavenly vision?" Or would they draw back in favour of the wider and more popular ministry? As they waited in the Lord's presence, they knew what the answer was.

When they arrived at Mettupalayam to catch the Blue Mountain Train to Madras, Bakht Singh, along with the brethren with him, knelt down on the platform and said, "Lord, shake Madras before we reach there." The Lord honoured the obedience of His servant. When they reached Madras Central Station, the so-called church people came with posters, "Bakht Singh go back." What an irony!⁸

A few months prior to that, the Lord had greatly impacted Madras city through the faithful ministry of Bakht Singh. He

was facing circumstances similar to what his Lord had faced. The very people who had shouted- "Hosanna, to the Son of David," (Matt 21:9) a week later were shouting - "Away with him, away with him, crucify him." (John 19:15) As the Lord Himself warned, the servant is not greater than his master. "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:31) However, many sincere believers came to welcome Bakht Singh and his co-workers, and took them to a house at 19, Kariappa Mudaliar Street in Purusawalkam, Madras (Chennai, South India). Even though Bakht Singh knew he would face real opposition, he returned to Madras in obedience to God's will and call.

After arriving at the rented house, they had a season of prayer with the saints, and thus they refreshed themselves after their tedious journey from the cool Nilgiri hills to the hot plains and the city. The house was small for the team of about a dozen brothers. Local brethren, including Captain Manoharan Jey Singh- a former cricket player who had committed his life during the great Madras awakening, and others did their best to help Bakht Singh and his team make their stay comfortable.

Early next morning, Bakht Singh and his team went out for an open-air procession. The news soon spread about them being in the city. As the procession moved, many joined and followed them to their new residence, hungering and thirsting for the Word of God. As the news spread, believers began to crowd into his small residence, requesting him to hold special campaigns and enquiring about his future plans for the city. He told them that he was planning to spend a night in prayer to find out the Lord's plan for the people of God in the city. One of the brethren located an old, dilapidated building in a Muslim cemetery on Pallavaram Hill near St. Thomas Mount for the night of corporate prayer.⁹

About twenty brethren, together with Bakht Singh set out for the hill to attend the night of prayer. One of the participants

was a young English missionary from London, England, Raymond Golsworthy, who had been working with Bakht Singh since 1940. The following is his personal recollection of the Pallavaram Hill prayer meeting.

"To the best of my memory, about twenty of us¹⁰ boarded the train, and headed for Pallavaram, - all of us full of joy and expectation, and all of us eager to know what the Lord would say to us that night! Throughout the short journey, we were singing heartily our gospel songs, - for this was common practice, those days, whenever groups of Christians were travelling together. We actually reached Pallavaram late in the afternoon, and expectations were running high as to what the Lord would say to us.

Now comes the special story of Pallavaram Hill. The hill was not far from the railway station, and the sun was setting when we began the climb. Soon, it was difficult to pick our way through the rocks and stones, so we lit our petromax lanterns and pressed on. Then came our big surprise! Pallavaram Hill was evidently a favourite haunt for snakes and scorpions! Every few steps, someone would call out that he had been attacked, and we began to wonder whether our choice of a place had been the right one after all! Some even suggested that we turn back and "try another day," - and at a rather more welcoming venue! Brother Bakht Singh, however, urged us to press on, resisting, in Christ's Name, all enemies that might oppose our purpose - whatever form they might take! By the time we reached the top of the hill, it was quite dark, but we could easily see the bright lights of Madras stretched out beneath us, while some stars were shining on us!

I do not recall the exact sequence of events at that point, but I do know that all of us were very soon on our knees, and praying to our Living and Loving Lord for the guidance and direction we so much needed. Prayer after prayer ascended to the Throne of God. Bible-promises were claimed, and enquiry was made as to

what would be the next step for us in God's unfolding plan. I remember watching the lights of Madras gradually going out, for I confess it was hard to close my eyes! Even the lesser street-lights were later switched off, and a strange, and somewhat frightening darkness "took over."

By then, it was getting a little cold, so we tightened our shawls around our shoulders while continuing on our knees. And, strangely enough, we felt an increasing closeness to our Blessed Lord. Physical weariness seemed to disappear from us, and, again and again, we just had to burst out in our happy songs of faith. Hour after hour, the prayers and praises continued, and we just knew that we were being heard. Then came **THE MOMENT I SHALL NEVER FORGET!!** I confess that I again opened my eyes, and out on the Eastern horizon, a tinge of light appeared, and then, very slowly, increased. Not long after that, I saw a small crescent of the sun itself "peeping up" over the Eastern horizon - as if it had a message for us! It slowly increased in size, and soon the complete sun was lighting up the familiar Bay of Bengal, and turning it to gold! Soon we could see the outline of Madras itself; **OUR MADRAS-WELCOMING THE DAWNING OF ANOTHER DAY!** My thoughts wandered again, and visualized the hardly few who would be hurrying out from their little houses for their early-morning "dip" in that sunlit sea! In my own "mind's eye" I also visualized those sleepy, but faithful mothers and daughters already busying themselves in their little kitchens, preparing those tasty "iddlies" and "dosais"¹¹ for the stirring families - not to mention that indispensable coconut chutney which must always be on hand! At the time, the sun was mounting higher and higher. And even up on our hilltop, we could hear the sounds of the morning traffic as our **DEAR MADRAS** was entering a **NEW DAY!**

It was getting slightly warmer now, and we on the hilltop could loosen our shawls from our shoulders, but still continuing

on our knees. Prayer, however, was giving way to praise, and enquiries became "thanksgiving of faith". We had "met God", and He had put something of His mind deep into our hearts. Very soon, we would have a definite assurance as to HIS way.

It was only at that point that the thought came to me that, during that night, now passed, and particularly the early morning hours, I had seen a picture of what God was now planning to do in Madras, and what He would do later throughout the land! What I had viewed from that Pallavarum hilltop was something clearly symbolic. Human and artificial "lights" were being gradually extinguished, and a "Greater Light" was about to rise, - The Living CHRIST Himself! He Himself would become the very substance of a NEW "Testimony," and only that could meet the need of the city. My mind was carried away to the word in Malachi, "Unto you that fear my Name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." (Mal 4:2) Then came that lovely word in 2 Samuel: "He shall be as the Light of the Morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds." (2 Samuel 23:4) Then again, that exultant word of Zecharias, "Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on High hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:78,79) Last of all, came the word in Isaiah: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." (Isa 9:2)

It was by those verses that God interpreted to me the things that I had seen. History confirms that that, indeed, is what GOD DID not long after, and as a result, new blessing has come to all parts of India and also the surrounding countries, and touching, even, the ends of the earth. That, of course, is another story, - not for present telling. Nor perhaps will it ever be. But it is a story known in Heaven. And to God be all the glory!¹²

The snakes, scorpions, centipedes, the other insects and creatures that tried to attack the praying saints were to remind them of the attacks and troubles they would face from the enemy when they would do the work in obedience to the will of God according to the heavenly vision.

About that experience, Bakht Singh later recalled, "These scorpions and centipedes were attracted by the bright petromax lights which we had taken with us. We went on killing them as we saw them approaching. It was an unusual experience, because on the one hand we were praying the whole night and on the other hand we were killing the scorpions and the centipedes. Early in the morning we could see the sun rising on the city of Madras. Then the Lord spoke to us in a clear and open way that we would have to face such bitter opposition and persecution from people that it would be as painful and poisonous as the stings of the scorpions and centipedes. The Lord also encouraged us, saying not to be afraid of them because even though these people may try to harm us, they would not be able to succeed, for as we were able to overcome the scorpions and centipedes, so we will also be able to overcome those who will persecute and oppose us. What the Lord spoke through the scorpions and centipedes turned out to be true as was experienced in the years that followed. So our going to prayer perseveringly proved a great help and encouragement."¹³

The very fact that Bakht Singh and his team had been spending a lot of time in prayer and fasting to know the perfect will of God concerning the future work clearly demonstrated that in no way did he want to do anything by "leaning on his own understanding" or to please himself or anybody else. His only desire was to seek, know and do the perfect will of God at any cost. Therefore, through the night of corporate prayer, the Lord directed Bakht Singh and the team to the next step they should take. The night of prayer on Pallavaram Hill was thus a turning point in the history of the work because it was born

out of the prevailing, persevering and painful prayer of His people.

Following that historic night of prayer, in the early hours of that Sunday morning, they came down from the hill. Though physically tired from a sleepless night, they were invigorated by the presence and the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. With His resurrection power working mightily in their mortal bodies, they were ready to do anything to please the Lord. The brethren who were with Bakht Singh asked him questions, some of which concerned as to how the early believers worshipped the Lord. Bakht Singh replied, they would not go by the opinions or traditions of man, but they searched the Scriptures on every subject and did everything according to the Word of God. In answer to their question he read Acts chapter 2 verses 41 & 42. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." There we have the account of what the early believers did at the birth of the New Testament Church.

Following showers and breakfast that morning, they met in a school building. As mentioned in Acts 2:41, they first had a baptismal service where sixteen believers, both men and women, were baptized in a small tank adjoining the school. After the tank was filled and before the baptism, Bakht Singh gave a message on baptism explaining its significance and importance. He also explained the importance of the laying on of hands. He was the first to enter into the tank and, with his face shining, he baptized them. Those who were baptized came out of the water rejoicing in the Lord and singing songs of praise.

Following the baptism, Bakht Singh and Brother Golsworthy laid their hands on those who were baptized, signifying their relationship with them and with the Body

of Christ worldwide. Some of the saints who had already been baptized and were convicted through the Word of God, also came forward for the laying on of hands. Following this, Bakht Singh gave a stirring message from the Scripture on the privilege of worshipping the Lord. He told them that, as believers, it is their spiritual birth-right to minister to the Lord.

All those present enjoyed the time of open worship when brothers and sisters poured out their hearts to the Lord through singing praises and thanksgiving and adoration.

Bakht Singh then gave a message about the Christian community and commitment – how to be built up as the “House of God” in the Lord. He challenged the people to give themselves wholeheartedly for the fulfilment of the eternal plan and purpose of God in building an eternal habitation for the Lord. They remembered the Lord by the breaking of bread. Following that, all those who attended the service enjoyed a time of fellowship during the love feast, thus demonstrating their oneness in the Lord, regardless of caste, colour and status. In the evening they met together for the ministry of the Word in a bigger compound nearby which belonged to Dr. Pushpam Samuel. Brother Golsworthy spoke from 2 Kings 2: 2. “And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Beth-el. And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Beth-el.” The Lord spoke to many a heart through that message. Moses Dawn, who interpreted it into Tamil, was so challenged and inspired that he composed a song based on the same text. In the evening, many more people joined the service. Even this larger compound became too small to accommodate all those who came for the service.

The first Sunday in the city was thus spent ministering to the Lord in the light of the Word of God with the people of God. It was like an open heaven. The life and love of God flowed

freely and fully among the people of God. It was a day that will never be forgotten by those present. Indeed, it was a significant day in the history of the new work which the Lord was doing in and through Bakht Singh and his co-workers. It was on that day that the Assembly we now know as Jehovah-Shammah was born through the travailing prayers and obedience of His people.

The number of people who were coming for meetings and fellowship continually increased daily. It was the repeat of Acts chapter 2:47 "...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved". Seeing the need of a bigger place, they began to pray that the Lord would provide them with a larger facility for this ever- growing work of God for His glory.

The following chapters describe the amazing work of God through Bakht Singh and his co-workers in Madras, Andhra Pradesh and in other parts of India and the world – truly, a 20th century apostolic revival.

End Notes

¹R.R. Rajamani, as told to Angus I. Kinnear, *Monsoon Daybreak* (London And Eastbourne: Open Books, 1971), p. 69.

²Ibid., p. 76.

³*Pandal* - temporary tent primarily made with large tarpaulin and bamboos.

⁴R.R. Rajamani, *Monsoon Daybreak*, p. 79

⁵Author's interview with Fred Flack, April 23, 1991

⁶Bakht Singh, *Return Of God's Glory*, (Bombay, India: Gospel Literature Service, 1969), p. 25.

⁷Sam Chacko, Dawn Moses, Noel Barrow, Raymond Golsworthy, Fred Flack, Willy- were among them.

⁸Bakht Singh, *Write The Vision*, (Unpublished papers, 1966).

⁹It was called St. Thomas Mount, because as tradition has it, St. Thomas, one of the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ was martyred while preaching there and was subsequently buried on that mount.

¹⁰Bakht Singh, Golsworthy, Noel Barrow, Rajamani, Dorairaj, George Rajarathnam, Captain Manohar, Pathros, Williams, Daniel, Moses Dawn, Sam Chacko, and others.

¹¹These are typical breakfast items made out of rice in South India

¹²Raymond Golsworthy, Pallavaram Hill, "*Hebron Messenger*" (July 16, 2000).

¹³Bakht Singh, *Come Let Us Build*, Page 18 (Secunderabad, India: Commerical Press, 1975), p. 18

Chapter 10

Jehovah-Shammah: To the Praise of God's Glory

"... thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts ..." Zechariah 1:16

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit saith the LORD of hosts." Zechariah 4:6

One of Bakht Singh's favourite sayings was that our God is not only a prayer-hearing but also a prayer-answering God. Soon after the night of prayer on Pallavaram hill in Madras, the Lord led them to a larger place in answer to their prayers. Therefore they could say with the Psalmist, "I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place." Psalm 118:5

While they had been praying and looking for a larger facility, Bakht Singh remembered a vision he had had some time earlier when he was at Coonoor. In that vision he saw a house and grounds large enough for their needs. So they began to look around for such a facility. Then Captain Manohar found an old building about to be vacated, because it was badly in need of repair and the owner refused to do anything about it. Manohar knew the owner personally because they used to play

cricket together. At first, the building and the compound seemed too large for their present need, but the Lord impressed upon them that He had prepared this place and that they were to take it.

They approached the owner, Mr. Isphahani, who was a Muslim. They told him that they wanted to rent the house and the compound for the work of God. Bakht Singh showed him the 1 Chronicles 29:1, which the Lord had given him that very morning in his quiet time. "The palace is not for man, but for the LORD God." Mr. Ishpahani was very impressed and said that he would not only rent it to them but have all the repairs made according to their specifications. He then took them in his car to inspect the property and told them that he would do any repair they wished and would even construct a water tank at his own expense to be used for baptisms. Moreover, they could occupy the property immediately, and it would be rent-free until the repairs were completed. As they were leaving, he knelt with them in prayer and accepted an Urdu Bible as a gift.

They agreed to pay two months rent in advance as was customary in those days, even though they had no money. But soon after they agreed to take the house, the Lord miraculously set His seal of approval on it by sending them a gift of 300 Rupees. They moved in on July 12, 1941, only about three weeks after coming down from Coonoor, believing that the Lord had begun a '*NEW THING*' (Isa 43:19) which was going to touch the whole of India and beyond. They named the building "Jehovah-Shammah", which means "The LORD is there". They named the building, not the people. (In the Old Testament, the practice of giving names to places for specific reasons was quite common. See for example, Genesis 22:14 and 28:19.)

Among the many names given to God's people in the Bible, one is "God's building." (1 Corinthians 3:9) Bakht Singh and his co-workers knew that they could not build "God's building"

on human plans. God's work must be done in God's way at any cost, only then will the four-fold purpose of the church mentioned in Ephesians be realized: only then will His fullness, unity, wisdom and glory be revealed through His church. With this in mind, they committed their lives to the Lord as they began to serve Him through the facility at 'Jehovah Shammah'.

Concerning the vision of the work, Bakht Singh stated this in his own words:

"That which would now develop should not be another exclusive body or sect of Christian people, another denomination. It was to be an expression of the heavenly and universal Church in its unity and calling. The first thing to be avoided, then, was a distinguishing name. We knew people would be eager to name us. We knew we would be pressed to name ourselves. Who are you? Where do you belong? What do you call yourselves? You must have a name! All this would come at us from every side.

We had seen that the Church of Jesus Christ is already 'One new man' "For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.' (Eph 2:14, 15) It does not have to be united. All believers are already united in the 'one body'. When regenerated by the Holy Spirit they are at the same time 'baptized by one Spirit into one Body'. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor 12:12-13) It is the expression of this unity that sectarianism and denominationalism has so much damaged and marred.¹ Then we must be satisfied to be called Christians and not add other

name[s] whether human, doctrinal or ethnological. Any name other than or additional to 'Christian' would distinguish us from other Christians and lead to our becoming another sect. Therefore we name the building only, and would be known as believers or Christians, the ones who met for worship at 'Jehovah-Shammah', or at No. 19, Ritherdon Road, Madras. The Church is one body, and all believers throughout the world and throughout the ages belong to us and we belong to them. This, the Scriptures plainly teach us. It is our responsibility and privilege to express this, if we are not to be "disobedient" unto the heavenly vision."² (Acts 26:19)

The Lord helped Bakht Singh to understand from the Word of God that the purpose of the church is to show forth His fullness. (Eph 1:23) Therefore he emphasized the importance of the Body Life whenever possible by believers living together and working together under the Headship of Christ in unity and oneness. When the brothers moved into the facility at 'Jehovah-Shammah' there were about fifteen of them, both national and foreign. Among the nationals were believers from various backgrounds, colour, caste, class and language. Humanly speaking it was extremely difficult to bring about true oneness and unity in a multi-cultural community. Only through the Holy Spirit can that oneness and unity be achieved, for spiritual unity is the work of the Holy Spirit. (Eph 4:3) Bakht Singh also emphasized from the Word of God that every believer, regardless of his background, however insignificant or influential in society, is equally precious, equally important and equally necessary to the body of the believers.

Activities at Jehovah Shammah were prayerfully designed to mature believers in Christ and to show the spiritual unity of all believers in Christ by breaking down man-made barriers and building relationships through the love of Christ in the light of the Word of God. Strict discipline was maintained among those who lived at Jehovah-Shammah. Sam Chacko of



Christ Church in Karachi where Brother Bakht Singh served the Lord from 1933 – 35 as an itinerant preacher.



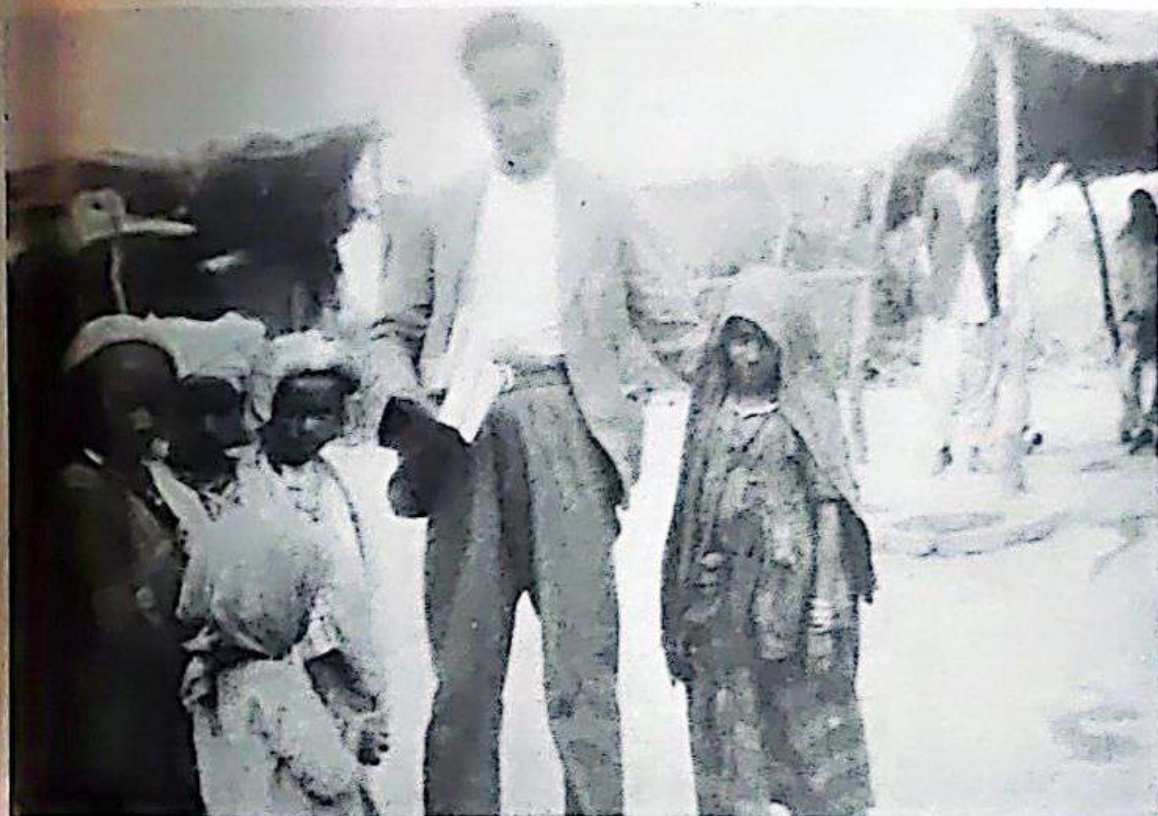
Elim , Hyderabad 1950-59



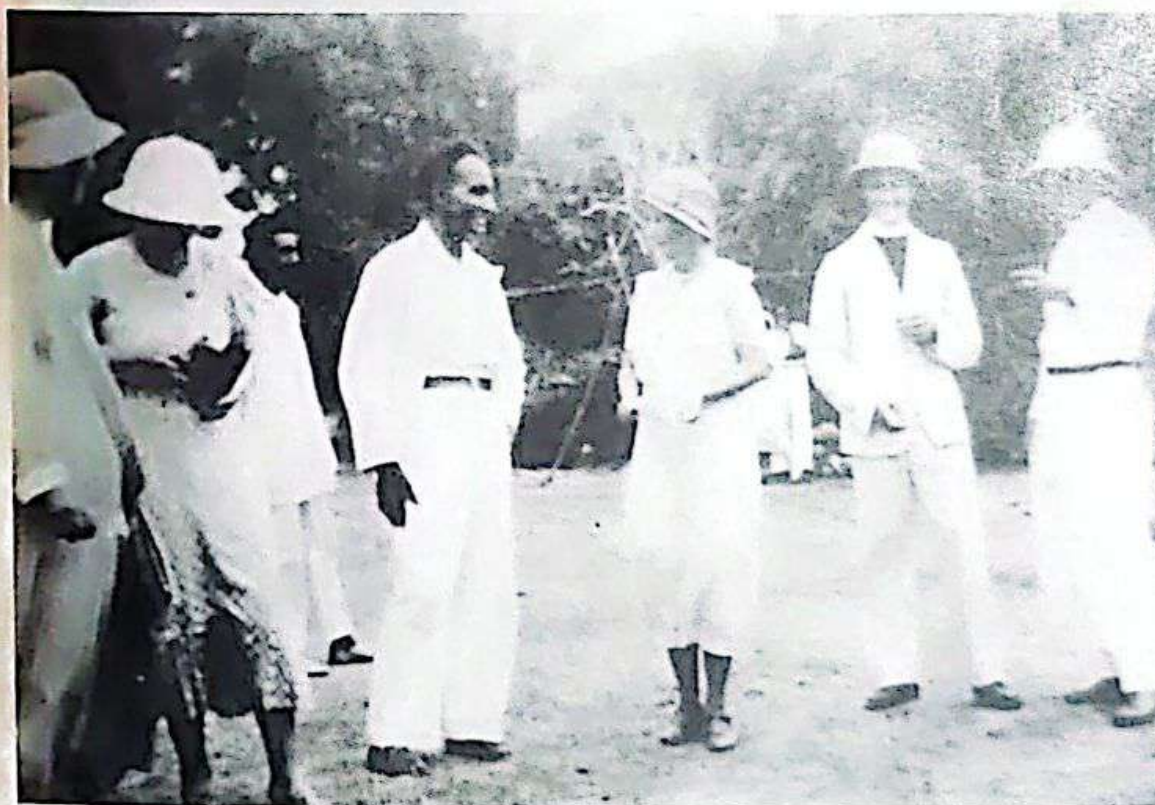
Brother Bakht Singh with lepers in a leprosy colony -
Karachi, 1933



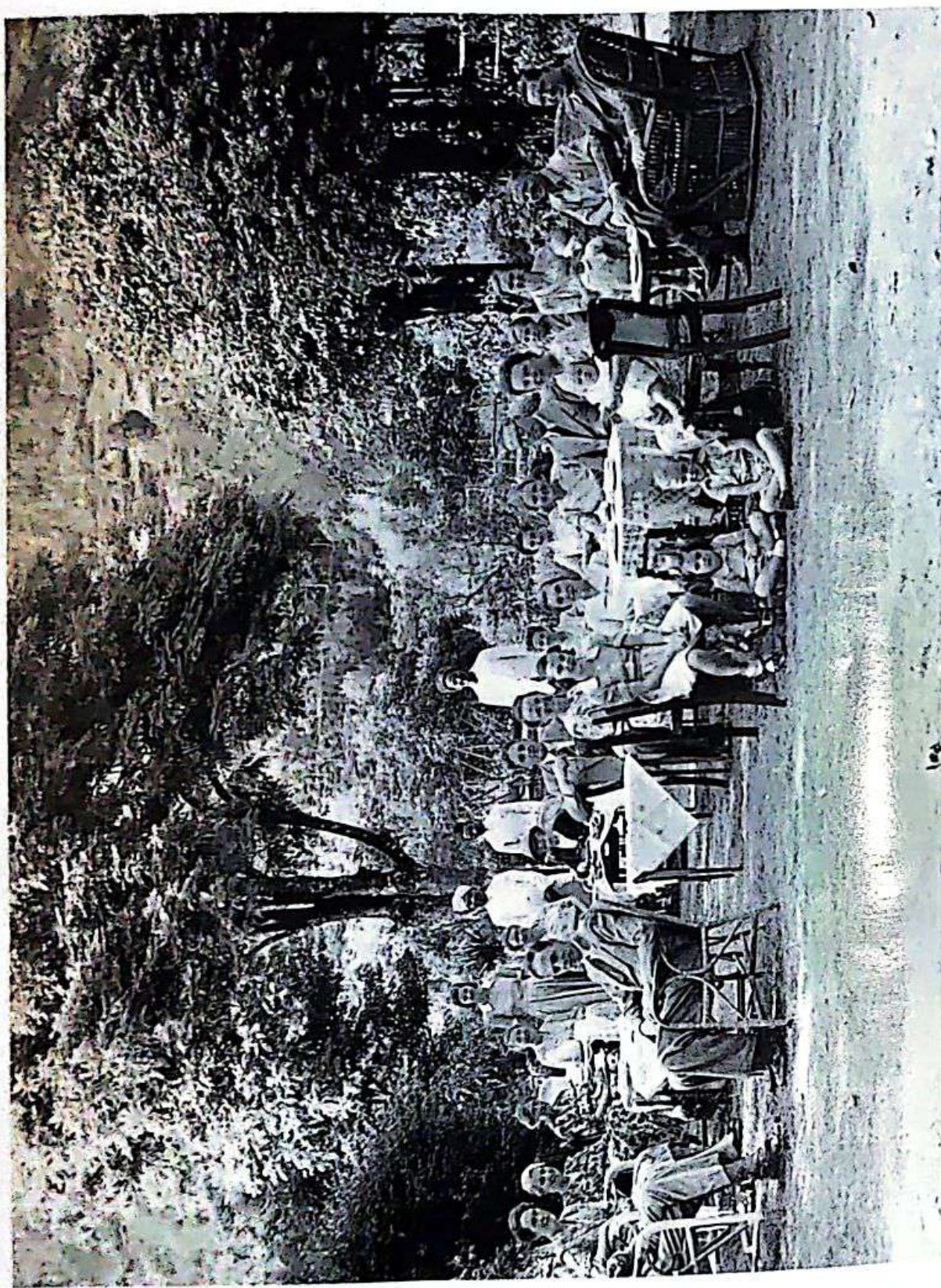
Brother Bakht Singh
busy with Personal
Evangelism-
Karachi, 1934



Brother Bakht Singh in a Sweeper Colony with sweepers' children
- Karachi, 1933



Brother Bakht Singh with some foreign missionaries -
Karachi, 1933



'Silver Dale' grounds in the Nilgiris showing Lady Ogle hosting a tea party for her missionary guests among whom are Austin Sparks, Raymond Golsworthy, Angus Kinnear, Fred Flack and Leslie Carter who were closely associated with Brother Bakht Singh.



Pallavarm Hill near Madras, the spot where the all-night prayer was held before the starting of the new work, 1941.



Brother Bakht Singh with the first four elders of 'Jehovah-Shammah' – Brother Rajamani, Durai Raj, Devasahayam and George Rajaratnam and other co-workers Bro. John Paul, Bro. Leslie Carter and Bro. C.E. Dasan.



Street-preaching in Madras during the 1954 Holy Convocation held at 'Jehovah-Shammah'. Brother Bakht Singh preaching from bullock-cart, with the interpreter Brother Dawn Moses and Bro.Appaji with Violin in the middle and other musicians.



Brother Bakht Singh busy with street evangelism 1952.



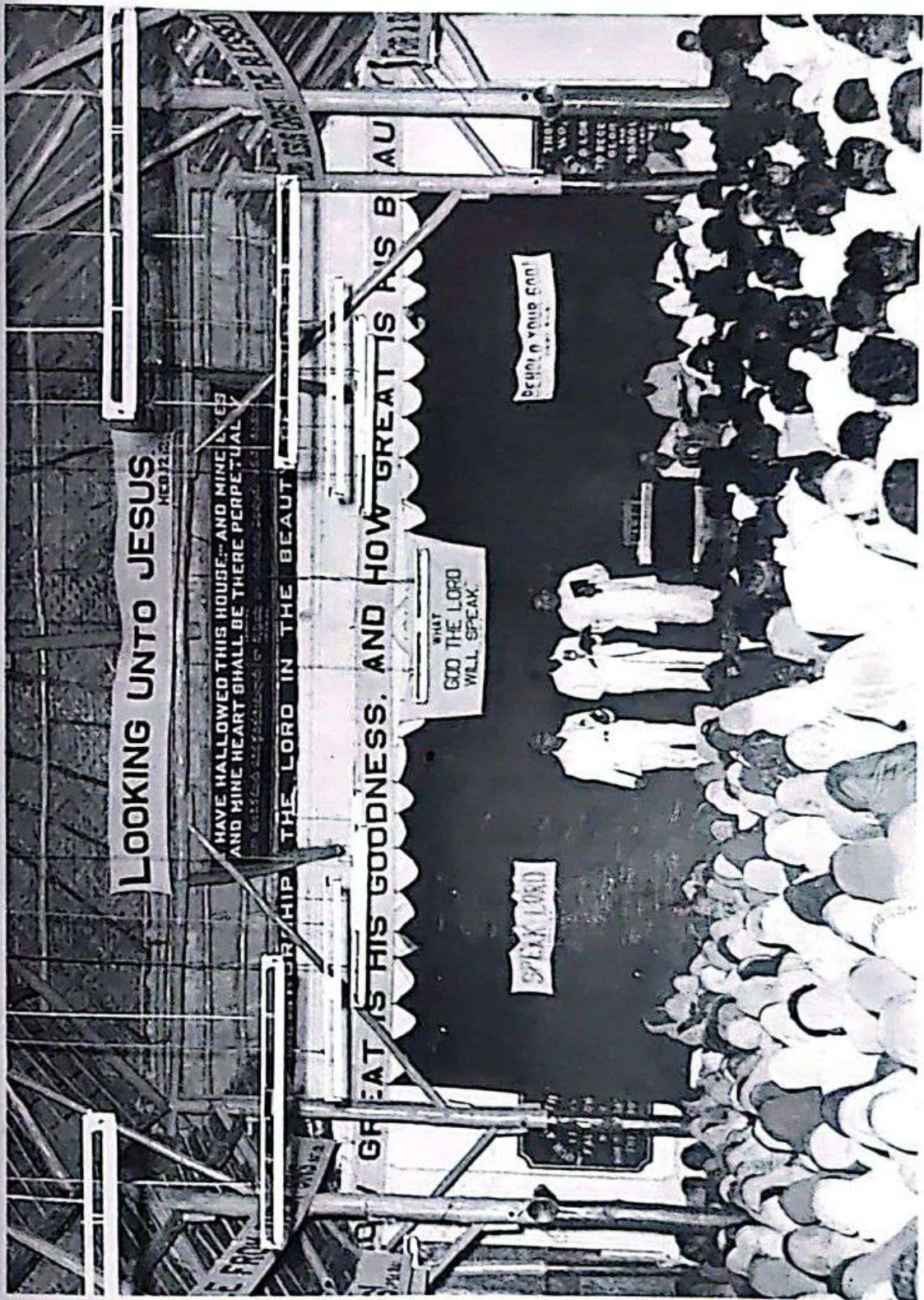
Miss Grace Stalley and Miss Violet Green who were in-charge of 'Hephzibah' the sisters home, during the early days of founding 'Jehova-Shammah'



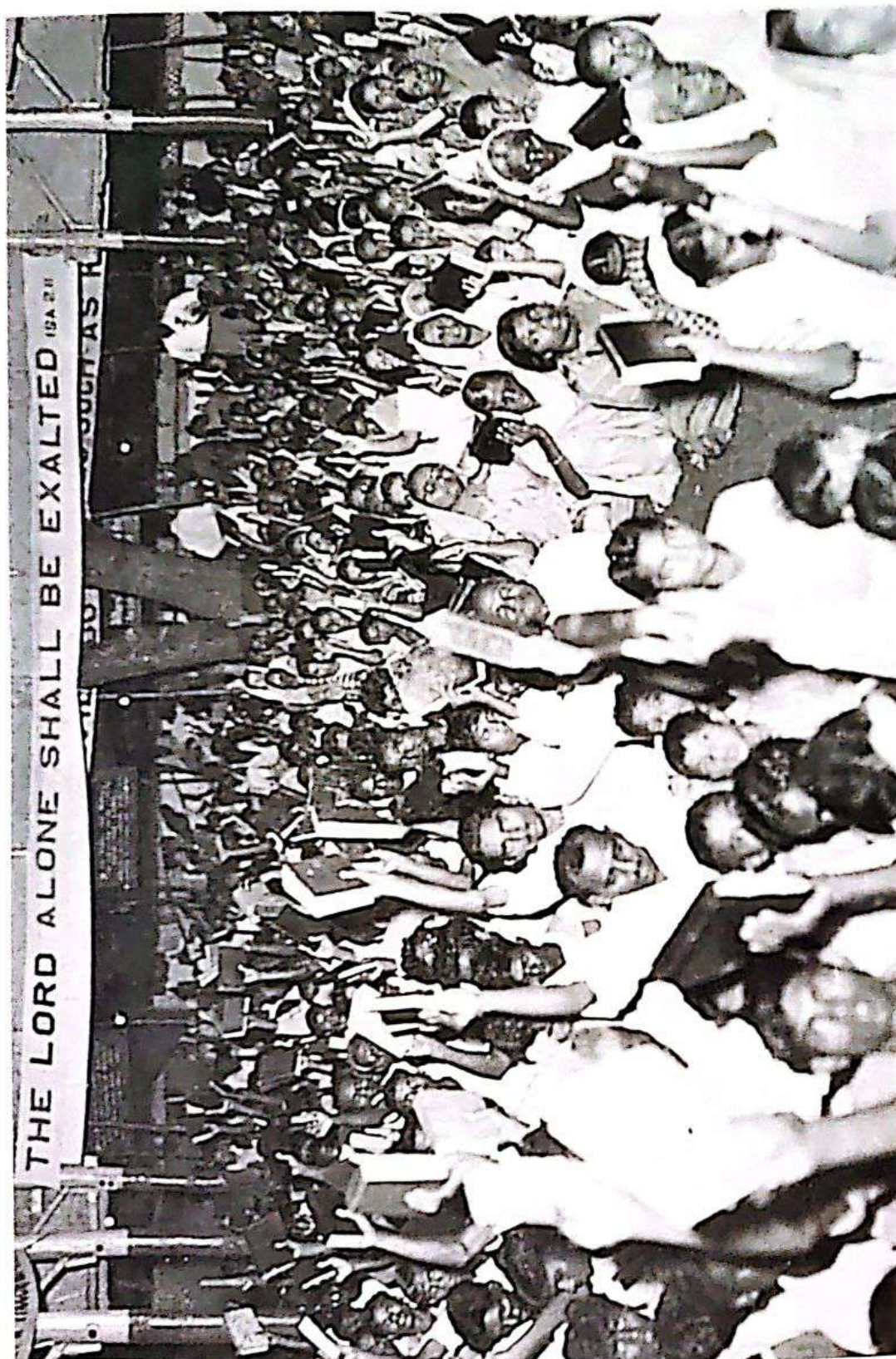
Brother Bakht Singh with
the long time co-workers
Brother Kuruvilla Phillip
and Brother Willy, 1945.



Brother
Bakht Singh
with Billy
Graham in
Madras 1956



Brother Bakht Singh speaking at one of the Holy Convocations at 'Hebron', Hyderabad with two interpreters translating into Telugu and Hindi languages.



Bible chorus
being sung
before the
message, by
lifting up
the Bibles.



Saints enjoying love-feast after one of the meetings



Left to Right: Bro.K.Philip, Bro.K.N.Augustine and Bro. G.T.Benjamin busy with the affairs of the Church at Hebron, Hyderabad, 1999



The
Author
with
fellow
God's
servants
in Hebron,
1999.



Bros K.Phillip,
Lazer Sen and
Koshy with
fellow servants
of the Lord at
Hyderabad,
2003



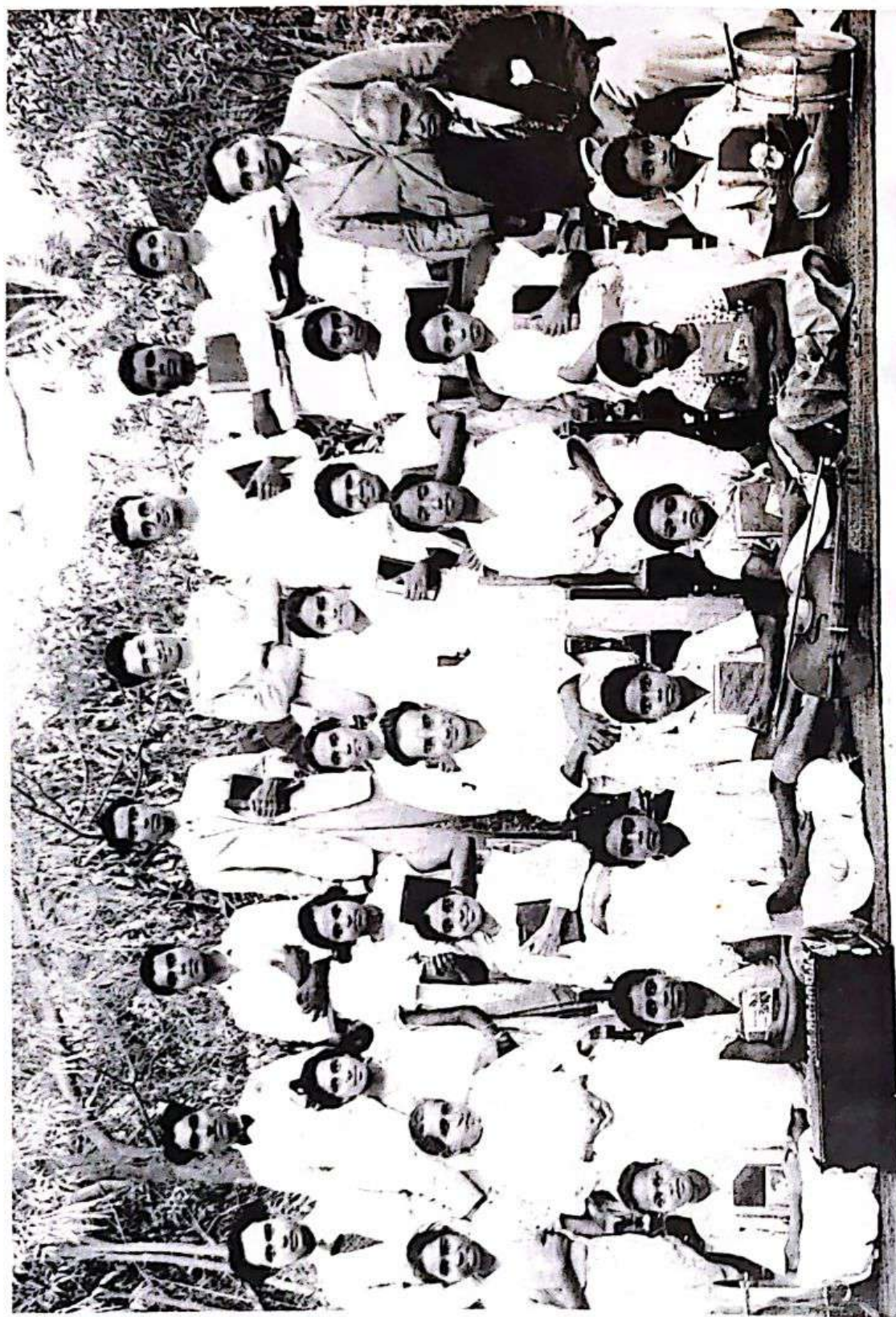
The chosen Brethren, *left to right*: Lazer Sen, T.E.Koshy, S.Martin, K.Philip - Madras, 1991



Brother Bakht Singh with Billy Graham and Crusade Committee in Madras - 1956



Brother
Bakht Singh
with Lady
Ogle, Miss
Sinclair and
others at the
Nilgiris. The
early co-
workers
Arogyaswami
Williams, and
Moses Dawn
are seen
standing
behind
brother Bakht
Singh.



Brother
Bakht Singh
with
Sanyasini
Ponnamma
(on the
right) and
other
members of
his team, at
Coiratore

Kerala, who was converted to Christ through the ministry of Bakht Singh in Madras in 1940, and joined Bakht Singh for the ministry from the beginning of the work, told this writer about an incident that explains how Bakht Singh tried to maintain discipline among his trainees. One day someone invited Bakht Singh and the housemates of Jehovah-Shammah for a birthday party. Before going to the party, Bakht Singh asked Sam Chacko to stay back at Jehovah-Shammah, to keep watch while others were out. Sam Chacko, who had not had any food and was hungry, tried to sneak into the party without the knowledge of Bakht Singh to have some food and to get right back to Jehovah-Shammah. But Bakht Singh, whose sharp eyes never missed anything, noticed Chacko coming to the party without permission. Bakht Singh asked him, why he was not at his post at Jehovah-Shammah and slapped him in front of all and ordered him back to Jehovah-Shammah for his duty as a watchman. Chacko returned, hungry and sad. After the party was over, Bakht Singh treated Chacko with food which he himself brought from the party. Bakht Singh was loving, caring and at the same time a strict disciplinarian. Chacko was a loyal and hard working co-worker of Bakht Singh, who served the Lord with him for a number of years. Bakht Singh and his fellow-workers believed that the people who come out for the service of the Lord should be trained and equipped through the House of God – the local Assembly. Those who came and lived in Jehovah-Shammah as fulltime workers were trained through ministry and activities of Jehovah-Shammah. These men and women of God were trained for God's work through the House of God and were sent out for ministry from the House of God, as we see in Acts 13:2,3: "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

Disciples are not born, they are made. They are made through training in the House of God. In order to facilitate the training and equip and mature believers, a typical day at Jehovah Shammah began with an individual quiet time with the Word and with the Lord. Bakht Singh practised having quiet time. He began his day at 4 a.m., by reading the Bible upon his knees and waiting upon the Lord for hours. He emphasized the importance of all believers having their morning quiet time with the Word and with the Lord. This was followed by daily activities from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. At 5:00 in the morning they met for family prayer, followed by breakfast. They gathered for Bible study from 7.30 till 9 o' clock, followed by open-air meetings for those who could attend. Others would spend time working in the kitchen or in the hall, or wherever work was needed to be done. They were taught the dignity of labour, and everyone was encouraged to take their share in sweeping and cleaning from the toilets to the worship hall. Then in the afternoon, after lunch, a period of prayer was followed by Bible study. The evening meetings were from 6.30 to 9 o' clock, followed by open – air preaching. Every other Saturday, the people fasted and prayed, and had all-night prayer. Mondays were set aside for general cleaning and personal work.

One of the unique aspects of the Assemblies connected with Bakht Singh's ministry was that every worship hall or facility and compounds displayed Scripture verses both inside and outside. After they moved into Jehovah-Shammah, the large compound walls, both inside and out were painted with appropriate verses of Scripture in large letters in different colours. Similarly, the walls of buildings, meeting halls, and even the toilet facilities were decorated with Scriptures for all to see and read. It was like an open Bible. When walking into the compound or the halls, one was struck by the Scriptures which declared the Presence and the Glory of God. It was a living testimony to both believers and non-believers; even the postman could eas-

ily identify these Assemblies by the Scripture verses displayed prominently.

People continued coming to Jehovah-Shammah in increasing numbers, even though no publicity was used to draw people. They had a constant stream of visitors coming at all hours of the day and night bringing their Bibles, eager for spiritual fellowship over the Word of God. They kept the doors of Jehovah-Shammah open at all times. There was a big banner outside the compound saying, "All are welcome." They sat together and studied the Scriptures. And as they studied the Word prayerfully together, God's eternal plan and purpose became more and more clear to them. They fully realized that they must obey the Word of God implicitly, fully determined to repudiate everything that proved to be a hindrance, whether it be tradition, method, doctrine, custom or anything else that would not stand the test of the plain Word of God. When there was conflict between tradition and the Word of God, they obeyed the Word of God.

A few months after they moved into Jehovah Shammah, a group of pastors from various denominations came to see Bakht Singh and his co-workers. Bakht Singh welcomed them graciously. They came to ask why he was baptizing since he was not ordained to do so, and moreover, why he had now started another church in Madras. After a word of prayer Bakht Singh said to them, "Let us consider the matter in the light of the Scripture." Unfortunately, none of the pastors had brought a Bible with him! He said to them, "How can we discuss this important Biblical matter unless we look at the Bible together?" He told the embarrassed pastors that they should go home and study the New Testament passages about baptism and then they should come back with their Bibles for further discussion. "Let the Word of God be our guide," he said. They promised to come back but they never did, nor did they ask for any further meetings with him.

Another unique aspect of Bakht Singh's ministry at Jehovah-Shammah was the corporate/community living and on-the-job training of believers as mentioned earlier. Jehovah Shammah was not a church. It was a place they used for the gathering of the local church, and for the boarding and training of believers. Even as an itinerant preacher, Bakht Singh travelled around with his co-workers. They lived together, prayed together, sought the will of God together, served the Lord together and learned from each other. As mentioned earlier, about fifteen of them, mostly full-time workers, both nationals and foreigners, moved into Jehovah-Shammah. There they lived together as a heavenly family in unity. They cared for each other and esteemed the other as being better than themselves. They were bound by Christ's 'agape' love, always caring for the needs of others. In the early days, there were times when there was not enough food to eat. One night after the open-air meeting, some of the young men came home hungry and went into the kitchen looking for food, but there was only one bowl of rice. Seeing that, one said that others might be more hungry than he was, so he decided to leave it for someone else. Each one came in, and after seeing the bowl of rice said the same thing. Finally, no-one ate the food and the rice remained in the bowl. This clearly shows how they cared for each other's welfare. This was indeed Christ-like love. Nationals did not expect any hand-out from the missionaries; both nationals and missionaries shared what they had. "And all that believed were together, and had all things in common." (Acts 2:44)

Brother Leslie Carter and his wife (British missionaries) joined Bakht Singh in 1943. After leaving the Mission, they trusted the Lord for their needs just like the nationals at Jehovah-Shammah. One Sunday, they put what little money they had in the offering box. A few hours later, following the love-feast, an Indian brother gave Brother Carter an envelope. After they arrived home, to their surprise, they discovered that

the Lord had provided for the needs of the Carters through a national brother³. This was one of the hallmarks of believers in the Assemblies. While in most denominations, nationals looked to the missionaries for their needs, here in the Assemblies they looked to the Lord and shared what they had with other nationals or missionaries.

Christ's love and life permeated their lives. Both non-Christians and nominal Christians who came out of curiosity or with critical minds were greatly touched and influenced, and often became believers by seeing the life-style of these early believers at Jehovah-Shammah. In this respect they truly fulfilled John 13:34,35: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Special provision was made for the women and girls who were recently converted and had been compelled to leave their homes, and to train sisters who came out for fulltime service for the Lord. In 1942, they rented a house specially for women, and named it Hephzibah from Isaiah 62:4. Miss Violet M. Green and Miss Grace Stalley of England helped these sisters, and instructed them in the way of the Lord, to train them for the ministry, including house-to-house visiting in the neighbourhood. At times, they also joined the brothers for the open-air meetings. One feature of the work among the sisters was retreats for Bible study during the times of public holiday. The Lord also used these sisters from England to provide the necessary help both in 'Jehovah-Shammah' and in Hephzibah. Later on these brothers and sisters would join together for a gospel outreach in different places, which gave them on-the-job training in witnessing for Christ.

The women who stayed in Hephzibah included young women from Hindu, Muslim and nominal Christian backgrounds who had come to know the Lord through the ministry

at Jehovah-Shammah. Mrs. Jordan Khan (Esther) and Mrs. Martin (Ruth), were Muslim run-away girls who came to know the Lord while living at Hephzibah and seeing Christ-like love among the others.

Practice and Order:

As soon as the believers began to meet regularly together, a number of practical matters arose such as maintenance of the work and provision for its progress among them. There was the rent to pay, Rs 145.00 monthly, for Jehovah-Shammah. At that time they thought this was quite a large amount, but this was only one of the recurring items of expense each month. They trusted the Lord Who gave them the promise in Haggai 2:8: "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine." They were thus assured that the Lord Himself fully intended to be responsible for them financially and would see to it that all their needs were supplied.

They resolved that they would be content with whatever He gave, and would never give any indication of any need they might have. They would make no appeals and take no subscriptions. They believed that there would be no shortage if they were faithful: God would take responsibility for these kinds of things if this was indeed His work. He would supply all they needed to do His will, without any kind of 'strategy' on their part. They concluded from the Word of God that believers who gathered for worship should have opportunity to give if they wished, but they stressed the point that if any were not yet born again they should not put anything in the offering box as it was meant to be an act of worship. The Lord honoured their faith and provided for them according to the promises given in His Word regarding financial matters, from the very beginning till the present time.

The following is an example of how the Lord met their needs without their making any appeal for funds.

On one occasion, they were in need of money to pay bills. Meanwhile a sister who was working on a ship going from Madras to Singapore was caught in a big storm at sea. She vowed that if the Lord would bring her back safely to Madras from Singapore, she would sell all her jewelry⁴ and give the proceeds to the Lord's work. On her way back from Singapore, the Lord reminded her to give the money to Bakht Singh, but she did not know where he was at that time. After her safe arrival in Madras, she found out where Bakht Singh was staying and went to give him an envelope with the money in it. And before leaving, she asked for prayer. After she left, Bakht Singh discovered that the envelope contained a gift of Rs. 1500, a large amount at that time. This was not an isolated case in the life and ministry of Bakht Singh.

The Lord also showed Bakht Singh and his co-workers at Jehovah-Shammah that they were not to make any attempt to draw people to the meetings. They were to use no kind of advertising or publicity whatsoever. They would just make a few brief announcements during the service. Yet they found people coming to them continually, hungry for fellowship, not only from Madras itself, but from places all over India, as well as Pakistan, Sri Lanka and other countries. The Lord had indicated clearly that His House was to be kept open for hospitality at all times, as they saw from Isaiah 56:7,8. "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *shall be* accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The Lord GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather *others* to him, beside those that are gathered unto him."

It was a real joy for them to welcome all who came. For them, hospitality was not an option, but a command. They practised Biblical hospitality where saints and strangers were re-

freshed by the loving services rendered in the name of Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes they only had "rasam" (pepper-water)⁵ to go with the rice, but people used to say that they enjoyed it more than the chicken curry they prepared at home! There may have been some who came to Jehovah Shammah just to taste the "rasam"!

Another question which arose at the beginning was an acceptable order of service which they should follow. This, they concluded, must be left to the Spirit of God, in order that He might express the sovereignty of Christ in and over the Church, His Body. If divine life was present and the Lord was in control, He would express Himself spontaneously. They must therefore not get into fixed forms for any meeting. There was no fixed order of service – only the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Bakht Singh and the saints took Sunday very seriously. They honoured the Lord with their time, talents and treasures through their worship and witness throughout the Lord's day. Every Sunday morning, Bakht Singh and the other responsible brethren met together in prayer seeking the Lord's plan for the day, because they felt that the practice of pre-arranged ministry was not for them to follow except on special occasions when they would have special speakers. From the beginning, the Lord led them to recognize their mutual responsibility towards Him and towards His people in that they should all be exercised about the message. God might not want to speak through any one of them. They were against both an 'one man' and 'any man' ministry. In every assembly there was to be more than one person able to minister something from the Word of God. Therefore, their practice was for those responsible to meet together for prayer before every meeting, and then to enquire of each other who had the word from the Lord. Sometimes it was one, sometimes there would be two or more. They recognized the privilege of giving place to one another

so that no-one should expect to be the preacher on every occasion. They faithfully followed this simple principle for Sunday and weekly meetings, as well as during the Holy Convocations.

Open Table for all believers on the Lord's day:

The church's practice from the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:42), was meeting together for the "breaking of bread." There were a few occasions when Bakht Singh and fellow believers had met around the Lord's table before they occupied Jehovah Shammah, but there had been nothing regular at that time. Again, they saw that communion service must be expressive of the church as one body. Although there would be the local churches, these would only be true to the universal church of Jesus Christ if sectarianism was avoided and universality was clearly expressed. They were convinced that they must welcome all true children of God to partake with them at His Table without reference to any caste or colour, nationality or sectarian label they might have. If they were born of God, then they were in the same family and should be welcomed equally. It has therefore been their practice from the beginning to welcome all, while at the same time to carefully and faithfully warn all against eating the Bread and drinking the Cup unworthily.

At 9 a.m. on the Lord's day, believers met for worship in the main hall of the house, often overflowing to the verandas and side rooms as the Lord added to their number. One of the brethren would open the service with prayer followed by songs of praise and worship. Most of these songs were composed by Indians set to Indian melody. Psalms were made into beautiful songs of worship, set to Indian tunes and in local languages. One of the brethren would then give a brief exhortation from the Bible to prepare the hearts of the people to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Then, for an hour or so, time

was given for spontaneous worship, during which time any brother or sister, constrained by the Spirit, was free to worship the Lord in his own language with no petitions but only expressing praise and adoration to the Lord. During this time, believers could also express their worship through songs, reading of appropriate Scripture verses, or words of praise and adoration. The Lord's Table was always placed in the middle of the hall to show that every believer has equal access to the Lord, and to express the centrality of Christ in the midst of His people. Solemn warnings were given to discourage those who were not born-again from taking part and believers were urged to guard their relationship with the Lord and with others.

R.R. Rajamani recalled an incident in his own life at the time of the Lord's table:

"I remember on one occasion I arrived early and sat down near the table with [an]unusually strong desire to take part. Brother Devadas, who worked in the High Court, was speaking from Matthew 5:23 and 24: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Suddenly, I remembered that I had offended a certain brother by declining an invitation to a meal at his house. I asked God's forgiveness. "Lord," I promised, I will unfailingly put that right afterwards." But then Devadas said it again, "First be reconciled; then offer your gift!" I jumped up. It was a very hot day in May and the man's house was two furlongs away, but I left my place in the meeting and simply ran there, hoping to return in time. "Are you offended with me, brother?" I asked him on arrival. He agreed that he was, so I asked his forgiveness, then we knelt and prayed together. I ran back and arrived, to my joy, just in time for the breaking of bread."⁶

On another occasion a brother was present in the worship meeting around the Lord's table and he remembered that the five rupees he had at home were not honestly gained. So he hurried back to the house and burned the five rupee note and only then did he feel free to join in the fellowship of the Table. Those were the days when men were contrite in spirit and trembled at God's Word. During the prolonged period of worship and breaking of bread, provision was made for the large number of children present to be instructed by devoted teachers in Sunday School.

After all had partaken at the Table, there would be intercessory prayer in some detail for the church around the world, which they saw symbolized in the bread that remained before them. One of the brethren, who was constrained by the Lord, would then teach from God's Word to build up the believers. The Lord's message was given with power and authority, as the leaders would have met for prayer at the start of the day to discover the Lord's mouth-piece for that day. They were always thus kept in conscious dependence upon the Holy Spirit of God. At the conclusion of the service on Sundays, the people's offering was taken as an act of public worship. Before the believers would bring their offerings, the brother who led the service would announce that the offering was open to every believer who loves the Lord. Unbelievers present were consistently warned not to give, for the Lord first requires the heart and not the substance.

On one occasion, a well-to-do Hindu was in the congregation. When it was announced that unbelievers were not encouraged to bring any offering, he was put to shame because he used to think that these Christians were only out to get money from others. When he realized otherwise, he was convicted and became a believer in Christ. This was not an isolated case. From the beginning of the work, the Lord was in control of the finances.

Bakht Singh did not believe in any form of membership *per se*. Membership into the Body of Christ was by the new birth, not a formality of joining a local body of believers as is practised in denominational churches.

Bakht Singh did not require anyone to give any subscription or any dues; he never made any public appeal for money. Instead, the believers were taught to give generously as an act of public worship, based on Scripture. "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." 2 Cor. 9:6,7. Thus believers were invited to come forward singing and put their offering in the box provided in the hall.

Following the Sunday morning service, which regularly ran from 9 a.m. to 2 or 3 p.m. or longer as the Spirit led, all would sit down together for lunch, called a love feast. It was a special joy to spend the Lord's day together in the house of the Lord, in the fellowship of His people. Many new converts from various backgrounds, Brahmins, high-caste, low-caste and out-castes would sit down together to eat a communal meal prepared by His people in Jehovah-Shammah's kitchen. Thus they overcame their former caste or social distinctions which had once separated them. The love feast helped greatly to breakdown the wall of caste or social separation which was a major problem even among Christians, especially at that time.

The serving of rice and sambar (a curry of lentils and vegetables) by a willing band of fellow-workers was carried out to the accompaniment of songs in which all joined. The food was served on leaves stitched together like a plate. After everyone was served, 'grace' (prayer) was offered before eating. After lunch, the young and active brothers and sisters, as well as many not so young, would go out in procession for open-air witness. Some of those they contacted, would be brought back

for the gospel meeting in the evening. On some Sundays, the day would begin with baptisms before the sun became too hot for the open-air baptistry.

The time quickly arrived when there was not enough space for all who came in the main building of Jehovah Shammah. They were compelled then to erect a pandal (tent) of light construction to accommodate the gathering saints.

Music too, had its part to play as the believers sang to the accompaniment of a harmonium and tablas⁷, tambourines and other instruments commonly used in India. The halls echoed with the songs of the redeemed. Moses Dawn, who had served as Tamil interpreter for the campaign in 1938 and 1940 and had subsequently gone with Bakht Singh to the Punjab, was much used, putting the messages into song. Soon they had some of the songs in Tamil set to Punjabi tunes that had long been sung in the North. With them came new and original Tamil and Telugu songs based on the Word of God.

At the first Holy Convocation which was held from 14th December, 1941 to 2nd January 1942, believers from various parts of the country and around the world came. The joy of fellowship together in so many languages was wonderful. Many found new life, and the gospel began to spread ever more widely as the people returned to their near and distant homes.

Caring for the needy in the time of disaster:

During Easter of 1942, World War II was about to come to Madras. A Japanese invasion of India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) was then imminent. In April, the ports of Calcutta, Colombo and Trincomale came under air attack from carrier-based bombers. People panicked. Air-raid warnings were practised and complete blackouts were imposed. Almost all the city churches closed at that time. Missionaries, and even some pastors, left the city.

The believers at Jehovah-Shammah, however saw no reason to close. They felt it was their task to be available to serve others in time of fear and war. Jehovah Shammah remained open with meetings and practical services every night. Because of blackouts the roads were dark. Public transportation (trams) was closed down and buses unlighted. Brothers and sisters who walked to the meetings were advised to dress in white and come singing. None met with any mishap. Some believers were transferred to different places, but this scattering led to increase, for wherever they went they carried the gospel.

A.J. Flack, before he was called for army duty, made copies of the messages preached at Jehovah-Shammah and circulated them among evacuees to encourage the more isolated ones. In the midst of panic and fear, they tried to encourage people by sharing the gospel of peace and quoting the appropriate Scriptures.

As the threat of war ceased in October 1943, disaster struck Madras through the north east monsoon which brought torrential rains. Low-lying city streets began to be flooded. There were power cuts and communications were badly disrupted. The region of Thana street was flooded as two or three feet of water ran into the houses. Dorairaj and his family lived on that flooded street. As the rain water was rising, the tank bund (big water tank) at Perumbakam had broken like a sea and the waters engulfed Kilpauk and other low-lying areas. The flood reached the upper floors of many buildings. Bakht Singh and the other saints at Jehovah-Shammah joined in the rescue efforts. In the meantime Dorairaj had to climb on the upper terrace of his house to escape the rising floodwaters. Bakht Singh took a megaphone, and shouted, "We are all praying for you." Then he went back to organize care for the homeless who were flocking to Jehovah-Shammah and to join with others in prayer for the flood victims.

Brother Sam Chako and others who had experience on the

water, got hold of a boat and rescued several people from the terraces of various houses. Around them in Purusawalkam and Kilpauk many thousands were homeless, and families crowded into Jehovah-Shammah for refuge, as the place was on a higher ground. All who came were fed and cared for. A few even went away with the new-found joy of the Lord filling their hearts. Believers made many friends that October.

After the flood waters receded, they went back to the house of Dorairaj on Thana Street where homes were flooded, and furniture and other effects had floated out of ground-floor rooms, lost for good. Dead bodies were floating around downstairs in Dorairaj's house. Many of the older buildings had collapsed.

Downstairs in Dorairaj's house there had been a sum of money which he had given up as lost in the flood. When he got there, he was happy to find the cupboard containing the money still in the room. Through the kindness of the Lord, He salvaged it all.

This experience of helping those in need during the north-east monsoon greatly increased their confidence, as the believers had become involved in real human need. Many lives had been in danger and the saints, led by Bakht Singh, had thrown themselves wholeheartedly into the task of rescuing them. In the process, new personal contacts had been made. Those who were helped began to forget their problem of church affiliations. They had the message of life to share with men and women wherever doors were opened.

During this time, two Muslim sisters by the names of Miriam and Khadija were discouraged with life and had decided to run away from home. Their cousin offered to help them to become movie actresses. They were excited by the prospect, thinking that it would give them the true happiness they were looking for. So they disguised themselves as Hindus and changed their names from Miriam and Khadija to Vasantha and Lalitha.

On the morning that they were supposed to leave their home, the rain descended and the city was flooded. After the waters receded they were to go and meet Grace Tangaman, a nominal Christian and school teacher who was a friend of their cousin, the one who had promised to help them to realize their dream. During the flood, however Grace's home was under water. Bakht Singh, along with his co-workers, rescued her and her family, presented the gospel to her and Grace was saved. When the Muslim sisters went to her school, she welcomed them graciously but discouraged them from becoming actresses. Instead, as a new believer in Christ, she took them to Hephzibah, the sisters' home connected with Jehovah Shammah.

Naturally, the young women were very frustrated and infuriated. They felt that they had been betrayed because, being Muslims, a Christian center would be the last place they would like to go. They both felt deceived by Grace, but God's hand was on their lives. They did not know it at that time, but in the midst of their apparent tragedy, the Lord was about to turn it all into a glorious triumph. In spite of their feelings they met some loving and dedicated sisters at Hephzibah. They were really touched by the genuine love and concern of those sisters who were singing and praising God while cooking and doing household chores. These young Muslim women had never seen such Christians before. Still, they said they would rather die for their Muslim faith, than accept Christianity.

While they were at the center, the Hephzibah sisters fasted and prayed for them. Occasionally, Bakht Singh would come in the afternoons and share with them the way of salvation. One Sunday morning they went to the worship service. When they returned, they were invited for a prayer session. The Muslim sisters at first refused to go, but later changed their minds and went to the prayer meeting. At the prayer meeting, as they listened to the prayers of the sisters, the Muslim sis-

ters felt the presence of God. They realized that they were in the presence of the living God. Khadija started to tremble from head to foot. Then she prayed a prayer saying in her heart, "Lord, who is this living God, reveal it to me and I will put my trust in you, even if I have to lose my life." She prayed and received the Lord and was baptized. Later on, Miriam also accepted the Lord. After much prayer, Bakht Singh named Khadija Esther, and Miriam he named Ruth. Then, in 1950, Esther was married to Jordan Khan and Miriam was married to S. Martin, co-workers of Bakht Singh.

Setting apart of elders in 1944:

From the very beginning of the new work in Jehovah Shammah, Bakht Singh's burden was to have a local church which would contain the Lord's glory. He and others were very conscious that in order to show forth the Lord's glory, they must do all things according to the revealed Word of God. As the ministry began to grow the church began to develop and they started to pray for the Lord's order to be brought about in the local church. As they searched and studied the Scriptures, it became apparent to them that those more regularly and locally engaged in the ministry of building up the believers in the local church should be the elders. Therefore, the appointment of elders in all the churches became vital to their implementing the New Testament concept of a local church. It was elders who were appointed for each church. The word in the New Testament was always plural when referring to the elders of a local church. If the work is in the hands of one man it does not fulfill the New Testament pattern of the local church. Therefore they began to pray for "elders in [each] local church."⁸

From the Scriptures they gathered that the churches of the New Testament got their elders in one of two ways.

1. The apostles appointed them. (Acts 14:23)
2. The apostles delegated others to appoint them. (Titus 1:5)

It was according to Acts 14:23 that the Church in Jehovah-Shammah obtained her elders.

According to the Scriptures the elders are the ones who should take the spiritual lead in the life of the local church. For months therefore, prayers went up to God that He would, in due time, show His choice of elders. Bakht Singh then called R.P. Dorairaj, George Rajarathnam and R.R. Rajamani, who had laboured with him for five years, to wait on the Lord together concerning their appointment. A week of prayer was set aside for united prayer by the church about the matter. After this, Bakht Singh announced these three names to the church, asking that all should pray concerning each one, that the Lord would confirm whether or not they were the men of His choice. At the end of the week, whoever had the least objection concerning any of these three brothers or his family which scripturally might disqualify them from eldership, was urged to state it then. If not, it was confirmed that the Lord had indeed set them apart for this task. That week of strong united prayer- which included a day of fasting - drew them all very close to the Lord and to one another. At the end of this process, the church was found to be of one mind as to God's choice of these men. Accordingly, at a special evening meeting with all present, these three brothers upon whom the Lord had shown such mercy, were set apart to be elders of the church, with the laying on of hands by Bakht Singh and Wilfred S. Durham of Bombay, in the year 1944.

It was their custom as elders to come to Jehovah-Shammah straight from their offices daily to pray together over all church matters, and with any who needed spiritual counsel or help. Nothing was done until they were unanimous in their decisions. Often they would wait upon the Lord for many hours as they sought His will on some matter of special consequence.

Brothers whose ministry often took them away from Jehovah-Shammah, whether near or far, would look to the elders

for fellowship in their decisions, just as they looked to the church as a whole to uphold all their labours in prayer.

Rajamani recalls how, on one occasion, Bakht Singh was invited to Colombo and had bought his ticket to leave the next day. As the elders prayed with him that evening, however, one of them could find no liberty in the Spirit in relation to his going. Accordingly, Bakht Singh cancelled the ticket and delayed his travel until all were together, united in heart. When he eventually arrived in Sri Lanka, events proved beyond a shadow of doubt the rightness of God's timing. This meeting together at the feet of the Lord for every small matter brought to them its own reward. Week by week they witnessed the truly mighty things He did in response to their cries. It often proved costly, but they learned to make personal sacrifices in order that God might have His way among them.

Holy Convocations:

One of the other special features of Bakht Singh's ministry has been the annual Holy Convocations. One has to be there in order to capture the spirit of them. As mentioned earlier in this work, the Holy Convocation is based on the account in Leviticus chapter 23 concerning the seven feasts of Jehovah. The first Holy Convocation was held in Jehovah-Shammah for nineteen days from the 14th of December, 1941, to the 2nd of January, 1942. It was attended by more than a thousand people who came mainly from Tamilnadu (Madras) and Andhra Pradesh: Some also came from Gujarat, Lahore and Martinpur, which are now part of Pakistan. While most of them were Indian nationals, there were also several missionaries, representing the U.K. primarily.

To hold the meetings a large inexpensive pandal⁹ was erected and large, white banners with Scriptures hung all over it. Several hundred people stayed on the grounds and accommodation was provided for them in booths and palm-leaf

thatched sheds. Breakfast, lunch and supper were provided each day for everyone, cooked by volunteers in the Jehovah Shammah kitchen. Many of them also volunteered to provide the necessary help to meet the various needs of such a large gathering. One of the main purposes of this Holy Convocation was to provide fellowship for the scattered believers, some who were very lonely, not having any local churches or believers to fellowship with regularly.

Bakht Singh emphasized the fact that believers are members of one spiritual family and thus were encouraged to meet daily for morning and evening family prayers, sandwiched in with ministry meetings in the mornings, afternoon and evenings. There were also meetings for children, young people and sisters. After much prayer, the Lord would guide them regarding the theme for each Holy Convocation, and songs were specially composed around the theme as well as appropriate messages given. Having spent nineteen days meeting regularly for family prayer and the ministry of the Word, people were inspired and encouraged to return to their respective places, radiating the Lord Jesus Christ. Their transformed life was always a testimony to their neighbours, family and friends. And so the Holy Convocation became a hallmark of the ministry.

The joy of fellowshiping together in so many languages was wonderful. Many found new life then, and the gospel began to spread more widely as the people returned to their respective places with joy shining on their faces and new songs on their lips. During every Holy Convocation, there were baptisms as well as special processions going through the city. The believers who were greatly enriched during the Holy Convocation always looked forward to the next one as they prayed, prepared and planned for the coming year.

The following report on Madras Holy Convocation was made by Daniel Smith, a Canadian missionary who worked

with Bakht Singh in Asia and was a speaker at the 1956 Holy Convocation at Jehovah-Shammah, Madras:

"The Holy Convocation began with an unusual sense of power. The crowds were greater than ever and expectation was intense. The Saturday opening meetings set the pattern. There was liberty in ministry and one felt the movement of the Spirit of God. If I had been sent half-way round the world for the Convocation alone, Sunday night justified all the trouble and expense of it. After the morning service, which Bakht Singh wisely cut to the length of five hours because of the heat, between three and four thousand gathered on Sunday night and the grip of the Spirit on that crowd was amazing to see. Nor did I ever feel such unction upon my own ministry. The message was released in remarkable fullness and power and almost two hundred made first [time] decisions for the Lord. The sense of the Lord's Presence and the manifestation of the power of the Holy Ghost assured of [a] very big response throughout the week. We felt it wise, therefore, to devote the afternoon to counseling. New converts were divided into small groups and a well-seasoned counselor took charge of each group. Everyone was free to ask questions and in this way doubts were dissolved and explanations were made clear. We found this way much more profitable than trying to do it hurriedly after every meeting. For some time, too, Bakht Singh has undertaken to write to each convert personally. With his own tremendous programme of incessant daily meetings and vast correspondence at all times and constant care of Assemblies which have swelled to nearly three hundred in India and Pakistan, you can imagine what this means. In recent campaigns there have been hundreds who have been converted and this Madras Convocation will bring in many more hundreds. The Convocation is an amazing fellowship of love — for while largely to do with one country, yet there are people of many

racess, languages and customs here from within the one country. It is the kind of thing which one dreams of as an ideal but which one seldom hopes to see in actual demonstration. But here it is and there is amazing joy in the camp.

The Convocation closed in a tremendous climax. There were about 5000 present for the morning Worship and Breaking of Bread. We began it at six in the morning and the service closed at 2 p.m. It was full of life and power throughout - a glorious eight-hour session. Bakht Singh closed the final meeting with a magnificent and dynamic message from Judges 6 and the latter part of verse 12. Five thousand were held by the Spirit while God spoke in thunder and piercing lightning to their souls. There has been tremendous response during the eight days. Probably seven hundred have made first [time] decisions and four hundred or more of these are in personal touch with us. But as believers return to their homes throughout the whole of India with a deep and satisfying work in themselves, you can imagine how the work will multiply as these go from town to town and village to village and tell what God has done."¹⁰

A series of 'Gospel outreaches' began in 1943 - another feature of Bakht Singh's ministry:

In 1943, they began a door-campaign, or door-to-door evangelism. Each evening the men would come from their offices directly to Jehovah Shammah. After a time of prayer, they set out two-by-two to different parts of Madras selling gospel booklets and Christian books door to door. Their aim was to get the Scriptures into every home in the city. They walked many miles each day witnessing for the Lord throughout the city. Often, when there was a full moon, they would stay out selling the gospels until midnight. They had a passion for God and compassion for souls, just as in the book of Acts where the church

whole-heartedly reached out to those who did not know Him. "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking of bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church, daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:46,47)

Early in 1944, the saints at Jehovah Shammah began a series of "Gospel raids." After much prayer and waiting on the Lord as directed by the Spirit, a large group of brothers and sisters would travel together for a visit of several days to places at a distance from Madras. Their aim was to spread the gospel and at the same time to strengthen and encourage the local believers in their own witness. This also gave on-the-job training to those who came out for full-time ministry. Sometimes, the party would number a hundred or more. First they went to Chingleput. About this gospel raid Sister Grace Stalley said:

"I was in the first "Gospel raid" when we went to Chengleput. Brother Bakht Singh was with us. We were 100 in the party – fifty brothers and fifty sisters. We went by train and arrived in the early hours of the morning. We arrived in the station and walked to the school where we were to stay. We could not go to bed, however, but were told that we should go on a procession. We went out on this procession and it made such an impression upon us and upon the people of the town. From place to place we stopped and Brother Bakht Singh preached. While he was preaching, some of us sisters went house to house distributing tracts and selling gospel booklets. Everywhere, we had a wonderful reception. Without any breakfast we continued witnessing till lunch time. Though we did not have any breakfast, yet everybody was full of the joy of the Lord. The tragedy now is this - in the Assemblies we've the third and fourth generation and you never have the same enthusiasm and the same vision."¹¹

The younger brothers were becoming discouraged through

always going to the same places, preaching for years on end: they wanted to move further afield. Someone came from Chingleput, which is the mission centre of the Church of Scotland and asked if they would come and preach there. Although it was the monsoon season, forty-five of them went together singing songs and preaching in the open air, with the local Christians gladly joining them.

Later on about sixty of them went next for four days to Kanchivaram, the golden city of a thousand shrines and a famous centre of Hindu pilgrimage, located fifty miles to the southwest of Madras. Many gospels and booklets were sold and they were very encouraged by the response. From time to time, they went further afield, staying longer each time in Vellore, Tiruvannamalai. In subsequent years, they sent raids to Cuddapah, Bellary, Nandyal, Kurnool and Rajahmundri, as well as Travancore and Christianpettai. Out of this evangelistic outreach began the wider spread of the work. In the neighbouring town of Watrap, G. Devasagayam¹² was employed as a sub-registrar. Sisters also visited nearby villages and held women's meetings in the homes. During one of their visits, they went to Sivakasi where Sadhu Sunder Singh had prayed for Rajamani. The first group of them arrived, led by Bakht Singh, and went preaching in the open air. About 120 brothers and sisters went out singing and preaching in procession. But the local people were hostile to them. A Punjabi brother with them was accompanying the singing on a Chimta, which is a dangerous-looking musical instrument at any time.¹³ Becoming irritated at the behaviour of local people, he unwisely threatened them with it. At this, some of the people attacked them with stones. A stone hit Dorairaj on the head and blood poured down his shirt. The Gospel team knew they had done wrong, so they turned and walked back very quietly. At their lodging place they knelt sorrowfully and asked the Lord's forgiveness. The Punjabi brother was the first to confess his mis-

take. Later on they arranged a meeting there for the sisters. From Sivakasi they passed on to Sattur and Virudhunagar and then on to Madras. They went round the town singing songs. Later that evening, in the pouring rain, they went in procession to the church where Bakht Singh was to preach. He preached with power and authority and the Lord drew many to Himself. "And the Word of God grew and multiplied." (Acts 12:24)

The work of the Lord thus began to spread in Andhra and other parts of India and the world.

End Notes

¹Bishop V.S. Azariah (1874-1945), the first Indian Bishop of The Anglican Church at Dornakal, Andhra Pradesh from 1912-1945, commented over the evils of denominationalism in India. His biographer writes, "First and foremost was his commitment to evangelization and his recognition that denominationalism weakened the effectiveness of missionaries in India... the ardent evangelists recognized that denominationalism was a barrier to the effective propagations of the gospel... Worst of all, denominationalism inhibited Indian Christians from overcoming their own prejudices of 'race, language, caste and social status.' Initially meaningless sectarian divisions inherited from the West were being reinterpreted, Azariah warned, to reinforce India's indigenous sociological divisions. Denominationalism permitted Indian converts of different castes to preserve and even strengthen their social separations by joining churches of different denominations. Thus, Azariah claimed, 'separate castes merge into separate denominations and once more continue their unholy warfare of generations.'

Azariah views the problem of denominationalism in much the same way as his contemporary, H. Richard Nieburh, who identified various sociological determinants of ecclesiastical sectarianism as 'the accommodation of Christianity to the caste-system of human society.' To Niebur, 'the evil of denominationalism' lay in 'the failure of the churches to transcend the social conditions which fashion them into caste organizations. Both men regarded church divisiveness as a moral failure falling short of the ideal of Christian brotherhood as presented in the Bible. (*In The Shadow Of The Mahatma - Bishop*

V.S. Azariah, and *The Travails Of Christianity, In British India* by Susan Billington Harper – Page 239)

²Bakht Singh, *Write The Vision* (Unpublished papers, 1966).

³Author's interview with the Carters in 1991 at their residence in England.

⁴Usually Indian Jewelry is made of expensive 22 karat gold.

⁵Rasam is specially seasoned, spicy curried pepper water – even better than the soup Mulligatawny served in five star hotels in the West.

⁶R.R. Rajamani as told to Dr. Kinneer, *Monsoon Daybreak*, (London and East Bourne: Open Books, 1971), p. 92.

⁷Harmonium is a manually operated Indian organ. Tabla is a percussion instrument (Drums)

⁸Bakht Singh, *Write The Vision*,

⁹*Pandal* – temporary tent primarily made with large tarpaulin and bamboos.

¹⁰Daniel Smith *World Conquest*, November-December 1956.

¹¹Author's interview with Sis. Stalley in 1991

¹²Later became an elder at Jehovah-Shammah, Madras

¹³"Chimta" is an instrument made of raw iron, long pair of tongs with pointed ends.

Chapter 11

Andhra Pradesh and Beyond

"ARISE and shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory be seen upon thee." (Isaiah 60:1,2)

The growth and spread of New Testament Assemblies in Andhra Pradesh was astronomical. In less than twenty years, beginning on September 25, 1950, the Lord had raised up literally hundreds of local churches in Andhra and other places across India and abroad through the ministry of Bakht Singh and his co-workers. According to Vern Middleton, a Canadian missionary to India in the 1970s, the Assemblies founded by Bakht Singh and his team were the fastest growing churches in India, particularly in Andhra.¹ Dr. George Peters of Dallas Theological Seminary once visited Bakht Singh in Hebron and told him that he had visited many foreign mission fields in Asia, Africa and other parts of the world but had never seen such a work as he had seen at Hebron. He then asked Bakht Singh, "Tell me what is your secret or strategy?" He then replied that he had no strategy or method. He and his co-workers had no extra qualifications but were

simple people without much education. They simply decided to do all things by prayer and in oneness and total obedience to the Word of God, without any compromise. "The Lord works if we honour God's Word."²

On his first trip to Madras in the year 1938, Bakht Singh passed through Hyderabad for a couple of days for some special meetings. Later in 1942, following the second Holy Convocation in Madras, some believers who came from Martinpur and Youngsonabad (now a part of Pakistan) went to Nellore, Vijayawada and Guntur for evangelistic meetings in that area for a short period, after a time of prayer with Bakht Singh. These brothers were preaching in the open-air and staying in the homes of some fellow believers. Some students from Andhra Christian College were born again, including Brother G.T. Benjamin, (who later became an elder at Hebron) through these Punjabi brethren³.

They reported to Bakht Singh at a later date what the Lord had done in those places in Andhra. That same year, Bakht Singh was invited by some of these new believers for two or three days of special meetings in Guntur. Many people were converted during his ministry. There was a big Lutheran church building in Guntur called St. Mathews Church and they invited Bakht Singh for a series of special meetings. The church hall was packed. People were sitting in the windows and standing outside as there was no room inside. He gave challenging messages and many were born again, including many students of the A.C. College, Guntur.

Then in 1944, following the Holy Convocation at Jehovah Shammah at Madras, S. Martin and some other young people were sent to Vijayawada and neighboring villages for a gospel outreach for several weeks. At Vijayawada they stayed as the guests of the late Brother Devavaram,⁴ then a Circle Inspector of Police. Making his home as their base, they moved about freely evangelizing neighbouring villages

such as Tadepalli, Vandavelli, Pedavaripudi and Chinna Vadlapudi. From Vijayawada they went to Naidupeta, Sullurpet, Nellore, Proddatur and many other places. About their experiences during their gospel campaign, Martin wrote:

"After visiting many villages there, we went to Sullurpet. A gentleman agreed to keep our things for security, but we were to stay in a school compound, under a tree. We cooked our food in the morning, left it under the tree and went around preaching in villages nearby. No-one would touch our food or vessels as they were afraid of contacting cholera. The news was that the epidemic had already started in a village and that it was being spread by wandering people. We would have been beaten-up and chased away had we informed them that we were from Madras. We were able to preach to them, pointing out to them their fear of death.

My poor family background, disciplined up-bringing and austere living at home, made it easy for me to adjust and get [along] well with life at Jehovah-Shammah. I was made familiar with hardship and hunger by the LORD, in my early spiritual life, through independent open-air ministry. It gave me endurance to suffer hardship and humiliation during the tours and in gospel raids.

Yet, the life was tough and the labour very hard. When we were sent out, we had to take whatever conveyance was available. We had to walk to many places, often long distances even when buses were available, due to financial limitations. On tours, we had no proper place to stay. We had to spend nights at the hospitality of people, on verandas of school buildings, road-side shops or even in the open, under trees. We had no proper arrangements for food, nor sufficient money to afford hotels. Often we did not know where the next meal was coming from. Days together, at one time we had to survive on tap water, yet not informing or show-

ing to others that we were hungry, for His name's sake. We had a change of only two sets of clothing, yet we always maintained ourselves clean and neat, not knowing how our miscellaneous needs like soap, oil, etc., would be provided. As Brother Bakht Singh practised, he taught us not to ask or hint about our requirements to anyone. Other than in our personal prayers to the LORD, we did not give any clue to anyone, did not give prayer requests or even pray loudly. We depended on God and asked Him only. He did not fail us. He provided all things wonderfully, or gave us grace to suffer when He did not want us to have certain things.

For the glory of the LORD, we can see that, in most of the places we laboured in pioneering work, the LORD has established our assemblies and the work is continuing to bear fruit. In retrospect, I know it was only the abundant grace of God which sustained us all through these days. Our LORD uses us, the unprofitable servants, for His glory to proclaim the gospel. May His Name alone be glorified.”⁵

Although Bakht Singh and members of his team had been evangelizing various parts of Andhra since 1942, the actual church planting ministry in Andhra began with the establishing of an Assembly in Cuddapah in 1945.⁶

During the Holy Convocation at Jehovah-Shammah in Madras (Chennai) in 1944, a believer by the name of Samuel, from Cuddapah, had approached Bakht Singh many times with tears saying, “Brother, when will you come to Cuddapah?”

It was several months before Bakht Singh could fulfill his request. One day when travelling from Anantapur to Madras he was able to break his journey at Cuddapah and visit his home. As he was having lunch with the family, he asked his wife and four daughters whether they were born again. Having not heard the term before, they stared at Bakht Singh blankly. He shared the gospel from the Word of God

and together they all knelt down and gave their hearts to the Lord that same hour. Following that visit, Jehovah Shammah began to be more burdened to pray for the work to be done in that area.

In 1945, the Lord showed Bakht Singh clearly that he should go on a gospel campaign to Cuddapah. When he was there only one day, a Hindu man came to see Bakht Singh wanting to know whether he wanted to purchase 5,000 copies of gospel booklets in Urdu from him. Naturally, Bakht Singh was suspicious, wondering how it was that a Hindu was selling Christian literature in the language of Muslims. He told him how it happened. A certain missionary gentleman had passed away, and amongst his goods to be disposed off was this stock of Urdu gospel portions, which this man had bought cheaply, thinking that the Bible Society would surely purchase them from him. The Bible Society was not interested, but they suggested that he should go and see Bakht Singh. Even though at that time they (Bakht Singh and team) did not understand how to use such a large number of Urdu Gospels in South India, they bought them, quite unaware of what the Lord had in mind.

When they went around the town of Cuddapah, they found that though it was quite a Muslim stronghold, the Lord had prepared many hearts, so they were unusually open and receptive. Before long, they had sold all the 5,000 Urdu gospels and there were people still begging them for a copy. The Lord blessed their time in Cuddapah, and in due course the Lord raised up a virile testimony in the home of one, Brother Titus, who was born again and opened his home for regular, weekly worship services. During that time, Bakht Singh and the team visited Kurnool, Proddatur, Dronachallam and Jammalamadugu using Cuddapah as their base.

The following story further illustrates how the Lord directed Bakht Singh and his team in spreading His message

far and wide. A few of them were travelling back to Madras following some meetings in Waltair. Rajahmundry was a station on the way and Bakht Singh remembered that a believing family was living there. He had an urge to stop in and visit them, so he sent them a message saying that they would stop at Rajahmundry briefly, catching the next train on to Madras four or five hours later.

When they arrived at Rajahmundry, this family met the party at the station and took them to their house at the railway employees' quarters. While they were still having breakfast with the family, a man came running, asking them to come soon for the meeting. "What meeting?" Bakht Singh enquired. He did not know of any meeting; and they had to go on the next train.

The man simply said, "Please come and see: there are more than a thousand people waiting for you to give them a message."

Bakht Singh was very surprised, and upon enquiry found out that some pastors of the local mission had apparently become agitated on hearing that Bakht Singh, with his party, was coming to Rajahmundry. They must have thought that he was coming for a campaign, so they sent a circular letter around warning all their people that Bakht Singh was coming and that they should boycott his meetings. Somehow, the Lord used that same letter to achieve the opposite effect to what was intended. "Surely the the wrath of man shall praise thee." (Psalm 76:10)

Without mentioning anything to the pastors, the local people of their own accord obtained permission to arrange meetings on the railway tennis court. Using bamboo poles and woven split-bamboo screening, they had covered the tennis courts, making a fine auditorium where the people were now gathered. Sizing up the situation, how could Bakht Singh and the party escape? So they felt that the Lord wanted them

to change their mind about going to Madras by the next train. It was one of those many occasions when they had been confronted with an open door which they had neither sought nor could avoid. There was no alternative but to go ahead with God's message for the people. The Lord was forcing them to a decision and thus fulfilling His foreordained purpose in the situation.

Thus they abandoned their previous plans, and stayed on for three days in Rajahmundry. The hunger for the simple Word of God and spiritual reality among those people was shown by both the eagerness of the attendees and the numbers in which they gathered. Once again the Lord was fulfilling His word to them, "I will do marvels, above your asking or thinking." (Ex 34:10) More than five thousand people attended the final meeting. Many souls were saved. This was the initial moving of the Lord in bringing about His "new thing" (Isa 43:19) for the people in that area. To-day, there are a number of local Assemblies in Rajahmundry and in neighbouring places.

The Lord's ways are often mysterious that is, He does not follow any design or pattern discernable by man. It is therefore necessary for us to learn to be governed by Him step by step. Bakht Singh had discovered that God Himself had led them first here, and then there, in ways and to places he least expected. It was as if they were being carried along on a strong current of God's moving, as they served Him in what was chiefly an evangelistic ministry from 1943 to 1950.

The Lord used many ways and means to lead them into new places. One day, a very heavy-set man came to see Bakht Singh at Jehovah-Shammah. He said, "Sir, I have heard of you and your people. I am a Hindu and a goldsmith from the town of Proddatur. My wife is sick in a general hospital, Madras (Vepery Nursing home). Will you kindly come and pray for her?"

Bakht Singh gladly went to the hospital and prayed for the sick woman, staying just a few minutes to share the gospel with her and the relatives gathered there.

A few days later, the whole family of eight persons walked into Jehovah Shammah compound. They told him that the lady who had been sick for such a long time with an incurable disease was now healed, and that the Lord Jesus Christ had spoken to them all. They had accepted Him as their Saviour, and all eight members wanted to be baptized. Through this family, the testimony spread to Proddatur, where there is now a healthy, growing church. The Lord used the vibrant testimony of the family members for the salvation of many Hindus and nominal Christians, and the planting of several Assemblies in the neighbouring areas.

From 1950 onwards, Bakht Singh and his co-workers saw the Lord beginning to work in a new way in the State of Andhra Pradesh. He was invited by some missionaries in the town of Cumbum to minister the Word of God at the convention they were organizing to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the beginning of their work. As had always been his custom, Bakht Singh prayed with his co-workers and sought the will of the Lord. Having been assured by the Lord, he accepted the invitation to go.

When he arrived in Cumbum, he found about four thousand people gathered there for the convention. On Saturday afternoon as he was having tea with the leading missionary and the pastors, he noticed that they were talking about arrangements for baptizing a certain number of people. When he enquired, they told him that 75 years ago a missionary had baptized 2,222 converts there. Their idea was to commemorate the event by baptizing 222 persons during this celebration. Bakht Singh asked whether all the candidates for baptism were born again. They said that they were not sure. Surprised by their answer, he asked them

how they could plan to baptize unconverted people, as they must surely know that this was contrary to the Scripture. They began to explain that each pastor and preacher had been requested to bring in a certain number of people for baptism and this they had done. Everything was thus arranged for the baptism of 222 persons during this celebration.

Knowing that the pastors did not want to offend anyone by altering things at this late hour, Bakht Singh told them a little story to make his point clear. He said, "Suppose a young man comes from the army on a month's leave and finds his aged father seemingly on his death bed. He is a hundred years old, and he is likely to die in any case. As the eldest son, the young man has the duty to see to his father's burial. But when there are only a couple of days left before he has to return to his duty, he finds the old man still lingering. As he is almost dead and of no use to anybody, and as the son has to return to duty, he decides that the best thing to do under these circumstances is to go ahead and bury his father any way. Claiming that the old man is dead, they carry him to the cemetery and bury him." Then he asked the missionary and his friends, "What do you think would have happened to that young man when this action was brought to light?"

They replied "No doubt, he would be sent to jail."

Then he asked them, "What about you? If you bury in baptism those who in fact have not died to sin, how do you think that you can justify yourselves?"

They simply said, "We have been planning this for many months. We cannot alter our plans now."

Bakht Singh then simply replied, "Well, I have warned you."

Then they informed him, "By the way, we are planning to show a film tonight before you speak; do you mind?"

He replied, "Yes, I do. I do not believe it would be right. Many people will come on account of the film only. Then you want to preach the gospel to them; that is a trick. Why do you rather not depend on prayer? I cannot insist that you cancel it, but neither do I approve of using a film in these circumstances."

God was working. It began to rain unexpectedly, which was a blow to all the arrangements. The monsoon rains had not yet broken, and this was an unforeseen disaster. After some time the leaders came to Bakht Singh with a proposition and said, "Will you pray that the rain will stop? If the rain stops, we will cancel the film!"

Bakht Singh accepted the challenge. He prayed, "Lord, show Thy hand. Stop the rain, and stop the film." God heard that cry and the rain stopped. The meetings started and Bakht Singh preached that evening, quoting 55 references relating to the conditions and meaning of baptism to that congregation of Baptist missionaries and their converts.

As soon as the meeting was over, the rain started again - not ordinary rain either, but heavy, pouring rain. In the morning one of the missionary ladies came to inform him, "Brother, God has spoken to us through the rain. The baptisms are cancelled."

"Thank God!" Bakht Singh replied.

These events at Cumbum were the Lord's way of opening doors all over Andhra Pradesh. People in many congregations began to realize their spiritual blindness by following man-made traditions and plans, making void the Word of God. During the next few weeks, following the Cumbum meetings, the Lord took Bakht Singh and his team up to Giddalore, Nandyal, and Kurnool.⁷

The situation in Kurnool was perhaps typical of many that they came across in various towns. There was much strife and jealousy among the denominational Christians

there. It became especially evident at the annual elections of church office-bearers. Those defeated in the elections would scheme and work against those who won. It was a common thing for ungodly men to win election by cunning and unworthy devices.

When Bakht Singh and his co-workers came on the scene, there were two parties among the Christians, each one conducting separate services on Sundays in the same building. The leaders of both the parties invited Bakht Singh to preach to them on the following Sunday. He told them that he would not be identified with either party, because both were wrong. He and his team would not attend either service but would conduct a service in the place where he was staying. Bakht Singh added, however, that if they wanted him to preach in their church building, all the committee members of both parties should resign from their posts and then they could have one common meeting for everybody. They talked among themselves for an hour and then agreed to this proposition.

As a result, Bakht Singh stayed the whole month, and the Lord worked in a real way there. However, after Bakht Singh left, they reverted to their old ways of strife and rivalry. Whatever blessing the Lord had so recently brought soon ebbed away and was lost.

They saw the same thing happening in numerous places. They thus became convinced that they could not retain revival blessings as long as the Christians remained under a system that negates the conditions for revival. Their experience in Kurnool and numerous other places made them see why the Lord commissioned Bakht Singh in 1941 to begin a new work unfettered by the restrictions of human constitutions, traditions or methods, which have come to be so widely accepted in Christendom throughout India and the world. Only by being governed by the Head in all things through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit can we hope to

see spiritual progress and the continued flowing in of Life from above. In time, the Lord did accomplish His "new thing" in Kurnool, and today there is a company of saints there bearing the testimony of the Lord in simplicity and life. Since then, the Lord has used their testimony to raise up several more local churches in the neighbouring areas.

Bakht Singh and his team moved on from Kurnool to Amarchinta, Narayanpet, Gooty, Madanapalli and Mahaboobnagar. The Lord then led them to Hyderabad on the 25th of September, 1950. Some believers in the Secunderabad area had for years been requesting that Bakht Singh come to their cities for some special meetings. For example, in 1949, two sisters came to see him at Jehovah Shammah, Madras. One of them was from Hyderabad and in tears she told of her husband who was very ill and whom she had brought for treatment to Madras city. Doctors could not diagnose the disease, so she came to ask Bakht Singh to go to the hospital and pray for her ailing husband who was on his death bed.

Bakht Singh went there and prayed for the patient whose name was Dr. Ebenezer. Following the prayer, he also gave a brief message. The Lord heard his prayer and healed Dr. Ebenezer. The following Sunday the whole family came for the worship meeting at Jehovah-Shammah. From then on Dr. Ebenezer began to write to Bakht Singh requesting him to come to Hyderabad. Until that time (1950) Bakht Singh did not have any burden for that area even though he had had many invitations from various people for ministry there. When their friends knew that they were ministering in a nearby area, they then requested him again to visit Hyderabad. After much prayer, the Lord constrained him to go to Hyderabad.

When the brethren heard a positive reply from Bakht Singh about his visit to Secunderabad and Hyderabad, Brother Aseervadam, Dr. Ebenezer and Brother Lawrence

sent a letter to the leaders of the American Baptist Church in Secunderabad dated 26th August 1950.

"Dear Brethren,

You will be glad to know that after several years' constant requests, Brother Bakht Singh has agreed to visit Secunderabad. I received a letter and telegram from him stating that he will be here on 1st September 1950.

I am sure you will agree with me when I say that we need his presence immediately to put new life into our dying souls. He may stay for about a week.

We need a place for him to conduct the revival meetings. For all purposes of convenience, our Baptist compound will be very suitable. On behalf of Brother Bakht Singh, I request you all kindly to allow the use of the compound.

Thanking you very much.

Yours in His service,

Bro. Aseeravdam
Dr. Ebenezer
Bro. Lawrence"

After much prayer, Bakht Singh, along with a party of twenty, arrived in Hyderabad. On their arrival at the railway station these believers, Brothers Lawrence, Aseervadam, Dr. Ebenezer and others who were blessed through Bakht Singh's ministry earlier, welcomed them and went with them in a procession singing through the streets up to the meeting place.

Most of these believers were members of the Baptist Church at Secunderabad. With much difficulty they obtained permission from the authorities to use the mission facility for the meetings. On the premises of the church building there was also a large guest house, which the believers tried to get for Bakht Singh and his team to stay. But unfortunately, the missionary in charge, Rev. Johnson, became angry and

refused to grant permission for them to use the guest house. Brother Lawrence, who was a foreman in the railways at that time, welcomed them and offered them one room in his house. Even though their party consisted of twenty members, both brothers and sisters, the Lord gave them grace to stay in the limited accommodation. In fact, as Bakht Singh put it, "We rationed the space and slept turn-by-turn." The Lord worked mightily from the very first meeting in the twin cities of Secunderabad and Hyderabad. The building was packed with people at every meeting. Hundreds stood around and outside holding up umbrellas and drinking in what they could hear of the message from the Word, not the least deterred by the heavy monsoon rain.

Even though Bakht Singh and team went there for only three days, because of the mighty blessing the Lord poured out upon them, the meetings continued. Hundreds were born again. Many of those who were newly born again or recommitted their lives to the Lord expressed their desire to be baptized. But the mission authorities refused to take care of them. Therefore, after much prayer, Bakht Singh decided to baptize them. They took the people in a procession through the streets to Hussein Sagar lake and conducted the baptisms there.

Among those who were baptized were G.T. Benjamin and his cousin G.T. Joshua, both children of Baptist ministers. When they were baptized, the Baptist pastor was so disturbed that he asked why they, being the children of Baptist pastors, testified in the waters of baptism a second time. They replied saying that though they were children of Baptist ministers, they were living in sin and were not born again until the gospel was preached to them.

Following the baptism, the Baptist authorities refused to grant Bakht Singh permission to continue the meetings in their facilities. But the Lord made it possible for them to

rent a building at 108, Oxford Street, now called Sarojinidevi Road. There they put up a large tent and the meetings continued. The Lord continued to save souls, so much so that every Saturday there used to be baptisms in the lake where as many as three hundred were baptized in one service. Often Bakht Singh himself did the baptizing.

The work thus grew and the people began coming regularly, not only for the weekly meetings but also on Sundays. As they ran out of all the facilities to accommodate the ever-growing ministry, the Lord wonderfully provided them with another large facility in Fateh Maidan. It is amazing how the Lord provided this facility. Although it was obvious to all that the Lord was doing a mighty work and His Spirit was moving mightily by transforming thousands of lives, the local mission people were not happy. The team asked the Lord to do something for them, and as they waited upon Him in prayer, the Lord led them wonderfully.

A Roman Catholic gentleman by the name of Colonel Ross had been converted during the meetings. One day he came and took Bakht Singh to see Fateh Maidan Pavilion in Hyderabad city. It was a large, beautiful pavilion, designed in the ancient Muslim architectural style, Hyderabad being the capital of a Muslim State. Here the Nizam (the ruler of Hyderabad) used to take salute of his army on ceremonial occasions. The colonel asked Bakht Singh whether he would like this pavilion for the gospel meetings. Hearing that, Bakht Singh told him he would certainly use it if it became available. Soon afterwards, he received a letter from the proper authorities authorizing him to use the pavilion with chairs and electricity all free of charge. The pavilion could seat well over a thousand people. Even though the missionary had refused to rent them even one room in their guest house, the Lord provided them with the palatial facility of a former Muslim king for their use without any charge at all.

They had a wonderful three-week campaign in the pavilion. This facility had never been used for such a purpose previously; it had been used only by the Nizam⁸ and that only occasionally. The Lord used this campaign to bring great honour to His Name in the city of Hyderabad - it being a large cosmopolitan city and the state capital of Hyderabad State. Hyderabad also was a stronghold of the Aryasamaj, a militant Hindu organization dedicated to opposing Christianity. Some of the believers, both brothers and sisters, had been beaten up and shamefully mistreated many times while they were doing gospel work in the city, by members of this organization.

One day during the campaign in the pavilion, about ten members of this group came into one of the meetings and gave their names along with those who were interested in baptism. Unaware of this, Bakht Singh asked those wishing to be baptized to sit in rows and began questioning them publicly one by one. He asked them to tell him plainly whether they were born again and if so when and where and how it happened. Had their lives and conduct been changed since then? What evidence could they give of being born again? Had they become a new creation in Christ? Had they set right things with others as far as possible in relation to all the misdeeds of their old life? Could they boldly testify that they had a good conscience? The members of Aryasamaj then realized that they too would have to answer such questions, so before their turn came they quietly disappeared, together with forty or so others who had been hiding nearby with sticks and other weapons ready for a fight.

By the time this campaign was over, they could see that the new believers were going to require proper shepherding. They prayed again asking the Lord to show them the next step in His plan and to work on their behalf. As in all their ministry, they wanted the hand of the Lord to be clearly seen,

for this was not man's work. If it were a work of God, the supernatural would be evident. The Lord demonstrated once again that He was in control and that He was leading them step by step.

A few days later, a man by the name of Major Paul came to Bakht Singh and asked him to make some provision for the village people who were interested in the meetings. Bakht Singh said that their place was not big enough, and therefore he could not accommodate any more people from villages. On hearing, this he took Bakht Singh and some of his co-workers, including R.R. Rajamani, in his car to show them a large building which was vacant at that time. It was a palace of a Nawab (member of the ruling class) called Mehdi Jang, which also had a very large open area, as big as that of Jehovah Shammah (3 acres). There was also a very nice garden attached to it. So they went in to look at the whole building. Bakht Singh thought that it was far too good and far too big for them. Together, they went to the terrace, knelt down and prayed, saying, "Oh, Lord, what is Your plan?"

As they began to pray, the Lord said clearly, "Take it. It is for the whole of India. It is not meant only for Hyderabad city and Secunderabad."

With the assurance of the Lord and oneness of mind, they decided to rent it for Rs.400/- a month. The very next day, the Lord provided the advance money to be given for two months. As a result, in December, 1950, they moved from 108 Oxford Street to this new place. This palace and the grounds were surrounded with so many palm trees that Bakht Singh named the building Elim. They held the first Holy Convocation in Hyderabad at the end of December 1950, in Elim.

The Lord continued with them in power and blessing. They erected a large pandal (temporary shed) in front of the house which had been enlarged three times in as many years

to accommodate all the people. Many souls met God there. It was a common thing for quite some time to have up to 50 baptisms every Sunday. Up until this time they had presumed that the Lord would push them from Jehovah Shammah, Madras, into other parts of South India, but they had no idea that the work would develop north of Madras. Contrary to their expectations, the Lord had brought them to Hyderabad. Little did they realize the size of the harvest He was preparing in this region and beyond.

Just a couple of instances must suffice to give an idea of how the Lord worked. One day back in 1945, a young man came on business to Madras from Chirala, a town about midway between Hyderabad and Madras. He visited Jehovah-Shammah while in Madras and returned to Chirala with the joy of salvation in his heart. Several years later, in 1953, Bakht Singh was travelling from Hyderabad to Madras by train and this young man somehow came to know about it. When the train pulled into Chirala Station he was on the platform with 30 or 40 others to meet him. As the train halted, they all came running along the platform to his compartment, saying, "Brother, give us a message from the Word of God." Bakht Singh offered a word of prayer and opened his Bible, but the guard blew his whistle and the train moved off, leaving them standing on the platform. However, hunger for the Word of God as evidenced by these people touched Bakht Singh very deeply and gave him a great burden of prayer for them. It was in the following year, 1954, that the Lord answered their prayers and they were able to visit Chirala and quite a number of towns in that area in a series of campaigns. There was a great moving of the Spirit and of reaping in fields that were white unto harvest.

The Lord has done similar things in various places in Andhra Pradesh. The work in Bhimavaram is another example. K. Aravindam was a born-again Lutheran involved

in gospel outreach among railway employees in the Bhimavaram area. He heard about Bakht Singh in 1945 through Brother Lauren who was working as Headmaster in a local school. Aravindam invited several speakers: Agrippa, John Lazarus and Bakht Singh, to a special gospel campaign at Bhimavaram in 1946, to be held on the Lutheran Mission premises. Following these meetings he arranged yet more for Bakht Singh, which were attended by thousands of people. Seeing the crowd, Bakht Singh had compassion on them for they were like sheep without a caring shepherd.

Later, Aravindam resigned from the railways where he worked for many years and began working with the Children's Special Service Mission (CSSM). Seeing Aravindam's spiritual commitment, Bakht Singh invited him to Jehovah Shammah where one of the elders, Brother Dorai Raj, talked to him about believer's baptism. Being a Lutheran, he was not convinced of it and so he kept away from Bakht Singh till 1952. Then, while Aravindam was attending a CSSM meeting, he visited Bakht Singh at Elim, Hyderabad, where Brother Dasan shared with him about baptism and this time he was convinced and was baptized. Following his baptism, he felt close to Bakht Singh spiritually and started working with him full-time. In 1952, he attended the Holy Convocation at Jehovah Shammah. After returning to Bhimavaram, he arranged special meetings for Bakht Singh and a hundred believers from his fellowship were baptized. To encourage these newly baptized people, Bakht Singh returned to Bhimavaram and held special meetings from December 1st to 3rd, 1953.

Following the meetings in Bhimavaram, Aravindam arranged special meetings in Vijayawada, Tenali, Chirala, Gudur and other areas during December 1953. Subsequent to these meetings, the Lord raised up living Assemblies in Bhimavaram and eventually in all other areas. Aravindam

has been serving the Lord faithfully and selflessly over these years, and the Lord has been using him mightily for the establishment of His Kingdom all across Andhra Pradesh. Through his dedicated service, many of his contemporaries in Andhra were saved and many came out for full-time service with the Assemblies.

Now, let us return to Hyderabad! One day several brethren were walking along with Bibles in their hands going to a meeting. An aged gentleman, who subsequently was affectionately called Appaji, noticed their Bibles, and his curiosity was strangely aroused. He was secretary to the Prime Minister of Hyderabad. The Prime Minister was the next person to the Nizam of Hyderabad. Then Appaji decided to follow them and that was how he came to attend one of Bakht Singh's meetings for the first time. Soon after this he came into a new spiritual experience, and on December 24th, 1950, he testified in the waters of baptism. In 1955, he expressed a desire to give his house and compound as a gift for the Lord's work. At first Bakht Singh refused and advised him to give it to someone else or to sell it; but he continued to insist that Bakht Singh accept it for the Lord's work. They prayed about his request for two years, till they finally became convinced that the matter was of the Lord. They accepted it as a gift for the Lord's work and named it Hebron.

In 1959, they left the big two-story house, Elim which is located in the next compound, and moved into Hebron. At first they wanted to keep both the Hebron and Elim properties for the work of the Lord, but the landlord of Elim was not very favourable to the idea. Moreover, the Lord clearly spoke to Bakht Singh from Genesis 13:8, "Then Abram removed *his* tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD." The transfer from Elim to Hebron took several months. Before completing the move to Hebron on Thursday Dec 24th,

1959, they had a day of fasting and prayer at Elim. Then on Friday, December 25th, Hebron was dedicated to the Lord. On December 27th, the last Sunday of 1959, they had the first worship service at Hebron.

Before they moved to Hebron they had to construct suitable facilities to accommodate the male and female residents, as well as facilities for the constant short-term and long-term visitors, offices and meeting halls. It was amazing the way the Lord provided them with a large compound adjacent to Elim which made their move easy.

As soon as the brothers' quarters were ready, they moved to Hebron, then Bakht Singh and the other senior brethren moved. In March, 1960, the sisters' quarters were completed and dedicated. Sisters Daisy, Nissi, Kaveri bai, Bonner, Kirubai, Dorothy, Pearl and Nelly Xavier were among those who moved into the new facility.

In those days, both Elim and later Hebron, were known for their spiritual atmosphere. People who came there were blessed through Bible studies, prayers and spiritual fellowship. If any of the residents quarreled, they were not allowed to participate in any ministry until things were put-right and settled. All worked in unity and harmony under the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bakht Singh was greatly blessed by the spiritual men and women whom the Lord raised up to team with him in the work. They were people of diverse backgrounds, talents and gifts, and all contributed to the enrichment and enhancement of the work of the Lord.

In His faithfulness, the Lord enabled them to construct a spacious pandal (shed) on the grounds for meetings, as well as quite a few other buildings. Believing brothers and sisters worked hard together to construct the new facilities. Everyone took their share in helping joyfully and the Lord blessed their labours of love. Over the years, the Lord has

blessed the ministry richly. Many, both brothers and sisters, have come out for full-time ministry. As of mid 2002, over 120 were living in the limited facilities of Hebron, Hermon and Zion. During the All India Holy Convocations⁹ they have accommodated over twenty thousand guests on the large compounds where people were "packed in like sardines." In spite of all the physical limitations and sufferings, they all came because of the joy of the Lord.

Another ministry still going out from Hebron is 'The Peace Of God' Bible Correspondence courses which have been produced since 1963. By this means they are able to teach the Word of God in a systematic way to people all over India through Bible lessons in English, Telugu and Urdu. They hope to expand into other languages soon as they know of quite a number of Hindus, Muslims and nominal Christians who have testified to having found true peace, salvation and new life through studying the Word of God by these courses.

Another means by which Hebron is able to serve all of India is by the publication of books, magazines, the Hebron Messenger, booklets and tracts for both the saved and unsaved. This literature ministry is finding its way all around the world.

Back in the late 1950s, leadership of Hebron did not follow any church-growth strategy or formulas. They have been pushed along by the Lord, so much so that to do other than they had done would have been conscious disobedience. Nor were they chosen by Him for this work for any other reason than absolute Grace, for they felt so unworthy before the Lord when they remembered all His goodness and faithfulness over the years. They always felt that other men before them have laboured more worthily than they, and they have entered into their labours. (John 4:36-38).

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing,

neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."
(1 Cor. 3:6,7)

The Lord's testimony has proliferated in a wonderfully spontaneous way throughout the whole of India since those incidents at Cumbum in 1950, although there were several churches established even prior to that, such as the one at Ahmedabad in Gujarat. There are now a good number of young churches scattered here and there all over India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. They are members of that wonderful Body; the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Body knows them; they grow as they feed on the Word of God and are governed by Him. Thus we are being built up together with all God's children world-wide into a spiritual House for the Lord, through which "He shall show forth, now and in the ages to come, the exceeding riches of His grace." (Eph 2:7)

How exactly has this multiplication of churches taken place? Were they personally responsible? Of course, there have been many to blame and criticize, accusing them by saying, "Starting new churches everywhere!" – That was the charge! Well, of course, they were not responsible for much that has happened, but it was the work of the Lord.

But the predominant feature of the work is that the great majority of the churches have come into being only indirectly from their ministry. It has simply been the grace and power of God released through the giving of the *MESSAGE of THE WORD OF GOD*, and not the personal efforts of Bakht Singh or any of his co-workers. In most cases they were not on the scene when the crucial developments were taking place. They would come to know about them afterwards. And even then, their policy had been not to interfere but to let the Lord work things out. If the local people called them they would go and pray for them, but they only went if and when the Lord gave them assurance that He would have them to

go. Furthermore, the whole idea of going was simply to further the spiritual knowledge and grounding of those hungry for God. "The servant of the Lord should not strive," and they left that strictly to the Lord.

Many of the churches to be found throughout the land have come into being through a few believers from a town or a village attending one of the Holy Convocations and seeing the 'House of God' being expressed, tasting of its joys and seeing its responsibilities. When they returned to their own places, the time would come when they could no longer tolerate the old - the dead denominational system with its spiritual bankruptcy, its politics, carnal divisions and strife. Usually they would find the "old" skin so rigid and inflexible that any "new wine" simply could not be contained therein, and in the end there would be a "bursting". As Bakht Singh said:

"We never preached or taught that the believers should in any way seek to precipitate a "bursting" or separation, but just as people never build houses in graveyards, so the living cannot abide with the dead. Thus we have seen those who had become "new wine" quietly grow together and the Lord would put them into a "new skin". It has not come about on any one's instigation, but rather it has been the spontaneous result of "new life" being experienced and new "vision" being granted. The new life has been so vital and the new vision so compelling that things took their own course locally without our intervention."¹⁰

But in other cases, perhaps more particularly in the cities and larger towns which have strategic value for the spread of the gospel, the beginning and the development of the work has been the direct result of their labours. The Assemblies in such places as New Delhi, Agra, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Vellore, Guntur, Hyderabad and many other places across India are the result of their direct and continuous labours. Some eager and hungry local believers persistently called

them to go and minister to them and when they did so, they felt before God that they could not leave the results to be dissipated by neglect or opposition; they were assured that they must take responsibility to shepherd them and ensure their spiritual grounding and collective integration into a living, local body - a testimony to the Lord Jesus.

In no case did they hurriedly enter places or take responsibilities. They did not want to run before the Lord or involve themselves in burdens the Lord had not given. Such could not be borne if the Lord was not supporting them. But whenever they had assurance from the Lord that it was His call and also His time to go to such towns or cities, they went. In such cases, they first concentrated on preaching the gospel that souls might be saved. Often this initial period was rather prolonged, and would be followed by a time of more emphasis on teaching, that the saints might be edified and made aware of their calling and vocation in their location.

According to the need and as led by the Lord, Bakht Singh would send a brother or two, like Paul sent Timothy or Titus, to take care of the newly formed fellowships. He then kept transferring these brethren, who were known as "God's servants," within two or three years to other areas or places where their ministry was needed for strengthening believers and establishing new Assemblies. These appointments were not meant to be permanent, but unfortunately some of the God's servants have been reluctant to move on to new places, and this has caused much spiritual loss and strife in a number of Assemblies, particularly in Andhra Pradesh.

While the Spirit of the Lord was moving mightily in the South - Tamilnadu, Andhra and other southern States of India, the Spirit of God was also moving in the northern part of India. The Lord used various people for the salvation of many and the planting of New Testament Assemblies in the north and north east, but the chief among them was Jordan Khan.

In the late 1940s, when Colonial India was going through unprecedented Muslim-Sikh-Hindu riots which resulted in many deaths and the eventual partitioning of India into Hindustan and Pakistan in 1947, the Lord was bringing about reconciliation and unity among the people of the sub-continent of India through the preaching of the Cross of Christ by Bakht Singh who was a Sikh convert, and Jordan Khan, whose father was a converted Muslim. Both Bakht Singh and Jordan Khan¹¹ were born and raised in Punjab, which is now part of Pakistan, and thus both were Punjabis. In the Lord's time, He teamed these 'Punjabis' together under His Headship to accomplish His purposes in India and abroad.

After his remarkable conversion at the age of 21 while Jordan Khan was working as a railway employee in the Karachi area (now in Pakistan), he resigned his employment and came out to serve the Lord full-time in obedience to the call of God. Soon after that, he came in contact with Dennis Clark, a British Missionary, who had worked closely with Bakht Singh. As Khan served the Lord as itinerant preacher in Lahore, Shantinagar and other parts of Punjab, he came in contact with those who were converted and blessed through the ministry of Bakht Singh. In 1944, at the invitation of Bakht Singh, Khan went to Jehovah Shammah, Madras, South India, to meet and fellowship with him. That was the beginning of a great work the Lord was to do through them. What a miracle! Here were two Punjabi converts to Christ from Sikh-Muslim backgrounds, who politically and religiously were considered as enemies, but in Christ they were one – both reconciling the world to Christ. Religion divides, destroys and kills - Christ unites, reconciles, builds and gives life.

About Khan's first impression of Bakht Singh his daughter Beulah writes:

"When Papa arrived in Madras railway station, brother

Noel Barrow (a co-worker of Bakht Singh) went to receive him and brought him to Jehovah-Shammah. When father went to meet Brother Bakht Singh in the morning, he was spending some time in prayer. After some waiting, Papa decided to come back later in the afternoon. When he did, Brother Bakht Singh had not yet concluded his time of prayer. When evening came, he was still on his knees, interceding to the Heavenly Father. This touched father deeply and left a lasting impression on him. His heart longed to work alongside a man of prayer. Later, the elders, Brothers R.R. Rajamani, Dorai Raj and George Rajaratnam prayed together with Brother Bakht Singh and arranged for three days of special meetings. Their endeavours were fruitful and they were involved in gospel outreach for the entire month. This was the start of a friendship that grew and deepened over the years."¹²

After spending several weeks in Jehovah Shammah ministering and fellowshiping with the saints, Khan went back to Punjab for ministry. After this, he made frequent visits to Jehovah Shammah for meetings and fellowship, but his base was in Punjab. In 1945, when Bakht Singh and his team (K. Phillip, Noel Barrow, S. Martin and others) visited Martinpur, Lahore and other places in Punjab (now in Pakistan), Khan joined the team and they worked together. Bakht Singh's base of operation was Madras until 1950.

In December, 1945, following the Holy Convocation in Jehovah Shammah, Madras, at the invitation of Lal Din (another fiery Punjabi evangelist who was converted to Christ through the ministry of Bakht Singh during the 1937 Martinpur revival), Jordan Khan went to Kharagpur in West Bengal for gospel campaigns. The Lord used him mightily for the salvation of many; notable among them were Lazar Sen (who later became a co-worker of Bakht Singh), Charles Sen, Nikil Mahapatra, Sylvester and others. He then returned to Punjab.

Khan had a deep passion for the Lord and compassion for souls. He did not care for his health nor counted his life dear unto himself. As his health was deteriorating, Dennis Clark¹³ invited him to Landour, Mussourie, U.P. in 1946 for much needed rest and recuperation. While there, in spite of his poor health, he continued to preach the gospel and many were converted. Then in 1947, some missionaries of the Church of Scotland invited the fiery young Khan for a series of revival meetings in Darjeeling. There, the Lord used him to bring about an unprecedented revival which resulted in the conversion of many. Dr. Andrew Pradhan and Brother Tashi were prominent people in Darjeeling who came to know the Lord. He used these men to raise up a vibrant local church there, and eventually in various parts of Darjeeling district.

Following his revival meetings in Darjeeling, the Lord led Khan to Kalimpong,¹⁴ where he had revival meetings in the church of Scotland. Once again, many were converted, including Victor Pradhan, Dhankumar Mukhia, Panchanath Namchoy, Prem Pradhan, Peter Song and his wife, Masih Prakash, Robert Mukhia, Brother Fudong and several others. Later, many of them became 'pillars' of the local church in 'El-Shaddai', Kalimpong.

In 1948, when the assembly in Kalimpong began, the believers met in the home of Victor Pradhan on the basis of Acts 2:42 under the name Jehovah Nissi. Three months later, they moved to a new site, where they continued to meet, and named the place El-Shaddai.

As the need arose for shepherding new converts, Victor Pradhan came out for full-time ministry. The Lord began using him and others to do a new work all over Kalimpong, Darjeeling, Siliguri, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. The 1948 Holy Convocation, and the visit of Bakht Singh and his co-workers to Kalimpong stimulated the work of God all over

the north eastern parts of India, including Nagaland, Mizoram, Assam and others.

The following is a report by Dudley Barker, a WEC Missionary:

"The El-Shaddai fellowship formed in Kalimpong, is a joy to know and associate with. After the outbreak of blessing through the ministry of Jordan Khan, the work first centred in the home of a Christian family who called their house Jehovah-Nissi. Later, Jordan Khan encouraged the establishment of a fellowship centre, related to no particular family, and the group rented a two-storey house on the edge of Kalimpong Bazaar standing on an acre of ground. On this they erected a simple meeting-room with open windows, set-in walls constructed of bamboo and mud. The roof is made of kerosene tins. Over the earthen floor they spread reed mats. There are no furnishings except some calico banners having texts painted on them in Hindi, Nepali and English. Everybody sits on the floor at the meetings, and all kneel to pray and worship. Each Sunday, there is a main meeting starting at 11 a.m. concluding between 3 and 4 p.m. Tea is served to all after the meeting. A Sunday School is conducted from 9.30 a.m. to 10.30 a.m., and sometimes they hold an open-air meeting after the main gathering. The programme during the week is full, where the whole church gets involved.

Often they go out in a group and spend a day in evangelism among the villages or at some distant bazaar. Located in Kalimpong are three evangelists and two Bible women, all supported by the fellowship. These evangelists and Bible women are continually going to other areas as a team where there are no witnesses, and their labours in Kalimpong and farther a field result in conversions, such conversions being a unique thing in Kalimpong. The conversions are consistently from Buddhism and Hinduism.

The two elders of the indigenous assembly were formerly

members of a denominational group. This is also true concerning other members of the El-Shaddai. What a joy it has been to fellowship with these brethren and sisters in Christ. Their joy and zeal is infectious. The significant aspect of the assembly fellowship is that a missionary has no status. He is not regarded as a demi-god, which is the sickening experience in those spheres where the work, resultant from a missionary's labours, has developed dependant upon foreign funds and personalities. He is treated through brotherly love and grace and accorded a warm welcome.

The programme of the assembly is designed to build up the strength of the individual Christian, as well as the group as a whole, and to reach out in vigorous witness to souls around, who are still without Christ. In all meetings Bibles have prominent place. Every Christian owns one and used it in the meeting."¹⁵

After much prayer and waiting upon the Lord, He made His will clear to Jordan Khan and his future wife, Esther, who was converted to Christ from Islam, through the ministry and prayers of the saints at Hephzibah, Jehovah-Shammah, Madras. The wedding was held at Jehovah-Shammah on the 15th of March, 1950. Following their honeymoon at Nilgiri Hills, Khan's physical condition worsened; his lungs were severely infected with tuberculosis. Bakht Singh accompanied them to the Sanatorium at Wanlesvadi in Maharastra state, where he made necessary arrangements for their physical comfort before he returned to Madras.

Within two months, he underwent three major operations. Seven of his ribs were removed and the infected lung was silenced. The other lung was treated with chemotherapy. By the end of the next six months, he had completely recovered. The doctors were certain that it was a miracle because there were patients with minor infections in the

same hospital for years, and here was a patient on the verge of death who was supernaturally cured within six months.¹⁶

After he was discharged from the Sanatorium, Jordan Khan and Esther went to 'Elim,' Hyderabad, the new base of operation for Bakht Singh, for his convalescence.

"Even after this period of recovery, Bro. Bakht Singh admonished papa to remain in Hyderabad. However, father insisted that he must go back to his people in Kalimpong."¹⁷

This spirit of "insisting" to do what one wants to do rather than working in co-operation and submission and doing all things with prayer and oneness has caused much spiritual loss and damage in the work of the Lord. The enemy also has used this "spirit of insisting" as the "Lord's will" to bring about division and broken relationships among the people of God. Unless one learns to submit to spiritual authority and godly men whom the Lord has placed over them, one cannot expect others to submit to their spiritual authority. Hence the problem.

In retrospect, if Khan had listened to Bakht Singh and stayed on at Elim, then gone to Kalimpong later on with much prayer and in oneness of mind, perhaps he could have avoided the problem in Kalimpong which precipitated his move to Kharagpur in 1952, and then in 1967 to Jabalpur, under clouds of much humiliation, pain and sorrow!

Beulah writes:

"Papa arrived in Kalimpong with a burning zeal to continue the work he had started. However, it was not long before [the] cold waters of contention quenched his enthusiasm. Unfortunately, internal conflict arose from within [the] leadership of the Assembly. Father then decided to go to Kharagpur upon the invitation of Brother Ron Bissel in 1952."¹⁸

The Lord used Khan and his co-workers such as Lazar Sen, Charles Sen and others to labour relentlessly in various

unreached areas of Northern India, namely - Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, U.P and so on. The Lord honoured their labours and used them to raise up New Testament Churches in many of these difficult areas. After serving the Lord so faithfully based at Kharagpur till 1967, Jordan Khan and family moved to Jabalpur to shepherd the work there.

The reason for Khan's move to Jabalpur Beulah writes:

"There was a key and influential member of the leadership who certainly despised my father's authority. He even conspired, engaging the involvement of other naïve leaders, in plotting against him. Their diabolical schemes culminated in a hideous explosion during a Sunday worship meeting. Father was disgracefully dismissed and ousted out of the church service."¹⁹

The Lord began to work in Nepal first through the Nepalese who were converted in Kalimpong and Darjeeling. Until [the]mid 80s, Nepal was closed for the gospel. Prem Pradhan, who was converted to Christ in 1951 and discipled in Darjeeling, returned to Nepal in 1953 as a mighty witness for Christ and worked in close fellowship with the brethren in Kalimpong for a while in the early days. The Lord used him in Nepal in spite of all the persecutions and many trials, imprisonment, for the salvation of many and establishing of New Testament churches in Nepal.

In 1955, the El-Shaddai Assembly joined with the fellowship in Darjeeling in sending an evangelistic team to Katmandu, the capital of Nepal. Khan led the team. They were unrestricted in the preaching of the gospel. Reporting to the police first of all they were given a green light to go ahead. Thousands of tracts, booklets and gospels were distributed and sold. Wisely, all the party wore national dress. There were conversions as a result of the witness. In 1956 they sent a group from Kalimpong to permanently reside at Katmandu. This is the method employed by both Bakht

Singh and Jordan Khan. It provides a focal point of fellowship for the new converts, as well as being an avenue of strength and encouragement. There is a vibrant Assembly in Katmandu and thirty or more in other parts of Nepal. The Lord is raising up more and more Assemblies through the labours of Nepalese believers.

Jordan Khan continued serving the Lord relentlessly both in India and abroad. He worked in fellowship with various godly groups including WEC and OM, and ministered several times on OM ships—the Logos and the Doulos. He visited many countries as a messenger of the Lord. Like the apostle Paul, his motto, was “For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21) From the time of his conversion to his home-call on the 31st of December, 1984, he was a flaming fire for Christ in spite of his physical weakness and human frailties.

The yearly Holy Convocation sponsored by El-Shaddai at Kalimpong has been growing. In December 2001, over 6000 attended from Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, besides those from Kalimpong and other parts of India, as well as a sprinkling of believers from various parts of the world. It is spiritually inspiring to be where believers, mostly converts from Hindu or Buddhist backgrounds, radiate the beauty of Christ. Christ’s life and love flow freely among them in spite of all the practical problems and persecutions. Many of these believers, having charged their spiritual batteries, go back to their villages, towns and cities as living witnesses for Christ. Through them, the Lord is gathering ‘living stones’ to build His living churches in various parts of Darjeeling, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan as well as in the North Eastern parts of India.

There are now hundreds of functioning local churches or assemblies in Kalimpong and Darjeeling districts, Sikkim and Nepal, and in other North Eastern parts of India. Victor

Pradhan, who is now in his late 70s, said recently that assemblies are springing up all over the areas. "What can I do? I cannot be in every place, yet all these new Assemblies need teachers and shepherds to take care of them?"¹⁹ Ninety-five percent of the new converts are from non-Christian backgrounds – Buddhist, Hindu, animist, tribal and so on. The Lord has been using El-shaddai, Kalimpong, like the church in Antioch. The work of the Lord has been spreading very rapidly throughout the areas through the witness of spirit-filled believers, most of whom have come from raw, non-Christian backgrounds. This is indeed the Lord's doing and is marvellous in our sight. Here again, we see people reaching people with Christ just as in the Acts of the Apostles.

End Notes

¹Based on research done by Church growth students under the supervision of Professor Vern Middleton, Yavatmal Theological Seminary, Pune, India (Author's conversation with Vern Middleton in November 2001).

²Author's interview with Bakht Singh, 1978.

³Brothers Lal Din and Sardar Masih were there. They were converted to Christ in Martinpur in 1937 through the ministry of Bakht Singh. Later on K.N. Augustine of Hyderabad joined Lal Din for evangelistic preaching. When Bakht Singh came to Hyderabad in 1950, he joined him as his interpreter and continued serving as God's servant in Hebron till his home-call in March 2000. Lal Din was promoted to glory in the early 90s and Sardar Masih is still alive and active, serving the Lord even now in 2002, in Pakistan assemblies.

⁴He was used of the Lord mightily wherever he was transferred. He had a great zeal for the Lord and for His House. He was the father of Brother D.S. Christopher. He was promoted to glory in his 40s which was a great loss to the work of the Lord and to His people

⁵Martin Satyanathan, *From Idols To The Service Of The Living God*, (Andhra Pradesh, India: Salem Prayer House, 1993), pp.30-32.

⁶Author's interview with Bakht Singh, 1978.

⁷Based on author's interview with Bakht Singh in 1978.

⁸Before the independence of India from Britain, in 1947, Nizam,

the king of Hyderabad was considered to be the wealthiest person in the world. Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *Freedom At Midnight* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975), p. 179.

⁹The last annual Holy Convocation at Hebron, Hyderabad, was held in October, 1985. Over 30,000 attended that Holy Convocation. Due to a lack of adequate facilities the Holy Convocation has been cancelled for the time being.

¹⁰Bakht Singh, *Write The Vision*. (Unpublished papers, 1966).

¹¹Jordan Khan was born on 26th February, 1918, to Mr. & Mrs. Chanan Khan. Chanan Khan was a converted Muslim who served for a while as a Presbyterian Pastor and later became a co-worker with Praying Hyde.

¹²Beulah Yogi, *A Soul's Travail Satisfied*, The life and testimony of Jordan C. Khan, (New Delhi, India: Masihi Sahitya Sanstha, 2001).

¹³Dennis Clark, a Brethren missionary from Britain who worked in fellowship with Bakht Singh in India and Lahore, Pakistan, for a number of years.

¹⁴Nestled in the foot-hills of Himalayas, Kalimpong is a beautiful place. It is located strategically in the north east of West Bengal and is surrounded by Sikkim in the North, Bhutan at the East end and Nepal on the West. It lies about 100 meters above sea level. The cool climate and high elevation are suitable for tea plantation. The population consists of mainly Lepchas and Nepalese. Because of its strategic location, it can be used as a base to take the gospel to all the neighbouring areas and countries.

¹⁵Dudley Barker, *World Conquest*, July-August, 1957.

¹⁶Beulah Yogi, *A Soul's Travail Satisfied*, Published by Masihi Sahitya Sanstha, 70 Janpath, New Delhi, 110001. Page 59.

¹⁷Ibid., Page 60.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 61 & 63.

¹⁹Author's interview with Victor Pradhan, 1998.

Chapter 12

The Riches of God's Glory: Worldwide Impact

"Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." (Isa. 33:17).

Bakht Singh's mission was to call the church to do God's work in God's way in the light of His Word. Therefore, his call was not only local but global; not only national but international. He was available to God to go anywhere, to say and do anything according to the will of God.

During the first thirteen years of ministry following his return to India from the West in 1933, the Lord used Bakht Singh in an unprecedented way, in the history of the church in India. The Lord brought about unusual spiritual awakenings which swept across various cities, towns and villages from Karachi in the North-West to Kerala in the South-West. We have already seen how the Lord used him to turn cities and towns upside down for His praise, such was the moving of the Holy Spirit through His servant. The news of his ministry spread abroad through Western missionaries who were working in the sub-continent of India. Missionary magazines and news letters heralded the unusual, apostolic revivals and healings that God was doing through His anointed servant, Bakht Singh.

Early one morning in May 1946, while he was in Coonoor, Nilgiris, South India, listening to the birds chirping and singing near his window, Bakht Singh heard a Voice saying, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." (Isaiah 33:17)

For three consecutive days he heard the same Voice with the same words. He thought that the Lord was giving him a special message for Sunday. But on Monday again he heard the birds singing and the Voice repeating the same verse from Isa 33:17. So he prayed, "Lord, tell me the meaning of this verse."

And the Lord said to him, "I want you to get ready to go abroad, to a land far off." So he began praying about it.

When he returned to Jehovah Shammah in Madras, he shared this with the brethren there and they all began praying about it. After prayer, they, too had peace about him going abroad. But the Lord kept on reminding him not to delay, that he should go soon.

"One morning, his daily scripture portion was Ezek 8:1 "And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month." Based on that verse, the Lord said to him that he should arrive in London, England, on the 5th day of the sixth month in 1946. He then said to the Lord that if He wanted him to go so quickly, he must first get a new passport within two days. Secondly, he must receive a special gift for the passage, as he did not want to take any money from the Assembly at Jehovah Shammah. Amazingly, he did get the passport in two days with the help of a friend. Then Mr. & Mrs. Devasahayam came to see him whom he had never met before. He was an employee of the office of the Inspector General of Police. Mr. Devasahayam said to Bakht Singh, "Brother, we have kept some money for God's service. We wanted to know whom to give it to. The Lord spoke to us, saying that this special gift is for you." So the

Lord did provide him with the money and passport just as he had prayed.

Then he went to Bombay to get a berth on the ship going to London and was told that one passenger ship called 'Venconia' would be leaving Bombay and was expected to arrive in London on the 5th of June. The problem was that Venconia was full: no berth was available, his name was then placed on the waiting list. He went again on the second and third day and was told that there was no cancellation.

After two days he was told that another ship called the 'Andes,' a very fast ship, was leaving for London and that one was expected to arrive in London on the 7th of June, not the 5th. Again he prayed, asking the Lord for direction and He directed him to go on the 'Andes'. As it turned out, the 'Venconia' had engine trouble on the way and it reached London two days late, on the 7th of June. The 'Andes' was a faster ship and arrived in London on the 5th of June instead of on the 7th. This incident shows how meticulously and marvellously the Lord directed his paths.

When he arrived in London, Bakht Singh had no place to go to, for he did not have any pre-plan. So he went to Honor Oak, London, where he shared with the saints that he had come at the direction of the Lord without an invitation from anyone. They were all glad to receive him because they had been in fellowship with Bakht Singh and had been praying for him and for his fellow-workers very faithfully over the years. While he was there, he began to receive invitations from various places in Great Britain. And after few days he went to Scotland.

Once in Scotland, the Lord spoke to him very clearly from Zechariah 9:10 about his going to the United States and Canada: "and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." From this verse the Lord told to him that he should continue his journey by

crossing another sea, meaning that he should go on to North America.

When he returned to London from Scotland, there was a letter waiting for him which had come from a Miss Margaret Green of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. She was a former missionary to Punjab, Pakistan, and knew Bakht Singh and his ministry well. She was also on the first board of Inter-Varsity Christian Students Union. Dr. Christy Wilson was asked to be the missions secretary for Inter-Varsity for the United States and Canada, and so was planning the first Urbana Student Missionary Convention, to be held in Toronto, Canada, from December 27th 1946 to January 2nd 1947. Miss. Green highly recommended Bakht Singh to be the keynote speaker at the convention in Toronto. The letter that was waiting for him in London was the invitation to the Toronto Convention. It had first been sent to Madras, India, and was then redirected to him in London, where he was at that time. With this letter of invitation from Inter Varsity, the Lord further confirmed what He had already told him when he was in Scotland about his going to North America.

However, it was very difficult to get passage from England to North America at that time. There were no seats available either by ship or by air: all were full following the end of World War II. While Bakht Singh was praying about getting a seat to go to North America, the Lord spoke to him from his daily reading from Isa 43:16, "Thus saith the LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters." When he read that, he knew the Lord would provide a berth for him. So he went to a shipping company and asked for a ticket. They told him that there was no way he could get one at that time. They said that there was only one chance he might be able to get a berth and that was through the British High Commissioner because government servants were given some special consideration. He then went to the

British High Commissioners' office and talked to a Mr. Hardy, saying that he wanted a passage to America. Hardy asked him if he was a government servant. Hearing that, Bakht Singh replied, 'No sir, I am God's servant.'

Mr. Hardy said, 'That will do.' The Lord provided him with passage to New York in a marvellous way.

Miss Margaret Green was unable to meet him, so she arranged for Mr. Chambers to take care of him. Reuben Larsen¹ happened to hear about Bakht Singh's coming to New York, so when he got off the ship, Mr. Larsen was also there to meet him. Bakht Singh had met him back in 1930.

When he arrived, Reuben told Bakht Singh, "You have come to America because of our prayers. I have been praying for somebody who knows Hindi because we want to record messages for those Indians in South America. This morning I overheard Mr. Chambers saying, 'Brother Bakht Singh is coming to New York'. That is how I have come to meet you."

The very first day after landing, he recorded a message in Hindi for HCJB Radio. In the days that followed, Bakht Singh recorded thirty messages in Hindi and Urdu; one per day, each message a duration of thirty-five minutes, to be broadcast for Indian listeners in Latin America.

Bakht Singh then travelled to and ministered in various parts of the USA before going to Toronto towards the end of December to speak at the first Inter-Varsity Christian Students Missions conference, now known as Urbana Inter Varsity Students Missionary convention. It is held once every three years on the university of Illinois at Urbana Campus.

Just before the convention was held, the weather was terribly cold and Toronto had an ice storm which made all the pavements and sidewalks just like glass. Bakht Singh, coming from sunny South India, accidentally fell and experienced a compound fracture in his elbow. They rushed him to the doctor who X-rayed his arm and told him that the frac-

tures were so bad that they had to open up his arm and reset all the bones. Bakht Singh was in excruciating pain. Moreover, the doctors also told him that he would not be able to speak at the convention because he would be in the hospital for about a month to allow his arm to heal following the operation.

Bakht Singh then asked whether the operation could be postponed until after the convention. The doctors told him that he could do that, but that he would be in terrible pain. Bakht Singh chose to wait until after he had given the main message at the Toronto Convention before he went to the hospital. According to Dr. Christy Wilson, who was on the platform with him at that time, he gave a powerful message on 'Counting the cost of serving Christ,' based on Luke 14: vs. 26 onwards.

At the conference, a student asked Bakht Singh, "If you are a man of God, why did God allow you to slip and break your arm?" Bakht Singh answered by saying, that he did not know all the reasons, but he knew that ever since his arm was broken he had been in so much pain that he could not sleep at all. That kept him awake so that he could pray for the young people as well as for the convention. As a result, the Lord did a mighty work at that first Urbana Convention. Jim Eliot, Ralph Winter and David Howard were some of the participants there, out of the five hundred and seventy-five who attended.

Following the convention, Bakht Singh was admitted to hospital for surgery and recuperation and it was about a month before he could travel again. The Lord had turned this 'tragedy' and trial of Bakht Singh into a glorious triumph. According to Dr. Christy Wilson, who visited him in the hospital every day, the doctors and nurses crowded around Bakht Singh to hear his testimony and the gospel that he shared with all those who visited him. The Lord al-

lowed Bakht Singh to break his arm with a compound fracture so that he could pray earnestly for the conference, and because of that, about half of those students who attended the convention went to the mission field.²

Following his discharge from hospital, the Lord continued to use him mightily both in Canada and the United States before he returned to India via Tokyo, the Philippines and Hong Kong. It was a round-the-world trip where the Lord directed Bakht Singh all along the way, wonderfully providing for his every need. The Lord opened doors which were totally unknown to him, thus fulfilling the promise He had given him before he left for the West from Isaiah 33:17: "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off."

The Lord took Bakht Singh to practically every continent as His mighty witness, ministering to various groups and denominations. Although the Lord took him to different countries for ministry, he did not have any intention of establishing any local churches affiliated with Indigenous Churches of India. His burden was to share with people the vision of the Body of Christ based on New Testament principles to bring back the glory of God. Believers who shared a similar vision were led of the Lord to establish local churches in other countries, based on these New Testament principles, in order to show forth the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ministry in the U.S.A. :

Bakht Singh visited the USA several times after his 1946-47 visit. In 1959 Dr. Bob Finley of International Students Inc., based at that time in Washington D.C., invited him for some special meetings in various parts of the United States and Canada. Dr. Finley again invited him in 1969 and 70, primarily to speak at their Indigenous Mission's Institute to

help converted international students get a vision of the church. It was hoped that on their return, God could use them to establish local churches in their own countries based on New Testament principles in the same way the Lord had used His servant, Bakht Singh.

About this conference, Bakht Singh wrote in the Hebron Messenger:

"I do praise God for all that he has accomplished through the Indigenous Church Conference (Indigenous Mission Institute) held in Washington, D.C., August 18th to 27th, under the auspices of International Students Inc., Washington, D.C.

About 70 Christian leaders and students from 20 countries, now studying or on business in the U.S.A., attended the sessions regularly. Besides the regular sessions during the day, there were special meetings every evening open to the public and these were attended by scores of Americans who have been seeking to know God's plan and pattern for His church. We were very much conscious of God's presence with us in every gathering. There has been daily, an increasing number of genuine enquiries from believers hailing both from the Untied States and from other countries, about the establishing of indigenous churches in their respective countries. I could see how the Lord is preparing His chosen vessels, in His own way, particularly in the South East Asian countries. I do believe that the Lord met with us and spoke to many hearts about their share in the building up of His Church in all nations. On Sunday, we had worship service with the Lord's table. Needless to say, for most of the believers this was their first experience of worshipping the Lord in this manner. The company present in the service, who were gathered from different nations, reminded us of Rev. 5:9, "... for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." There were believers from : India, Philippines,

Sudan, Ghana, Hong Kong, U.K., Japan, Singapore, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, China, Thailand, Taiwan, Guyana, South Viet-Nam, Ecuador, Kenya, Puerto Rico, Malaysia and Guatemala. The worship meeting was followed by an Indian-style love-feast – rice, dhall (Lentil curry), vegetables and so on. This gave us opportunity to have fellowship with one another very intimately.

Many believers felt much refreshed by the spirit of worship in the gathering, and they expressed their longing to have similar worship meetings conducted in their respective countries. Every afternoon we went in a procession to the Lincoln Memorial for open-air preaching. Several of us from different nationalities, testified to the crowd gathered around us and told them of the saving power and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. We were encouraged by the response of the people. One evening 13 believers from 9 different countries, both men and women, witnessed to the Lord in the waters of baptism. Among these were two from Afghanistan who found Christ while studying in the U.S.A. Even though we spent a full day in this way, and should have been tired, most of us felt much refreshed by the Holy spirit. We were convinced that the Lord would have us pray with a greater burden for the establishing of His living churches in various parts of the world.

Please pray much that the Lord may grant fresh anointing to those who have accepted God's Word during these past few days at the conference as they return to their respective countries with a new heavenly vision, so that they may take part in the building of His Church at any cost. We thank God for the remnant He has kept in every country to show forth the glory and the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have noticed a growing desire among people to understand the true meaning of His Church, and the secret of a

joyful and triumphant life. They have been disillusioned with various groups that claim to have the fullness of the Holy Spirit."³

During his visit to the U.S.A. in 1969, Bakht Singh also visited the author in Syracuse. Staying in our home, he saw what the Lord was doing through us to minister to international students at Syracuse University. He was thrilled to see the unprecedented opportunity of reaching students from around the world. He asked the author what was being done with those students who came to know Christ through our ministry. He was told that those students were being sent to various Bible preaching churches in and around Syracuse University.

He thought for a while and then said, "Our responsibility is not only to see that men and women come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, but also to disciple them and to teach them the whole counsel of God through the local expression of the Body of Christ, which is the church." He also told this author that it was important that we give to newly converted international students the concept of the New Testament Church so that when they go back home they can apply these New Testament principles within their own cultural background and thus increase the body of Christ in other parts of the world.

We read in Acts chapter two, verse five, that every nation under the sun was at Jerusalem at the time of the coming of the Holy Spirit. People from various nations heard the gospel preached by Apostle Peter. Those who were converted through the preaching of Apostle Peter were baptized, and "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and in fellowship, in breaking of bread and prayers." (Acts 2:41,42).

So Bakht Singh encouraged this author to start a house church based on New Testament principles in order to disciple and equip the newly converted international students.

The author said to him that he would pray with his wife Indira and do as the Lord leads them.

Later on Bakht Singh wrote in the Hebron Messenger:

"I can see that the Lord is preparing His remnant in this country of America, as I mentioned in the last issue of the Hebron Messenger. A large number of believers have begun to gather in various homes with a sincere longing to worship God in Spirit and in truth. There are many who have been seeking to understand God's order for His Church, which is to show forth His manifold wisdom to the powers and principalities in heavenly places, according to Ephesians 3:10. I have had the privilege to come across many such believers in every place the Lord has taken me so far. Realizing the hunger of such believers, we felt led to arrange a worship gathering for the breaking of bread in Syracuse, New York, in the home of our Brother and Sister T.E. Koshy, whom the Lord has been using mightily among the international students coming from many nations, who are studying at Syracuse University, and also among the Americans in many surrounding areas. (By the way, there are now students from 90 countries at Syracuse University). About 70 people gathered with us at the Lord's Table on Sunday morning, September 7th. Some of them came from as far as 130 miles away. The genuine interest of the people who attended the worship meeting convinced us of the great need for such Sunday gatherings. To most of them it was their first experience. The service went on for about four hours, 10.a.m.to 2 p.m. We all took part in a love-feast after the worship meeting. The believers were blessed and refreshed. Some of them expressed their desire to have similar gatherings regularly every Sunday. Please pray that the Lord may guide and direct Brother Koshy how to meet this need.

In the evening, five believers testified to the Lord in the waters of baptism. Two of them were from India, (Mrs. Dinah

Perry, Brother Koshy's mother-in-law, was one of them); two from Taiwan; and one from the U.S.A. It was a very happy day, and many were challenged and encouraged both by the baptism and the evening meeting that followed.

I believe that the Lord is speaking to many in this country about His eternal plan for His Church, and unless they are properly led and instructed, the enemy is bound to mislead them into unscriptural practices of human ingenuity, which will hinder, rather than help, in the building of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

From what I have observed in different places during the past few weeks I have sensed five great needs among God's people in the U.S.A:-

1. The need for genuine hunger for the Word of God; many are after stories and entertainment.

2. The need to have a real burden for prayer, and the need for learning to pray and know the mind of God as His co-workers.

3. The need to know His perfect will in every matter, and to be prepared to pay any price to do it; there are very few who really seek to know the mind of the Lord.

4. The need to understand God's perfect order for His Church.

5. The need for learning how to claim the power of resurrection for every burden, and every temptation.

Please pray much that the Lord may protect His people from the subtle devices which the enemy has been using to keep God's people in spiritual darkness. Also please pray that the Lord may give His Church in this country, apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers and pastors for the perfecting of the saints and the edifying of the Body of Christ (Eph 4:11-14).

The spiritual condition of many young people in this country is appalling. Very few have any real interest for the things

of eternity. The enemy is using all kinds of subtle devices to ruin these young people. Only the persevering, intercessory prayers of God's people can rescue these young lives from the clutches of Satan.

I thank God for those of you who have been burdened of the Lord to spend one night a week in prayer for the ministry which is being fulfilled in the country. I very lovingly beseech you to pray much for the young people of America and also for those believers who have begun to gather in various homes to wait upon the Lord with the earnest desire to know the Lord's answer for the satisfying of their spiritual hunger.

Also kindly pray for Brother and Sister T.E. Koshy, that the Lord may grant them extra unction from above for all the contacts which the Lord has been giving them among students and visitors from almost every part of the world."⁴

In the summer of 1970, Bakht Singh came back to Syracuse again. The Lord brought him back a week earlier than he had anticipated and he was able to give the author and his wife some extra time before he started on his ministry in various places. While he was with us, he again emphasized the importance of starting a house church based on New Testament principles on the basis of Acts 2:42. On Sunday while he was with us, we had a worship service and the Lord's table which was attended by a large number of believers who came from in and around Syracuse, New York. Before leaving us, he prayed with my wife and me and encouraged us to continue.

After he left, we prayed seeking the Lord's mind about sharing this matter with believers who were close to us. Then in September 1970, six of us met together in our living-room for worship and the breaking of bread. It was indeed an international gathering consisting of a Dutch couple, Richard and Edith Post, students at Syracuse University; Adel Amin,

a student from Egypt; Howard Pettman of the USA, and Indira and myself. That was the beginning of the local church in the USA affiliated with the ministry of Bakht Singh. By God's grace, it continues still. Later on, we registered the house church, naming it International Assembly. Since then, the Lord has raised up similar gatherings in various parts of the United States.

In 1974, Bakht Singh returned to the USA and asked me to pray about holding a Holy Convocation in October 1974. Naturally, I went into it with fear and trembling. Firstly, due to lack of experience in holding such a gathering as a Holy Convocation. Secondly, we did not have adequate facilities to hold such a Convocation; and thirdly, we were only few in number to handle all the various aspects of such a gathering. But Bakht Singh encouraged us, saying that the Lord would take care of everything.

The first Holy Convocation was held in Syracuse in 1974, from 18th of October to the 22nd. Believers came from far and wide, including Indians, Pakistanis, Americans and various other nationalities. Meetings were held on Thursday, Friday and Saturday at the North Syracuse Baptist Church. The final service was held on Sunday at the Grant Auditorium of Syracuse University and was attended by about 500 people. Our family and friends prepared the food for all those who came and did not charge anybody anything, looking only to the Lord for every need and He was faithful.

Encouraged by the unusual blessing of the Holy Convocation, the Lord constrained us to continue the following year. One Brother, Walt Henry, and his friends hosted the Holy Convocation in Rhode Island in the summer of 1975. In 1976, the Holy Convocation was held in Columbus, Ohio, sponsored by some believers there.

Following the 1976 Holy Convocation, Bakht Singh, K. Phillip and S. Martin who were with him, prayed and felt

very strongly that it was important that we should have the Holy Convocation in the place where the Lord has prepared for it. We also felt that it should be sponsored by a strong local assembly where saints would be available to cater to the various needs of visitors and others who would come.

As a result the Lord led us to have the Holy Convocations from 1977 at Cazenovia College, Cazenovia, New York, a small village about 20 miles South of Syracuse. These Holy Convocations lasted for nine days, from Saturday to the following Sunday. Bakht Singh and the senior brethren from India came regularly to minister. The Lord brought together hundreds of scattered believers, particularly those who were formerly associated with Bakht Singh in India and Pakistan, as well as from other parts of the world. The Lord also used these gatherings to strengthen the believers and give them the vision of the Body of Christ. It also helped them to understand more clearly the New Testamental principles of the Church. As a result, the Lord constrained believers in different places in the U.S.A to gather together on the basis of Acts 2:42. There are now several Assemblies in the United States, some of which came into being as a direct result of saints attending the Holy Convocation and receiving the vision of the Church. By God's grace, Bakht Singh came regularly for these Holy Convocations in the USA from 1974 till 1985.

About the Holy Convocation in Syracuse, Bakht Singh wrote:

"May we take this opportunity to thank you all for your faithful prayers which we have been coveting in the recent issues of the Hebron Messenger for the fifth U.S.A. Holy Convocation held at Cazenovia from the 25th to 30th of July. Your prayers have been abundantly answered far above [our] asking and thinking. We began to pray for this Holy Convocation soon after last year's Holy Convocation which

was also held in the same place, and through which we were much blessed. After praying for nearly four months, we were sure that the Lord wanted us to have this year's Holy Convocation also in Cazenovia. Somehow, the Lord gave us an increasing burden of prayer in India for the ministry to be fulfilled during this year's Holy Convocation in the U.S.A. As a result of the prayers of the saints from all over the world, quite a good number attended the Convocation. Some had to travel quite a long distance to get there. There was a well-represented company of believers both from Asian and American nationals. The number went on increasing every day and the place was quite full during the last few days of the Holy Convocation. The place where we had the Convocation is ideal for such gatherings. The atmosphere was surcharged with love, expectation and true oneness among us all irrespective of national or other differences. People came from Missouri, Kansas, Atlanta, Georgia, Pennsylvania, New York, Illinois, Iowa, Ohio, Oklahoma, California, and from Ottawa, Toronto and Fredericton in Canada.

Our theme for the Holy Convocation was 'God's dwelling place' (Exodus 25:8). The Lord gave us full liberty in the spirit, to convey His message, in spite of much human limitation. We were made to realize in a fresh way how every believer, howsoever weak and handicapped in the worldly sense, has an equally important share in the building of God's everlasting, glorious, heavenly sanctuary. In the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ, every believer is equally important, equally precious and equally necessary, provided we are prepared to come under the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ in every matter, and are willing to abide in His perfect will by waiting upon Him daily with longing to know it. As we lived together with so many believers of various backgrounds, our fellowship was inspiring and refreshing. We have been very conscious of the Lord's presence in every

gathering, beginning from the early morning family prayer on the first day till the last evening family prayer. All were provided free boarding and lodging, irrespective of their position or circumstances. As the Lord led, they put their gifts in the offering box. According to His promises and faithfulness, the Lord provided for all our needs, and made our fellowship very sweet and profitable by enabling us to feel perfectly one with each other. Before and after every meeting, the Lord enabled us to have a session of prayer. The time of worship around the Lord's Table on Sunday morning was extremely inspiring and precious. We would have gone on for a longer time if time had permitted. We were able to have a prayer-cycle for twenty-four hours throughout the period of the Holy Convocation. Also we were able to have eight testimonies in the waters of baptism, and a short gospel procession, through the town by all the believers. This was something unique as there had never been such a procession in the city."⁵

Every year, Bakht Singh would come a few weeks before the Holy Convocation for much needed rest, and to prayerfully wait upon the Lord in a lovely cottage, nestled in the woods and surrounded by lakes, near Pulaski, New York. Bakht Singh once told this author that the Lord had prepared that place specially for him from eternity past just for his physical rest and spiritual invigoration. While staying at the cottage, he would request some of us to join him to seek the Lord's mind for the ministry to be fulfilled during and following the Holy Convocation. After the Holy Convocation, he would travel to various places for ministry and some of us would accompany him. He often had more invitations than he could accept. The following is a typical example of his itinerary in U.S.A.

"God willing, I shall be in the following places, and shall value your prayers.

Toronto, Canada	September 1-3
Buffalo, N.Y.	September 4
Syracuse, N.Y.	September 5-9
Chicago, Illinois	September 10-14
Denver, Colorado	September 15-17
Vancouver, Canada	September 18-21
Calgary, Alberta, Can.	September 22-24
Tacoma, Washington	September 25-27
Olympia, Washington	September 28- October 1
Minneapolis, Minnesota	October 2-5
Odessa, Texas	October 6-7
Macon, Georgia	October 8-9
Channel View, Texas	October 10-12
Birmingham, Alabama	October 13-14
Knoxville, Tennessee	October 15-16
Norfolk, Virginia	October 17-19
Trinidad, West Indies	October 20 for two weeks.” ⁶

On his way back to India he would visit Europe, the Middle East and other countries for further ministry.

Ministry in France :

Brother Paul Wolff of Strasbourg, France, first met Bakht Singh in 1956 at Honor Oak, England. But during his next visit to Europe in 1965, they were able to meet and again fellowship with each other. In 1968, Bakht Singh visited Paul Wolff and his family and stayed with them for a couple of days. During that time, Paul Wolff and some of the other saints, namely Charles Rorer, Jean Klein and others, were regularly attending a non-denominational local church. Through the visits and encouragement of Bakht Singh they began to gather together on the basis of Acts 2:42. The Lord thus began a living testimony and local body based on New Testament principles in Strasbourg, which is still meeting regularly even today.

In July 1965, when Bakht Singh was visiting Strasbourg, France, he met Earnest Verborne for the first time. In December 1969, he visited Brother Verborne and his fellow believers in Sarcelles, returning in August of 1970, and again in October 1975. During this last visit, he encouraged Brother Verborne and his fellow-believers to buy a house for the Lord's work based on Joshua 18:3- "and Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long *are* ye slack to go to possess the land, which the LORD God of your fathers hath given you?" and Judges 18:9, "And they said, "Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it *is* very good: and *are* ye still? be not slothful to go, *and* to enter to possess the land." and named the house 'Patmos' as a future place of worship based on 1 Kings 9:3 which says, "And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually."

In October of 1976, the Lord led Bakht Singh back to Sarcelles where they began to gather together for worship on the basis of Acts 2:42, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." During those visits, Bakht Singh also shared with Brother Verborne and his co-workers about having a Holy Convocation there in Sarcelles. In January, 1977, the Lord spoke to them through Isaiah 43: 16-21 particularly through the portion, "Behold, I will do a new thing," and constrained them to hold the first Holy Convocation in October, 1977, at the hotel Sogetel, in Sarcelles, France.

These gatherings continued until 1984. Their full fellowship and co-operation with Bakht Singh was the consequence and the effect of the ministry of the Spirit of God. It was during the first French Holy Convocation in 1977 that the

Lord brought a powerful message through His anointed servant Bakht Singh, on the subject of "The Return of God's Glory." That message brought a deep burden for prayer to the lives of those gathered at the Holy Convocation as they realized how God had used such vessels as Hannah, Samuel, David and Solomon to bring back His Glory in His temple.

This message gave them a prayer burden for the Body of Christ world-wide, so they began praying every evening and from time to time, all night. It was evident that through the ministry of Bakht Singh, the man of God, the Spirit of God visited them.

Although the Lord brought a growing number of believers to these Holy Convocations in France, the last of these gatherings had 630 people, yet, concerning France and other countries in Europe, the effects could have been greater if a larger number of responsible people had responded to the invitations and participated in the Holy Convocations. The following is the report by Bakht Singh about the 1979 Holy Convocation in France:

"We have just finished the third France Holy Convocation which has been an abundant blessing to us far above all our asking and thinking. Last year we had the privilege of setting apart elders in the church at 'Patmos,' the place of worship which the believers have purchased at Sarcelles. We thank God for the burden of the elders and the brethren there to spend sufficient time in waiting upon the Lord to make sure of His mind for every matter in every small detail. It was very inspiring to hear one of the elders testify how the Lord confirmed His perfect will about every detail of the Holy Convocation such as the work of preparation, accommodation, procession, etc. They started praying on the 14th of last September, 1978, to make sure of God's will whether they should have a Holy Convocation in 1979 this year in France. Quite a good number of brothers came regularly to take part in prayer ev-

ery morning from 6 o'clock to 8 o'clock. They were very much assured through a number of verses from God's Word that it was God's will for them to have a Holy Convocation this year. Accordingly, they started making enquiries for suitable accommodation. The Lord showed them from His Word to expect a large number. So by faith they reserved the whole hotel with the accommodation for two hundred and fifty people and some more additional members for food. The Lord has honoured their faith and the hotel was full. People came with much eagerness from far off places. Even though there was not much publicity about the Holy Convocation, somehow they came to know about it.

We did not invite any special speaker or messenger as we have been doing for the past many years for every Holy Convocation. (In India usually we have four Convocations. Also in America we have been having Holy Convocations for the last six years and in France for the last three years). The Lord gave us much liberty in the spirit for the ministry of His Word and also His perfect heavenly plan for each day's ministry. Arrangements were made to minister God's Word to small children and that also was very profitable. After much prayer and waiting upon the Lord, the elders were able to get permission for the gospel procession through the town. They had to go through a lot of formalities to get it. The Lord gave them many promises from His Word regarding the procession, so they were sure of getting the permission. It was really an inspiring sight to see more than two hundred and fifty people marching in the streets of Sarcelles carrying gospel placards and singing gospel songs. Before starting the procession and at the end of it we knelt down to pray in the street. People watched us as we passed by with much respect. In the history of the assembly this is the first time for them to have this kind of procession. The believers worked very hard to prepare a number of suitable placards

with gospel verses and also some on worship. They were very attractive with very bold letters which could be seen from a long distance.

On Friday the 31st of August, we had eleven testimonies of baptism. On that day also, we were much inspired. Our theme verse was "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col 1:27). The time of worship around the Lord's Table on the Lord's Day was full of devotion and exaltation for the Lord Jesus Christ. Many worshipped the Lord with tears. It was the first time for some to attend such a worship meeting. We are finding by experience how the Lord is using the time of worship to gain ground into many hearts and Assemblies. It is during this time that our attention is drawn away completely from the world, the speakers and other activities and is fixed upon the Lord, and He becomes very precious to us.

Our worship was threefold in nature. The first few moments were spent in exalting the Lord Jesus Christ for His greatness, might, majesty and glory as our Creator. Then we magnified Him for the work of salvation accomplished in us, and for deepening the work of grace day by day. Next we worshipped Him for the day of His second glorious coming when He will come again with full glory as the King of kings and the Lord of lords, when He will complete the work of salvation in us because by seeing Him we shall be like Him. We can never forget the way how one by one, quite a good number worshipped the Lord before taking part in the breaking of bread. We felt so sad when we had to finish the last gathering. Quite a good number have decided to come for next year's Holy Convocation with their families."⁷

The messages given during these Holy Convocations brought a true revelation for many people concerning God's purpose for the Church to show forth His fullness.

About the impact of the Holy Convocations, Brother Verborne wrote:

"These Holy Convocations were evidently on the basis of the desire of a real consecration, of an awakening of the attention of many people, of a new interest for God's Word, accompanied with the importance of knowing God's will and a very real desire to learn such a lesson. It was truly a new thing among those who received the Word, in effect these gatherings of believers coming from different parts of the world, brought a clearer vision of the Body of Christ, its unity, the fellowship, Lord's table and the true worship, the worship of Him not only as Saviour but as Lord and God." ⁸

The believers who obeyed the Lord's call came out of various denominations in order to put themselves under the authority of the heavenly throne. As a result, seven Assemblies were established in France. Afterwards the ministry spread in Europe, particularly in Rumania where believers began to gather together in Bucharest, Oradea, Cluje, Margitta, Giurgiu (near Bulgarian border).

Establishment of New Assemblies in New Caledonia and neighbouring islands:

It was in April 1985, during Brother Verborne's reading of God's Word in Psalm 72, that the Lord very strongly impressed a portion of verse 8 on his spirit, 'from sea to sea'. So he began to pray and sought the will of the Lord about visiting New Caledonia. At the beginning of 1988, a brother coming from Futuna asked him to visit the believers of this island who had recently come to know the Lord.

During his second visit to this island, a Melanesian brother came to see him upon his return to Noumea, asking him to come for meetings in the north of New Caledonia. After having prayed about it, Brother Verborne went to the Nassapoue tribe in the North-East portion of the island in November, 1988. The Lord powerfully worked during these meetings and many people obeyed God's call to follow Him

to the very end, but they were ostracized by their tribe and moved to the southern part of the island where they also had to face many trials.

At the present time, the believers gather together for the breaking of bread in three places besides the Assembly at 'Antioch' in Noumea. These are at Hounailou which is at the border of the northern and southern Provinces, at Koumac, in the North-West of New Caledonia, at Nessapoue, (the saints of Nessapoue cannot gather together in their area because of persistent opposition, so they observe Lord's table in the tribal area of Tibarama which is an hour- and- a- half walk from Nessapoue.)

The Assemblies at Houailou and Koumac were formed as a result of the Holy Convocations held at 'Antioch' every year. And at Lifou one of the Loyalty islands, some believers gather together for the breaking of bread.

After the Lord had clearly spoken through Colossians 4:3, and five years of prayer, the Lord opened the doors of the archipelago of Vanuatu in 1998. At present, believers gather together for the breaking of bread at Port-Vila, Efate island, others at Atchin, an islet opposite the island of Malakula, and still others at Malakula where a Holy Convocation was held in May, 2000.

The Holy Convocations in New Caledonia are held on the premises of the assembly of 'Antioch' on 22 acres of land where the believers from different places are accommodated and fed.

These smaller Assemblies are all visited by God's servant from the Assembly of 'Antioch'. Elders have been appointed in 'Antioch,' as well as in the Assembly at Nessapoue according to 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. At the time of writing, there are eight local Assemblies in France, four in New Caledonia, two in the Loyalty islands and seven in the Archipelago of Vanuatu.

As Brother Verborne recently put it:

"Even though the Lord has promoted His servant Bakht Singh to glory, yet the fruits of the ministry of this man of God in whom the teaching of God's Word was incarnated continue to bear fruit. He was in his person, the very message of what he was teaching."⁹

Ministry in Germany:

Through the reading of Bakht Singh's testimonies and his books, as well as through the reports of missionaries from Europe working in India, many evangelical believers in Germany came to hear about Bakht Singh and the unprecedented works the Lord was doing through him in India and in other places. He had visited Germany several times, ministering in various places from the 1950s to the 1980s, during which time Bakht Singh came in contact with Werner Tietze of Nuremberg, who worked very closely with Bakht Singh from the early 1960s. Werner Tietze served as his host and translator for a number of years during Bakht Singh's visits to Germany and other European countries. About Bakht Singh's visits to Germany Werner writes:

"In Germany, we sometimes travelled extensively and had meetings in various types of Assemblies and churches in quite a number of places including Nuremberg, Sarrebourg, Lauf, Norbert, Frankfurt, Bad Kissingen, Aidlingen, Ingolstadt, Riedlingen, Grafenberg, Hanover, Bethel (von Bodelschwing's homes for retarded people), Brake Bible College, the Theological Seminary of the Evangelical Free Church in Ebersbach. We also went to the German section of Trans World Radio where his testimony was recorded and subsequently broadcasted on the air."¹⁰

For many years Werner translated and sent out the letter for Praise and Prayer for the Hebron Messenger. Some of Bakht Singh's books, including one by Daniel Smith, 'A

Prophet of God- Bakht Singh of India' were translated, printed and widely circulated in Germany. Young people especially found much inspiration through them.

A good number of German believers attended the Holy Convocations held in France and were greatly blessed. Through these Holy Convocations, the Lord brought about a spiritual bonding and fellowship with many of the scattered believers and Assemblies in Germany. So there again we can see how the Lord has been uniting like-minded people to stand together and work together through the ministry of Bakht Singh and his co-workers who share the same New Testament vision of the Church.

The following is a report by Bakht Singh about his visit to Germany in 1978, accompanied by C.D. Benjamin and the author:

"We left Holland for Nuremberg, West Germany, on the 19th. The Lord gave us much liberty in the Spirit to minister His Word to over three hundred who came from various parts of Germany with much hunger for God's Word and also to learn how to find God's will and obey His Word in establishing Churches according to His pattern as seen in the New Testament. On the 21st the Lord took us to Aidlingen, which is about two hundred kilometers from Nuremberg, where there is an institution run by all born-again sisters who have dedicated themselves to the Lord's service. They received us lovingly, and it was a joy to see this work, which began in the year 1915, being so much blessed by the Lord according to His sovereign will and purpose because of love, faith, humility and whole-hearted consecration of the sisters. It is encouraging to meet the Lord's witnesses, to have fellowship with them and to share the heavenly vision which He has graciously given to us, His unworthy vessels, that is, to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Many dear brothers and sisters from Yugoslavia who are working in Munich,

West Germany, came as a team in two car-loads for fellowship, and received the Word with much readiness of mind like the early Berean believers. Some of them have now decided to go back to Yugoslavia with a fresh heavenly vision to work among their own people, mostly among the villagers as full-time servants. Please pray much for them as they will have to face much opposition and persecution.

Our dear Brother T.E. Koshy, who accompanied me from New York to Denmark on the 1st of this month, has also been much used of the Lord, and has been a means of much encouragement and inspiration to us. He is in full-time ministry in Syracuse, New York, working mostly among the University students who come from nearly ninety countries of the world. Many of them are born-again and return to their countries, not only to occupy high positions there, but also to be the Lord's witnesses. Brother Koshy left for the U.S.A. today, the 30th. We covet your prayers for him that the Lord may continue to use him mightily for His glory."¹¹

Ministry in Switzerland :

Karl Frei of Winterthur, Switzerland, came in contact with Bakht Singh in Bangalore, India, in the 1950s while Frei was working as an engineer in a watch company for a few years. Being a believer, he was already in fellowship with the assembly in Bangalore. During his stay in India, the bond of fellowship became very strong. Later, when he returned to Switzerland, he maintained his close contact with Bakht Singh and the other saints until his home-call in 2001. Karl Frei was a faithful and loyal brother whom the Lord used to open many doors for Bakht Singh, and later on for other co-workers of Bakht Singh in Germany, Yugoslavia, France and other East European countries. He translated into German and distributed many of Bakht Singh's books, as well as the Hebron Messenger, a bi-monthly news-letter

published in Hebron, India. He also was a regular participant at the France Holy Convocation.

From 1985 onwards, when Bakht Singh was not able to visit Europe due to his declining health, Karl Frei and Werner Tietze organized and co-ordinated the meetings for this author to minister to Assemblies in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Holland, France and other countries. Here again, we can see how the Lord brings together fellow-believers to stand and work together under the Headship, Lordship and Kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ for the edification of His Body and for the extension of His glorious Kingdom around the world for His eternal glory.

Ministry in England :

Whenever the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ loses its life and vitality, the Lord, Who is the Head of the Church, raises up His chosen vessels to renew His Body the Church worldwide. Such was the case as the Lord raised up Mr. Austin-Sparks of London, England, as one of those chosen vessels to bring back His glory. He was a Baptist Minister who received a fresh revelation of the Body of Christ, left the Baptist Church, and began to gather believers in a school at Honor Oak, in S.E. London on the basis of Acts 2: 42. He was an excellent Bible teacher who had a deep understanding of the mystery of the Church. For many years, Austin-Sparks and the saints at Honor Oak prayed with a heavy burden for India. In 1935, Fred Flack and Raymond Golsworthy were sent to India by the Honor Oak fellowship for the Lord to do a new work for the edification of His Body and for His eternal glory.

Lady Ogle was associated with Honor Oak and had come to India to help with the Lord's work in Wellington, Coonoor. In 1939-1940, Bakht Singh came in contact with her and through her, Brothers Flack and Golsworthy were intro-

duced to Bakht Singh. The friendship which began over a cup of tea with Lady Ogle in Coonoor lasted for decades. Through them, Bakht Singh came into contact with Austin-Sparks and the saints at Honor Oak. Sparks visited India in the early 50s and ministered in a number of Assemblies, as well as at the Holy Convocation held at Guntur. Bakht Singh visited the UK number of times. There are a few Assemblies which are in fellowship with those assemblies established by Bakht Singh in India. These Assemblies are small in number and primarily consist of expatriates from the Assemblies in India, Pakistan and Nepal.

Ministry in Holland :

After the Lord had given him the vision of the Church based on New Testament principles, his burden was to share the same vision with believers in various parts of the world so that they, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, may not only catch the same vision but also be obedient to it and raise up similar churches for the glory of God.

In 1958, he visited Holland and met with a few believers, sharing his testimony and vision of the church. Then in May 1965, he visited Holland again at the invitation of Dick Lugthart of "De Hooge Paaschberg," a Christian conference center. He stayed almost a month and spoke in different places throughout the country as led of the Lord. The Lord burdened him to speak on the subject of the 'Return of God's Glory,' emphasizing that in order to bring back the glory of God to the churches, four spiritual conditions must be met: (1) Praying in the spirit of Hannah, (Samuel's mother), (2) emphasis on the Word of God (like Samuel), (3) doing everything according to God's plan (like David) and (4) doing God's work according to God's way (like Solomon). So he encouraged his listeners to pray that the Lord would raise up people like Hannah, Samuel, David and Solomon, so that His glory

might fill the Church. About this visit, Bakht Singh wrote the following report:

"Brother Lugthart and about twenty other believers from Amsterdam were at the airport when I reached Amsterdam, and they gave me a very warm welcome in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We had a very sweet time of fellowship in a home where the saints, about twenty-five in number, had been gathering regularly since two years, for worship and breaking of bread. Amsterdam is the capital of Holland. It is a very needy city. Three fourths of the population refuse to be identified with any kind of religion. Too much prosperity has made the people spiritually blind. To see a group of believers in a city like this was like seeing an oasis in a desert. Please pray for the Lord's people in Amsterdam that He may use them to spread the gospel in the Netherlands and in other parts of Europe. By the time you read this letter, we will have finished the four days of special meetings in Amsterdam from June 7 to 11.

About twenty-five miles away from Amsterdam, is the town of Baarn. Believers have been gathering for Bible study since two years in this town in the home of Brother Braaksma. Soon after my arrival in Holland, I had the privilege of ministering the Word among them in four gatherings. There were present about seventy people from different parts of Holland. I was much blessed by meeting these dear saints. I praise God for the privilege of giving God's Word to them at the very beginning of my ministry in Holland. We gathered together for breaking of bread on Sunday afternoon, May 30. The time of worship we had before partaking in the Lord's table was most inspiring. I feel that the Lord is preparing this group of His people so that, in His time, something new may be accomplished in the whole country through them. So far they have not started regular breaking of bread every Lord's day. Please pray that the Lord may show them in His time to do this.

In Ede, another town in Holland, believers have had regular gatherings for the breaking of bread since about six years. From that time, there has been marked growth in their midst. They had to face much opposition and criticism in the beginning. Through all this, however, the Lord has brought them to a larger place and a deeper experience of His grace."¹²

Bakht Singh's itinerary in Holland as given in the Hebron Messenger dated June 6th, 1965, was as follows:

The next few weeks we are going to have a very busy time of ministry, details of which are given below:-

In Holland :

Ede conference	June 5 to 7
Amsterdam	June 8 to 11
Eindhoven	June 12
Rotterdam	June 14 to 16
Zwolle	June 17, 18
Den Helder	June 19
Anna Paulowna	June 20
Hengelo	June 21

During his later visits, he came in contact with Albert Postma who was then teaching English in a local college. A few believers had been meeting in his home in Vorden on the basis of Acts 2:42. From 1977 on, Bakht Singh and his co-workers visited the fellowship. The saints in Vorden were also encouraged and were built up through the Holy Convocations held in France. About the ministry in Holland, Bakht Singh wrote in the Hebron Messenger:

"After fulfilling the ministry in Denmark which was quite encouraging, we¹³ were led to spend about a week in Holland with the believers who have been gathering under the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ for the past four years. They have, by their faithful study of the Word of God, been

delivered from the influence of wrong teachings. The enemy has been trying to gain ground in their midst in a very subtle way by creating a spirit of contention, condemnation and strife. On Sunday morning, the 13th, we had a time of the Lord's gracious visitation before we took part in the breaking of bread. The Spirit of the Lord fell upon us with a deep convicting power which broke down many among us with tears, and gave us a longing to put things right straightaway by being reconciled with one another, and asking forgiveness from each other with all humility and contrite spirit before partaking in the Lord's Table.¹⁴ That brought in a spirit of love and oneness which they never had before. The whole day was marked with the Lord's loving presence in a peculiar manner. We have been much humbled before the Lord to see Him working so mightily through us, His unworthy vessels. We are being made to realize the power of prevailing prayers of co-intercessors of our great, everlasting heavenly High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁵

Over the years the Lord has blessed the Assembly in Vorden by adding many believers to it. And through the fellowship and ministry of the saints there, the Lord raised up similar Assemblies in other places in Holland. In some respects, Bakht Singh was like a spiritual father who prayed and guided them as the Lord led. In 1985, Bakht Singh was requested to set apart elders in the fellowship in Vorden. In 1986, during his last visit, Bakht Singh became sick. George Verwer of Operation Mobilization gave a short message in honour of Bakht Singh from 2 John 1-6. In his message, George said that he had not seen many examples of this truth until he came to India and met Bakht Singh. He had been looking for New Testament reality, and when he met Bakht Singh in India, he saw a man walking in that truth. George challenged those present to follow Bakht Singh's example and run the race to the end. Through his life and ministry, not only the

saints in Holland but many saints in different parts of the world were inspired, blessed and encouraged to go on with the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, he was a man sent from God to call people back to God; back to His Word, and back to His vision of the Church.

The saints in Holland are now working in close fellowship with other fellow- saints in Europe, India, the USA.

Denmark:

It is amazing to see the way the Holy Spirit of God leads people in different parts of the world with the same burden of God in order to accomplish God's work in God's way. Such people share a similar vision of the work even though it may be expressed differently according to different countries and cultures. For example, the Lord raised up Paul Madsen of Denmark with a similar vision of the Church. So in the fullness of time, the Lord would bring such people together to encourage one another in the things of eternity. Bakht Singh visited Denmark to speak at the annual conference organized by Paul Madsen and his co-workers. Bakht Singh had visited Denmark several times previously, and Poul Madsen had also visited Bakht Singh and the Assemblies in India.

The following is the report concerning Denmark by Bakht Singh:

"We¹⁶ had the privilege of taking some share in the ministry of God's Word at the Annual Conference in Nyborgstrand, Denmark, from August 2-6. Believers had come there from different parts of Finland, Norway, Sweden, Germany and all parts of Denmark. The Lord worked among us mightily during the whole period of Conference by giving us much liberty in the Spirit for the ministry of His word. Some people came from quite a long distance to attend this conference. It has been held in a very ideal place at the sea-side for the past twenty-five years or more. The work has grown from a

small Bible Study Group conducted by the Lord's servant, Brother Poul Madsen in his home. These Bible studies have created an increasing hunger for God's Word in many hearts and homes. As a result, now there are believers scattered throughout Scandinavia. Even though we did not know their language, yet we felt perfectly one with them, and had a foretaste of heaven through their love and fellowship. We could exchange only a few broken words with each other, but still there was a consciousness of the flow of divine life in our midst. The number went up to more than four hundred and fifty towards the week-end. We had a time of worship around the Lord's Table on the morning of Sunday the 6th, before breaking of bread. What a joy and privilege it is to take part in such a gathering, where believers of all classes and all walks of life from many countries can take part in the breaking of bread and wine [the cup] with a sense of perfect oneness among themselves forgetting all man-made differences of colour, caste and creed!

The theme of the Conference was the Lord's Second Coming, and how we must keep ourselves ready for the day of glory by living an overcoming life in the power of the Holy Spirit so that we may see our Lord Jesus Christ face to face with a good conscience, and not be ashamed at His coming, according to 1 John 2:28. When we shall see Him as He is, we too shall be like Him. It is a great spiritual loss to many of the Lord's people throughout the world if they do not understand fully the value of worshipping Him in the beauty of holiness; remembering His death till He comes in the manner He Himself taught us, and taking part worthily in the Lord's Table by searching their hearts, and putting things right with God and man.

We praise God for the stand which they have taken for the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ in these days of growing lukewarmness among many believers, when all kinds of

wrong teachings are creeping in among God's people in a very subtle way. We, however, praise God for His sovereign ways by which He is gaining ground in many hearts and homes through the ministry of His faithful servants. We were much blessed and strengthened during our stay with them. Please pray that the Lord may grant them His extra anointing to bear the growing and heavy responsibility to strengthen the believers scattered throughout the Scandinavian countries and also many parts of Germany.

This Conference in Nyborg Strand has been held for several years in a very nice seaside hotel. It has every convenience, and is most suitable for Conference-meetings. This Conference was arranged by Christian Fellowship, Copenhagen, which came into existence through a Bible study class started by Poul Madsen in his own home, for a small group of about ten believers. They decided to study the whole Bible, chapter by chapter, and to obey His Word as the Holy Spirit revealed it to them. Through the networking and fellowship of saints from around the world, the Lord is building His Church to show forth His glory in Scandinavia and other parts of Europe."¹⁷

Ministry in Australia :

Bakht Singh's burden concerning the vision of the church was not only for the Indian sub-continent but also for the whole world. Some people mistakenly referred to him as an Indian raised up by God mainly for India. His life and ministry show otherwise. While his primary burden was for India, he also had the burden for the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ world-wide. He was not interested in establishing a "franchise," but longed to see the Lord raising up living local churches to show forth His fullness and glory. He travelled extensively, practically to every continent as led by the Lord, both as an evangelist as well as an apostle.

As a result of the Lord using him so mightily as a revivalist, he received invitations from believers all over the world to speak in churches and at conferences. For example, in the year 1949, and again in 1953, Bakht Singh was invited by the Little Flock Fellowship in Singapore. While he was there, he met with an evangelist, G.D. James, a former Hindu convert. In 1956, while G.D. James was ministering in Sydney, Australia, some evangelical leaders in Sydney asked G.D. James regarding the revival ministry of Bakht Singh. He highly recommended Bakht Singh to them.

In late 1956, Bakht Singh visited Sydney at the invitation of some evangelical leaders. He ministered at different churches, over the radio, and at Christian rallies. Revival was the foremost theme during that visit and so he emphasized the importance of praying according to God's burden and will. As a result a great expectancy arose in many places. In one church group for example, Hurstville Baptist church, morning prayer meetings were convened for the church from 6 to 8 a.m. every day, and continued for two years. In 1958, Bakht Singh was invited again by some evangelical ministers to teach and preach further on revival. So he ministered again in Sydney in late 1958. As a result, truths related to priesthood of all believers expressing itself through the spontaneous open worship of the congregation and the simplicity of the church functioning according to New Testament principles based on Acts 2:42 and other Scriptures, captured many hearts. The attitude of many was, "If this is the truth of the Word, why can't we do it?"

In early 1959, a congregation was formed on the basis of Acts 2:42, and brothers Golsworthy and Flack, co-workers of Bakht Singh, visited for a short period to teach and encourage the members of the newly-formed congregation.

Ten years later, Bakht Singh went back to Australia primarily to help those who were gathering together according

to the New Testament Church principles. He set apart elders in the first local assembly called 'Hebron' which was located in Hurstville, outside Sydney, Australia. However, due to some doctrinal differences most of the elders came out of that fellowship and joined Ernest and Kathleen Toussaint. The following is a report of Ernest and Kathleen Toussaint about their involvement in the work in Sydney which they reported in third person:

"Ernest and Kathleen Toussaint of Colombo, with their three children who were 10, 6 and 4 years arrived in Sydney on the 23rd of March, 1959. They came from the Christian Fellowship Centre in Sri Lanka where Ernest was one of the three very first elders, set apart by Bakht Singh.

Their intention was to settle in Queensland, but in Melbourne they met Raymond Golsworthy and Fred Flack who encouraged them to settle in Sydney. As they prayed, the Lord confirmed this thought by providing them with a house for a very reasonable price in Moorefields Road, Beverly Hills. After they settled down, they began ministering to people in their neighbourhood and the Lord began blessing their ministry by saving many from various backgrounds. Through the years many believers were baptized in the sea, where many gathered to witness these baptisms.

Shortly after this a few believers asked for a worship meeting on Sunday mornings and a Breaking of Bread service was commenced. Here again the numbers grew. Those who came from far stayed over for lunch in order to attend the evening meetings. There were about 30-40 believers Breaking Bread at that time.

At this stage, Harry Johnson who had been a preacher with the Cooneyite Mission and had seen the error of their teaching, came out, heard of the meeting at Moorefields Road, contacted Ernest and joined the Assembly and subsequently was set apart as an elder with Ernest. He lived 18 years in

their home helping with the work.

A few years later, in 1970, Ron Jarlett, Reg Stewart and Archie Dawkins along with their wives joined the Assembly after leaving 'Hebron' in Hurstville. These three brothers, who were well known to Ernest and had been elders previously, were invited to serve as elders. Steve Jacobs, who served in India with Brother Bakht Singh, made a big contribution in the building up of the saints.

At this stage, since numbers had increased and more room was needed, an extension was built onto the Toussaint's home to accommodate about 80 people. After some years the present building at Padstow Heights became available and the Assembly was able to purchase it."¹⁸

During his visit in 1969, the Lord also used Bakht Singh to minister in different places, emphasizing and challenging Christians to gather together according to Acts 2:42. As a result, a group of people left their denominational churches and began to meet together in the home of Mr. & Mrs. Vidler in a place called Wollongong, which is about 50 miles south of Sydney.

Eventually, the Lord also raised up five or six local Assemblies in the Sydney area. Through the ministry of Brother Golsworthy, the Lord raised up a similar local church in Brisbane. During the visit of the author and his son, Jay, in March, 2000, the Lord also raised up an Assembly in Perth, Western Australia, where believers of various backgrounds are now gathering to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

The following is from Bakht Singh's report of his visit to Australia in 1968:

"The Lord gave me a very precious and blessed time in Brisbane (Queensland, Australia), even though my stay there was for three days only. I could sense a great spiritual decline in that country. Yet in every place, the Lord has kept

some witnesses who are giving the rightful place to the Lord Jesus Christ, both individually in their hearts and also in their churches.

After much prayer, the Lord has made His plan clear to me regarding my programme for the coming weeks, and I am giving details of it below, coveting your fervent prayers for the ministry in each place:

Hurstville, Australia	Till April 15
Djakarta (Indonesia)	April 17-19
Surabaya (Indonesia)	April 21-23
Badung (Indonesia)	April 25 - 26
Singapore (Malaya)	April 27-28
Philippines	April 29 to May 13
(Including the Annual conference at Bagiuo, May 14-30)	
Formosa [Taiwan]	May 14-30 ¹⁹

I could not visit many places in Australia. I had the privilege to have special meetings in only three places. Even though the numbers who attended the meetings were not very large, we were very much conscious of the Lord's presence in every gathering. Almost every evening I saw several who had travelled long distances with great hunger and longing for things of eternal value.

I praise the Lord for the privilege of meeting several old friends whom I had met nine years ago during my previous visit to this country. The Lord has raised up a few gatherings of believers in places like Brisbane, Hurstville and Wollongong to bear testimony of His Headship and Kingship. Some of these believers have gone through very hard and testing times because of the stand they have taken for the full counsel of God. Praise God, they have emerged victorious over all these trials, and by His grace they have been brought into a large place according to Psalms 18:19. I had a

very happy time of fellowship with them. I believe that the Lord has begun a new work in the hearts of many of them, and has granted to them a fresh heavenly vision to prepare them for their ministry during the coming days.

In a country like Australia which is growing in population and industry, and increasing in prosperity at a very rapid rate, it is not easy to take a strong stand for the Lord and His Word, and I could sense a great spiritual decline even in evangelical circles—that is, among those who believe sincerely in the fundamental doctrines of salvation by grace. Worldliness is bewitching young and old with its irresistible power of attraction. Those who decide to honour the Lord fully must be prepared for every kind of ridicule and ostracism.

We have to be thankful to God for believers scattered in small groups all over the country. They gather for prayer and Bible study in homes, and sincerely search the Word of God to get the Lord's answer for the present situation. Please pray that the Lord may grant them His unction from above so that they may be able to understand the meaning of the true Church. We have noticed that wherever believers gather together on the basis of life in Christ, there is in their midst a real sense of the Lord's presence and working; and eventually many of them get a longing to rise above the barriers and limitations of sectarianism.

There is a remnant in Australia who have much burden for the spreading of the gospel. They are very active in house to house visiting, and they invite people to attend special gospel meetings which they arrange here and there. Their tract distribution and their testimony meetings are being much used by the Lord. Please pray that the Lord makes His Word to yield an abundant harvest and gives courage to those who have decided to follow Him at any cost.

I shall be very grateful for your prayers for the believers who gather in Brisbane, Hurstville and Wollongong. I had

the privilege of having fellowship with them during these past few weeks. The bond of love which the Lord established between us nine years ago has been strengthened even more. I am so thankful to the Lord for enabling me to meet these dear ones again. May the Lord watch over them and enable them to go on from strength to strength and from victory to victory."²⁰

"God willing I expect to be in Australia for about four weeks from July 22 to August 17, 1969 and do hope to visit:

Brisbane	July 22
Melbourne	July 23 to 27
Wollongong	July 28 to 29
Penrith	July 30 to Aug 3
Beverley Hills	Aug 4 to 17 ²¹

I was able to stay only one day in Brisbane (Queensland). The Lord gave us [a] very precious time. We had five days of special meetings in Melbourne (Victoria), in the very same place where we had a campaign for two weeks, eleven years ago. The Lord granted full liberty in the Spirit for the ministry of His Word in answer to the prayers of His saints in many parts of the world who have been burdened to pray for this ministry."²²

"I was very conscious of the prayers of His saints in a very real way while I had the privilege of ministering His word in six different places in Australia.

The Lord is preparing His remnant in this country of Australia in His own way, in spite of the enemy's subtle activities to keep people in spiritual darkness. It is very sad to see that the activities of the powers of darkness are increasing, day by day, to ruin young lives in every home. We thank God for what has been accomplished for the salvation of souls through crusades and gospel campaigns; but we do not see in these converts the spiritual hunger and thirst for the Word

of God which is one of the first evidences of true conversion. I can still remember how the Lord gave me an abnormal hunger for His Word soon after my conversion. I began to spend many hours every day with the Word of God, having a growing hunger to understand the things of eternity. I have seen a similar experience in the lives of many who have been truly born again by the Spirit of God, even though the means and circumstances God used in their conversion were quite different.

One reason for this lack of hunger could be that in many places the preachers depend far too much upon worldly, unscriptural methods to draw crowds and to hold their attention. Stories and entertainment programmes are used lavishly by them, and they forget that unless God's Word is given its proper place in preaching and teaching, we cannot expect a deep and real work of God to be accomplished in the hearts of those who are longing to find God and to obtain true peace.

How we praise God for the faithful witnesses whom the Lord has kept everywhere. Through their consistent lives, and bold witness, the Lord is gaining ground in many quarters. I had the privilege of meeting such dear saints in every place where the Lord has taken me so far, and I do thank God with all my heart for the refreshing time of fellowship I have been able to enjoy with them.

Groups of believers have begun to gather for fellowship and prayer in a number of places in Australia, with a great longing to find God's perfect plan for His Church and to understand and enjoy the hidden mysteries of His Word. Through them, the enemy's devices are constantly defeated and many young believers are nurtured and made to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I was able to visit six different places in Australia during my stay of four weeks or so, and in every place I enjoyed

full liberty of the Spirit for the ministry of the Word. All this was in answer to the prayers of His saints. So may I take this opportunity to thank you all once again for your unceasing intercession on my behalf.

In one place, we had the privilege of setting apart elders by the laying-on-of-hands. They had been proven of their faithfulness, and the marks of eldership were evident in them (Titus 1:6-9; 1 Timothy 3:2-7). Even though the number of believers in this assembly is still small, the Lord has accomplished much through the faithful labour and loving shepherding of these elders. Please continue to pray that the Lord may likewise raise up apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers in this country to bring the believers to full maturity; to the stature of the Son of God, according to Ephesians 4:10-16.

On Saturday 9th, one of God's servants working in Sydney was married to a sister who has also been in the Lord's service for some years. It was a unique marriage. God's Word was given first place in every part of the function. All who came were much blessed and refreshed by seeing the honour being given throughout the whole service to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to His Word. Some of the guests testified that this was the happiest wedding they had ever witnessed."²³

The Assemblies in Australia are in close contact and fellowship with similar Assemblies in India, Pakistan, the U.S.A., Holland and in various other places.

Pakistan :

According to a recent report, there are 55 full-time workers (khadams) and over 160 local Assemblies scattered all over Pakistan.²⁴ These Assemblies are the by-product of the labours of Bakht Singh and his co-workers. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Bakht Singh began his evangelistic ministry in Karachi in 1933. His burden then was to see people

receive Christ as their Saviour and Lord and live in obedience to the will of God: he did not have any intention of establishing independent local churches.

However, with the establishment of 'Jehovah-Shammah' in Madras on July 12, 1941 there came a paradigm shift in his vision and mission. He began emphasizing the importance of local churches that would function under the Headship of Christ.

Several believers from Punjab attended the Madras Holy Convocation in 1941, and got a fresh vision of the church. Bakht Singh and his co-workers from Jehovah Shammah made several visits to Punjab and Sindh, encouraging the new believers into the deeper things of God.

In 1945, Bakht Singh went back to Martinpur with some of his team members, Noel Barrow, K. Phillip, Moses Dawn and others from Madras, spending about three months in Punjab and other areas. In Martinpur the meetings were arranged by the pastor, R.D. Bahadur. Unfortunately, controversy and the subsequent interruption of the meeting took place as Bakht Singh pointed out to the audience the importance of believer's baptism. At the objection of the pastor, Bakht Singh stopped preaching and knelt down to pray before closing the meeting. Mr. Daniel Fazal Din, the tax collector of the village and an influential member of the church then said to the pastor, "You are a son of Satan and I am also a son of Satan, but Brother Bakht Singh is a man of God. Why are you objecting to him preaching the Truth." ²⁵

Daniel then asked the congregation whether they would like to listen to Bakht Singh and the Word of God. Hearing that, everybody raised their hands and Bakht Singh was asked to continue preaching, but the pastor no longer attended the meetings. Eventually, the congregation was divided on the issue of baptism and other scriptural practices. Brother Borra Baght, who was converted to Christ during

the 1937 revival, opened his home for meetings and Bakht Singh continued his ministry there. At the close of the meetings many were baptized, including Borra Bhagat. When Bakht Singh and the team left, regular meetings continued in the home of Borra Bhagat, a small house located just in front of the U.P. Mission Church.

Unfortunately, the emphasis on believer's baptism became a hot issue, and most denominations which practiced infant baptism boycotted Bakht Singh's meetings. They felt that his Bible-based messages on baptism were a threat to them and to their congregations, particularly when several "members" of these denominations began obeying the Lord in the waters of baptism and subsequently departed from these denominations to join the newly-formed Assemblies which had been started by Bakht Singh and his co-workers on the basis of Acts 2:42 and other Scriptures.

In 1945, as Brother K. Phillip and other team members were preaching in an open-air meeting at Youngsonabad, the local members of a major denomination attacked him, bound him with ropes and threw him into a dirty buffalo pond nearby. Such was the prevailing opposition to the work of God among most of the denominations controlled and financed by foreign missions. As reported by Ellic Williams,

"The early believers at Martinpur went through a lot of discrimination at the hand of the Missions and missionaries. Some children who were studying in the schools and Colleges run by the Mission, were deprived of the financial help and scholarships normally given to all Christian students. I myself went through that in my third year in Gordon College, Rawalpindi. The authorities, who were missionaries, turned me out of the hostel because my parents were the members of the Believer's church. Through all these hardships and discriminations, the believers stood firm and progressed in the knowledge of their Saviour, Jesus Christ."²⁶

In 1945, Brother James of Shantinagar, along with Gulam Masih and Sister Martha, went to 'Jehovah-Shammah.' James stayed there about 14 months before returning to Shantinagar. Later in 1950, he was set apart for full-time ministry by the laying on of hands by Bakht Singh. He has been serving the Lord as a ministering brother in the Assemblies. In 1952 in Lahore, Bakht Singh set apart through the laying on of hands Brothers Hadyat Masih and S.M. Daniel. Later on Brother Daniel began travelling and ministering across Pakistan until his home-call in the late 70s.

Those who were converted at the Martinpur revival in 1937, began witnessing for Christ all across Punjab and Sindh and in other areas which are now part of Pakistan, in spite of all the opposition.

The ministry of a British missionary Dennis Clark in Pakistan, first commended by the Plymouth Brethren in the UK, is unique indeed. He was a very open-minded man of God, a visionary, whose attitude transcended sectarianism and parochialism. He was a pioneer missionary. He and his wife, Gladys, ministered in Lahore during the winter of 1942-43. While living there, he came in contact with Jordan Khan, a newly converted young Punjabi whose father had been converted to Christ from Islam. Jordan was involved in consolidating the first Assembly in Lahore named "Bethany", which was founded mainly by the labours of Dennis Clark and other Punjabi believers who had been converted through the ministry of Bakht Singh. The Assembly first met regularly at 37, Ferozpur Road, Lahore in 1947.

From September 1943 to autumn of 1945, the Clarks were in Peshawar preoccupied with the Central Asian Trading Agency, which was founded to gain entrance into Afghanistan. In November 1945, Clark was arrested and expelled from Afghanistan.

During his time in Lahore and Afghanistan, Clark had

heard much about Bakht Singh, primarily through the correspondence of Wilfred Durham, another Brethren missionary from the U.K., living and ministering in Bombay at that time. He and his wife, Christina, were the founders of Gospel Literature Service, Bombay. The Durhams greatly appreciated Bakht Singh and fully supported his ministry.

In 1945, Clark went to 'Jehovah-Shammah' with a desire to work in close fellowship with Bakht Singh. At the Holy Convocation there in December 1945, Bakht Singh and elders laid their hands on him as an expression of their oneness and identification with him in the work of the Lord.

In 1946, he returned to Lahore where he laboured along with Punjabi Brethren who had been converted through the ministry of Bakht Singh. In a way, the Lord used him to lay a unique foundation in Pakistan where Brethren missionaries began working in close fellowship with the believers in the Assemblies associated with Bakht Singh. In India and in most other countries, the 'Brethren' have their own separate local churches and missions, whereas in Pakistan they work in unity with the Assemblies associated with Bakht Singh. This is unique. Forgetting the minor differences that separated them, they focused on the major issues that united them in Christ. What an example this is for the saints in other countries to follow.

About this unique working relationship between Brethren missionaries and the Assemblies associated with Bakht Singh, Paul W. Marsh, a former Brethren missionary who had worked in Pakistan for many years since 1951, wrote to the author. Due to its historical significance, part of his letter is quoted at length:

"I will try to sketch in now the early history of the 'Brethren' association in Pakistan with Brother Bakht Singh and the work the Lord used him to found. In 1951, when we arrived (that is Robbie and Jean Orr together with Joanne and

me), Dennis Clark had already established a close association with Brother Bakht Singh, as you have mentioned. There was at that time already a disagreement between Dennis and three 'Brethren' families already working with him in Lahore. All three made strong accusations against Dennis and quite soon they left the country. The Orrs, ourselves and another 'Brethren' family, Ron and Rose Beckett, remained in full fellowship with Dennis and Gladys, and all of us were fully identified with our national Pakistani brothers and sisters in the Assemblies known as the Bakht Singh Assemblies. I should point out that during our time in Pakistan, right from the beginning, there never were any so-called 'British Brethren Assemblies.'

None of us working in Pakistan, commended from Assemblies in the UK, were associated with strongly conservative 'Brethren' Assemblies. I myself had, in fact a Baptist background so far as my childhood upbringing had been concerned. I was brought back to the Lord as a backslider in India through Brother Wilf Durham (GLS) in Baroda where I was flying with the RAF as a pilot. Before that I had not had any contact with the 'Brethren'. However, after we got married in 1949, we finally linked up with an assembly in Purley, England, and it was they who commended us to the work in Pakistan. It was in 1946/47 while in the RAF in India that I learned of the work the Lord was using Dennis Clark to do, and gradually we became conscious of the Lord's leading to join him in the Lord's work in Lahore.

Both the Orrs and ourselves also had an IVF background from our university days when we had been used to working in an interdenominational context. We had never been interested in separating ourselves off from other believers because they differed from us in minor matters. Our desire was always to have fellowship with all the Lord's people, not one small part of the Body of Christ. So when we were

introduced to the 'Bakht Singh Assemblies' in Pakistan, we had no problems. We saw that here was a vibrant work of God, with which it was a privilege to be identified, and they were gracious enough to accept us into their fellowship. We were never interested in seeking to establish in Pakistan a replica of some western 'Assemblies', complete with all the traditions that had grown up around them in the UK or elsewhere in the western world. Robbie Orr and I did wonder about the practice of the laying on of hands after baptism, not being familiar with that practice in the UK. So when Brother Bakht Singh visited Pakistan, we took the opportunity of discussing the practice with him. We had heard that the laying on of hands might be considered as the way to receive the Holy Spirit, and we were a little concerned about that. I shared with Brother Bakht Singh that after I was baptized I was given the 'right hand of fellowship' (Gal.2:9) into the local church where I was baptized. Brother Bakht Singh was happy about this, recognizing that in both practices the intention was to express the identification of the local church with the person being welcomed in. Certainly, in every way, we felt privileged to be accepted into the fellowship of these local Assemblies in Pakistan. Our fellowship with these Assemblies was total and remains such until this day, and this has been the experience of all those who have subsequently joined us from the West.

It should also be said that the elders of our local Assemblies in the UK wholly supported the identification of ourselves with the Assemblies in Pakistan. Also, we never encountered any contrary attitude on the part of the brothers at Echoes of Service. We are all one in Christ and it has been our privilege over the years to maintain and rejoice in that unity."²⁷

While Paul and Joanne Marsh ministered both in the Assemblies and through MIK (Publishing house) based in

Lahore, Robbie and Jean Orr made their base in Multan and worked closely with the Assemblies in that areas.

Bakht Singh and his co-workers came frequently to Pakistan, even after the partition of the country in 1947. Bakht Singh always came with his team members turn-by-turn. In the 1950s, he brought with him S. Martin to lead in singing.

During Bakht Singh's visit to Pakistan in 1948, Dennis Clark and fellow believers arranged the first Holy Convocation in Lahore. During the 1952 Holy Convocation, saints from all over the country numbering over 2000 attended. The Holy Convocations further spearheaded the establishing of Assemblies in Pakistan.

The themes of these Holy Convocations often centered around the vision and functions of the New Testament Church to show forth Christ's fullness and glory. Besides Bakht Singh, the Lord also used anointed speakers like Daniel Smith, Raymond Golsworthy, A.J. Flack, Jordan Khan, Dennis Clark and others.

To aid the saints in Pakistan in evangelism, discipleship, and spiritual maturity, the Lord led Dennis Clark to establish a Publishing house in Lahore called Masih Ishait Khana (MIK), which in some respects is a counter part of Gospel Literature Service (GLS) in Bombay, India. GLS was a great boost in the ministry of Bakht Singh in India, particularly for the publication of his books and other literature.

According to Ellic Williams, who was a former headmaster of a school at Martinpur, during Bakht Singh's visit to Martinpur in 1950, many people were converted and baptized in the nearby canal. Almost one fourth of the village had been baptized, including his father Ch. Emmanuel, who had been angry with his wife for seven years due to her baptism in 1945. A new believers group, which had many members, and had now separated from the village Presbyterian Church had no place of worship, so, Ch. Emmanuel donated

some land where the believers constructed a mud hall for their regular gatherings. The newly formed local Assembly was shepherded by Attar Singh, Mehinga Mall, Godfrey and Bura Bhagat. Brother Alfred Lall Din served as God's servant full-time. These men were set apart by laying on of hands by Bakht Singh and his senior team members during his visit to Martinpur in 1952.

The Lord began establishing other local Assemblies patterned according to New Testament principles. He raised up an Assembly in Youngsonabad, shepherded by Bawa Hayat and Ghena Mall. The group met in the mud house of Bawa Hayat. Later on, his daughter, Barkat Bibi entered for full-time service and even though she is now elderly, she is still actively serving the Lord faithfully.

Between 1942 – 1960, the Lord raised up several Assemblies based on New Testament principles.

In 1942, a small group of newly converted believers began meetings on New Testament principles on the basis of Acts 2:42. They met regularly under the leadership of Bakht Singh's co-worker Phinehas in a rented place at Haroon Manzil in Lee market, Karachi. This continued till 1964. After Phinehas left Karachi for Quetta, the work in Karachi continued under the oversight of Bashir Almas and others. Eventually, the local gatherings of believers was moved to a building of its own called Zion Church, at Azam Basti.

After the partition of colonial India into Pakistan and India in August 1947, it became difficult for Bakht Singh and others who were living in India to travel to Pakistan to give these newly formed Assemblies the much-needed spiritual guidance and encouragement. This has resulted in so many problems.

Eventually, there was a split in the Assembly and some of the believers began meeting in the home of Saddiq Masih who had worked in the American Embassy in Karachi. Even

though he was a simple and sincere man, Sadiq Masih succumbed to some unspiritual practices in the assembly and this led to its ruin. Since 1998, a group of believers have been meeting regularly under the name Bethany Church.

The following are details of the beginning of the work and the leaders of the Assemblies in major centres in Pakistan.

Dennis Clark, Hadayat Masih (Lahore in 1947), Younis Masih, Luka Masih and William Gill, (Rawalpindi, 1948), Barra Jalal, Chotta Jalal, Gulam Mashi and others (Shanti Nagar 1950s), Younis Lal Din and others (Multan 1950s), Quetta (1950), Jalal, Maqbool Gill and others (Faisalabad 1960), S.L. Isaac and others in Peshawar (1960s)

God mightily used some of the godly sisters to enhance the work in Pakistan. Notable among them are : Nawal Bibi, wife of Bro. Hadayat Masih, Barkat Bibi, of Youngsonabad, Feroza Jalal, of Martinpur, Ulfat Chamman Lall, Mrs. Louisa Daniel and others.

In 1963, while ministering in Shantinagar, a predominantly a Salvation Army village, some disgruntled nominal Christians reported against Bakht Singh saying that an Indian Christian was trying to create troubles in the village. On the basis of that, and without any further enquiry he was deported from Pakistan. The country he loved and served so faithfully had rejected him on the basis of a false report. Assemblies were, by and large, cut off from those in India and from the loving, nurturing, fatherly care of Bakht Singh. Even though he could not return anymore to Pakistan, his associates, A.J. Flack, C.R. Golsworthy, Daniel Smith, Jordan Khan and several others have visited the Assemblies and believers from time to time.

Living in an Islamic fundamentalist country where missionaries and particularly Christians are treated worse than second class-citizens, many of these Assemblies became iso-

lated and inward-looking. Internal strife and struggle, coupled with the lack of proper spiritual teaching and nourishment, took its toll upon the believers and the Assemblies.

Even though the political tensions between India and Pakistan prevented believers from these countries from visiting each other, the Lord raised up the necessary spiritual and social help through both British and German missionaries who laboured among them. Over the years, many served in Pakistan, including Robert and Jean Orr in Multan, Paul & Joanne Marsh in Lahore, and Peter and Ann Grover in Faisalabad, along with several lady missionaries from the U.K. serving in different places throughout the country. From 1957 onwards, Mr. & Mrs. Heinrich Becht, Mr. & Mrs. Wolfe Mun Zinger (1967) and several of their associates from the Brethren Assemblies of Germany worked in close fellowship with Pakistan Assemblies. They spent their time, talents and treasures for the edification of His body and for the extension of His Kingdom working through these Assemblies.

Mr. & Mrs. Munshi and Feroza Massey and their children migrated to the USA and settled down in Syracuse, N.Y, in the late 70's. While they were in Lahore, they were actively involved in the Bethany Assembly. They encouraged this author to visit believers in Pakistan. After much prayer, the Lord made it possible for the author to go for the first time for four weeks at the end of January 93. The Lord put His seal upon the visit and the believers all across Pakistan received him warmly.

Unlike the local Assemblies in India known by Biblical names such as 'Hebron,' 'Patmos' and 'Jehovah-Shammah,' the local Assemblies in Pakistan are known as "Brethren Churches". The writer asked one of the senior brothers, Hadyat Masih, why they refer to these Assemblies as 'Brethren'. He said, "Because when we were converted, Brother Bakht Singh said we are all brothers."

Even though Bakht Singh could not visit Assemblies for more than 30 years, the Lord Who builds His Church, continues to build and sustain His testimony in Pakistan for His glory.

The leaders of the major Assemblies requested this author to visit them again. So in October, 1993, he went back to Pakistan along with Mr. & Mrs. Munshi Massey and their eldest son, Peter. During that visit, we travelled extensively to Rawalpindi, Lahore, Multan, Quetta, Faisalabad, Martinpur, Youngsonabad, Karachi, and several other places: restarted the All-Pakistan Holy Convocation, and encouraged believers to work together in mutual co-operation with oneness of mind.

In order to mobilize all the scattered Assemblies across Pakistan, the Lord helped us to form a national body of spiritual men from various Assemblies.

In 1995, the Lord constrained Maqbool Gill and his wife, Victoria, to come out for full-time ministry and co-ordinate the work in the Assemblies throughout Pakistan.

Although there are many human problems and limitations, including political difficulties and severe persecution by Muslims, the Lord has done a new work in Pakistan through the prayerful, diligent work of the national body by providing both spiritual and monetary assistance.

The present members of the National body that assist the Assemblies in Pakistan are : Younis Lal din (Multan), Maqbool Gill (Lahore), Hadayat Masih (Lahore), William Gill (Rawalpindi), Abdul Masih (Rawalpindi), Brian Adam (Australia), Peter Grove (England) and Dieter Becht (Germany).

The author and Peter Massey are working closely with the saints in Pakistan, visiting the saints frequently to encourage them.

About the timely visit of the author to Pakistan, Maqbool Gill reported:

"Dr. Koshy's visits to Pakistan, starting in 1993, were very timely. These visits brought great blessing and encouragement to the believers in Pakistan.

In Lahore, at the first meeting he had with full-time workers and assembly leaders, while he was speaking, the Spirit of the Lord came upon all those who were present and all began to weep, which seldom happens at such times. They began to confess their sins, and recommitted their lives to the Lord. Immediately following that, they all said with one accord, 'The very spirit which was upon Brother Bakht Singh is upon you. Therefore, we accept you as we accepted Brother Bakht Singh.' They also requested him to come back again to help them. This event has brought real oneness and unity with Brother Koshy, and is, in a way, the turning point of a new work in the Assemblies in Pakistan. Brother Munshi B. Massey, who was present at the meeting said, "It was like a revival as in the days of Brother Bakht Singh."

Everyone present in the meeting felt very strongly that the author was sent by God with His anointing to meet the spiritual needs of the believers in Pakistan.

The anointed ministry of the Word was a blessing, not only for the believers in the Assemblies, but also for the denominational churches as well. They found in him a man of God with the gift of preaching, particularly in conventions, which is lacking in Pakistan. Many denominational leaders, like the Bishop of Lahore, Alexander John Malik, invited him to speak at their convention held in the Lahore Cathedral compound. In this way the Assemblies in Pakistan have become a blessing to various organizations and denominations in Pakistan and, in spite of all the practical and spiritual problems, Assemblies in Pakistan are growing qualitatively and quantitatively. Praise the Name of the Lord."²³

As for Maqbool Gill, the Lord has been constraining him since 1990, to enter into full-time ministry in fellowship with

the Assemblies, but he hesitated to do so. When the author first visited Pakistan, Maqbool had the opportunity to be with him as translator. This gave us the time to fellowship with each other. Through sharing and praying together, his conviction and vision became clear. As a result, in 1994, he resigned from The Pakistan Bible Correspondence School where he worked for more than twenty years.

When the author visited Pakistan again in 1994 for the Lahore Holy Convocation, Maqbool and his wife, Victoria, were set apart by the laying on of hands by the author and other senior brethren, to oversee the work of the Assemblies throughout Pakistan.

Ministry in Sri Lanka :

The Lord, Who builds His church, uses different people to labour for His Church. As the apostle Paul puts it, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." (1 Cor. 3:6-7).

In Colombo, Sri Lanka, before a local Assembly was established in 1949 on the basis of Acts 2:42, the Lord used different people to prepare the ground.

In the year 1941, through the ministry of Samuel Mathew, an Indian Evangelist, E.C. de Alwis and his wife, Lillian, were converted to Christ. Mr. de Alwis at that time was working as an engineer at the port of Colombo. In 1949, one of the elders of 'Jehovah-Shammah,' George Rajaratnam, who was working with George Oaks Ltd., received a transfer order from Madras to Sri Lanka. Because he was greatly used of the Lord in Madras, the saints there began to pray earnestly that the transfer order would be cancelled. But God's ways are not our ways, and the order was not cancelled.

Soon after his conversion, Mr. E.C.de Alwis opened his

home for meetings, and a small group began to meet for regular fellowship. By 1945, it had developed into a small local Assembly with Brothers E.C. de Alwis, and Earnest Toussaint as leaders.

The little group thus formed was later divided and had two separate gatherings due to differences within the leadership, and continued that way till 1949. When George Rajarathnam went to Colombo, the Lord put him in touch with one of the groups. Through prayer, teaching and patience, he was able to bring the two factions together. Bakht Singh was on a visit to Singapore at that time, and at the request of George Rajaratnam and other believers, he first visited Colombo in late 1949. It was with his arrival that the Church in Colombo became a true New Testament Church. He laid hands on four senior brothers and set them apart as Elders. Thereafter, Bakht Singh made visits to Colombo on four more occasions, the last being in 1973. Every time he visited, the Lord did great things by bringing many to salvation. The meeting places were always filled to capacity. Convocations were started and believers from Sri Lanka began to visit Indian Assemblies. In more recent years, many of the leading brothers of Indian Assemblies have visited the Colombo Assembly and they have been working together in close fellowship. Now there are scores of Assemblies functioning in various parts of this small island.

About the ministry in Sri Lanka, Bakht Singh reported in the Hebron Messenger :

"The Lord is using Brother Antipas in a remarkable way to encourage and strengthen the believers who are scattered over the tea estates. Please pray that the Lord may raise up many co-workers to help him, from among the Tamil and Singhalese people, and prepare them to bear responsibility in the coming days. Please also pray much for the elder breth-

ren in Colombo that the Lord may enable them to shepherd His widely scattered flock."²⁹

"I shall be grateful for your prayers that the Lord may encourage the saints in Colombo, and grant His perfect wisdom from above to the elders to feed the flock, and make every provision for the up-building of the believers who are scattered in many tea estates in different parts of the island. The Lord has been using our Brother Antipas to strengthen the believers in the different estates, and at the same time to take the gospel to many remote and unreached areas of the island. Please do pray that the Lord may enable the believers in Colombo to bear their responsibility very faithfully and spread the gospel, and thus build His Church."³⁰

Bakht Singh's visit to Japan, the Philippines and other Asian Countries :

In his attitude and actions, Bakht Singh was a world-class Christian who had a global view of the Body of Christ. He believed and taught that every believer in Christ, regardless of their nationality, language, caste, class and colour, is equally precious, equally important and equally necessary for the building up of the Body of Christ and for the fulfillment of the purposes of God. He appreciated and enjoyed the fellowship of groups which were not of his own initiation.

Therefore, as the Lord led him, he travelled and ministered Christ and shared the vision of the church with believers in many parts of the world without any personal vested interest. His burden was to see local churches established on New Testament principles to show forth the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. In 1947 and again 1959, the Lord led him to Japan and the Philippines. About his visit there he wrote:

"I was much blessed and refreshed through my short stay with the believers in Toyoma, north of Tokyo, on the 16th and 17th of November 1947. In His own sovereign way, the Lord has raised up this group for His glory. In the year 1959, I visited Tokyo for about a week. A few of the God's servants belonging to different countries, who had been working in that part of Japan came to Tokyo during that period for fellowship. They were really dissatisfied with the existing condition of Christian groups in Japan at that time, and were very anxious to get the Lord's answer. I believe that the Lord did speak to them at that time and when they returned to their own field of work they decided to meet to worship the Lord in a simple and sincere way giving the Lord Jesus Christ His rightful place in their midst. Since then those among them who were foreigners have returned to their respective countries. But a group of thirty Japanese believers have been gathering regularly almost every day and are enjoying the Word of God very earnestly upon their knees. Through them, the Lord has gained ground in surrounding places as well. A few of these believers meet every day for early morning prayer gatherings for an hour. Through prayers like this, the Lord has been releasing new life through them in other parts of Japan also.

The people of Japan as a nation are extremely superstitious, and even believers are very easily led away by new and strange doctrines. Unless there is a living testimony to show forth the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, one does not see much hope for Japan. When one sees the multitudes of Japanese being drawn away towards false cults which provide them nothing but husks, one cannot but feel a strong burden for the Japanese nation."³¹

Philippines:

"From Japan I came to the Philippines. I do praise God

for enabling me to have some time of fellowship with believers in Manila. It was only after I reached Manila that I could see clearly why the Lord had been burdening me to plan two weeks in the Philippines. I had the privilege of spending about one week in Manila and another week in Mindanao. For thirty years there has been a group of Chinese believers in Manila. They began at first as a small group before the first World War. For the last twenty years, the number has been increasing rapidly and there is quite a large group now. But sad to say, most of their activities have been confined to the Chinese only. This has much limited their spiritual outlook. However, for the past four years or so, there has been a new movement of the Holy Spirit, and when I visited them this time I found a new burden of prayer in the hearts of many believers in this group to know the Lord's mind for the coming days. No doubt, the work of the Holy Spirit may appear to be slow, but it gives us joy to see that the hand of God has begun to move in their midst to do a new work in them and has given them a fresh heavenly vision of their responsibility towards people in other parts of Asia."³²

During his time in the Philippines, he was encouraged to see how the Spirit of the Lord was gathering a people for Himself and establishing many churches where the believers were functioning under the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ in the light of the Word of God. He was much encouraged and refreshed to see the people of similar 'vision' of the church in the Philippines.

Following is the report of Bakht Singh about the Philippines:

"Kindly continue to pray for Brother Flack's ministry in Mindanao, South Philippines. In his recent letter he says that he has received much encouragement in his ministry and he expects to remain in those parts till about the end of March. There are about 45 groups of believers in that area. There seems to be an increasing response from the Philip-

pine people. Please pray that the Lord may build these believers on a very strong foundation and also use them to take the gospel into all the surrounding islands."³³

"From Singapore I have come to Manila. In the Philippines, from where I am writing this letter, during the past four months Brother A.J. Flack has been much used of the Lord, especially in Mindanao and the Southern islands, where there are already forty to fifty Assemblies of believers who meet every Sunday to worship the Lord. Of late, they have been going out increasingly to preach the gospel in surrounding areas. In some of these places recently they have had large gospel processions. These have made a deep impression upon the people who are mostly Roman Catholics. They looked on, wondering, having never seen anything like this before. Please pray that this kind of work among them may continue and prove very fruitful in bringing many souls to Christ. Please pray for Brother Flack who has just left the Philippines and now hopes to spend a short time in England and other places, before returning to India.

Here in the Philippines, they have arranged a Youth conference in a place called Baguio, in the mountains about 150 miles north of Manila. I shall be able to tell you more about this in my next letter.

It has been a great joy to meet Brother & Sister Golsworthy again in Manila. The time of fellowship we have had together has been very precious. It is wonderful how the Lord has enabled us to be together again at this time. They have requested me to take this opportunity of passing on their loving greetings to you all."³⁴

"I was in the Philippines from May 1 to 13 as already mentioned in my previous letter. From May 2 to 5 we had special meetings in Manila, and from 6 to 12 a Youth Camp in Baguio, which is a very nice hill station and the summer capital of the Philippines. The Lord blessed us abundantly

in both places. Meetings were conducted both morning and evening in the Christian Gospel Center, at Manila. Here believers are mostly settlers from China. They have been much blessed by the Lord; but so far they had not realized their responsibility to take the gospel to other islands, with the exception of Mindanao.

However, recently many have offered themselves for the Lord's service and are sincerely desirous of being used by the Lord in taking the gospel not only to other parts of the Philippines but also to the other countries of South East Asia. Please pray for them.

I was very thankful to take part in the Youth Camp at Bagiuo where about 180 young people from different parts of the island had gathered. From the very first day, May 6, we were made conscious of the Lord's working. The Lord poured out the Spirit of prayer upon all the young people and the helpers. We finalized all the arrangements only after we had waited upon the Lord in prayer sufficiently. At the very first meeting, a good number of young people offered themselves for the Lord's service and they began to search the Scriptures daily with much diligence. Please pray that the Lord may make adequate provision to train them for His service and grant them His heavenly plan for gathering the ripened harvest in the surrounding countries.

I was very much refreshed through this Youth Camp in Bagiuo. It was a great joy to me to minister to these young souls who were so hungry and thirsty to receive the Word of God. Our last gathering at the Youth Camp was around the Lord's Table, and the time of worship which we had before taking part in the bread and in the cup was very inspiring and uplifting. As these young people worshipped the Lord one after another upon their knees, I could understand to some extent the longing which they had to give the Lord Jesus Christ His rightful place in their lives. I believe the

Lord is raising up similar groups of young people in other countries of South East Asia also. They all require much covering in prayer that the Lord may protect them from all the onslaughts of the enemy and keep them safe under the shelter of His mighty wings.

There is a group of young people in Surabaya, West Java, who also are ready to come out for the Lord's service. Please pray that the Lord of the harvest may prepare and send forth His labourers to reap the harvest (Matt 9:38).³⁵

Formosa (Taiwan) :

About the visit to Formosa, and other places in Taiwan, Bakht Singh wrote in Hebron Messenger:

Taipei:

"Brother Lucas Wu of Manila and I reached Taipei, the capital of Taiwan, on May 4th. I was very thankful to have Brother Lucas Wu with me for fellowship and also for interpretation. He has been mightily used by the Lord in these parts during the past years.

I was very much humbled by the warm and loving welcome extended to both of us by the large number of believers who had gathered at the airport. I was reminded how the ass's colt carried the Lord Jesus from Bethany to Jerusalem on the Lord's last journey, and how it walked upon the garments spread upon the way by the people to welcome the Lord Jesus as their king. (Mark 11:7-9) What a great honour we receive when we serve the Lord and act as His witnesses.

Meetings have been arranged in Taipei for two days, both morning and evening. People are coming in large numbers, some of them from far-off places.

I expect to visit altogether about seven places in the island. There appears to be a rich harvest ready in this country."³⁶

"We had a time of great blessing and refreshing during the past two weeks of special meetings in different parts of Taiwan, beginning with Taipei, the capital. In nearly all of these places we had meetings both morning and evening. There was good response to the Word in each centre and people came even from far-off places to get their portion.

The Lord granted me full liberty in the ministry of the Word. The burden of the messages in the two weeks which have just gone by has been mostly for the believers, who have, as a result, been revived and stirred up to go from house to house and invite people for the special gospel meetings to be held in the two weeks following!

Many of the inhabitants of this island have gone through much suffering and hardship due to Communist occupation of the mainland of China in 1947. But this proved to be a blessing in disguise. About twenty-one years ago, there were very few foreign missionary societies working on this island. Since then, all missionaries in the mainland of China were forced to leave the country and many of them shifted to the island of Taiwan. About the year 1948, nearly two hundred believers, who had been in fellowship with Brother Watchman Nee, came and settled down in Taiwan, and the Lord began to use them for the salvation of many souls throughout the island.

About the same time, a large number of foreign missionary societies, most of them from the U.S.A., began to labour in different parts of Taiwan, and from that time they have baptized believers from all classes and also prepared many more hearts to receive the gospel. In view of all this, this appears to be an opportune time to evangelize the island, and to reap the harvest intensively.

Taiwan is a beautiful and fertile island. Its people are very hardworking and they have made full use of every available inch of land. You can travel the whole length and breadth

of the island without seeing even a tiny plot of land lying waste which is good enough for cultivation. The people of this island have made really remarkable progress in a very short time.

In every city I visited, I was very impressed by the absence of pictures of nude women in the advertising boards on high ways and main streets, and I did not see anything even suggestive of indecency. This is quite unlike Europe, Australia or America, where indecent and repulsive pictures will constantly meet your eyes in almost every city. Generally speaking, women in Taiwan dress modestly, even though they have adopted western mode of dress.

As a nation, the Chinese in Taiwan are very methodical and systematic in their way. This characteristic of theirs sometimes limits the free working of the Holy Spirit, and they need to be shaken occasionally to make them get out of their ruts. But then, I should say that, we all need such kind of shaking at times.

Chinese hospitality is proverbial. In every place I visited I was overloaded with love and kindness. One can learn much from the kindness, courtesy and consideration which they show to all the needs of their guests.

I believe there is a very good material in this country of Taiwan which the Lord can use to evangelize both the East and the West. Please pray that the Lord may thrust forth His labourers from this country to gather the harvest in other parts of the world.

The Lord brought me back safely to India on June 21. The happy memories of the days spent in Ceylon, Singapore, Indonesia, Australia, Philippines, and Formosa are still very fresh in my mind. I do praise God with all my heart for the burden of prayer given to so many of you for the ministry fulfilled during the past four months.

Please continue to pray that the Lord may enable us to

realize more fully our responsibility to take the gospel by every possible means to all the countries, to different parts of Asia and especially to those parts where recently the Lord has given us so many valuable and precious contacts. We have received many encouraging letters from various friends in these countries telling us of the blessing which they continue to receive, following the ministry we were able to fulfill in their midst, in spite of much weakness and human limitation. I do praise God for enabling me to see something of the spiritual need in these countries. We are now praying much that the Lord may enable us to meet that need more fully for His glory.

We had special gospel meetings in different parts of Formosa during the last two weeks of my stay there, that was from June 2 to 16. The Lord did bless us abundantly, particularly in Taipei, the capital of Formosa. The believers there were able to rent one of the best public halls in the city. It was centrally located and provided accommodation for a large audience. People of all classes attended. They came from many parts of the city and some from very great distances. We were very much conscious of God's power falling upon us in every gathering.

Before this campaign began, believers had to work very hard and they had gone from house to house inviting people. They also had a great burden of prayer. At the same time, the Lord had put upon the saints in many parts of India, Ceylon, Australia and Philippines, a great burden of travailing prayer for these gatherings. We are very thankful to God for the harvest which has been gathered in consequence of all this loving ministry.

Undoubtedly, there is a ripened harvest in Formosa today. I could sense godly hunger for the Word of God in many hearts. When I met people in the trains and offered them tracts, they received them very eagerly.

Kindly pray that the Lord may help His servants in Formosa [Taiwan] to strengthen those who were recently born again. Till now most of the believers have been concentrating their gospel efforts upon those who came from the mainland of China, and have not done much to evangelize the first inhabitants of the island of Taiwan. But now many of the Lord's servants there have received a great burden to do this, and this burden and longing is increasing in their hearts day by day. Not only this, but they are getting ready to take the gospel to all the surrounding islands also."³⁷

Singapore :

After visiting Singapore, Bakht Singh reported in the Hebron Messenger:

"I have been much impressed by the large number of people who have been attending the meetings at Singapore. Last Sunday there was a special gathering for young people when about five hundred were present. My heart went out to them when I saw their faces so hungry and eager to receive the Word of God. I am told that Christian gatherings are conducted in several parts of Singapore, and usually the majority of those who attend are young people. Many of them join one Bible College or another. I fear that unless these young people are brought into proper Church life and related to the believers of other age groups as well, the enemy can take advantage and lead them astray through his subtle devices. I shall be grateful for your prayers for the young believers in Singapore regarding this matter.

There is a fine Sunday School meeting at 17 Wilkie Terrace, and the gospel is reaching homes of all classes and communities through these children. We have to thank God for the devoted teachers there as they labour to make the gospel message simple and interesting for the little ones.

Again in Singapore we had a love feast. It was on Sun-

day. The gatherings were attended by a large number of believers and the fellowship was very sweet. I could see the enlargement in the assembly, and this in spite of many handicaps which they have had to overcome. During the past few years, the enemy has attacked them several times, but the Lord's hand has been with them to deliver them again and again. Please pray that the Lord may enable the elder brethren to meet for prayer more often to find the Lord's mind for the various ministries which they have the responsibility to fulfil."³⁸

"The Lord enabled me to spend two days in Singapore on my way to the Philippines and I was much refreshed for the second time by the fellowship of the saints in this city. May I covet your prayers for God's servant Bro. Faithful Luke, who is ministering in this important city. In the early years, he was much used to win souls to the Lord and to establish the believers in Indonesia. For the past two years this brother has been very unwell. By God's grace he is much better now and is moving around as much as he can to encourage the saints in their trials, sorrows and affliction. It was a real inspiration to me to see him going around so faithfully and diligently in spite of his age and physical weakness. Please pray much for him that the Lord may grant him extra strength at this time of great spiritual need."³⁹

Trinidad :

"We had a very blessed time in Trinidad for about twelve days. We had two meetings a day; and people came with much hunger and thirst for His Word.

The Lord gave us a time of open heaven during the time of Worship round the Lord's Table on Sunday Nov 2. About 200 believers of different groups took part for the first time in such a gathering. It was a very precious time. Please pray that the Lord may deepen the work in many hearts."⁴⁰

Indonesia :

As a Church, Bakht Singh and the saints had been praying for years for Indonesia. Therefore he was glad when he got an invitation to go to Indonesia for ministry in 1968. The following reports by Bakht Singh give some insight on the work of God in Indonesia.

"After much prayer the Lord has made His will clear to me, and I have accepted the invitation from Indonesia to attend the W.E.C Conference of their South East Asian leaders, from February 25 to March 15, and I am planning to go on to Australia from there for about three weeks afterwards. I shall be grateful for your prayers that the travel documents may be ready in time and that the Lord may grant me His special anointing for the ministry to be fulfilled in both the countries."⁴¹

"I am writing this from Indonesia where I have come to attend a Conference of servants of God from different parts of South East Asia. This has been a time of great blessing and refreshing to us all. I praise God for the privilege given to me to be here and to have fellowship with so many of His servants.

The Lord has been working amongst us in a most mysterious way. His searching eyes which are like a flame of fire (Rev. 1:14) have been searching our hearts almost every day, and the Lord has met many of us in a new way. We were humbled before Him again and again, confessing often we had grieved Him and failed Him in carrying out His perfect will. We were reminded of His compassions which fail not (Lam 3:22) and His mercies which are sure and steadfast (Acts 13:34, Isaiah 55:3), because of which we have been cleansed by the precious blood of the everlasting Covenant. Thus we were made to enjoy His loving presence and unchanging love in a manner we had never done before.

Among the servants of God whom I had the privilege to

meet, were some through whom the gospel of the grace of God is being preached with power and authority in different parts of South East Asia: this in spite of much opposition from the enemy, who through many subtle devices has tried to hinder the work of the gospel. We are reminded of the promise of the Lord Jesus in Rev. 3:8, 'Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.'

Throughout the Conference, the Lord has brought before us the challenge to take the gospel to the uttermost parts of the world. Many servants of God, representing the Lord's Church in different parts of Asia, accepted this challenge with all humility; and dedicated their lives afresh to the Lord by bringing themselves to the altar of consecration with a sincere longing to spend and be spent for Him in this joyful task of serving Him in the gospel!

Please pray that the Lord may give us who are in India a fresh heavenly vision of our responsibility to spread the gospel to all other countries according to His perfect heavenly plan. This can be revealed to us only as we are prepared to wait upon the Lord perseveringly, as did the servants of God at Antioch before they set apart Paul and Barnabas for a wider ministry (Acts 13:1-4). We should note the significant fact that the Lord had to bring such a burden of prayer upon the hearts of His servants at Antioch even by sending such means as famine and persecution."⁴²

"The Spirit of God has been working in many parts of Indonesia in a threefold manner: first, through the prayer groups formed in different places as a result of the rapid political changes, the unsteady economy of the country and the fear of impending persecution: secondly, through gospel teams consisting of students of Evangelical Bible Colleges who, after eighteen months of prayer and heart-searching have been burdened to take the gospel to all parts of the country: and thirdly, through the direct work of the Holy

Spirit among children, illiterate people and old folks, whose simple faith and implicit obedience has brought about remarkable conversion among people all over the country."⁴³

"In many ways it is very evident that this is the time of the Lord's visitation for Indonesia, and particularly for South Sumatra, Central Java and Timor Island. A very large number of people in these parts have been baptized during the past year or so. But it is very hard to say how many of them are really born again and have become new creatures in Christ Jesus.

However, there is no doubt that the Lord has been working. We have to praise God for the great hunger which has been created in many hearts by the Holy Spirit, and also pray that the Lord Himself may make adequate provision to satisfy the hunger of these longing souls through His living and true Word.

As I have mentioned in the previous issue of Hebron Messenger, a number of young people-both men and women have been going out in gospel teams to these parts of Indonesia, and as a result, there have been some remarkable conversions. At the same time, one can sense a real danger because many of these teams are under the leadership of women, and there is far too much emphasis on experiences which cannot be fully supported by the Word of God.

There is tremendous need in these parts for a systematic teaching of the Word of God and the establishing of living churches which can provide fellowship and spiritual food to the young believers. Only then can they grow into maturity and take [a] share in the building of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Please pray that the Lord may grant the spirit of discernment to those who are sincerely seeking after the truth, and save them from the subtle devices of the teachers of wrong doctrines.

I had the privilege of giving God's message during the

special meetings which had been arranged in three different cities of Indonesia. In one of these, a large public hall had been arranged. I was much impressed by the hunger for God's Word shown by the people and by the real concern evinced for the salvation of souls by many young people who had themselves been born again only recently. We arranged two meetings every morning for Bible study and both were well attended. I am praying whether the Lord would have me give a few more days to Indonesia on my return journey to India. Please pray that His perfect will may be made clear."⁴⁴

"The Lord put His seal very definitely upon my second visit to Indonesia from April 17 to 28. I had times of much blessing in each of the five places in Indonesia, which I had the privilege of visiting during this period. While in Australia, I had many pressing invitations to extend my stay in that country, but the more I prayed about it, the more the Lord burdened me to give these days to Indonesia instead. After a few days in Indonesia, I could sense how the Holy Spirit of God had created an abnormal hunger for the Word of God among the people. They came from distant places to attend the meetings. Quite often, we had three meetings a day.

As I have already mentioned in my previous letters, there has been a movement of the Spirit of God in South Sumatra, Central Java and Timor Island. People have been baptized in large numbers. But the pity is that in many cases this has been done without imparting proper instruction to the recipients and even without making sure whether they were saved or not. In some cases, certain miracles have been wrought in answer to the prayer of those who have been preaching the gospel, but because these preachers have been going about on their own in an independent way, the enemy has taken advantage and misguided them into unspiritual practices and soulish activities. It is for this reason that I was burdened to concentrate on helping those believers who

would, in their turn, be able to help those who are genuinely in search of the things of eternity.

There are many Chinese believers in Indonesia. Till now they have been interested in ministering only among their countrymen. Consequently, they have greatly limited their own spiritual growth. But now, by the grace of God, they have begun to include the Indonesian language in all their meetings, and have received a new vision of their responsibility towards the general public around them.

I was much impressed by the large number of young people in Surabaya and other places who came forward accepting the call for God's service. Please pray that the Lord may make provision for teaching them the Word of God and training them for His service.

We had two meetings every morning and both were well attended. I would have loved to stay longer with these believers in Indonesia, to help them and share with them what the Lord taught us during the gospel campaigns in different parts of India during the past years. But it was not the Lord's plan. They requested me again and again to visit them once more. Please pray that the Lord may make His mind clear concerning this urgent appeal.

I have already referred to the large number of people who have been baptized, but not given proper teachings from the Word of God. They have been easily exploited by the teaching of false cults who are mostly concerned only with gathering material for exciting reports. I believe there is a tremendous need in Indonesia at this time, and this need can be met only by our persevering prayer for these dear children of God that they may be protected from the unseen and subtle devices of the enemy.

We do thank God for a few groups of believers whom the Lord has graciously raised up in some parts of Indonesia to take a strong stand for the Word of God and for the Headship

and Lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Please pray that the Lord may grant them a discerning spirit that they may be fully preserved from the false teachers who go about to deceive and misguide. There is a real need for men like Timothy and Titus who can strengthen the believers and establish them. At present there are a few keen young men who were born again only recently and have heard the Lord's call for His service. They are going about here and there preaching the gospel. They require more discipline and fellowship before they can fulfill a church-building ministry. Please pray for them also."⁴⁵

Ministry in various Countries of Africa :

In August, 1963, Bakht Singh went to former Nyasaland (modern Malawi) to speak at the Keswick convention held at Blantyre, the capital of Malawi, from August 24 to 30. People representing various denominations, countries and backgrounds along with several missionaries attended the convention. Sharing the platform with both national and foreign missionaries, the Lord mightily used Bakht Singh and other speakers to edify the Church. Oneness of the Body of Christ was beautifully expressed at that Keswick Convention. Following this, Bakht Singh was able to visit several other countries including Rhodesia, Kenya and Tanzania where he spoke at various churches and denominational groups managed by local and foreign Christian leaders.

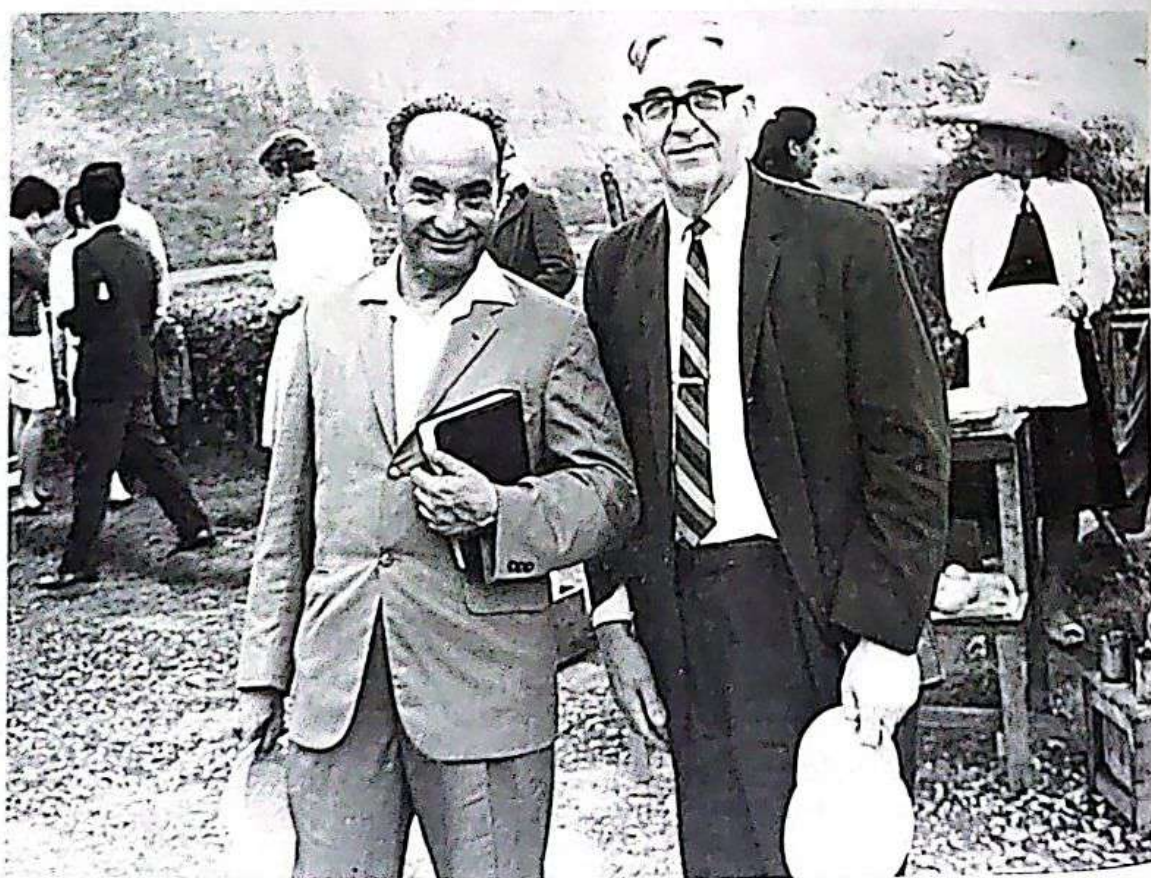
While in these African countries, Bakht Singh also had opportunities to speak to Indian communities, particularly Gujaratis who had settled in various countries of Africa. At Blantyre in Malawi, some of the leading Indian citizens (Hindus) arranged special meetings in a hall attached to a Hindu temple. This was an unusual opportunity to present the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ to many of the well-to-do Hindus living in the city. During his travels to such places



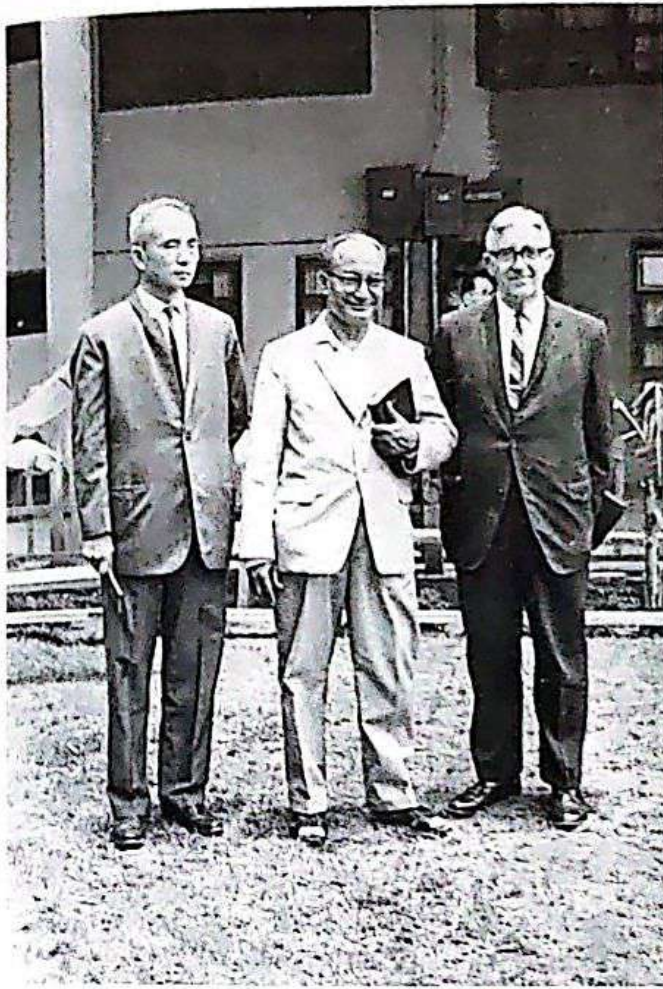
Brother Bakht Singh with the author, T.E.Koshy in Syracuse
(USA) in 1984



Brother Bakht Singh with co-workers Daniel Smith of Canada on his right and Fred Flack of England on his left 1950's



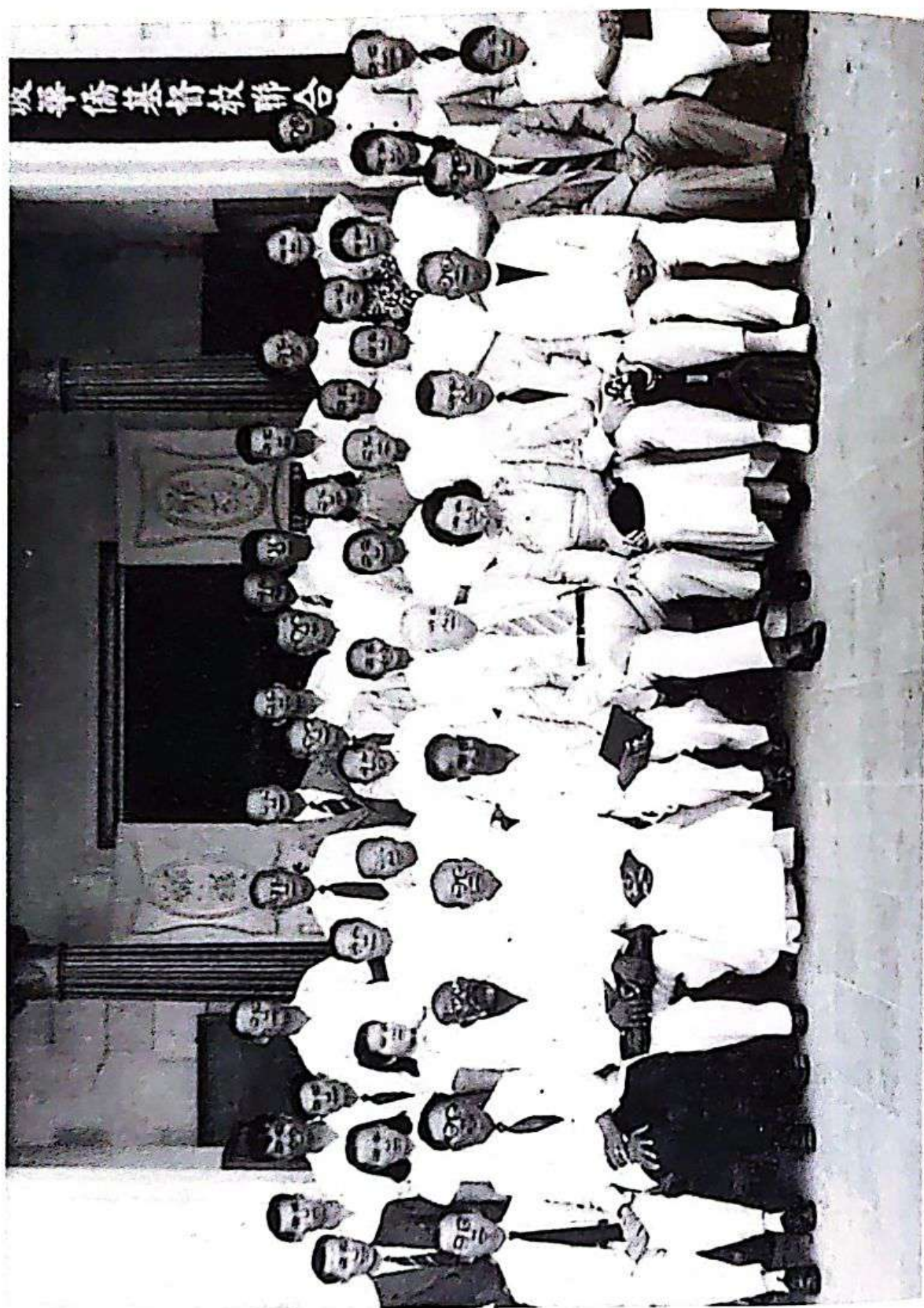
Brother Bakht Singh with Raymond Golsworthy in Philippines 1950's.



Brother Bakht
Singh with Simon
Meek, Co-worker
of Watchman Nee
and Raymond
Golsworthy in
Philippines
1950's



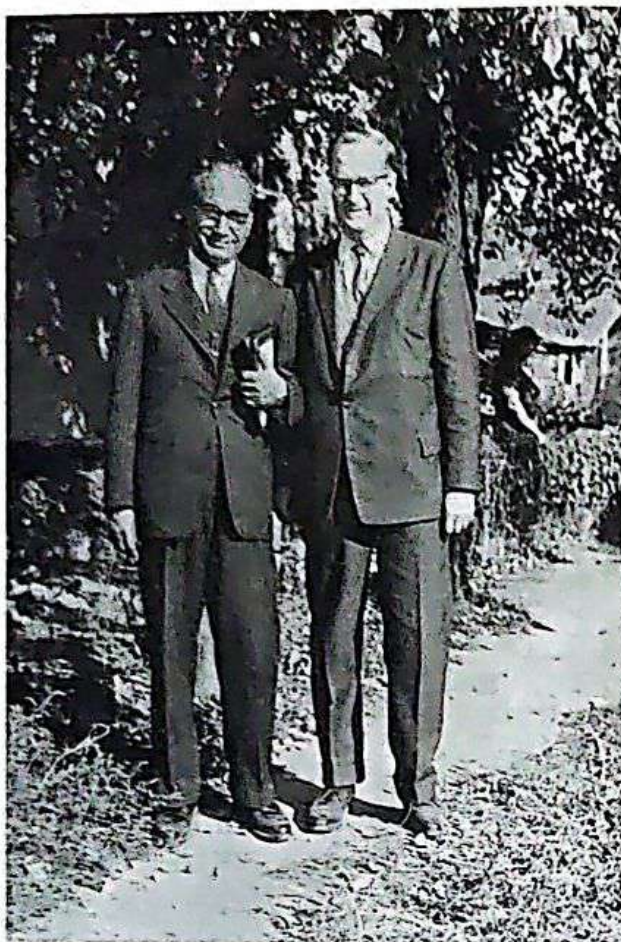
Brother Bakht Singh with Chinese believers in Formosa (Taiwan)
1954



Brother
Bakht
Singh with
faculty and
students at
Chin Lien
Bible
School,
Singapore
1947.



Brother Bakht
Singh with
believers in
Yugoslavia - 1965



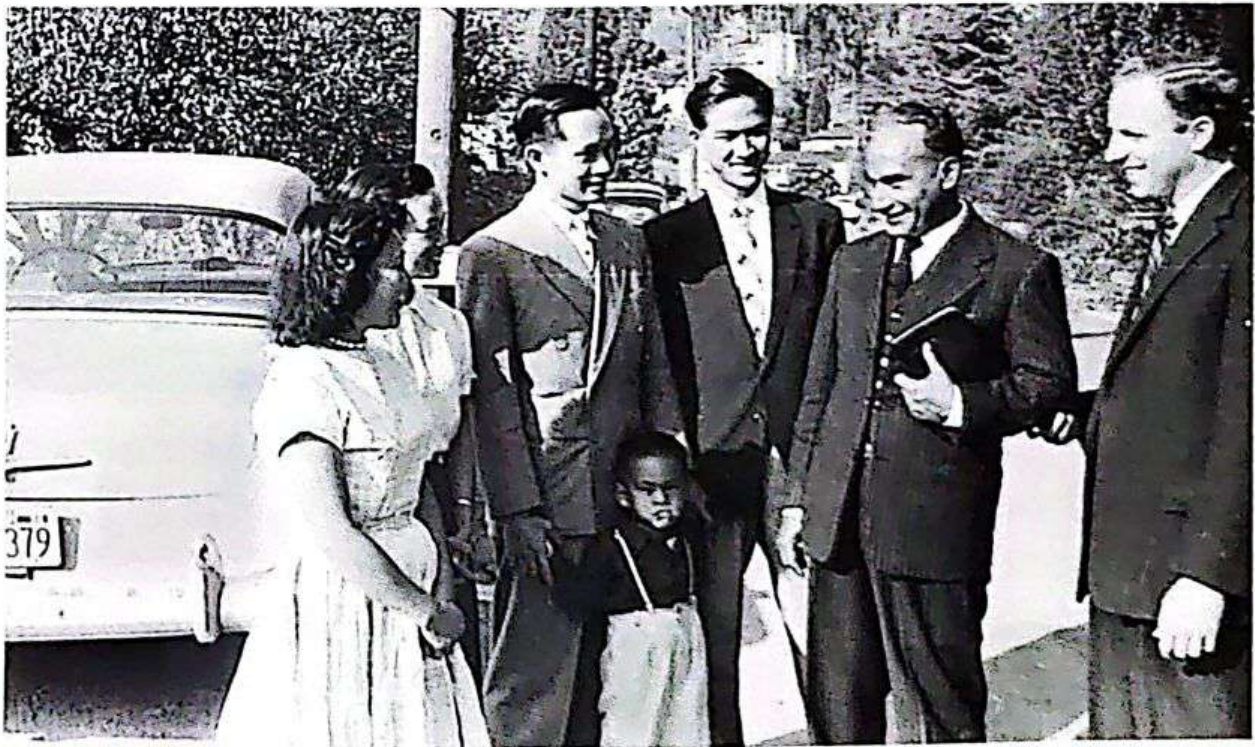
Brother Bakht Singh
with Brother Jonke in
Yugoslavia 1965



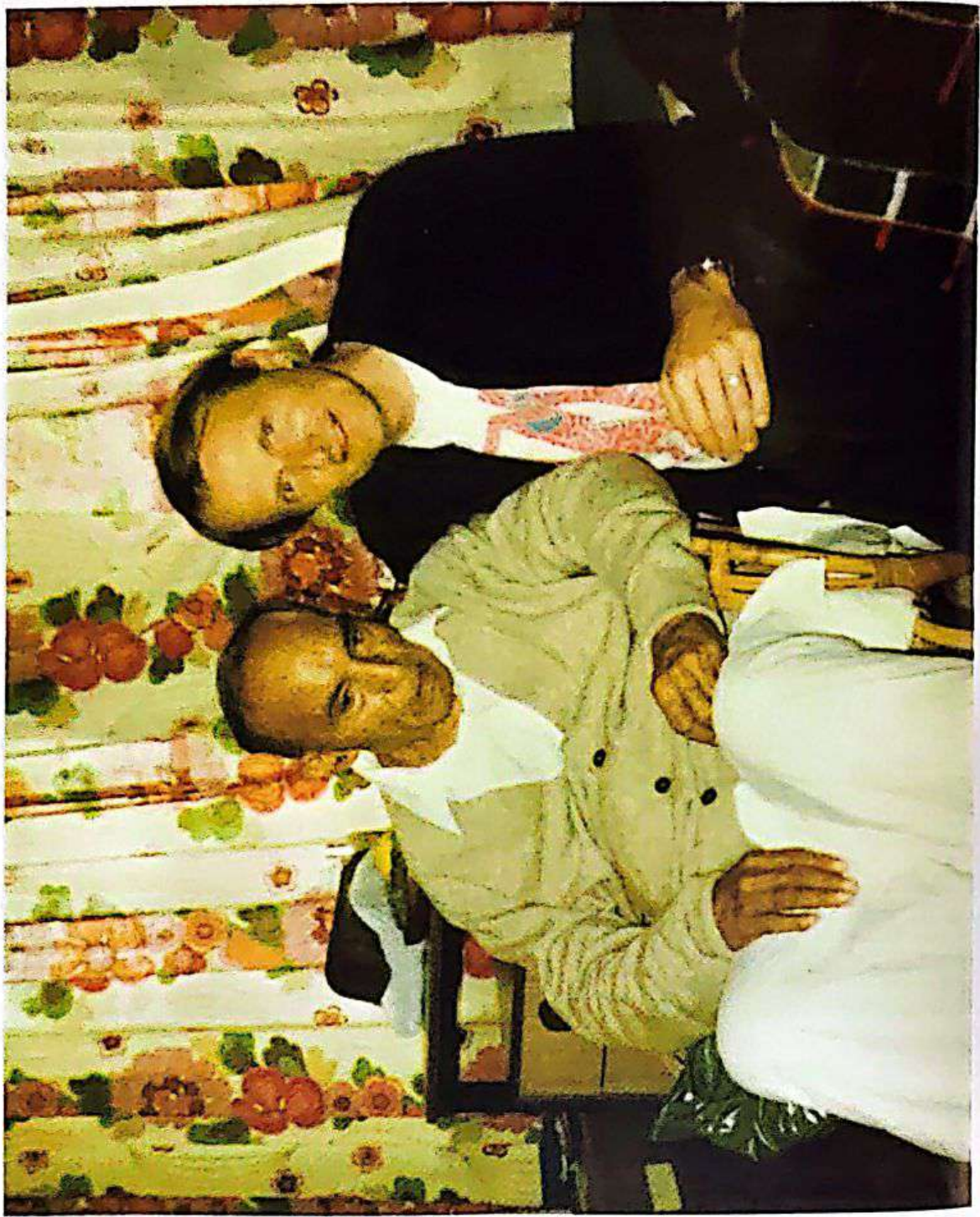
Brother Bakht Singh in Sarcelles, France Holy Convocation with
Bro. Earnest Verborne on his right and Bro. Paul Wolf on his left



Brother Bakht Singh
teaches at meetings
sponsored by Christian
Aid in Washington
D.C. (U.S.A) - 1969



Brother Bakht Singh greets foreign students at the University of
California in 1969 as Allen Finley (right) looks on



Brother Bakht Singh
with George Verwer in
Holland, 1986

as Mombasa, Dar-es-Salaam and Nairobi he was able to minister both to the African population as well as to the large Indian community composed primarily of non-Christians.

Since there were thousands of Hindus from India, (mostly Gujaratis) living in these parts of Eastern Africa, the Lord has made it possible to send Edwin Parmar, a former Gujarathi Hindu convert, his wife Vinodini, and their son Isaiah, from Surat to Nyasaland, as well as his brother-in-law, Earnest Christian and his wife, to Mombasa. Earlier, Arvind Christian and his wife, Susheela, were sent to Malawi to work among Indians.

It was encouraging to see this opportunity of ministering to Indian expatriates living in East African countries. As far as the record shows, this was the first group of Indian missionaries sent from the Assemblies of India. They had several years of fruitful ministry in Africa, but not without cost. In August, 1976, Isaiah met with a fatal auto accident in Nairobi and suddenly was ushered into the presence of His Master, whom he served so faithfully as a young man.

During Bakht Singh's visit to Africa, one of the African pastors by the name of Megawee, who was his translator at the Keswick Convention, was so blessed through the ministry of Bakht Singh that he arranged for him to minister to African believers in the interior of Malawi, about two hundred miles away from Blantyre. He spoke at various places to various groups, and through these meetings believers were encouraged and strengthened.

About 400 people prayed to receive the Lord Jesus Christ. Following that, whenever he went to Nairobi, the Lord gave him meaningful contact with both African and Indian believers.

Because he was sensitive to the leading of the Lord, he was used mightily to minister to those who were in need. For example, on his first visit to Nairobi, he was staying with

a friend who told him about the world famous Natural Zoo where people would come from all over the world just to see the animals walking about in their natural setting. During his morning meditation, Bakht Singh prayed and asked the Lord whether he should go and see the zoo or should he do something else. The Lord advised him not to go because someone was going to come to see him. So Bakht Singh said to his friend that he could not go to the zoo that day. Hearing that, his friend was very surprised because of the zoo's popularity. "It is a wonderful sight, and you must come," he said. Bakht Singh answered, "No, I have not come to Nairobi to see monkeys and donkeys. I have come in the service of the Lord. I will go where He wants me to go and I will do what He wants me to do."

That same day he went to the Air India office in Nairobi, where he was told that someone had come to see him. Later on, a man did come who said, "Brother, I have travelled the whole night by bus from Mombasa, about 500 miles, to see you." He told Bakht Singh he had heard that he would be passing through Mombasa, but he had missed him. So he had come personally to Nairobi to see him. This friend who came to see him took him to visit some other Indian Christians who had been born again and baptized in Madras in 1940. When they saw him, they greatly rejoiced and said, "Brother, we have been praying that God would send you to us."

But Bakht Singh did not know they were there. Soon they arranged special meetings and the Lord blessed their time together. What a joy it was to be led by the Lord, rather than leaning on one's own understanding. If not for God's guidance, he might have spent his time that day watching monkeys, donkeys and lions, but because he allowed God to direct him, He made him a mighty blessing to others.

Bakht Singh left Africa praising God for what He was

doing among His people in Africa and with a great burden for the needs of Africa, both among saints and sinners.

Ministry in the Middle East :

Following his visit to Africa in late 1963, the Lord led Bakht Singh to Amman in Jordan, Jerusalem, Aden, Bahrain, Doha-Qatar, Kuwait and many other places in the Middle East. His heart was filled with joy and gratitude when he met God's faithful witnesses in every place whom the Lord has raised up for His glory. He was greatly encouraged to see the way the Lord was using these believers through their triumphant lives and their consistent testimonies to influence others for Christ. The Lord also granted him full liberty in his spirit for the ministry of the Word wherever he went.

In Aden, he was the guest of the Red Sea Mission Team which had been serving the Lord faithfully among Arab people located around the Red Sea. Bakht Singh was greatly refreshed and encouraged through his fellowship with the saints who were working with the Mission.

During these visits, he also had the privilege of spending time in Beirut, capital of Lebanon. He ministered the Word to the refugees from Palestine as well as to Lebanese Christians. He was very encouraged to see the way the Lord had raised up few groups of believers in Beirut who have been following the Lord so faithfully. He was refreshed by their fellowship and encouraged by their hunger for the Word of God.

From Beirut he went to Amman, Jordan, for a week among the believers who gathered together from a number of surrounding places. He was glad to see that a few Muslims were able to come for the evening meetings. While he was there he was the guest of Mr. Whitman, a British missionary and his co-workers, whom the Lord had used for the salvation of many souls in that area.

Then from Amman, he went to Jerusalem for several days of meetings. It was such a joy for him to visit Israel and the surrounding areas.

As he put it, "The Bible becomes more living and real while one goes from place to place remembering the details mentioned in the scriptures. For example, the river Jordan, the Mount of Temptation, Bethany, the Mount of Olives, Gethsemane, the Garden Tomb, Calvary, and the old Mount temple and so on".

It was after much prayer that the Lord opened a way for him to go to Kabul, Afghanistan, to visit his good friend, Dr. Christy Wilson of the USA, a Presbyterian missionary, and his co-workers, working primarily among European communities. He was one of the "tentmaker" missionaries who formed a church within a foreign colony to hold worship meetings (in English) and to provide a Sunday School for their children. The only Afghans who attended were secret police sent to spy on any other Afghans who might dare to sneak in occasionally. The "tentmakers" put up a church building, but within a year or two Muslims knocked it down with bulldozers and Dr. Wilson was expelled from Afghanistan, never to return.⁴⁶ This again shows the largeness of Bakht Singh's heart and outlook. Although, Christy Wilson was a Presbyterian American missionary, Bakht Singh took time to go, visit and encourage him and his co-workers. While there in the winter of 1963, looking at the snow-clad mountains of Afghanistan, Bakht Singh was so inspired that he shared from the book of Isaiah and explained forty spiritual aspects of Christian salvation.⁴⁷

About this visit to Kabul with Dr. Christy Wilson and his family, Wilson recalls:

"He was in our home and I asked him to lead devotions at breakfast. He was very inspired with the mountain peaks around Kabul because they had snow on the tops of the

peaks, and so before the devotions he said he would like us to consider the mountain peaks in the book of Isaiah. By memory, he picked out every key verse of every chapter of the 66 chapters of Isaiah starting with chapter 1, v. 18 "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." And so he said, just as the mountain peaks are around Kabul in Afghanistan, so we have mountain peaks in the whole book of Isaiah. And these were his devotions at breakfast which was such a rich experience to hear him expound the Word of God by memory."⁴⁸

Throughout the visit to all these places he was able to see in person the greatness and largeness of God and His method of working among various countries, tribes, languages and peoples to gather a people for Himself. It also gave him a global view of the Body of Christ. He was encouraged and refreshed to realize that he, too, is a part of His Body worldwide. So he came back with a heavy burden of prayer to pray for the people of God worldwide, knowing that they all were part of the Body of Christ.

As he travelled, particularly through the Middle East, the Gulf States such as Doha, Kuwait, Bahrain, Dubai and different city states later on, the Lord raised up living testimonies of worshipping communities on the basis of Acts 2:42, particularly through Indian, Pakistani and other expatriates who went to these places for employment and who already had the vision of the Body of Christ. Later on starting from the seventies, Bakht Singh often visited the believers in these areas to encourage them.

Throughout all his trips around the world the Lord demonstrated His sovereignty and faithfulness by providing for his needs in miraculous ways. On December 31, 1969, as he was on his way to Zagreb, Yugoslavia, from Zurich, Switzer-

land, before boarding the plane it was announced over the loud-speaker that the plane could not land at Zagreb due to bad weather there, and so would go straight to Belgrade, which is quite a long distance south of Zagreb. Bakht Singh did not have any contacts in Belgrade. Moreover, there was a special meeting arranged in Zagreb for that evening. He had only two minutes to decide because the passengers had already started boarding the plane. While standing by the entrance gate and watching others going into the plane he prayed saying, "Lord, tell me what to do?"

The Lord replied very clearly, "You also board the plane."

He obeyed the still small Voice of the Lord and, entering the plane, sat down and continued praying, "Lord, you have all power. Please change the weather. People at Zagreb are waiting for Thy message. Please take us to Zagreb."

In a few minutes the captain announced that the plane would land at Zagreb! But no sooner did they land than it began to snow again heavily. Indeed He is a wonder-working God and His ways are past finding out.

The very same night after the evening meeting at Zagreb, they had to go by train to another town near the border of Hungary for another meeting. In that town the message had to be translated into both the Slavic and Hungarian languages. The Lord gave a very precious time during those five days in Yugoslavia.

He had promised to go from Zagreb to Stuttgart, Germany, for annual mission conference which was fixed for January 6, 1970. Even though he had asked for a seat by air for January 6 from Zagreb, Yugoslavia, to Stuttgart, Germany, three weeks prior to this date, when he went to the airport, no seat was available due to the rush of people returning after their New Year holidays. So he had to go by train to Munich. This train was extremely crowded. The platform also was so crowded that passengers attempting to get off

the train were obstructed by people running to and fro to find seats on the train, that ladies had to be helped to get out through the windows. But he knew that the Lord had reserved a good seat for him, and he had no anxiety. Without any difficulty, he found a compartment completely empty at the rear end of the train. The Lord gave him a very comfortable time throughout the journey.

Following the meetings in Germany when he went to Doha-Qatar, he discovered that the flight on which reservation had been made for him to go to Tehran via Kuwait had been cancelled, and there was no other suitable flight by the same route for two more days. He had promised to be in Tehran, Iran, on Jan 24th, so he prayed much that the Lord would enable him to reach the place in time for the appointment.

He found that there was a flight to Tehran via Beirut, Lebanon, which was a roundabout route involving an extra thousand miles. But the Lord gave him full peace and liberty to go by this route, although he did not have sufficient time to inform his friends in Tehran. This meant that they would not come to receive him, and he wondered how he could find his way to them, especially as they lived in a small lane which was not very easy to locate. So he prayed that the Lord would enable him to meet somebody who could help him.

At Beirut, while sitting in a taxi which was to take him to the airport, a gentleman joined him. Bakht Singh could see from his face that he was a believer and immediately they became friends. During the course of their conversation, he found out that this fellow passenger was an engineer from Holland who had come on business to the Middle East. He told Bakht Singh he was well acquainted with his name.

They reached Tehran at about 10 o'clock at the night

and, as expected, there was no one to meet him at the airport. But his companion told him not to worry, as he had booked a suitable room in a good hotel. He took him there, and Bakht Singh rested well that night. The next morning, in answer to prayer, he found his contact's place without much difficulty.

The two days he spent at Tehran were a source of much inspiration and encouragement to all of them. The Lord was definitely working in His own way in these parts, and saving souls one by one. It was a great joy for Bakht Singh to meet those who had been brought from darkness to light.

Bakht Singh also visited Jamaica, West Indies, for two weeks of special meetings. Many believers still recall his visit. He also had the privilege of ministering in Bangladesh, Korea and other Asian countries. Wherever the Lord took him, he shared with them the burden of God to raise up churches that were living testimonies on the basis of the New Testament principles.

Throughout his life and ministry, Bakht Singh spiritually influenced literally tens of thousands of people. Indeed, he consistently tried to reflect, radiate and represent Christ wherever the Lord led him during his travels and ministry around the world. Moreover, through his fellowship among believers of various backgrounds and nations, his own spiritual life was enriched and his outlook broadened.

Everywhere, as the Lord gave him utterance, he shared with the Lord's people the vision of the New Testament Church, and challenged believers to build His Church according to His divine plan and pattern, to show forth His fullness and glory.

As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, Bakht Singh was 'a sweet Saviour of Christ' – some people appreciated him and others were turned off. "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to

the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. 2:15,16).

End Notes

¹Reuben Larsen was a co-founder of HCJB Radio in Ecuador, South America.

²Author's interview with Dr. Christy Wilson, who was the missionary secretary of the convention that year.

³*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, September 14, 1969.

⁴*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, September 28, 1969.

⁵*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, August 20, 1978.

⁶*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, September 17, 1969.

⁷*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, September 23, 1979.

⁸Information given by Brother Ernest Verborne to the author in 2002.

⁹Verborne's letter to the author in 2002.

¹⁰Werner Tietze's letter to the author in 2002.

¹¹*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, September 17, 1978.

¹²*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, June 20, 1965.

¹³Bro. C.D. Benjamin and the author were with Bakht Singh in Holland during that visit.

¹⁴At the request of Bakht Singh, the author gave an exhortation for the Table from Matt 5: 21-24, and the Spirit of God fell upon the people. The Dutch and Malaken saints began crying and putting things right with deep repentance and confession, which continued for about two hours. That was an unforgettable Sunday.

¹⁵*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, September 3, 1978.

¹⁶On August 1, 1978, following the USA Holy Convocation, Bakht Singh left for Denmark accompanied by the Author.

¹⁷*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, September 3, 1978.

¹⁸Information given by Ernest Toussaint to the author, 2002.

¹⁹*Hebron Messenger*, editorial, April 14, 1968.

²⁰*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, April 28, 1968.

²¹*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, July 6, 1969.

²²*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, August 16, 1969.

²³*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, August 31, 1969.

²⁴Reported by Yunis Laldin to the author, May 2002.

²⁵Reported by Ellic William to the author, May 2002.

²⁶Material supplied by Ellic Williams to the author, May 2002.

²⁷Paul W. Marsh's letter to the author dated June 24, 2002.

²⁸Information given by Maqbool Gill to the Author in July, 2002.

²⁹*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, March 17, 1968.

³⁰*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, July 6, 1969.

³¹*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, December 19, 1965.

³²*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, December 19, 1965.

³³*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, February 4, 1968.

³⁴*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, May 26 1968.

³⁵*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, June 9, 1968.

³⁶*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, June 9, 1968.

³⁷*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, July 7, 1968.

³⁸*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, March 17, 1968.

³⁹*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, May 26, 1968.

⁴⁰*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, November 23, 1969.

⁴¹*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, February 4, 1968.

⁴²*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, March 31, 1968.

⁴³*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, March 31, 1968.

⁴⁴*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, April 14, 1968.

⁴⁵*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, May 26, 1968.

⁴⁶Christian Mission, Winter of 2000-2001, p. 17.

⁴⁷Later on this was compiled and published as *Forty Mountain Peaks*.

⁴⁸Author's interview with Christy Wilson, 1991.

Chapter 13

Salient Features of Bakht Singh's Life and Ministry: Personal

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Phil 1:21)

Like the Apostle Paul and Sadhu Sunder Singh¹ and several others in the history of the church, Bakht Singh had a miraculous personal encounter with the living Lord Jesus Christ which eventually led to his reading of the New Testament, conversion, and life-long commitment to the "living Christ." It was very striking that the first words that came out of his mouth when he knelt down for prayer on board a ship in December 1928 were "Living Christ." His experience with the living Christ completely revolutionized his entire life and thinking. For him, Christ was not a person of the past but a Person of the present—One Who is living—One Who is "alive for ever more," (Rev 1:18); "Who is the same yesterday, today and forever." (Heb 13:8). His subjective experience of the living Christ was further strengthened by his implicit faith on the objective facts of the infallible Word of God. Eventually "the living Christ" and His "living Word", the Bible, became very precious to him. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and

spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb 4:12). He pointed people to the living Lord Jesus Christ and to His living Word. And challenged them to follow Him in total obedience to the Word of God as he did during his long life and ministry. He often shared his conversion with people, as well as other personal experiences and told them how he got joy unspeakable and full of glory through the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this respect, Bakht Singh's concept of personal salvation in Christ was similar to that of Sadhu Sunder Singh. As Mr. P. Surya Prakash pointed out:

"His (Sadhu Sunder Singh's) concept of Christian preaching is to bear witness to one's personal experience of salvation and the living Christ. For him 'preaching is pointing to Christ and presenting Him as the Saviour and the Giver of life, and as Master and Lord. According to Sunder Singh, it is the task of the Christian preacher to bear witness. Witness for him means to speak publicly of one's experiences especially that of conversion and to the life in Christ. According to him, the personal experience of Christ is a process. A person needs to realize Christ in his or her heart. Through this realization, one comes to know that Jesus Christ is in his or her heart. Through this realization, one comes to know that Jesus Christ is not only a great Man and a Prophet, not a Saviour in the Bible but a personal and living Saviour. That realization leads to the experience of inner joy and peace, which is a foretaste of heaven itself on earth."²

At the same time, in many other areas Bakht Singh was different from Sunder Singh, as J. Edwin Orr wrote:

"Bakht Singh ministered in Karachi and Lahore, holding great revival meetings in the latter place, and at Ludhiana, Pathankot, and Martinpur. The Punjab Praise and Prayer Union Circular featured regular reports of meetings

and requests for prayer signed by B.S. Chabra, and a missions review headlined a report of startling impact: 'Another Sunder Singh?' to the world.

"But Bakht Singh was not another Sunder Singh. He was not a mystic, though his devotion to Christ rivalled that of his Sikh predecessor. He was an Indian equivalent of the greater western evangelists, as skilful as Finney and as direct as Moody. He was a first-class Bible teacher, of the order of Campbell Morgan or Graham Scroggie."

"In Maharashtra, Bakht Singh's ministry in Poona raised such a demand for Bibles that local and hurriedly imported supplies were exhausted. The Poona Bible Society, reported that its sale of Bibles had risen from 500 to 12,000. In the United Provinces there occurred intense conviction of sin among students, teachers, workers, missionaries, and even servants. Bakht Singh now embarked upon an India-wide ministry in co-operation with the Church at large."

"Great crowds thronged to hear him and in spite of faithful criticism, churches of all the major denominations supported his campaigns."³

The concept of his spiritual life, discipleship, evangelism, the church, as well as every aspect of his life, both temporal and spiritual, was based on his personal experience with the living Christ and the living Word of God – the Bible. It was both subjective and objective. It was subjective in that he experienced Christ daily by hearing His voice, being led by Him in every detail of his life and ministry; and objective because he accepted the Bible as the final authority for his faith and action. For his subjective experience to be valid and authentic, it had to be substantiated by the revealed Word of God.

His deep sense of the living reality of Christ encouraged him to read the Bible daily and wait upon God to hear His voice. He took God and His Word seriously. He was unique

in his life and ministry. Following are some of the outstanding characteristics of his life and ministry.

1: Hearing the voice of the Lord

He once said, "Once we learn the secret of hearing the voice of God, all our questions, no matter how difficult they are, are answered; and our problems, however complicated, are solved. The Lord does speak."⁴

Like Enoch, Abraham, apostle Paul and many other saints of the Old and New Testaments, as well as others in the history of the church, Bakht Singh walked with God. From the time of his conversion he prayed, "Oh God, speak to me." About how he came to this experience of hearing God's voice he wrote, "When I started reading Genesis in January 1930, I came across these words several times in every page, 'God said, God spoke.' It is repeated 558 times in the first five books of the Bible. I said to myself, if God is speaking then I must listen. And as I read, I prayed, 'Oh God, my loving God, speak to me and help me now'⁵..... "If you want to enjoy the grace of God and to understand His power in fullness, and to know the mind and the will of God everyday, then learn the secret of hearing His still small voice everyday and many times during the day. God does speak- the living and mighty God, and He wants us to hear His voice and listen to Him. We must hear the voice of God everyday saying to us, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' (Isa 30:21)⁶. God speaks to us through His Word. And if you believe in God you must listen when He speaks. He is not something abstract. He is a Person. We can know Him, hear Him, be led of Him and know Him more intimately than we know anybody else. "You, too, can hear the voice of God everyday according to your need, and through the inward voice you can know exactly what God expects of you and wants you to do."⁷

Bakht Singh heard the voice of the Lord ever since his conversion. He would normally hear this voice only in his spirit and not audibly. But there were a few occasions when he actually heard the voice of God with his physical ears. The voice of God must correspond with the written Word of God because God does not contradict His Word. If it does, then we know that, that 'voice' was not from God. If anybody would ask him what was his highest privilege as a Christian, Bakht Singh would reply- 'knowing and doing God's will at any cost.' He gave three conditions to hear the voice of God daily.

1. One should repent of one's sin and acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as his or her personal Saviour and Lord. He said, "If you have accepted Him as your personal Saviour, ye shall hear His voice, according to John 10:27." "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

2. Through divine light or revelation. He said, "Without divine light you cannot know or see or hear God. If you want to receive the light of God then first of all you must believe from your heart that the Bible is true from Genesis to Revelation. Hear and read the Word of God with respect, reverence and faith, and go on saying, step by step, 'Lord speak to me from Thy Word.'

3. One should have a deep desire to know and to do the will of God. Bakht Singh gave many examples from his life experiences of the way the Lord spoke to him and directed him step by step.

One day he saw a man walking in front of him. God told him 'Go and stop him'. So he went, put his hand on the man's shoulder and he stopped. As he stopped, the man asked him why he had stopped him. He was a very busy man. He started to walk on and again Bakht Singh stopped him. And he said the same words, adding, "Why are you wasting my time like

this?" He replied, "It is because the Lord has sent me." The man retorted, "I don't believe it, don't waste my time any further." Once more Bakht Singh went after him and stopped him saying, "Please stop a while." Then the man replied, "To be frank with you, I am tired of my life and I am on my way to commit suicide." Then Bakht Singh told him that he was not stopping him from doing that. He could do it now or afterwards. "You won't lose any thing by giving me half-an-hour. Then you are free to go where you like to commit suicide. I promise you, I won't stop you." So the man agreed. They both went to a nearby park. Bakht Singh took his Bible and after a short prayer gave him the gospel message. Again he prayed with the man and told him, "Now you are free to go and commit suicide." But the man replied, "My desire to commit suicide is gone. When can I see you again?" The man visited Bakht Singh once or twice more and was born again.

Some years ago, as he was praying at midnight before lying down, there came the Voice of God saying to him, "Go out with the gospel." Then Bakht Singh thought, "Who would be outside at this time of the night?" Still he put on his coat, took the gospel booklets and went out. He found two men walking ahead of him. Then he asked them, "Will you kindly stop for a minute." They asked him why he was asking them to stop. Then he replied, "Just as I was about to lie down I heard the Voice of God and He told me: 'Go to the right side, to the right.' Then Bakht Singh told them that he had a message for them. One of the two young men said to Bakht Singh, "You are right. God has sent you for my sake. I am tired of life. Give me God's message." Then Bakht Singh shared the gospel and had the joy of showing him the way of salvation. This realization of the reality of the living Triune God radically changed his thinking and revolutionized his life for ever. He became a yielded instrument to be used by God to accomplish His purposes during his generation.

The secret to Bakht Singh's victorious Christian life and actions was that, whenever he realized the Lord was speaking to him, he obeyed immediately and joyfully. His prayer for all believers was that they may learn to hear and obey the Voice of God, and to live a victorious life in Christ.

2. His total dependence on the sovereignty of God

Bakht Singh believed with all his heart that God was sovereign, and it did not matter what would happen to him, the Lord could turn his trials and tragedies into glorious triumphs. Because of his total dependence upon God, he believed that even though he could not fully understand everything that took place in his life, in the ministry and in the world, the Lord would turn it around to fulfill His purpose. That ultimate purpose was to make us like Christ. Bill Thompson, an English missionary who had worked with him in India, made this observation of Bakht Singh's total dependence on the sovereignty of God: "It was brother Bakht Singh's quiet rest in the absolute sovereignty of God that gave him his characteristic freedom from stress. On one occasion he was passing through Bombay and was bound for a flight to London for a very important conference at Honor Oak, London. This was in early August, 1961, when Christian leaders of similar works from around the world, particularly from China, were meeting, and he was very keen to meet them. In the taxi on the way to the airport in Bombay, he discovered that he had left his passport behind in Hyderabad. There was no way of getting it in less than a day, and no hopes of getting that flight. What would have thrown many into a panic left him calm and thankful for a God "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."⁸ (Eph 1:11).

An American missionary, George Verwer⁹ who worked closely with Bakht Singh during the mid-60s, was asked by this writer-what was the one thing that made a profound

impact on his spiritual life by Bakht Singh. He replied, "Bakht Singh has many things, but certainly if I had to say one thing, I will say his emphasis on prayer and absolute confidence (dependence) in God. Perhaps even greater than prayer is his absolute, deep confidence in God, and that is why he has run the race to the very end. I think that is one of the most beautiful things about Bakht Singh. He has run the race to the very end."¹⁰

On one occasion, Bakht Singh was to go to Bombay by air from Hyderabad. Before he left, he was delayed by so many people asking for prayer that his co-workers told him to hurry up, otherwise he would miss his flight. But Bakht Singh said that, if the Lord wanted him to go to Bombay, He will take care of it. By the time he arrived at the airport the plane had already left. He was not the least concerned, however. He told his co-workers who were worrying about it, "Don't worry. If the Lord wants me to go to Bombay, He will bring the plane back." Sure enough, a few minutes later the same plane did come back to Hyderabad. Apparently, after the plane had taken off one of the passengers, a wealthy woman, reported to the pilot that she had left a very costly diamond ring in the ladies' room. She then pleaded with the pilot that the plane return to Hyderabad so that she could look for her diamond ring. (Only in India this might happen). The pilot consented, allowing Bakht Singh to catch the flight to Bombay.

On another occasion, in 1970, he was on his way from India to Copenhagen, Denmark. He missed his connection in Rome because of the late arrival of his flight from India. The next flight to Copenhagen was full and there was not much hope, humanly speaking, for him to reach Copenhagen that evening, but he had perfect peace in his spirit. As he prayed, the Lord assured him that He was in control of his journey, and there was no need for him to be anxious, so, he just rested in Him. The Lord kept His Word and made perfect arrange-

ments for his reaching Copenhagen via Amsterdam, and granted him some very precious contacts along the way.

3. He accepted the Bible as the Word of God

He accepted the Bible as the infallible, inerrant, inspired Word of God from Genesis to Revelation. In this respect, he was a Biblical fundamentalist. He obeyed the Word of God implicitly. After his conversion in Canada, Bakht Singh went in to a Bible College to attend a lecture. When the professor, who was teaching the Bible, raised this question to the class, "Suppose the Bible is not the Word of God?", he walked out saying, how could the Bible teacher/professor ask such questions? He was once asked whether he believed that a fish swallowed Jonah and he said, "Yes," then he went on to say that if the Bible had said Jonah swallowed the fish he would still believe it. Such was his trust in the revealed Word of God. Therefore, he encouraged every believer to have his or her own Bible and to live in total obedience to the revealed Word of God.

Dr. Kinnear, who had worked with him from the early days of his ministry, was greatly impressed with Bakht Singh's emphasis upon the Scriptures.

"I was impressed by the very strong emphasis upon the Scriptures as a constant, living source of instruction from God through the Holy Spirit, Who will open up the Word of God which leads to a very precious ministry. It was true about Brother Bakht Singh himself and also the other men who were along with him....All the songs were based on the Scriptures and usually based on Convocation messages, composed around the expository messages, and the Scriptures were kept in view in the song so that they can memorize them. They all sang in their own languages which they have learned. ... Songs were of great joy, and they were one of the features of the movement."¹¹

During his gospel campaigns in every place, the Bible Society sold all their stock of Bibles. People had to go to the second-hand bookstores looking for Bibles. More than any person in the history of modern India, he encouraged people to honour God and honour His Word. He accepted the Bible as the Word of God from cover to cover. He preached the Word of God. His sermons were filled with Scriptures. Christy Wilson, a former Canadian missionary to Afghanistan, knew him personally and pointed out that the outstanding quality of Bakht Singh was his knowledge of the Scriptures. Then he went on to say, "I have never met anyone who knows the Bible the way he does. He knew the Bible better than anyone else. That was an outstanding quality of Bakht Singh."¹² He preached the unadulterated Word of God in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2). Like his Lord, he encouraged every believer not to live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Matt 4:4).

His insight into the Word of God and his photographic memory were legendary. According to Robert Finley, President of Christian Aid Mission, "I have never met a man who has a greater knowledge and understanding of the Bible than Bakht Singh. All our western preachers and teachers seem to be children before this great man of God, Bakht Singh of India."¹³ George Verwer of O.M, said, "His knowledge of the Word of God was a phenomenal thing. And his messages were so filled with the Scriptures. He was a man of the Bible. The Bible was the Book and he was like a walking concordance. Bakht Singh dedicated all our three children at Hebron, Hyderabad, India. He had more verses for children than I ever knew existed."¹⁴ During his visit to England in the summer of 1965, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, the famed expositor and Bible teacher, and Rev. Leith Samuel, one of the speakers at the Keswick Convention, met with Bakht Singh. This

writer was present at the meeting. They spent several hours with him, asking him questions from the Word of God. Bakht Singh's answers challenged and surprised these men of God. Then Martin Lloyd-Jones asked Bakht Singh how he got such insight into the Word of God. To that Bakht Singh answered, simply by reading and meditating on the Word of God upon his knees until the Holy Spirit of God revealed the deeper things of God. Most of his life, until he became ill, he read the Bible on his knees and meditated on it for hours. The Holy Spirit of God revealed to him wondrous things out of His Word. His life and ministry demonstrated that he came to know the Lord deeply and intimately, and knew His will and purpose not merely by reading or researching the Word of God, but ultimately through revelation.

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." (Eph 1:17).

It is incredible that from the 30s, when the validity, reliability, authenticity and relevancy of the Bible as the Word of God was questioned and challenged by liberal theologians and religious relativism and pluralism, the Lord had raised up men like Bakht Singh to uphold the reliability and authenticity of the Bible as the Word of God. He was truly a man sent by God as His messenger.

4. The life of faith

Bakht Singh was a man of faith. He trusted the Lord for all his personal and ministry needs throughout his life. Dr. Robert Finley said, "Bakht Singh lived by faith, trusting God to supply his needs... I never heard my dear Indian brother make any appeal for funds."

He had a child-like faith. Throughout his life, the Lord wonderfully provided for his needs through His people. He never sent out a letter nor made any public appeals to any-

body, he looked to the Lord alone, and never allowed anybody to pray for any needs publicly, even in assembly prayer meetings.

"There was an elderly brother from Karnataka in 'Jehovah-Shammah.' Seeing and understanding the clothing needs of the inmates, he gave a prayer request during the Wednesday prayer meeting. Brother Bakht Singh did not mention that in the prayer, but soon after the meeting, he called and rebuked the old brother for his lack of faith and belittling God. That way he taught us to look to God, and God alone, for any and all of our needs."¹⁵

Daniel Smith put it well: "Bakht Singh had never been to the West to beg. His annual Holy Convocations in India require several thousands of US dollars, plus all the needs and cares of the work and workers. I have been as close as any to him, but I have never heard the slightest whisper about finance. He finds God faithful. By such faith, he witnesses the daily miracle of God's provision."¹⁶

He really demonstrated the faithfulness of God. Particularly these days, many say they have been called of God to start ministries or go into full-time ministry, then they look to America and other countries for their financial needs. Bakht Singh's life and ministry were diametrically opposed to such practices. Dr. Robert Bowman, co-founder of Far East Broadcasting Company, told me of an incident when, during one of his visits to the USA in 1959, Bakht Singh called on Bowman for a brief visit. Before he left the office, Bakht Singh prayed for Dr. Bowman and for his ministry. When as he shook hands with Dr. Bowman, he pressed a 50 dollar bill into his hand. After Bakht Singh had left, Dr. Bowman looked at the \$50 and was surprised. Usually, when Christian workers from other countries like India would visit him, they would expect some gift from Dr. Bowman. But here Bakht Singh, an Indian, was giving Dr. Bowman a gift for his minis-

try. Dr. Bowman said to me, "Here is an Indian proving that his God is a great God. He did not have to depend on the Americans for his support."

Whenever people in the West would ask him what they could do to help India, he would say, "The Lord is able to supply the need. What India needs is more of Christ and prayer for India."

Norman Grubb, who was the International Secretary of the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade, had this to say about his visit to the Holy Convocations in Hyderabad. "To us Westerners, the most striking part of the whole work with Bakht Singh are the Holy Convocations held annually at Hyderabad. ...Bakht Singh puts on these Holy Convocations yearly where several thousand people are massed together in close quarters and all fed by the Lord for a week with no appeals to man... Here is an Indian proving God."¹⁷

As he prayed by faith in private, the Lord laid upon the hearts of people to send in the money, or whatever help was needed. For example, on one occasion Bakht Singh needed some money. He prayed for an exact amount. While he was praying, another Indian believer was going to the bank to deposit a certain amount of money. The Lord, however, spoke to that Indian believer-instead of depositing the money in the bank he was to go and give that amount to Bakht Singh. When he went to Bakht Singh's room, he was on his knees praying. The brother knocked at the door. When Bakht Singh opened the door, this brother handed him the envelope. On opening it Bakht Singh found the exact amount of money he had been praying for. Throughout his life, the Lord demonstrated again and again that He is not only a prayer-hearing God but a prayer-answering God. The Lord honoured his child-like faith by not only providing his needs for the ministry, but also by using him mightily to challenge his co-workers and the people of God both in India and around the world

about the importance of trusting God for their every need.

His life was filled with practical examples of faith. The following are just a few examples.

During the 1944 Holy Convocation in Madras, there was a great shortage of rice and they had to provide for an average of 2,000 people daily. The rationing authorities did not sanction enough rice to meet the need. The elders applied a second time, but their application was turned down. They rejected the idea of buying rice from the black market. They did not know what to do. The people must eat! So they prayed. An idea then came to Bakht Singh to get the brother in charge of the stores to measure the amount of the rice which remained and let him know the exact quantity. He followed the instructions and reported, that somehow, there were five bags extra. During those wartime days of severe rationing, they had to keep a careful account of the rice received and the daily consumption. The account book showed clearly what should have been the balance left that day. Bakht Singh then asked him to go and measure it again. They measured it three times, and there was no doubt that by some 'mysterious' means there were five bags of rice more than there ought to have been. The result was that instead of being put to confusion and embarrassment with all the guests, they had one bag left over when the meetings concluded!

During the Holy Convocation at Kalimpong in October 1968, there were heavy rains. Bakht Singh wrote about this rain in the Hebron Messenger, "It went on raining heavily every day, as if buckets of water were being poured out till Saturday morning, the 5th of October. The residents of Kalimpong said they had never seen such a down-pour in all the past years as far as their memory went."¹⁸

In spite of the heavy rain, they continued to have meetings during the Holy Convocation. On Friday night, the 4th, at about 11 p.m. there was a strong earth quake which caused

many heavy landslides around Kalimpong and Darjeeling. Many houses were swept away and many lives were lost. Many people had come to attend the Holy Convocation from many parts of North and South India. The Road from Kalimpong to the railway station in Siliguri crosses the Teesta river over a bridge about ten miles from Kalimpong. It was a very strong bridge, but even that bridge was washed away. As a result, all the roads to Kalimpong were completely blocked. Many who came to attend the Holy Convocation were thus detained in Kalimpong and there was no possibility of the roads and bridges being repaired for a long time to come. Bakht Singh and party had no idea when they would be able to get away, but the Lord gave them perfect peace and full assurance that, in His own time and in His own way, He would make every provision for their departure.. His ways are past finding out and beyond human understanding.

As Bakht Sing later wrote in the Hebron Messenger dated 10th November, 1968:

"It is only as we put our implicit trust in Him, and believe with all our heart the promise of Romans 8 verse 28 which says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose," that we realize how God is working out a much bigger plan than we ever realized before. So we began to understand that the Lord was keeping us in Kalimpong for a longer period to fulfil a bigger purpose than we had thought.

As I mentioned in my previous letter, this year a good number of believers from many parts of North India had come to Kalimpong for the Convocation. It was quite a representative company from the different Assemblies. They were all in need of extra quickening and reviving to face the situations which must soon arise in many parts of the country, according to the prophecies of the end-days. Some of them are already being literally fulfilled in many parts of

the world. It is very easy to be too much occupied with our own activities, however good they may be, and not be aware of the Lord's goings and doings. I believe that the Lord wants us to be supersensitive in these end days to understand His goings. So in this unforeseen way, we had the great privilege of strengthening the believers who had to stay on for about an extra week or ten days.

We were able to carry on our Bible studies morning and evening and at the same time take the gospel to the people in the town who had gone through much suffering due to the recent landslides. A very large number of tourists and visitors who were stranded in Kalimpong had nothing else to do but wander about the streets making enquiries from different people as to how and when they would be able to get away. This proved to be the best time to put forth the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone can give true comfort in every kind of distress. At the same time, the Lord enabled our fellow-believers, held up from the different parts of India, to strengthen the local believers who had gone through a great strain because of the recent happenings. It is at times like this that our relationship as fellow-believers becomes very precious, as we are enabled to bear the burdens of each other. So the Lord helped us to get to know each other more intimately, and also to realize our dependence upon each other in many practical ways. Generally speaking, we do not have enough time to get to know the problems of our fellow-believers when we meet for a short while, and so it is not easy to share their burdens because we do not know what they have gone through. All of us began to feel during our prolonged stay that we were being drawn very close to each other by the Lord, and our inward peace began to increase day by day.

Suddenly one day, this prayer was released in our midst, "Lord, command the Military and Civil Authorities to take

us out of Kalimpong by helicopter." To some this sounded like wishful thinking. Even though we had resigned ourselves to God's perfect will, and were prepared to stay on there without any sense of regret as long as the Lord wanted us, yet, we took note of the burden of the Holy Spirit in making us pray like this.

After a day or two, during my quiet time, the Lord gave me some very unusual and precious promises: Ezekiel chapter 3, verse 12, "Then the spirit took me up," also Ezekiel chapter 8, verse 3, (first part), "And the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven." I took this as a clear indication that the Lord was going to answer our prayer and arrange an air-lift for us. On October 12, the Lord gave me another verse from Ezekiel chapter 12, verse 3, "Prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight." So, by faith we began to pack up our suitcases. The very next day more than half of number were given air-lifts by helicopters. Indeed, His word is utterly dependable, and His faithfulness beyond our comprehension!

On the morning of October 14, the rest of us came to the Kalimpong helipad in the hope of getting airlifted to Siliguri. At that time petrol was extremely scarce in the whole town; no-one could buy even a small quantity. We had to go quite a long way from 'El-Shaddai' where we were staying, to the helipad. We managed to get a jeep for our transport, but when we had gone half way the petrol ran out. Humanly speaking, it now looked impossible for us to reach the helipad. I prayed, reminding the Lord of the promise given to us from the book of Ezekiel. Just then, a believer and his wife who were living nearby came to our rescue with their jeep. Even though he had only a very small quantity of petrol in the tank, by faith he made four or five trips to take our party and the luggage to the helipad. He was more and more surprised to see that

each time he measured the amount of petrol in the tank with a stick, it always showed the same level! He was so impressed by this little incident that he went home joyfully and brought rice and curry, and coffee and bread for the whole party. This was the Lord's loving provision because there was no other possibility of our getting food from any place nearby.

Even though we were a large party, we had a very comfortable journey all along the way from Siliguri, and we were kept conscious of His angels having gone before us in every section of the journey."¹⁹

Several times during his travels, Bakht Singh went by faith, trusting in the Lord to find a seat on a plane or train and the Lord amazingly honoured his faith. In the early 60s, he came to Bombay with a missionary couple. The lady had had a hip operation and therefore was in a cast from the hip down and was using crutches. Just about two hours before the departure of the Bombay-Hyderabad Express train, Bakht Singh came to the author and said he would like to have three sleeping berths, and one of which should be a lower berth for the missionary lady on crutches. The author looked at him in dismay and told him it would be impossible to get three sleeper berths, particularly a lower berth that late, as normally these are booked weeks and even months in advance. But Bakht Singh said he had prayed and the Lord assured him that He would provide him with three berths on the same train, so he asked me to enquire with the station master. On enquiry, he said that no berth was available. Then half-an-hour before the departure of the train, the station master said that even the VIP quotas were given out. Hearing that, Bakht Singh said, "No, God will provide." The author suggested he should try to go the following day, but Bakht Singh was very sure that the Lord would help them to travel on that particular train and on that particular day. A few minutes prior to departure, the station master came and

informed us that it was a miracle that someone came and cancelled three sleeping berths and one was a lower berth. Hearing that Bakht Singh looked at the author, and said, "You see, the Lord will never fail." Throughout his life and ministry he thus demonstrated that one can live by faith and prove the faithfulness of God.

5. Life of Prayer

Brother Bakht Singh was a man of prayer. He spent hours on his knees in communion with the Lord seeking His mind regarding the work and ministry. Before he would arrange any meeting whether in India or abroad, he would insist the organizers pray for months – even, at times, for years.

His life was saturated with prayer. People often found him on his knees day or night. Usually, he began his day at 4 a.m. praying till 6 a.m. or so. He was a man of devotion who worshipped God. He communed with God and waited on Him to hear His voice for his guidance and direction for the day. He read and meditated on the Word of God, and looked to Him to reveal mysteries from His Word. He sought by prayer to sense the Lord's burden for the day rather than sharing only his needs with God. People who knew him attested to the fact that he was truly a man of prayer. Brother Raymond Golsworthy,²⁰ a co-worker of Bakht Singh from the early 40s, has this to say about Bakht Singh's prayer life:

It is more than sixty years since (1939) I first met brother, and had the privilege of being numbered amongst his co-workers. In those days we lived in very close proximity to each other, and we got to know each other intimately. We lived together under the same roof for weeks on end, and had all our meals together. We travelled together in the same trains and buses, and often walked from village to village together. For much of the time, when we were in Madras,

four (or more) of us shared a large 'Upper room' at 'Jehovah-Shammah': each in his own corner as it were. Often, when going to bed after a tiring day, we would see our brother wrap his Kashmir shawl around his shoulders and kneel down at his bed-side for his 'time of prayer', and, no doubt, to go over the events of the day with his Master. If we looked up much later, and looked across the room, we would usually see our brother in the same position, and with his lips still moving as he continued in his communion with God. Whatever other gifts our brother might or might not have had, everybody knew him, above all else, as a man of prayer, and an example to us all."²¹

Dennis Clark, another British missionary, who worked with Bakht Singh since the 40s both in India and Pakistan, had this to say about his praying.

"Brother Bakht Singh's prayers were earth-shaking. They were so strong in fact, like praying Hyde of Sialkot, and would continue so long that many were moved. In my whole life's experience, I have never heard the equal of Bakht Singh's prayers and the flow of prayer meetings wherever he went with the team... In Pakistan, late at night with his head under the mosquito net he would be praying. We had string beds on the mud house roofs. It was very hot in late May or early June. Before dawn he was already up, and I noticed his ankles moving against each other to ward off mosquitoes. Prayer was central to his life and the whole movement: the prayer of men and women often before meetings was 'burdened,' when prayer after the meetings could go on a long time. Bakht Singh's prayer life was consistent over the many years that I knew him."²²

Paul Marsh, another British missionary who worked in Pakistan, knew Bakht Singh, and had this to say about his prayer life:

"We were at the end of the special meeting which Bakht

Singh had been holding in Lahore, Pakistan, in the 1950s, and I was asked to pick him up at 7.30 in the morning to take him to the Pakistan/India border at Wagha on his way home to India. I arrived at 7.30 and found all the brothers already praying. I thought that perhaps I had mistaken the time and had arrived late. So after they had finished praying I apologized for being late. 'Don't worry', replied one of the brothers, 'you are not late. We are just finishing the prayer meeting which began after the meeting last night. The brothers had been praying together for something like ten hours throughout the night.' That was true to the personality, character and spiritual stature of our Brother, Bakht Singh."²³

In 1965, the author was with Bakht Singh at the Keswick Convention in England. We were staying in a tent, just the two of us. At 1 a.m. when the author went to bed, he saw Bakht Singh on his knees praying. Then at 5 a.m. as it was getting cold with the cold northern wind blowing against the little tent, the author woke up and saw, he was still on his knees. Surprised by that, he asked him whether he had not gone to bed yet. Bakht Singh answered, "Yes, I went to bed and I already had my sleep." Hearing that, the author said to him, "Brother, from where do you get this strength and energy, to be on your knees for hours with only a few hours sleep?" He simply said, "When we wait upon the Lord, we are renewed and refreshed, and the power of resurrection becomes a reality."

Many of his hosts in different parts of the world have reported that often, far into the night, they had found him praying on his knees. As Dan Smith, a former Canadian missionary to China and then to India, wrote in a brief biography "A Prophet of God- Bakht Singh of India", had this to say about his prayer life:

"There is much more which can be said, over all is cast a

life of prayer which I myself have never seen equal in any man and I have moved around the world a good deal. Bakht Singh rises early, sometimes at 4 a.m., even though he is seldom in bed before midnight. His day begins with several hours of prayer and devotional reading of his Bible. Throughout the day, every matter is brought before the Lord in prayer. No move is made and no journey undertaken without prayer. He never ventures outside without prayer, never enters or leaves a home without prayer, never receives or sends a visitor away without prayer, nor does this fervent and zealous spirit of prayer ever seem to be thrown off at any time or in any day. His is a true life of prayer. Twenty times a day you may hear the word, 'shall we pray', and this prayer is always on the knees.

His desires in prayer are very vigorous, flowing like a strong stream that cannot stay to creep into little holes or spend their energies in small crevices. Nothing is wasted by flowery language or trifles of the moment. His prayers, though longer than his letters, are like the sentences of his letters in that they are to the point falling and rising with swift motion and hungry appetite. No wonder he accomplished so much. All lies, I am sure, in the terrific, vigorous resolutions of this truly wonderful prayer life. Year in and year out, the force of it never seems to be retarded. All who know him will bear testimony to the life and nature and quality of his prayers. Never does he grow weary in prayer: never have I known him at any time to be cold, dull or dead in prayer. Oh! What a man of prayer! Oh! what prayer."²⁴

There are numerous examples of the way the Lord answered his prayers. Following, are two examples.

A few years ago when Bakht Singh was having a campaign in Nagercoil in the open field, a swarm of insects came like a storm upon them. There were about 7000 people gathered for the evening meeting. They had begun with songs and had

only sung about three songs when this suddenly happened. This swarm of insects came as a storm, which is not usual in South India. Such storms come up like a thick wall, and these insects came upon them like that, covering hands, feet, head and neck and made them restless. They could not even give the Word, for when doing so, the insects went into their mouths. They thought they could not go on with their meeting because nobody could withstand the insects as many were going into their mouths and noses. The people were about to disperse, so Bakht Singh said: "Kindly wait, we will pray." He prayed: "Lord in thy Name we rebuke these insects, which the devil has brought to disturb our meeting,"²⁵ and as by faith they took hold of the Lord, the insects fled and they were able to continue the meeting joyfully.

On another occasion, Bakht Singh's older sister's daughter was getting married. Her father was a Magistrate in Delhi. They invited many guests for the wedding feast. There was big shamianah (a big tent) put up in old Rajendranagar. Bakht Singh went there that morning to attend the marriage. In the morning paper it was announced that heavy rain was forecast for that afternoon. So all the family members were looking very sad. They said to Bakht Singh, "What to do? We have invited so many people. Now the forecast is heavy rain." Bakht Singh said "We shall pray, don't worry." Then they knelt down and Bakht Singh prayed, "Lord, keep the clouds away from this place." Evening came and that area stayed dry while in other parts there was heavy rain. So from that time they all became very much interested in prayer and the Christian message."²⁶

Prayer was the key to his triumphant, and spiritually fruitful life. He prayed, believing that the Lord would answer his prayers. The Lord brought about mighty wonders and miracles through the prayers of faith of His faithful servant.

This is one of the reasons why the Lord has used him so

mightily for the edification of His Body and for the extension of His glorious Kingdom both in India and abroad.

6. He was a man of simplicity and humility

He was an unassuming man who took God seriously but not himself. Mr. Earnest Verborne of France explained clearly what many around the world have said of Bakht Singh. "It is difficult for me to express the impression and impact of this man of God: he was living in communion with God only to do His will. He made a very deep mark on me in my spiritual life. What struck me was the humble, simple appearance of his person coupled with the radiance of his inward life."

He was content in every situation. He worked among the poor and needy, like he did in the slums of Karachi among the sweepers and lepers. He sat with them and ate with them. He was accessible to anybody. He was never too busy or too big to meet those who came to him. The writer recalls his experience at the Madras Holy Convocation in 1974, where he was sharing a room with him. At about 3 a.m. while he was sleeping, the village folks who were returning home after attending the Holy Convocation would come and shake him by his feet to wake him up. He would get up, kneel down with them and pray, then send them away, and go back to sleep. After half-an-hour to one hour, while he was sleeping soundly and snoring, another batch would come and shake him by the feet until he woke up. Once again, he would get up quietly and pray, then send them away. This continued every half- an- hour or so. When the next batch came, the author got up and told them not to wake him up, then suggested that somebody else pray for them and send them away. But while talking, Bakht Singh woke up and said to the writer, 'Please do not hinder them. Let me pray with them before they go.' When I said to him how these people were disturbing him from his sleep, his answer was, "This is

the little we can do for our fellow-saints.' This again shows his simplicity and humility—he identified himself with the needs of others, regardless of their background. He never exploited or manipulated any-one but served everyone equally as the Lord enabled him.

7. He was loving, caring and hospitable

He demonstrated Christ-like love toward others. He was a spiritual father to tens of thousands both in India and abroad. He expressed his love by caring and being hospitable to the needs of others. He served others selflessly. He cared for their spiritual, temporal and physical needs. Even though thousands may attend a meeting, his loving, piercing eyes would detect those who were absent, and enquire later why they were not at the meeting. When people were sick, regardless of their position, he would be at their bedside at home or in the hospital to pray and comfort them. He would personally make sure the guests were well taken care of. People thus loved him and gravitated toward him. That is why unexpected masses came to show their love and respect for him at the time of his home-call. Like Elisha cried out at the time of Elijah's home-call, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and its horsemen.." (2 Kings 2:12) many lamented Bakht Singh's home-call.

He practised what he preached. He was an open epistle of the Lord Jesus Christ. By his practical Christian life he taught us many valuable spiritual lessons and showed us how to live a victorious Christian life in this fallen world. Therefore, like the Apostle Paul, he could say, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1 Cor. 11:1). May his life influence and inspire us to live like Christ so that He may be magnified and glorified in and through us.

End Notes

¹He was the best-known Sikh convert to Christ in India. He was born and raised in a well-to-do Sikh family in Punjab, and came to know Christ at the age of 16 in a miraculous way. The room where he was sitting was flooded with light, then he saw Christ on the cross speaking to him, "I am the way, the truth, and life" and, hearing the voice of Christ, he committed his life to Him. Following his conversion, rejected by his family and friends, he travelled extensively as a Christian Sadhu, preaching Christ both in India and abroad. In 1929, he disappeared and no-one knows exactly how the end came.

²P. Surya Prakash, *Christianity Is Indian: The Emergence Of An Indigenous Community*, ed. Roger E. Hedlund (Delhi, India: ISPCK for MIIS, 2000), p. 119.

³J. Edwin Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings In Southern Asia* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1975), pp. 168-169 (This edition is a revision and expansion of the book, *Evangelical Awakenings In India*, published in New Delhi by Masihi Sahitya Sanstha).

⁴Bakht Singh, *The Voice Of The Lord*, (Bombay, India: Gospel Literature Service, 1970), p. 26.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁸Reported by Bill Thompson, a former British missionary to India, fellow-trustee of Gospel Literature Service with Bakht Singh, in Bombay, India.

⁹George Verwer, founder of Operation Mobilisation.

¹⁰Author's interview with George Verwer at his London office in 1991. George Verwer, an American missionary, Founder and International President of O.M. Team (Operation Mobilisation). He and his family loved and worked with Bakht Singh at Hebron, Hyderabad, from 1964 for a number of years.

¹¹Author's interview with Dr. Angus Kinnear, April 20, 1991, in London, England.

¹²Author's interview with Dr. Christy Wilson, 1991.

¹³Author's interview with Robert Finley, 1991.

¹⁴Author's interview with George Verwer, 1991.

¹⁵Martin Sathyanathan, *From Idols To The Service Of The Living God*, (Andhra Pradesh, India: Salem Prayer House, 1993), p. 23.

¹⁶Daniel Smith, *Bakht Singh Of India: A Prophet Of God* (Charlottesville, VA: Christian Aid Mission), p. 24.

¹⁷Norman Grubb, *Once Caught, No Escape*, (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1970), pp. 151-152.

¹⁸*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, October 27, 1968

¹⁹*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, November 10, 1968

²⁰Raymond Golsworthy is a British missionary.

²¹Raymond Golsworthy, "A Tribute to Brother Bakht Singh: He Taught Us to Pray", *Hebron Messenger (Special Edition)* 17 September 2000

²²From Dennis Clarks's letter to the author, 1988.

²³From reports by Paul W. Marsh on June 24, 2002.

²⁴Smith, pp. 85-86.

²⁵Bakht Singh, *Forty Mountain Peaks*, (Bombay, India: Gospel Literature Service, 1971), p. 28.

²⁶Author's interview with Bakht Singh, 1978.

Chapter 14

Salient Features of Bakht Singh's Life and Ministry in Relation to the Church

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon." (1Cor 3:10)

Bakht Singh's concept of the church was the result of his personal experience of the "living Christ" who is the Head of the Body the Church. Therefore he searched the Scriptures, waiting on the Lord to reveal the truth of the Church. For him, the Church is to show forth Christ's fullness - His life, love, light and liberty to the world so that Christ may be magnified and glorified through the Church. In this chapter, we shall see some of the salient features of the New Testament Church as understood and practised by Bakht Singh.

1. The concept of the Church:

After waiting on God in prayer and fasting, Bakht Singh received a fresh vision of the church in the light of the Word of God. The Church is a spiritual community of the redeemed people of God of all classes and castes and nationalities. It is

the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Head of the living Church. It is all inclusive in the sense that it includes all the believers in Christ Jesus. Bakht Singh was not after a national or international church, but a Church that would be spiritual and would express its supernatural character under the headship of the Living Christ.

According to the New Testament, the Church includes only those men and women who receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. The English word "Church" is translated from the Greek word "ecclesia" – which means "called out." Thus true Christians are those who are called out of the world by Christ and united into His Body the Church. We can see this from Acts 2:47 where the Lord added souls daily to the Church - not to a building, but to a group of people who believed in the Lord Jesus and had received His Holy Spirit. By the Church, Christ's manifold wisdom and power have to be revealed. God's manifold wisdom is not going to be revealed by heavenly angels, but by human beings who are redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Through the reading of the Scriptures, Bakht Singh identified the two major aspects of the church, one local (visible) and the other universal(invisible).

According to the Scriptures, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is already "One New Man." "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." (Eph 2:14-15). All true believers are already united in the "One Body" when they are regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and they are at the same time baptized by that same Spirit into one Body. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ. For by one Spirit are

we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor 12: 12 -13). The church is therefore one, and all believers throughout the world and throughout the ages belong to each other. It is our responsibility and privilege to express that oneness if we are not to be "disobedient unto the heavenly vision."¹

As mentioned in chapter 10, the local church constitutes a group of believers assembling together under the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every local church should be administered by elders as we see in Acts. "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed." (Acts 14:23) "The provision or appointment of elders in all the churches appears vital to their constitution as a local church."² The church is not an organization or an institution, but is a living organism where the redeemed people of God are spiritually united with Christ as the Head of the Body, the Church.

Bakht Singh rejected ecclesiastical order on the basis of the Word of God. He rejected the distinction between clergy and laity, and preached and practised the priesthood of all believers. "But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:" (1 Peter 2:9) He emphasized the function of the body of Christ of fulfilling the purpose of Christ to show forth the four-fold purposes of the Church: 1) His fullness (Eph. 1:23); "Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all;" 2) unity of all believers (Eph 2:15); "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph 2:22); 3) His wisdom (Eph 3:9-10), "And to make all *men* see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in

God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God;" and 4) His glory (Eph 3:21), "Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end." Bakht Singh did not believe in church membership *per se*, but only recognized that membership which was based on new birth when such are united to the Body of Christ through the Holy Spirit, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor 12:13).

He emphasized the functions of the church based on Acts 2:41-47 which include: baptism of new believers; teaching of the Word; fellowship, and the Lord's Table, as well as prayers and worship on a weekly basis at least. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

He taught and practised that the church as a corporate body must be actively involved in evangelism, discipleship, planting of new, living assemblies and ministering to the needs of both believers and non-believers.

(a) Baptism:

Baptism must follow repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; it cannot precede it in any form. That was the practice of the apostles in the New Testament. (Acts 2:41). "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." It was the individual testimony of his or her union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom 6:3,4). Thus the Scriptures are clear: water baptism was not to be made a means of salvation or a method whereby people joined the Church or became recognized as members of the Church.

(b) Laying on of hands:

Bakht Singh practised the laying on of hands following baptism. Brothers from the Honor-Oak fellowship, London, taught him the importance of laying on of hands in 1941, while he was waiting upon God in Coonoor to know His mind regarding the future of his ministry. While he was there, A.J. Flack and Raymond Golsworthy shared this practice with Bakht Singh and, having been convinced of it, he submitted himself to it and began to practise it following believers' baptism. Some Christians view this practice as unnecessary, controversial and divisive. Therefore let me quote Bakht Singh's teaching on this practice verbatim:

"We saw also from the Word of God that 'laying on of hands' was associated with baptism, usually after, [but] sometimes before; for example, Acts 19:5-6, 'When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when

Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied'. Then in Acts 9:17-18, "And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized." We saw that this 'laying on of hands' was on the part of the Apostles, elders or those in a position to represent the Church, like Ananias was in Acts 9. But why was this done? What did it represent or declare? By looking at all the references from Genesis to Revelation we concluded that this was done in all cases to express the existence of a relationship. It might be the relationship of father and son, Moses and his successor, the congregation and those set apart to serve them, the offerer and the sacrifice he brought, the Lord and the least in His Kingdom (the little children) or the Church or its individual members. We concluded that when the church 'laid hands' upon those who had testified to their union with Christ in Baptism, it was to express and to declare that all such are related to them in the 'One body.' It was not to make the relationship but to declare that the relationship existed when they received Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

Regarding those newly saved; those who have publicly identified themselves with the Lord in the waters of baptism, the Church, acting by her representatives, the elders, lays her hands upon these and declared thereby that this one, being joined to Christ, was also joined into the 'One Body,' the Church of Jesus Christ. This act was not to be used to single them out making them members of a sectarian, exclusive, and therefore contradictory representation of the church. We have been accused of teaching that those

on whom hands have not been laid were not in the Body of Christ, which of course is quite false. Others have thought that it was by this means that believers were reckoned to belong to us or not. Others have thought that the laying on of hands might be considered as the way to receive the Holy Spirit. Nothing of that kind! All believers belong to us and we to them; there is only one Body. All that we do, must express this and be true to that fact. We saw that both baptism and [the] laying on of hands could contribute to sectarianism if it was in any way or degree made the basis of fellowship. What we practise together must show what we have in common with all believers all over the world; we have one 'Life' and we are one Body. Our zeal in these practices at the beginning may have led some to believe they joined us by following these practices, but that was never a fact. The Lord is the one who joins us together and our part is to express the existence of that relationship. No practice must be made a basis of fellowship. That would immediately make us another sect."³

In this fallen world where the Body of Christ is divided by so many natural and human factors, the laying on of hands can be a beautiful symbolic expression of our relationship and oneness in the Body of Christ, provided it is done in love and in the Spirit of Christ. If it can be done in that way we can then express outwardly the Biblical truths of 1 Cor. 12:13. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus;" and Col 3:11, "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor un circumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all."

This is all the more true and significant in a country

like India where believers range from high-caste to outcaste, and they avoid each other like the plague. Bakht Singh, with the help of the Lord and in the light of the Scriptures, succeeded in breaking down such barriers and helping the believers to realize that in Christ, regardless of their place or position in society, they are equally precious, equally important and equally necessary in the sight of the Lord and in the Body of Christ.

(c) The Lord's Table:

Bakht Singh believed in and thus practised the weekly observance of **THE LORD'S TABLE** in obedience to the Lord's command, Who said, "this do in remembrance of me." (1 Cor. 11:24). The Table was open to all true believers regardless of their nationality, colour, caste and status, but believers were advised to partake of it worthily. It was all inclusive and thus expressive of the Church as one Body. Although there would be local churches, these would only be true to the universal Church of Jesus Christ if sectarianism was avoided and universality was clearly expressed. If they were born of God, they were in the same family and should be welcomed equally. Therefore, from the very beginning of the ministry, they welcomed all, but at the same time faithfully warned all against partaking of the Table unworthily. Following the Lord's Table, one of the brethren would lead in intercessory prayer, reminding all that the broken pieces of bread which remain speak of the members of the Body worldwide. From the very beginning, they were thus conscious of the fact that they were part of the Body of Christ worldwide and remembered them in prayer, expressing deep concern and care for the Body of Christ, worldwide.

(d) Praying for the Sick:

Bakht Singh believed in the gifts and the ministry of the

Holy Spirit. He also believed in praying for the sick, based on such scriptures as Mark 16:18, "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." And also, James 5:14,15. "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."

Bakht Singh, after anointing the sick with oil, would then lay his hands on them and pray for their healing. In many cases, the Lord was pleased to honour his prayer in quite remarkable ways for those suffering with bodily sickness as well as demon possession. Even though many were healed, they felt they should follow the Lord's example with respect to these things, that is the healing and deliverances which the Lord gave should not be proclaimed or published: thus undue attention would not be given to them or to Bakht Singh. It is not bodily healing which ensures entrance to the Kingdom of God, neither do healings nor deliverances prove a movement to be of God. The strongest and clearest evidence of God's working is that of transformed lives.

(e) Choosing of Speakers:

Bakht Singh did not believe in "pre-arranged" ministry, meaning that he did not plan or arrange before hand who should be the speaker or preacher at any particular meeting. This way, he felt that the Lord's man with His message for His people would speak under the anointing of the Holy Spirit of God. The only exception to this was when they were led of the Lord to invite one of His servants to conduct a series of meetings.

From the beginning, the Lord led them to recognize their mutual responsibility towards Him and towards His people

in that they should all be burdened and exercised about the message. The Lord may not want to speak through any one of them in any particular meeting. Those who are responsible for the ministry of the Word of God must be before the Lord individually seeking His guidance for the message. They felt that a 'one-man' ministry was wrong. They equally felt that an 'any-man' ministry was wrong. To this end their practice was for those responsible to meet together for prayer before every meeting and to enquire from each other who had a word from the Lord. It has kept all those in the church who felt any responsibility for the ministry on their knees before God for His message.

(f) The Body Life:

Bakht Singh believed that the living Christ is the Head of the Church and that He should be in charge of all the affairs of the local church, which is His Body and through which He functions in the light of God's Word by the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, everything should be done for the edification of individual and collective members of the Body, and for the extension of His Kingdom, for the glory of God.

Thus, for every aspect of the work of the Church, he felt strongly that the believers, particularly those who are in leadership, should seek the mind of Christ and that they should be led by the Holy Spirit in all things.

As mentioned earlier, he did not follow any ecclesiastical order, instead he preached and practised that all believers are equally important, necessary and precious in the sight of the Lord and for His service. He believed in the corporate functioning of the Body of Christ to show forth His fullness and glory. He taught and encouraged every believer to do his or her part for the smooth functioning of the Body of Christ based on Romans 12 and 14, and 1 Corinthians 12, as well as other scriptures.

Many local churches throughout India and Pakistan came into being in one of three ways. In the cities and larger towns, the beginning and development of the work had been the direct result of the labours of Bakht Singh and his team. The Assemblies in such places as 'Jehovah-Shammah', Madras; 'Beersheba', Ahmedabad; 'Hermon', Bangalore; 'House of Worship', Vellore; 'Zion' in Guntur and 'Hebron', Hyderabad, to name a few, were the result of the direct and continuous labours of believers, some of whom were full-time servants of the Lord.

Secondly, in many other places, particularly in villages, the Assemblies were the result of the labours of the ordinary believers who were greatly influenced and challenged as they saw the living reality of the Church in action by attending the Holy Convocations and other services.

Thirdly, Assemblies were established through the labours of men of vision, and commitment, who, while they were gainfully employed, set their priorities to found living local Assemblies. For example, George Rajaratnam of Madras was used of the Lord to begin Assemblies in Madurai and many other places. C.D. Benjamin of Hyderabad, was used by the Lord to start more than 30 Assemblies in various parts of India, including Kothagudem and the neighbouring areas, while serving as an engineer. Muthunayagam was also secularly employed and used by the Lord to commence a vibrant Assembly in Syamnagar and neighbouring areas. Police officer Devavaram (D.S. Christopher's father) was used by the Lord to begin Assemblies wherever he was transferred in the line of duty as a police officer. Similarly the Lord used scores and scores of others to found living groups of believers. Practically all the Assemblies now functioning in the Gulf States areas began through the testimonies and continuous ministry of those who went there seeking employment.

In this regard God used the members of Body of Christ

to be His instruments to accomplish His purpose without any distinction between full-time or self-supporting workers. In the witness and the work of the Lord, while they may differ functionally and in their calling, all believers are equal in their standing before God. These believers gave their time, talents and treasures for the edification of His body and for the expansion of His Kingdom. One of the great secrets of the expansion of the work of the Assemblies in connection with Bakht Singh was the corporate functioning of believers employed in secular jobs or full-time workers giving themselves wholly to the work of the Lord to fulfill the Great Commission to build His Church.

(g) The Provision of Shepherds:

As Assemblies began to multiply, the need for shepherds after God's own heart became a pressing necessity. Every local church needed shepherds to live among them and be one of them to help them on to maturity. The Lord answered their prayers for the need of shepherds in two ways. There were small groups of local churches which had come into being through the labours of one or two brethren living there who, by preaching the gospel and expounding the Word, had brought souls together and built them up and they gave the necessary shepherding. A number of churches had come into existence and grown under the ministry and care of very ordinary local brothers whom the Lord had gifted and who had a shepherd's heart to care for and to feed the flock of God. But then there were other places where a few believers had begun to seek the Lord together, but with no manifest gifts for shepherding or ministering present among them. Such had appealed to Bakht Singh saying, "Please send us someone to help us." They asked the Lord to call and set apart for His service those who could, for a short or long period of time meet the need of these churches where there

was no evidence of local gifts present. The Lord again had been faithful in providing such servants and had sent them to meet the need in many places.

2. God's servants or Full-time workers:

From the earliest days in Madras, there had been those who had left all because they felt a call to serve the Lord full-time. Some of them seemed very unpromising for such important or responsible work, being often young and immature. They had much to learn and it would certainly take time. But God gave faith and patience to all concerned. They came trusting in the Lord with no promise of salaries or human security. They lived together, suffered together, learned together and experienced the Lord together. The result has been a very strong and real bonding between those whom the Lord put together for His testimony and work. The 'supernatural' was with them everyday. The 'miraculous' was with them in that despite such diversity and variety in the many brothers and sisters working together and coming from vastly different backgrounds, they continued together in harmony and co-operation in the most difficult and exacting of all work from the beginning, thus bearing witness that this was of God.. In the early years, God's servant and the local believers worked together in unity and in harmony without any distinction.

The primary purpose of God's servant is to build up and help the local believers to become mature in the Lord, so that local leadership, as elders and deacons can be chosen from among them to carry on the work. Just as the Apostle Paul sent Timothy, Titus and others to various local churches for a period of time to strengthen the believers, Bakht Singh, too, practised the same principle by sending God's servants wherever their help and ministry were needed. The usual practice was that those men were transferred from Assem-

bly to Assembly within three to four years with a few exceptions where some of them stayed on for a longer period. His transferring God's servants was very unique. Every year following the Holy Convocation in 'Hebron', he would hold two days of workers' meeting. During the meeting he would pray and seek the Lord's mind about the transfer. Then at the close of the meeting, he would mention the names of the brethren and the places of their transfer in his prayer. That was how the brothers were informed where and when they were transferred to. For example, in his prayer he would say, "Lord, thank you for transferring Brother Timothy to Khammam and Brother Aravindam to Kurnool" and so on. No letter of transfer was issued to them. In most cases the brethren would comply with their transfer. In rare cases due to the children's education or other reasons, some may ask permission to continue at their post for some more time.

From the late '70s onwards, however, as Bakht Singh became extremely busy with the work worldwide, he did not have sufficient time to insist on the transferring of God's servants periodically as he should have done. As a result, in a number of Assemblies God's servants stayed on and began to "lord it over" the flock like some denominational pastors. This has adversely affected the testimony of the Lord in some places, leading to conflicts between local believers and God's servants and the subsequent breaking up of some local Assemblies and in a few places has led to court cases. Even though Bakht Singh began using the service of God's servants with all good intentions to help build the local Assemblies, in a number of places they became a snare. In fact many of the problems in the Assemblies today can be attributed primarily to some of God's servants who seemed to be more interested in themselves than in the work of the Lord. In some Assemblies responsible local brethren or local believers who are 'carnal' have caused the problems, some even

opposing the ministry of God's servants in their midst. The cause of the problems is carnal, not spiritual.

Sisters also have been a part of the work over the years, particularly those who came to Bakht Singh and elders expressing a desire to serve the Lord full-time. They, too, had a share in various aspects of the ministry, namely VBS, the Hebron Messenger, Bible correspondence courses, the outreach ministry, visitation, and kitchen duty and in so many other areas of work - in relation to 'Hebron' as well as other Assemblies. Many of them lived a very sacrificial life, giving themselves wholly to the Lord. Although they are numerous, it is appropriate to mention a few names. In the early years they were blessed with missionary sisters such as Violet Green and Grace Stalley who helped greatly in the early days of 'Jehovah- Shammah' particularly at 'Hephzibah.' Later on, they were blessed with sisters Lockette, Wallgreen, Ruth Resius and others. They were also grateful for Indian sisters such as Sisters Nissi, and Daisy and several others who gave themselves sacrificially to serve the Lord. Those who came out in obedience to the call of God to fulltime service looked to the Lord for their needs. No-one received a regular salary and whatever they received they shared.

Bakht Singh taught believers to contribute generously and joyfully to the work of the Lord. Those who served as God's servants in the local churches were supported by the local church. They learned to live simply and were satisfied with what the Lord gave them. There was no central fund or distributing center for the support of the Lord's servants. On occasions, the local churches also ministered to those visiting them from overseas. Neither the work nor the workers depended on money from outside India. But whenever the Lord sent them gifts from overseas, they were received with thanks. By God's grace, they never lacked the Lord's resources for their work.

3. The training of workers:

Bakht Singh did not believe in any formal Bible school or seminary training as a prerequisite to the work or the ministry of the Lord. For training, Bakht Singh decided to follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul by providing the necessary training both for those in full-time ministry and other believers, through the activities of the Assembly. They were given on-the-job training. They also had periods of definite, specific and consecutive study of the Bible, to learn how to interpret and how to use the Word of God rightly. From these experiments, they came to the conclusion that the usual Bible school idea was not God's way for them, but rather that they should follow the methods of the Lord with His disciples.

The Lord first gathered His disciples that they might be with Him and that subsequently He might send them out. (Mark 3:14) There was a period in which they were learning by being with Him, and there were times when they were sent forth to preach and work out what they had been taught. This also seemed to be the way the apostles of the early church were prepared for their ministry and the way they in turn prepared younger fellow-workers for the ministry.

Thus it was Bakht Singh's practice to gather the Lord's servants together in suitable centres from time to time for periods of Bible study and instruction. The length of the periods varied, but he found the most suitable was three weeks. They would come apart from their responsibilities (if they already had some), and had opportunity for spiritual refreshment, for further instruction and understanding of the Word of God, and for sharing and praying together concerning their problems. It was essentially a spiritual ministry of the Word that they exercised with brethren at such times.

4. Indigenisation of the New Testament principles in the local churches:

Bakht Singh was not after any national church. He believed in only one Church which is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ as expressed locally, nationally and internationally. He repeatedly said that there is no Indian Church or Chinese church or American Church, but only one universal Church, which is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. He believed that only Christ can build His Church and our responsibility is to assist Him in obedience to His will in the light of the Word of God. It is a spiritual matter. He was after that which would best realize God's purpose in His Son and will best contain His fullness (Eph 1:22-23). "And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." This Church, God's Church was to have a strong foundation in order to withstand the assaults sure to come on the Lord's people in India. He believed that sectarian divisions, i.e. denominationalism, defeat these high and holy ends, for one group excludes another group. Bakht Singh wanted that which preserved the oneness and equality of all believers, and above all, he was after that which was spiritual.

Indigenization is not Indianisation. It simply means applying the New Testament principles of the Church within the cultural background of the people without compromising the Word of God. It also means self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating fellowships under the Headship, Lordship and Kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ and under the direction of the Holy Spirit in the light of the Word of God.

Moreover, in the light of the Word of God and as far as possible, every local church should be inclusive and open to all believers who wish to be a part of it. "There is neither

Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28) Many of the churches established by Western missionaries were 'foreign' to the people of India because they brought Christ to India along with Western culture. Sadhu Sundar Singh once said:

"Indians do need the Water of life, but not in a European cup. They should sit down on the floor in church: they should take off their shoes instead of their turbans. Indian music should be sung. Long informal addresses should take the place of sermons."⁴

Years later, God used Bakht Singh to fulfil the expressed desire of Sadhu Sunder Singh.⁵ George Verwer, who worked in 'Hebron', Hyderabad, in close fellowship with Bakht Singh, made the following observation about his ministry:

"Bakht Singh's ministry is a phenomenal example of contextualisation in its earliest days without compromising the Word of God. He liked the simple old gospel but he served it in a simple Indian cup. People sitting on the mats on the floor with their chappals or shoes off, singing authentically Indian music with Indian musical instruments. His messages were long, simple, filled with Scriptures and with appropriate witnessing stories and explanations. He was humorous and a man of great charisma. Following the worship service on Sundays people sat on the mats on the floor and had meals together – love-feast, fellowshiping with one another."⁶

Daniel Smith, one of the Canadian missionaries who worked with Bakht Singh for a while, had this to say: "These assemblies founded by Bakht Singh are indigenous in a real sense. They are quite distinct from those churches which have simply been 'Indianized' from the Western system or founded in opposition to Western churches and Western missionary denominations."⁷

In contrast to the Assemblies founded by Bakht Singh, the following are a few examples of churches founded in India which are neither based on New Testament principles nor 'indigenous' in the strict sense of the Word.

(a) Hindu-Christian Church:

The Hindu-Christian church founded by A.A. Sattampillai at Prakasapuram, Tamilnadu, in 1857 does not meet the criteria of an 'indigenous' Christian church.

"Founding of the Hindu-Christian church was to fulfil the Shanar⁸ converts' agenda which could not be carried out in the church public sphere, constituted by missionary authority. It was created as an alternative public sphere where the Shanar converts could assemble to pursue their goals and aims, evading the well-established missionary authority."⁹

"The rapid and extensive growth of Christianity among the Shanars gave rise to specific Christian settlements that accorded protection and offered facilities to search for new ways of empowerment and new identity. Concentration of Shanars in these settlements was bound to strengthen their cast identity In fact conversion to Christianity empowered them to contest caste-based practices and customs such as forbidding them the use of roads and wells, sanction against wearing upper cloth, imposition of discriminatory taxes and extraction of corvee labour The Shanar converts, now in a position to challenge the indigenous structure of authority, were simultaneously dis-empowered within the church. European authority in the church was so dominant that the Shanar converts were identified as inferior, needing the paternalistic domination and guiding control of the missionaries. Another source of annoyance for the Shanar converts was the insinuations and derogatory references of the European missionaries to their lowly origin and culture.

Thus the converts' status within the church was one of subordination and marginality. In the nationalist discourse, the converts were treated as a 'denationalized' 'unpatriotic race' for they had given up their 'Ancient faith to an alien one' which aimed at destroying Hinduism and strengthening the British imperialism. Representation of Christianity as a denationalizing force added another dimension to the converts' marginalization in the colonial context.

In elaborating the tenets and doctrines of the Hindu-Christian church, Sattam Pillai's first move was to de-legitimize Western Christianity and to establish it as a counterfeit.... He accused the missionaries of introducing into India a false version of the Holy Scriptures European Christians, he argued, were 'awarded' with 'several unlimited carnal sins' since they incurred the wrath of the Almighty by their 'perversion of the sincere Word of God'."

"...Sattam Pillai drew parallels between the few so-called ancient Hindu customs and Jewish customs that, according to him, had sanction in the scriptures. He cited the example of laws pertaining to widow remarriage that were prevalent in the Jewish tradition as well as in the Hindu tradition. Similarly, the ritual impurities attributed to the women which were accepted by [the] Hindu Christian church were claimed to be found both in Hindu tradition and Jewish tradition.

The Hindu Christian church succumbed to internal dissensions which split the church in 1883, leaving Sattam Pillai with only few followers. Even this small following failed to survive his death on the 16th of January, 1919."¹⁰

From this brief account we can see clearly that the Hindu-Christian church was not based on New Testament principles, nor was it indigenous in the true sense of the term. It was basically a reactionary religious group based on personal, socio-economic and ethnic reasons, rather than being based on the revealed Word of God.

(b). The National Church of India:

It was founded in Madras by Dr. Pulney Andy who was from an affluent upper-caste Hindu family, and who was converted to Christ while studying medicine in England.

The major thrust of the National Church was to have a complete break with the Western Christianity and its structure of missionary authority in India. It desired to replace them with 'Oriental' and 'Asiatic' forms of Christianity suited to the 'national peculiarities and instincts of the people of India derived from her ancient heritage.' The church was primarily for upper-caste converts.¹¹

As they entered the church, upper-caste converts realized that they have to share their identity with the low-caste converts who constituted the vast majority of the Christian community. The overwhelming presence of the lower-caste converts in the church was a source of embarrassment. Upper-caste converts desired to demarcate the distinction between themselves and the low-caste converts by clinging tenaciously to Hindu customs under the dominance of caste. The quality of low-caste converts and the motives of their conversion were subject to criticism and unfavourable remarks. Lower-caste converts were accused of bringing Christianity into disrepute lowering both the spiritual and moral tone of the churches and rendering the native church a cripple. Thus the upper-caste converts tended to hold themselves aloof discrediting and distancing the lower caste converts as inferior. Nationalism, equated with Christianity, as noted earlier had furthered the anxiety of the upper-caste converts.

".... The new movement or anxiety for the upper caste-converts was thus how to retain the respectability or their social identity in the traditional order and the church, lost in the process of conversion; how to counter the accusation of denationalization due to their conversion in the national-

ist discourse and how to negotiate the missionary domination in the church. It was against this background that the National Church of India was established by the upper-caste converts chiefly to fulfil their expectations. The appeal to this church was by and large confined to upper-caste converts. The major thrust of the national church was to have a complete break with Western Christianity and its structure of missionary authority in India.... Western culture symbols and expression of Christianity were to be replaced by indigenous forms of symbols and expressions. Such resources were essential to repudiate their disempowerment and marginalization by the missionaries and also to counter the denationalizing implication of Christianity on converts in the nationalist discourse.

"The national church with its Hindu-Christian components denied a space for Western forms of Christianity and Brahmanical intrusion. European domination at one level and Brahmin domination at another level were contested by this move. The national church, with its emphasis on the Hindu-Christian connotations and overtones, had marginalized the low-caste convert who were denied the opportunity to interpret and reach out to Hindu texts. Then national church empowered its members to question the authority of the European missionaries and incorporate non-Brahmanical Indian elements into the church.

In order to affirm their national identity, both Sattam Pillai and Pulneuy Andy constructed elaborate theories of commonality between Hindus and Christians. European and western Christianity were left out of this national domain. Even in the elaboration of theology no scope was given to Western Christianity branding it as inauthentic and counterfeit. ... Exhibiting as a strong nationalist spirit, - both openly expressed their distaste for colonialism and the colonizers."¹²

Both of these so-called indigenous or national churches were based on anti-western sentiment. Both were highly exclusive and therefore neither can be said to be churches based on New Testament principles.

(c). Robert de Nobili :

While Roberto de Nobili was a very sincere and saintly man, his labours did not stand the test of New Testament principles because he concentrated only among Brahmins and allowed Hindu customs to influence the church.

"The indigenous church experiment of Italian Jesuit missionary to India, named Roberto de Nobili's approach to the Brahmin was highly segregated, exclusive and localized. Moreover, his method re-emphasized the caste system rather than breaking down the caste. Furthermore, in order to make the transition to Christianity easy, he made every possible concession to Hindu custom. De Nobili obtained a ready audience and baptized many converts, but after 40 years only twenty-six Brahmin Christians remained."¹³

(d). The St. Thomas Christian Church of Kerala :

This is the most ancient of Christian groups in India, and is therefore considered to be a part of India and not foreign.

The St. Thomas Christians of Kerala cannot be classified as purely indigenous, because it was founded by a foreign missionary called St. Thomas, one of the 12 apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were for centuries controlled by a Persian religious hierarchy. For their liturgy, they used Syriac rather than Malayalam, which is the local language. They were highly exclusive and lacked evangelistic zeal.

"Hindu rulers gave considerable privileges to the Christian merchant community in Kerala; by so doing they did in fact confer on it, though perhaps not intentionally, the char-

acter of a caste. The community of the Thomas Christians became almost hermitical from the Hindu world around it. Marriage was always within the community. Conversion from the non-Christian to the Christian world was so rare as hardly to enter into consideration. The status of the Christians was roughly the same as that of the Nayars, the great landholding Hindu caste. Throughout the centuries, the Thomas Christians made little if any attempt to Christianize their non-Christian neighbours, fearing perhaps that to do so might involve them in sharing with others their considerable social privileges, or perhaps merely because they had absorbed into their mentality the Hindu concept of an unalterable status quo."¹⁴

"The St. Thomas Christians of Kerala, with their close link with Syria and the Persian church in Persia, were accepted in Kerala Society, and their commercial ability won them a status in the society seemed second only to that of Brahmanism. The price of acceptance, however, was the adoption of an attitude to outsiders as exclusive as that of any Hindu caste. Until Western missionaries re-awakened a certain zeal for evangelism a Hindu could not join one of the Syrian churches even if he wished to do so."¹⁵

"Bakht Singh was used by God as a chosen instrument for an indigenous Bible-based church in the early 1940s. Bakht Singh's movements were not a counter movement to the already established denominational churches and missions. In fact, he was fully convinced that he was not opposed to the foreign missionaries in India or in any other country."¹⁶

He was never 'anti-missionary' or 'anti-denominations', but he was 'anti-sin', 'anti-death.' Whenever and wherever people did contrary to the Word of God, he severely criticized them and some people interpreted this as anti-missionary. From the very beginning of his ministry, how-

ever, he worked closely with like-minded, godly missionaries both foreign or national.

"But 'indigenous' is not a good word to use for the Church of the Lord Jesus. It savours of nationalism. What I have seen springing up through the ministry of Bakht Singh is something on a higher plane altogether. It is that which is purely spiritual and wherein "there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:28). In that fellowship, there is no dependence on the West; but there is fellowship with Westerners and also a place for their help and ministry if they have ought worthy to give. There is no such thing as Eastern or Western money. What is given are the love-offerings of the Lord's people as to the Lord. Here, too, there can be fellowship. Such work, then, is indigenous, as we like to call it in these days; but it is higher than that in the realm of things spiritual, and close to the principles of the Word of God."¹⁷

Bakht Singh's vision of the Church was to have local churches that were free of denominationalism and sectarianism in order to show forth the fullness of Christ. That was why he sought for a pattern based solely on the Word of God. The issue was in quite another realm than the mere building of indigenous churches. He was after that which would reflect, radiate and represent the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church – that which would transcend all the barriers and that would be all-inclusive to contain His fullness, unity, wisdom and glory. Bakht Singh wanted that which preserves the oneness and equality of all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, regardless of their colour, caste, country, culture.

After much prayer and fasting, the Lord led him and his co-workers to establish local churches which met not in 'expensive church buildings' but in simple inexpensive halls or houses. Believers were encouraged to sit on mats on the floor with the men on one side and women on the other. They sat

with their shoes off. The gifted men of God composed songs of praise and worship using Indian melodies and Indian instruments. Bakht Singh believed in the priesthood of all believers based on the Word of God (1 Peter 2:9; Rev 1:6) and the Assemblies were led by godly men rather than 'ordained ministers.' It was indeed a real breakthrough. Many who came in contact with these Assemblies felt at home, realizing that one can be a Christian and also at the same time an Indian. The 'foreignness' of Christianity began to give way to the New Testamental principles of the Church. He did not compromise the Word of God with Indian culture, customs or the traditions of men. He vehemently taught against any culture or custom that was contrary to, or in conflict with, the Word of God. "What we needed in the Body of Christ was not Western or Eastern culture but Biblical culture," he emphasized.

Sunday services usually lasted for 3-5 hours with singing, open individual worship, the Lord's Table and long, simple Bible-based messages filled with examples and illustrations for all to understand, appreciate and appropriate.

Writing about Bakht Singh's life and ministry, Dr. Robert Finley of Christian Aid Mission, who knew him better than most people in the West, wrote the following:

"As a planter of churches among many nations, Bakht Singh exemplified God's purpose for His Kingdom as clearly as any man in church history.

In the book of Acts, our Lord revealed a pattern by which His kingdom would eventually spread to every people, tongue, tribe and nation. Clear examples were demonstrated in the lives of Barnabas of Cyprus and Saul of Tarsus. In the twentieth century, the pattern was duplicated in the life and ministry of Bakht Singh of India....In fact, I have never seen or read of a clearer example of God's pattern throughout the centuries since the kingdom of God was first launched on this planet almost two thousand years ago."¹⁸

These Assemblies established by Bakht Singh and his co-workers were self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing in the sense that Bakht Singh taught, prayed and mobilized the local churches to evangelize the un-evangelized people, people reaching people. He taught from the Scriptures that their responsibility was to give generously and cheerfully for the work of the Lord, which they gladly did so that there was no lack of finance for the work of the Lord. The Lord provided for every need through His people both from within India and abroad, without Bakht Singh ever making any appeal publicly for his needs or that of the ministry. At local assembly meetings on Sundays, a large box or basket was placed on a table and believers were given the opportunity to go forward and place their offerings in the box as part of their worship. No offering plate was passed around. The unconverted at the meetings were advised not to bring any offering, for the Lord was after their soul rather than their silver.

Dr. Christy Wilson, a former missionary to Afghanistan, said about Bakht Singh regarding the self-support of the assemblies:

"I think Brother Bakht Singh has been a wonderful influence on Christians around the world to show the importance of self-support. He told me that in India many of the Indian Christians were having what was called the 'dependant syndrome'. They were depending on finances from abroad to support their work. But Brother Bakht Singh insisted that the Assemblies be self-supporting. I remember when he came to the United States one time, a wealthy American asked him to tell about his financial needs. Brother Bakht Singh amazed the man because he said, 'I don't have financial needs because the Lord has promised to supply all my needs according to His riches in glory.' He then turned down the man from giving a big cheque, and the man was

confounded because he expected Brother Bakht Singh wanted a lot of money. This, I think, was a very important principle—to have the work he established be self-supporting. This is the reason the churches in Korea have been so strong, because they have been self-supporting as well. Therefore Brother Bakht Singh caught this vision and did not depend on Western churches to support his work, but rather had it indigenous and self-supporting. It thus grew and did not have to depend on finances from abroad, which often have strings attached. In this way he has been used of God mightily around the world.”¹⁹

Assemblies are not controlled by any outside agency or organization. The leadership of the local assembly comes together, prays and seeks the mind of the Lord, Who is the Head of the church. No voting or election is allowed—they pray for a unanimous decision in all the affairs of the church. In this sense, the Assemblies (local churches) are not self-governing, or governed by man or the will of man, but are governed by the Lord Jesus Christ Who is the Head of the Church.

5. Place of worship:

From the very beginning, the Assemblies had met together in rented houses for worship and weekly activities like in ‘Jehovah-Shammah,’ Chennai. They felt they should not spend too much money on physical buildings for the service of the Lord. Whenever the houses became too small for the gathering, they built tent-like halls (or pandals) for the gatherings. From 1941 to 1959 they had only rented properties. In 1959, due to circumstances, the Lord led them to purchase the property for Jehovah Shammah, later, as the Lord led, they were open to buy or rent facilities.

The Lord did a miracle in enabling them to purchase the property known as Jehovah Shammah. Being an historic step,

it is worth quoting Bakht Singh to help the reader understand the way the Lord led them to purchase it:

"From the beginning we have met together in rented houses. Jehovah Shammah, the first place where we had regular meetings of the local church, was a private and rented house. We used the large main rooms of the building for the meetings. Almost invariably, the work in each place, whether in villages, town or city, has begun like that, in a rented house. From 1941 to 1959 we had only rented property. We owned no property whatsoever. From 1957, circumstances arose in one place after another which led us to conclude that it was of the Lord to acquire what was needed for the purpose of meeting together in the Lord's name. The days of 'rented houses' in so many places were blessed days. Of course, we often had difficulty and unsympathetic landlords who harassed us not a little. Notices to quit were served upon us. But such things sent us to the Lord, and kept us on our knees before Him. The 'heavens do rule' and God's people rule on their knees with Him. Many battles on such issues of accommodation for the work were fought and won on our knees. But up till 1957, we felt we should not get involved with owning property.²⁰

After the partition of India and Pakistan, the Muslim landlord of the 19, Ritherden Road left for Pakistan and the house was taken over as government property. After a few years, the government decided to auction it. They made three attempts, but every attempt failed. At the first auction no bidders were present. The second time, the auctioneer himself was absent due to illness. The third attempt failed for some other reason. All the time we prayed that somebody should buy the house who would not give us any trouble, but we never prayed for possession of the property. However, the fourth time, the house was auctioned to a Sindhi man who bought it for Rs. 138,000. Even then we were not much

concerned about it. After one or two weeks, he came to see the property and made plans to divide it into plots for re-sale. This stirred us up to great concern, and that night about twelve of us met for prayer.

We asked the Lord to show us what was His will. We began to have frequent days of fasting and prayer. At that time the verse Joshua 18:3 (And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long *are* ye slack to go to possess the land, which the LORD God of your fathers hath given you?) came to us again and again with great force. Finally, we drafted a letter offering to buy the property for the same price of Rs. 138,000, requesting permission to pay the amount in three installments.²¹

We approached the Government again stating our case, pointing out that we had been using the property as a house of worship for the past 16 years.²²

The letter was then sent to the authorities in Bombay. Within three days, we received the reply that if we were prepared to pay the first installment of Rs. 46,000 within a week then we could fill in the enclosed application form for the purchase of the property. We had only a small amount with us at that time, but we had full assurance that the Lord would provide. The Lord did not fail us.²³

We went to the Lord in earnest prayer and informed the believers of the position. What was the result? The response of the believers was amazing and the extent of their self-sacrifice was incredible. Every luxury was surrendered. Cycles, watches, jewelry and many other things were brought by the believers to redeem our promise to the Government, that we would purchase the place within two years in three installments. So many and deep were the sacrifices, that only the Lord Himself really knows the extent of them. We might mention one or two examples, but they were not intended for publication and we must not betray them. Publicly giving

was shunned, although it was unavoidable in some cases. Believers in other parts of India came to know about the step being taken in Madras and they also contributed, although no information was purposely circulated or appeals made. The Church is universal, not first 'local', so on this occasion, and in this circumstance, we proved again the truth the Lord had taught us. The church is "one new man" and, if one suffer, we all suffer, and if one member rejoice, we all rejoice.²⁴ (Eph 2:15; 1 Cor 12:26)

Saints began to bring in gifts as the Lord led them, and within a week the amount was ready. Leaving Hyderabad, I arrived in Madras on the last day of the prescribed period. The amount had to be deposited in the State Bank. My train was five hours late, so I went straight from the railway station to the office of the official incharge. A crowd of people was standing before the officer and there was only half-an-hour left for me to go to the bank. I stood at the back of the crowd with my Bible in my hand. Seeing my Bible, the Officer recognized me and called me over and asked if I had the amount ready. I replied in the affirmative and requested him to sign the required paper so that I could go and deposit the amount in the State Bank. He replied, 'Please do it quickly. I am to be transferred from this post and I want to attend to your matter myself before I go.' Thus we found that the Lord touched even unbelievers to help us many times when facing difficult situations.

After that we prayed, 'O Lord, help us to pay the remaining amount before the stipulated time.' We had been given two years to complete the payment but we were able to pay the whole amount within eighteen months. Thus we were able to prove the truth of the promise in Haggai 2:8, 'The silver is mine, and the gold is mine.' I give this testimony to prove that if we trust the Lord fully, we will find Him absolutely faithful.²⁵

Over a period of nearly 16 years, 'Jehovah-Shammah' and the saints' meetings there had ministered to so many from near and far through the times of Holy Convocations and gospel campaigns. Thus, many were mindful of their debt to Madras and recognized their responsibility and privilege to help us at this time. The believers showed the same kind of sacrifice throughout the whole period. The final installment was paid six months before the deadline. "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." (Psalm 126:2).

What occurred in Madras at that time has been repeated in a number of other places since then, although the circumstances have varied considerably. Because it has become increasingly difficult for various reasons to rent suitable houses for meetings of the local churches, we have taken the step of acquiring a piece of land and building to suit the local requirements in a number of places."²⁶

The property at 'Hebron' was given as a gift without even making their needs known to anyone. (The matter was dealt with more in chapter 12). In other places the Lord either gave them timely gifts for meeting places or provided the finances to buy land and erect inexpensive places of worship. Bakht Singh believed that the Lord did not live in temples made with hands. Redeemed people of God are the real temple of God. Therefore, he paid very little attention to the external things. It is also possible that he had to move to an extreme position to show the weakness of the existing foreign-based denominational church buildings which are very lavish and very costly.

Thus he built simple bamboo sheds as against the pretentious stone buildings of Western design; he sat his people on floor mats, native style, and not on Western-style benches; he had gifted fellow-workers compose their own hymns and psalms and set them to native lyrics; he brought in Indian

instruments of music to lead congregational singing; he kept meetings going for long hours (which Indians love) to debunk the infamous Western one-hour service; he taught believers to give and not to beg; he showed them how to seek guidance about every matter direct from the Lord instead of slavishly following the orders of the missionary.²⁷

Every local church took the initiative to construct an appropriate facility within their means. He believed that every local church was autonomous and therefore every local church should be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. In every case, it was the local initiative and local means which provided for the needs of the local people and local work. Of course, as the Lord led from time to time, the well- to-do local churches always cared for the needs of the other local churches. While they had seen and stressed the autonomy of the local church, they held fast to the fact that this was an expression of the church universal. They must avoid too much emphasis on the local so that they lose or inhibit the expression of the universal. This also applied in respect to the means provided for acquiring the land or property for the work. There were rare cases where all the means needed for such purchases were forthcoming only from the believers actually meeting there.

Bakht Singh did not believe in centralized control or the federation of churches. He believed in the spiritual unity and fellowship of all the scattered Assemblies both in India and abroad. He knew the value of unity and fellowship they had with God's children everywhere, who by the new birth had been incorporated into one New Man. Because all such are one body, they have scriptural unity, and believers saw this as the reason why they were exhorted to strive to keep the unity of the Spirit. These Assemblies were not controlled from anywhere overseas. They received no advice, control or support from any other centre. Their colleagues from other

lands who were working with them did not advise, or control or guarantee support by their connections with churches from which they came. They believed that all who ministered in India were subject to the church in India.

6: Chosen Brethren / Elders:

1982 was a very significant year in the life and ministry of Bakht Singh. He had been suffering with Parkinson's – a very debilitating disease. In spite of this, he kept himself extremely busy with the ministry all across India, the USA, Europe and the Middle East.

In July he came to Syracuse, N.Y, for the North American Holy Convocation held at that time in Cazenovia, N.Y., along with the late Brother Amiritha Raj. Following the Holy Convocation, the author accompanied him to the Holy Convocation in France. He then persuaded the author to accompany him to Germany, Holland and Switzerland. In Hamberg, Switzerland, he was to hold a week of special meetings arranged by some Swiss believers for believers from various parts of Europe. He had a packed schedule there but just a day after arriving he came down with a high fever. He was taken to the hospital in St. Galen, Switzerland, and it was found that he was suffering from a highly advanced stage of his enlarged prostate gland. The surgeon recommended immediate surgery to save him from further dangerous complications which could be fatal. Hearing that, Bakht Singh was shocked and numb for a while. He looked at the author sadly and agreed to go to India for surgery. Cancelling all the pending engagements in Europe and the Middle East, he went directly to Madras, India, where he had his prostate operation, followed by recuperation. As a result of the operation and coupled with Parkinson's, his strength and stamina began to decline.

In spite of all this, his care for all the churches only

increased. He sensed perhaps that he had to do soon the things that needed to be done, particularly that of putting things in order in all the major Assemblies by appointing elders and deacons.

In December 1982, following the Kalimpong Holy Convocation, Bakht Singh requested that some of us join him at 'Hebron' to wait on the Lord to know His mind regarding the future of the ministry, particularly that of the hundreds of Assemblies in Andhra Pradesh and other places. He had been greatly burdened about appointing elders and deacons in various Assemblies for a long time.. He wrote about it in the Hebron Messenger and had been asking for prayers since the sixties:

"We are also much burdened that the Lord's perfect order of eldership should be brought about in all Assemblies wherever possible, as we read in Acts 14:23. But there is much need to teach the Word of God to the believers in such places before the elders can be set apart, and also brethren who are to be given responsibility have to be properly tested and proven before being set apart; otherwise they will not be able to fulfil their charge faithfully. Wherever wrong persons were brought forward, the enemy always gained much ground, and it has taken a long time to fully recover the loss sustained in this way. So we shall be very grateful for your prayers that the Lord may give us the spirit of discernment to recognize those who have been really called of the Lord to the ministry of eldership.

We read in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, how elders and deacons have to be thoroughly tested and proven before being set apart. This requires much prayer. Please pray that the Lord may pour the spirit of persevering prayer upon all the Assemblies, that they may learn to pray to the Lord for the gift of elders.

We cannot afford to make even one mistake regarding such

an important ministry. The growth of the Assemblies depends upon the right choice of elders. Just as prophets, evangelists and teachers have to be called of God, in the same way elders also have to be called of God, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." (Eph 4:8-14). Our need is urgent, and we would very much appreciate your prayers for us as we embark upon this important task."²⁸

We have been much exercised to bring about God's perfect order of eldership in all the Assemblies where the believers are ready for such a step. Because of gospel raids and Special meetings, as well as new doors which have been opening all over the country and abroad, we have not been able to devote sufficient time to such an important ministry as this. It does require much time to make sure that the persons who have to be set apart as elders have really been called and prepared by the Lord for such ministry. We see in Acts 14:21-23 that the apostles had to visit a place several times to strengthen the believers, before the Assembly was ready for elders to be set apart with prayer and fasting. "And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and

Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

According to Eph 4:11-14, all the gifts ordained by the Lord should work together "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (vs 12,13). So please pray that all these gifts may be manifested in the assemblies."²⁹

After he had met together with six brethren to know the will of God for bringing scriptural order in the Assemblies he wrote:

"The elders should be appointed after much prayer. They should teach the Word of God to protect the believers from wrong teaching and false doctrines. Elders should have the heart of a father and mother. How careful the early church was in choosing the elders! For quite some time we have been having the burden to have all the five-fold gifts functioning in the church. These gifts are given to the church only through prayer, and not by observation. We confess, we have not prayed sufficiently for ordaining the elders. With humility we confess our failure and negligence. Having the mercy of God, we claim His promises and pray that the Lord may give us the five-fold gifts, not only for India but also for His church in different countries. After the Lord shows us the men of His choice to be elders and deacons in different Assemblies they will be tested and proved. Then, after a time of fasting and prayer, these brothers will be set apart by laying on of hands.

This work cannot be done by one man. Brothers with spiritual maturity, wisdom, vision and discernment are needed to help in this extremely important task of choosing and appointing elders and deacons for God's glory and for the edification of the church. Such men can be shown to us only by prayer. Therefore, I invited some brothers of like-mind to join me for several days of prayer. We met in 'Hebron' during the 1st week of January 1983. While we were praying the Lord showed me that according to Titus 1:5, before appointing elders and deacons, we have to appoint men to help us in that work just as Paul appointed Titus.

"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." (Titus 1:5)

After much prayer, the Lord has led me to set apart six men to assist me in appointing elders and deacons and also to help me in other important jobs of the Assemblies, especially in Andhra Pradesh. Their responsibilities will be extra-local in nature. As the Lord leads, they will also shoulder various responsibilities in the Lord's work. The following brothers have been chosen for their special calling as given in Eph 4:11, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;" and are appointed according to Titus 1:5.

1. Brother C.E. Dasan of Hebron, Hyderabad
2. Brother K. Phillip of Jehovah Shammah, Madras
3. Brother S. Martin of Waltair
4. Brother Lazar Sen of Ahmedabad
5. Brother Amrit Raj of Bangalore
6. Brother T.E. Koshy of Syracuse, N.Y., U.S.A.

In God's sovereign way, we have been brought together one by one and for the past many years we have been travelling together, working together and studying the situation

together in many parts of the country and abroad. That is why I felt that with their help we will be able to find out in a clear way those brothers whom the Lord has been preparing to be elders and deacons of God's flock, purchased by His precious blood. We have been drawn together by the Lord more closely and intimately into the work of the Lord for the last many years. I feel very confident that through their faithfulness, humility, diligence and prayer, the Lord will reveal His perfect will for His Church.

God willing, we have to set apart these brothers on the 24th of February at 'Hebron', Hyderabad, by laying on of hands after fasting and prayer for the ministry to which the Lord has called them. At that time Brother Koshy will be away in the U.S.A., but the other five brothers will be present. God willing, Brother Koshy will be set apart for a similar ministry during the 10th Annual North America Holy Convocation at Syracuse, New York, U.S.A. which will be held from July 23 to 31.

The ministry to be fulfilled by these six brothers along with me, is a very important ministry, because by waiting upon the Lord together with one mind we will be enabled to protect His people from many wrong teachings and attacks of the enemy. By labouring together with one accord and one mind, and by remaining true to the heavenly vision which the Lord gave us more than forty years ago, we will know clearly the Lord's choice for shepherds for His flock in different places."³⁰

After setting apart five of the six brothers and their wives by the laying on of hands at a special service held at 'Hebron', on Thursday the 24th of February, 1983, Bakht Singh wrote on the March 6th issue of Hebron Messenger:

"After much prayer and fasting, we have found six brothers to assist me in different ministries. They will shoulder various responsibilities in the work of the Lord worldwide

as the Lord leads. Before they were set apart by fasting and prayer and laying on of hands, they were proved and tested. By laying our hands upon them scripturally, we expressed our spiritual oneness and relationship with them as believers and members of the Body of Christ. Many people thought that it is impossible to find such men. No doubt, it was a difficult job, but after persevering prayer, the Lord began to remove all the obstacles and gave us a glorious time on Thursday the 24th of February.

Out of those six brothers, five brothers together with their wives dedicated themselves afresh for the new service which might take them to any part of India or even other countries. On the 23rd and 24th we had fasting and prayer, besides fasting and prayer which we had previously on three or four occasions. After coming to one mind and finding no charge against them we questioned them one by one whether they were fully prepared to accept this responsibility as from the Lord, and were willing to go through any hardship, and inconvenience which they might have to go through while carrying on their responsibilities. They all expressed their willingness to accept the responsibility which might involve long journeys and hardships. We also questioned their wives whether they were quite happy about their husbands accepting such a great responsibility. After they dedicated themselves afresh for God's service upon their knees, I laid hands on them and prayed. After the meeting was over, to our joy and amazement, practically everyone in the gathering numbering about 700 came with beaming smiles, embraced them and welcomed them to such a ministry. It was a glorious occasion to see all the believers full of joy, feeling perfectly one with these brothers who have been set apart for God's service. We covet your prayers for all of them that the Lord may find them faithful in their new responsibility which they have ac-

cepted from Him. Please pray that the Lord may enable us to set apart elders in this manner in as many Assemblies as possible, so that God's perfect order for His Church may be brought about in His time. By waiting upon the Lord to make sure of His choice, we have been much revived, inspired and strengthened. Please do pray that the Lord may keep us faithful in the new responsibility.³¹

At the tenth North America Holy Convocation in Cazenovia, N.Y., from July 23 to 31st, 1983, where eight hundred people [were gathered] representing twenty countries, Brother Koshy and his wife were set apart by laying on of hands as had been mentioned in the previous issue of Hebron Messenger."³²

7. Seeking the Lord's will corporatively and individually:

From the beginning of his ministry, Bakht Singh was a team player. Whenever and wherever possible, he worked with people of the same vision.

From the beginning of his Christian life, he learned that the Lord Jesus Christ is a living, sovereign Lord and therefore everything that we do whether small or big, collectively and or individually, must be done according to His will and guidance, for He is the Head of the Body, the Church. The Church, therefore is to act under the direction and guidance of the Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the previous chapters, we have seen how Bakht Singh sought and did the will of God.

One of the evangelical leaders of India once said that in the last century (19th) the Lord raised up men like Hudson Taylor and George Muller to teach the Church the importance of doing God's work in faith. And this century (20th) the Lord raised Bakht Singh to teach the Body of Christ to seek and do the will of God corporately.

Dr. Angus Kinnear, a British medical missionary worked

with Bakht Singh from the beginning of the 1940s, said that the most remarkable thing about the work associated with Bakht Singh was that before they made any important decision whether in relation to the speaker, place and whatever it may be - Bakht Singh would meet with his co-workers and pray and seek the mind of Christ. Without unanimity they would not act.

In answer to the question of what he thought were some of the strengths of Bakht Singh's ministry, Dr. Kinnear said the following:

"I was impressed by the spirit of waiting upon the Lord corporately. Whether they were going to a street meeting or a main campaign or crusade, they will pray before doing anything. This was perhaps the greatest strength of the ministry - praying and making sure of God's will before doing anything. They made the decisions after waiting upon the Lord completely. For example, after a time of prayer, someone in the group would say their registration as to what the Lord wants them to do, there was unanimous agreement on that. Others would say 'yes brother, we all feel the same'. ... People were free to express and take the decision corporately as led by the Lord."³³

Rajamani recalls how on one occasion Bakht Singh was invited to Colombo and had bought his ticket to leave the next day. As they prayed with him that evening, however, one of them could find no liberty in the spirit in relation to his going. Accordingly, Bakht Singh cancelled the ticket and delayed his travel until all were united in heart. When he eventually arrived in Ceylon, (now Sri Lanka) events proved beyond a shadow of doubt the rightness of God's timing. This meeting together at the feet of the Lord for every small thing brought to them its own reward. Week by week they witnessed the truly mighty things the Lord did in response to their cries. It was often costly, but they learned to make

personal sacrifices in order that God might have His way among them.

Gordon Bell recalled his unforgettable first experience with Bakht Singh at the Kalimpong Holy Convocation in 1951 when he came to India as a young missionary from Britain. Before the meeting began, Bakht Singh called all the leading brethren for prayer and after the prayer he asked them one by one including Gordon, if any of them had a burden for the message that evening. Thus the speakers for each meeting were selected not by prior assignment but by corporately waiting and seeking the mind of God.

George Verwer was amused and surprised by this practice of selecting speakers at the last minute before the meetings.

"To me, as a Westerner so well organized, we had to know months in advance who is going to speak. In contrast to that, Bakht Singh would wait upon God and often even he did not know who was going to minister in the evening meeting until about the time it came just before the meeting. Just before the meeting he would call a group of brothers for prayer and then he would ask me if I had a message. Of course I was just always burden-hearted to give the message. In 'Hebron,' that is where I really got to know him and through our prayer and my ministry at the convocations when he let me speak at these great convocations of people."³⁴

Bakht Singh taught his associates and fellow saints the importance of seeking the Lord's will corporately for the ministry, for travels and for any decision that would affect the church or the individual believer, such as marriage, employment, etc.

Once this writer asked him why he was seeking God's will for the obvious things, and his answer was to never take anything for granted. We must have the spirit of humility to follow Prov 3:5,6: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart;

and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

The following are Bakht Singh's guidelines to help him to find God's will:

"Of the many promises which the Lord gave me to confirm His will regarding my going abroad, one was Exodus 33:14, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." I have seen this promise from His living Word being literally fulfilled in every place the Lord has taken me so far since then.

Indeed, the Lord is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working (Isaiah 28:29). What a great loss we incur both spiritually and materially by not waiting patiently till His perfect will is made fully clear to us. For some, it takes years to learn this simple lesson. Once we do learn it, we will be able to say with the Psalmist, "I delight to do thy will, Oh my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8).

I have learnt by the experience of many years that our safety is in waiting patiently till we have received every possible evidence confirming God's perfect will. Our God is a loving and living God and He delights to guide us in His perfect ways, provided we are willing to be led by Him at every step and in every matter. We should seek His face daily with all meekness, because we read in God's Word, "The meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek will he teach his way." (Psalm 25:9).

We should go to the Lord every day, preferably the first thing in the morning, and during these devotional moments we should sincerely wait upon the Lord with this prayer: "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." (Psalm 143:10). The Lord will speak to us in His still small voice (1 Kings 19:12), which can be heard clearly only when we live very close to Him and when we are able to say hon-

estly and truthfully, Lord, not my will, but Thy will be done. (Matt. 26:39).

Generally there are seven evidences by which we can make sure of God's perfect will and they are as follows:

a. The first evidence is the witness of the Holy Spirit with our spirit, as when God spoke to Samuel, "Arise, anoint him: for this is he." (1 Samuel 16:12).

b. The second evidence is the witness of the Word of God. We read in Psalm 119:105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." It is for our safety to get God's will confirmed through some portion of God's Word which we read during our morning devotional time. It is very profitable to read the Bible systematically and prayerfully as far as possible upon our knees, and seek God's guidance from the portion we read.

c. The third witness is the registration given to fellow believers, co-workers and God's servants. Daniel also prayed with his friends, (chapter 2:17-19); then as they prayed together God revealed the secret to Daniel.

d. The fourth evidence is the increasing of the inward peace in our hearts as we pray regarding some particular matter. "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." (Isaiah 32:17). However, we have to make sure that this peace is heavenly peace not earthly, human peace. Heavenly peace that makes us feel God's presence more and more strongly.

e. The fifth evidence is the strengthening of our faith and the liberty in spirit which we receive overcoming all fear and anxiety. For instance, when the apostle Paul was sure of God's perfect will regarding his going to Jerusalem, he was determined to go there in spite of the prophesy of Agabus that he would be bound and put into chains in Jerusalem. (Acts 21:11-14).

f. The sixth evidence is the fulfillment of some sign which we may be constrained to request from God, as Abraham's servant did (Genesis 24:10-21). When the circumstances justify it, we may ask God for some sign to be fulfilled in confirming His perfect will.

g. The seventh evidence is the full assurance we receive in our hearts that the Lord's Name is going to be glorified through the particular matter which we are seeking to know His perfect will."³⁵

8. He discovered and practised Biblical worship, and encouraged all the saints both male and female to worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth :

Through the revelation from the Word of God, Bakht Singh realized that God created us and redeemed us to worship Him. All through the Scriptures we see that God is seeking for those who would worship Him. Worship is one of the most misunderstood subjects among evangelicals. As A.W. Tozer said more than half a century ago,

Now worship is the missing jewel in modern evangelicals.

We are organized, we work, we have our agenda. We have almost everything, but there is one thing that the churches, even the gospel churches, do not have, that is the ability to worship. We are not cultivating the act of worship. It is the one shining gem that is lost to the modern church, and I believe that we ought to search for this until we find it.³⁶

God's eternal purpose is to have a redeemed people who worship Him in spirit and in truth. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." (John 4:23)

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb,

clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God. Saying Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. (Rev 7: 9-12)

In true Biblical worship, we minister to the Lord until His heart is satisfied. True worship is the direct result of our deep love for Him and all our activities must be the direct result of our worship of the Lord.

One of the unique aspects of Bakht Singh's ministry was to teach and to practise Biblical worship in all the Assemblies which the Lord raised through him and his co-workers. In most of the Assemblies in India and other places, the believers were encouraged to worship the Lord audibly one by one. Specific time was set apart for pure worship where the saints were encouraged to magnify and glorify the Lord through praise and thanksgiving. In some Assemblies a minimum of an hour or more was set apart purely for worship.

Usually, Sunday morning service began with an opening prayer by one of the leading brethren, followed by worship or devotional songs which are mostly composed by those gifted among the congregation in local languages, with the accompaniment of Indian musical instruments. Then an elder or a leading brother would give a brief exhortation focusing on Christ to prepare the hearts of the believers reminding them that they had not come merely to receive something, but to give to the Lord the worship worthy of His great name. Kneeling down, one by one they would pour out their praise and thanksgiving.

Bakht Singh had discovered that one of the secrets of developing the life of Christ in the soul and spirit of a be-

liever is through Spirit-led individual worship in a corporate setting. Worship also seemed to release the waters of Life from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and in the flow of these living waters a sanctifying process was going on in the hearts of the worshippers. The spirit of resurrection life can be released at such meetings. Indeed, the fullness of Christ is manifested only in the corporate life of the Church. There is a manifestation of Christ in the midst of a corporate body which can never be realized by mere individuals alone. It is Christ in the midst of the golden candlesticks.

"Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt 18:19-20). "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." (Rev 1:3).

Daniel Smith, a Canadian missionary who worked with Bakht Singh for a number of years, made the following remark:

"At 'Hebron', Hyderabad, one Lord's day the worship went on from 9 a.m. until 5.30 p.m. and even then the worship was cut off when it was most strong and vigorous... the time given to pure worship on the Lord's Day mornings is a secret of growth hidden for centuries. Another Sunday, the flow of worship was allowed to continue as believers poured out their love at Jesus' feet." ³⁷

Through such worship the Body is edified, saints are blessed and the Lord's heart is satisfied. The time of worship is like an open heaven. Many non-Christians have been challenged and opened their hearts to receive the Lord at the time of pure worship. "And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will

worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." (1 Corinthians 14:25). "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." (Hebrews 13:15). True worship is the most important spiritual exercise of the priesthood of all believers which breaks down all manmade and ecclesiastical differences such as clergy and laity, male and female, boys and girls. All God's children, who know Him personally as their Saviour and Lord are given the opportunity to participate audibly in worship as time permits. True worship and the Lord's Table are the expression of our oneness and unity regardless of caste, color, creed, nationality, socio-economic status and demographic differences. Through worship, believers are made to realize their God given right of ministering to God directly and are encouraged to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God. "My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense." (2 Chronicles 29:11).

In worship, the worshipper comes to minister to the Lord, not to receive anything. It is a time of giving to God the glory due unto His Name. Unfortunately, most Christians on Sundays usually go to a 'so-called place of worship' to receive something – to hear singing or to be entertained by the preachers and friends. A Biblical worship, however, always involves giving ourselves wholly to the Lord.

9. He encouraged fellowship among the saints by introducing the love-feast :

One of the salient features of the Assemblies has been the 'love-feast' following the Sunday Worship service. Some Assemblies prepare all the food themselves for all those who would come. In others, the believers are encouraged to bring dishes to pass for themselves and for others. The main pur-

pose is not merely to satisfy physical hunger but to provide an opportunity for believers to get together and to have fellowship with one another over a meal. We notice from Acts 2 and from 1 Corinthians chapter 11 that the early believers met together for worship and fellowship through the love-feast, because hospitality is not an option, it is a command. This also helps to break down human barriers based on colour, language, and caste or any other man-made divisions. Particularly in India, where there are so many different castes which do not interact with one another, the love-feast helped not only to break down barriers but also, in a practical way, to demonstrate the acceptance of each other in Christ, thus showing forth our oneness in and through Christ. It is heart-warming to see believers of various backgrounds sitting, eating and fellowshiping together regardless of their differences.

The caste system has been one of the curses of India. Caste divides but Christ unites. True Biblical Christianity is all-inclusive. Yet even among Christians, particularly in denominations established by foreign missionaries, the caste system is maintained even today. Some church-growth people advocate establishing churches on the basis of caste.

There are Christian churches in India that will not admit to their fellowship, members of certain castes, and others that separate various castes at the communion rail. How, one wonders, can such churches set forth with its full power St. Paul's assurance that Christ's death on the cross has broken down all dividing walls? (Eph. 2:14).³⁸

Bishop V.S. Azariah (1874-1945) the first Indian Bishop of the Anglican Church at Dornakal Diocese in Andhra (1913-45) fought against the caste system that was plaguing Christians during his life and ministry. His biographer, Susan Billington Harper writes:

"The bishop's most frequently articulated social goals

were to lessen the age-old animosities between Mala and Madigas and to soften the negative feelings of 'Sudras' towards 'untouchables'... A Yeruka (Erukala) convert named Premamma refused for four years after her conversion to join former Malas and Madigas at Christian wedding feasts, insisting that she cook and eat her food separately... 'we deplore the many exhibitions of caste spirit within the Church', lamented Azariah in 1935. But the pages of his diocesan magazine bore repeated testimony to the survival of such caste prejudices. As in virtually all other areas of India, the church was apparently unable to produce a sense of total community strong enough to replace caste.

Of particular concern to Azariah as leader of the ultimately successful ecumenical effort to unite South India's churches was the way in which Christian denominationalism permitted and even exacerbated caste divisions. As he observed in 1932:

In many places, the Baptist Church has all the Madigas of a village; the Church of India (Anglican) has all the Malas of the village. In the Kurnool District in many small villages we may see two chapels, two village schools and two teachers – each serving one, and only one, of the two great out-caste communities in the area. At one of our Pastorate centers, the Baptist chapel (entirely consisting of Madiga converts) stands at a distance of twenty yards from our chapel! ... These divisions pander to the age-long caste spirit of the people. Malas and Madigas hate to sit side by side, never eat in each other's houses, yes, never drink from the same well. Denominationalism then comes and panders to this inter-caste hatred. If one section joins one Church, the other joins another, and caste is thus no chance of becoming really Christian or truly Catholic, but for ever remains sectarian, racial and caste-ridden.

Far from eradicating caste, the divided Christian church

provided new alliances around which rival kulams might organize themselves and reinforce their sense of distinctiveness from other groups. Denominationalism thus undermined the anti-caste policy of Andhra's churches and further complicated the already elusive goal of making conversion to Christianity the occasion for overcoming caste distinctions."³⁹

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27). "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13). "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free: but Christ is all, and in all." (Col 3:11). It was through these Assembly love-feasts that were so revolutionary in bringing about unity among all believers where others have failed, that Bakht Singh was able to succeed by strictly following the New Testament principles.

10. One of Bakht Singh's salient contributions was re-introducing the "Holy Convocations"⁴⁰:

We read about these Holy Convocations in the Old Testament, particularly in Exodus and in Leviticus. In Leviticus chapter 23, God told Moses that they should celebrate the seven feasts of Jehovah and the Israelites should gather together in Jerusalem for these Holy Convocations. "These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons." (Lev 23:4).

Following the founding of the first local church at 'Jehovah-Shammah' in Chennai (Madras), in July 1941, Bakht Singh was led of the Lord to arrange for a Holy Convocation where scattered believers from all across India and other places could come together and "feast" upon the Lord Jesus Christ. The first Holy Convocation was held in 'Jehovah-Shammah' on December the 1st of that same year and lasted

for 19 days. These Holy Convocations have been one of the hallmarks of Bakht Singh's work and ministry. They have done much to break down the walls of separation and build bridges of relationship among people of various castes, colours and backgrounds.

These Holy Convocations were open to all people whether nationals or foreigners, and were a beautiful expression of the Body of Christ living and fellowshiping together in love and unity. By attending and participating in these Holy Convocations, many were able to understand the meaning and the purpose of the House of God (the Church) where the Body of Christ worked together corporately to minister to the needs of one another, both temporal and spiritual.

Following are the reports of various Holy Convocations by Western missionaries who attended them, giving their perspectives.

Julia Malic writes of her experience at the 'Jehovah-Shammah' Holy Convocation in May 1956:

There were several features that impressed me on approaching the place of the Convocation. Each convocation costs 1000s of dollars, yet there are no appeals for money. When the life of the Spirit flows, they really do give. Unbelievers present are consistently warned not to give any money unto the Lord. Banners bearing texts of the Word of God were strung from gates, fences, and everywhere, in whatever direction one might look. The impact of their message stirred the soul and one's thoughts became absorbed with great truths concerning the Church, His Kingdom, His Glory and His Reign. It was a place filled with love and life. I was transplanted into Apostolic times for a week, where one saw the normal life of the Church of God.

There is no such thing as membership in these assemblies. The only membership is into the Body of Christ by the new birth. Doctrines and methods are extracted from the

Word of God, where also the function of the Church is clearly taught. The whole assembly renders active part both in worshipping, witnessing, caring and serving to the needs of both believers and unbelievers.”⁴¹

Daniel Smith wrote of his observations of the Madras Holy Convocation:

“The Holy Convocation is an amazing fellowship of love – for while largely to do with one country, yet there are people of many races, languages and customs here from within the one country. It is the kind of thing which one dreams of as ideal but which one seldom hopes to see in actual demonstration. But here it is and there is amazing joy in the camp.”⁴²

Following is an eye-witness report of the Holy Convocation from the Balance of Truth, June 1955:

“Theme verses:

‘King of kings, and Lord of Lord.’ Rev. 19:16 ..

‘And of His kingdom there shall be no end.” Luke 1:33’

‘His dominion, shall be from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.’ Zech. 9:10’

The first impression of the Holy Convocation is that of putting the clock back to Old Testament times. A “multitude” of nearly two thousand were accommodated in booths on the compound, yet there was no rush and bustle, no shouting or clamour. A quiet sense of orderliness and spiritual authority pervaded the whole. On every side were long, white banners bearing appropriate verses of Scripture, some announcing the presence of the Lord in the midst of the camp, and the consequent necessity for personal, mental, and spiritual holiness: others proclaiming His greatness and might, and demanding the homage due to His Name; others again declaring the Headship of Christ over the Church which is His Body - His pre-eminence, His surpassing beauty and sweetness, His authority and Kingship, and the eternal and unchangeable character both of His kingdom and of His

promises. In the presence of these silent but powerful witnesses, the heart was hushed to worship.

Before the front steps of the main building is erected a pandal capable of seating several thousands. This had been enlarged to seat about twice that number, but during the closing days of the Convocation even this was insufficient to accommodate all who gathered. It was not the seating capacity, however, nor even the sight of thousands prostrated in prayer, that challenged the heart on entry. Above the steps and facing the throng, stretched three great banners, bearing the three mighty texts at the head of this article. So powerful was this living message from the living Word that the soul was instantly bowed in the presence of the King of kings, and its effect which did not diminish with familiarity.

Catering and serving, which is problem No. 1 of any large gathering, went smoothly and harmoniously in the hands of willing 'volunteers.' These were from the local Assembly only, who willingly forfeited their share of the spiritual feast in order to care for the physical welfare of the visitors. Some were in charge of the cooking and serving, and a little imagination will readily concede that this was no mean responsibility. Three to four sacks of rice, and a mountain of onions and vegetables had to be prepared and cooked for the two main meals of the day. At meal times the 'multitude' were seated very scripturally, 'in the ranks', up and down which passed the 'servers', some laying first the banana-leaf plates, and others following with the rice and curry -ample helpings to each, and all exceedingly tasty and well-prepared. It might also be mentioned, to the glory of God, that no charge was made to any, rich or poor. All was provided by voluntary contributions. No collections were taken at any of the meetings except the usual free-will offerings at the worship gathering on the Lord's Day morning. Even there, the unconverted who might be present were solemnly warned not to

offer of their substance to the Lord till they had first yielded themselves to His claims.

Others of the volunteers cared for the water-supply. Lorries kept large tanks replenished, and this item alone cost Rs. 35/- per day, to maintain a constant water supply for 2-3 thousand. Adequate for drinking, bathing, and washing clothes, during the hottest month of the year, testifies to care, supervision, and forethought, that is worthy of the highest praise.

Still other volunteers cared for the bathroom and sanitary arrangements, and, in spite of the numbers on the compound, there was no sign of rubbish or uncleanness. Any stray piece of paper was immediately gathered by child volunteers who took a justifiable pride in the well-kept appearance of the inter-booth spaces entrusted to their care.

Others again drove the van which met all incoming trains, saw the guests to their accommodation, and cared for their departure also in due course.

So much for the organizing side of the Convocation, which in every branch was irreproachable and God-honouring. One of the most remarkable features of the whole was, perhaps, the prevailing atmosphere of prayer. Each of that vast concourse of guests was received with prayer, and did not depart without being commended to the Lord. If any fell sick, they were visited and prayed for, likewise if any were in spiritual difficulties or distress.

As for the spiritual aspect of the Convocation, the resultant blessing is eloquent witness to the spiritual power liberated in messages sought and obtained from the Lord and soaked in weeks of prayer, both individual and collective. A typical day began at 5 a.m. with Family Prayers. It was expected that private devotions would precede this! Breakfast followed at about 7 a.m., and the morning session of ministry began at 9 a.m. Time-schedules gave the starting

hour of any period of ministry, but otherwise there was no time-limit! The message was given in English, and translated regularly into Telugu and Tamil and sometimes into Hindi as well, the translations proceeding smoothly and rapidly. Lunch was served when the period of ministry was over, which might be anywhere between 12 p.m., and 3 p.m. At 3.30 p.m. was a gathering for prayer for gospel work and workers, and ministry relevant to that subject. This was followed by a break for a cup of tea. At 6.30 p.m. the evening period of ministry began, and continued till between 9 p.m. and 10 p.m., sometimes later. After this, dinner was served and after dinner the 'Family' gathered again for evening prayers. On two occasions this continued till 1.30 a.m.! And so to bed, till the 'reveille' was sounded at 4.30 a.m. by an enthusiastic band of young volunteers who circled the camp singing lyrics to the accompaniment of harmonium, violin, and chipade. Strange to say, no-one ever seemed to feel really tired, and only the aged and very young were occasionally overpowered by sleep during the meetings. In addition to the activities, a prayer chain was conscientiously and enthusiastically maintained during the days of Convocation. (Exodus 27: 20-21). A group of five or six gathered in the Prayer-Booths (one for men and another for women) and interceded on behalf of the Convocation. This group changed every hour, but the Prayer Booth was not vacated till the next group took over. Thus prayer arose continuously, day and night, throughout the days of Convocation. Is it any wonder that blessing followed?" ⁴³

The following is the account of the Holy Convocation at Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, by Dr. Morris:

"The Word of God came through Brother Bakht Singh and others with him that they should plan for a Holy Convocation at Guntur. The vision was clear, but the difficulties were great. How could such a young assembly carry the great weight and responsibility of such a venture? Where

in all closely-built Guntur was there a place where the great crowd anticipated might be accommodated? Then each Convocation cost about Sterling Pounds 750 and there was to be one in Hyderabad, so a leap of faith would be required to embark the very month following on such another costly enterprise.

Without any appeal to man, without anyone being kept waiting for payment, without any charge being made to the 2000 guests (plus their children), the Lord supplied every need in answer to the faith of His servant."

Joyous hard working:

"A day before the meetings were due to commence found the compound a vast hive of activity. The "pandal" (shelter of bamboo and palm leaves) capable of holding 3000, had been erected in the center. On three sides, booths of the same materials had been put up for housing families, while on the fourth side there was the great barrack-like three-stories building which provided sleeping accommodation for hundreds of sisters above and brothers on the ground floor. On the top of this was a flag staff from which floated a rich blue banner bearing the inscription in white, "JESUS IS THE LORD OF ALL" ... and therein lay the secret of ten wonderful days.

Simplicity and order were the key-notes. All was being done for the glory of God and nothing shoddy would do. For three weeks the brothers had been labouring, white-washing, putting up the pandal, booths and wash places, often working far into the night. An electrician took a three weeks' 'holiday' on half pay in order to wire the whole place for the electricity. Sisters worked on long banners that the Word of God might be everywhere displayed; others patiently cleaned bags and bags of rice; but how can one begin to mention the labour of love involved and so joyfully undertaken.

The next morning into this carefully prepared scene, the saints came pouring, often bringing with them unsaved relatives or friends. Many of these met with God during those days. A bus plied to and from the railway station bearing the banner "The Lord loves the gates of Zion", and out of it poured the singing occupants to be greeted and prayed with on the spot."

One heart, one soul:

"In order that the tremendous work involved in caring for the needs of well over 2000 people plus hundreds of children could be adequately carried on, volunteers were called for and organized into teams for various duties. Did any one need proof of God's work in these lives, they would have found it in the spirit in which the manual work was carried on. Professors were seen pulling water carts; college demonstrators and teachers daily swept the house and compound; the head cook was a brother with several academic degrees! And how infinitely worthy is our beloved Lord to receive these willing offerings.

Food was served thrice daily (except on a couple of occasions when the spiritual food was so good that somehow breakfast got so late that it was missed out altogether), and required a rearrangement of the reed mats in the pandal. The serving team gathered by the kitchen, where the massive cooking pots stood on the open-air fire place, to pray while the long, long lines of people sat cross-legged on their mats singing, singing. First along came the leaf plates, then the rice, and the curried vegetables. When the last person had been served, the blessing was asked and all fell to!

Oh, the glow!

"The meetings! The heart-searching and illuminating

messages from God's Word, often on the theme of the spiritual Zion, the church; or the singing; or the chain of prayer which carried on throughout the 24 hours as different men and women met in the separate places on an hourly rotation. The last meeting seldom ended before 1 a.m., and the singing party did as efficient a job as 2500 alarm clocks would have done around 5 a.m. each morning! One of the very few Westerners present made an interesting remark, "Usually," he said, "in conventions there is a burden that Life may come in. Here we are moving in Life."

With us the victory:

"It has been thought that there could be no procession of witness because of the Convocation center being so far from the city, but the Lord over-ruled this in His own way and gave us the most wonderful day of the ten! Suddenly and painlessly, He caught to Himself the much-loved sister who had given the first ten rupees (about Sterling Pound 1 at that time). It had long been her wish that she should go to Him from the midst of His people. The day of the funeral was one of victory and joy all through. A procession over 1000 strong sang its way for three miles through the heart of the city, and on out to the quiet graveyard. We reached there as the sentinel palms were etched against the afterglow in the western sky. "We do not bury the body, we sow it in hope of the resurrection..." Darkness fell and [the] service ended by lamplight. "Dust unto dust." The hard earth clods thudded on to the coffin But this "mortal must put on immortality." Softly, sweetly through the night came the strains of a violin playing, 'Jerusalem the Golden.' As we knelt around the open grave something of the 'radiancy of Glory' broke through, and we could almost hear the trumpets sounding on the other side!"⁴⁴

11. He had passion for God and compassion for souls – Evangelism and Gospel raids:

Bakht Singh preached a Biblical gospel for salvation particularly at a time when it was not popular to preach the Old Gospel. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve." (1 Cor 15:3-5) "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12).

His life and ministry demonstrated that he had a deep love and passion for the Lord which was expressed outwardly as he was moved with compassion for the souls of men and women whom the Lord loved and died for. From the time of his conversion, he had such compassion for souls that he began distributing tracts and witnessing Christ to others. At heart, Bakht Singh was an evangelist, sharing in the burden of God with regard to the salvation of perishing souls globally. Throughout his life, he did both personal and mass evangelism. He always carried tracts to distribute to whoever he might come in contact with. He and his co-workers and fellow-believers prayed earnestly and perseveringly for the souls of men and women both in India and abroad. A visiting British missionary heard the saints at Jehovah Shammah praying with a great burden for the people of Java, Sumatra in Indonesia way back in 1945. He wondered if the great revival there in late 1965-66 was in response to that great burden of prayer in India.

In order to evangelize people more effectively, Bakht Singh organized gospel campaigns, gospel processions, gospel raids, door to door visitation, open-air and street evangelism. From the mid 60s onwards, he teamed with OM and

made the best use of their Trucks and personnel to evangelize various parts of India from south to north, from Kerala to Kashmir.

He also travelled around the world preaching Christ for salvation and taught believers the vision of the New Testament Church. During his time in Indonesia in 1968, his spirit was ignited by the passion of God for perishing souls and he prayed earnestly that believers in India and everywhere would pray with a heavy burden to evangelize Asia and the world.

About this Bakht Singh wrote in the Hebron Messenger:

"Throughout the Conference, the Lord has brought before us the challenge to take the gospel to the uttermost parts of the world. Many servants of God, representing the Lord's Church in different parts of Asia, accepted this challenge with all humility; and dedicated their lives afresh to the Lord by bringing themselves to the altar of consecration with a sincere longing to spend and be spent for Him in this joyful task of serving Him in the gospel!"⁴⁵

The Lord heard his prayers and used him mightily for the salvation of countless people both in India and abroad.

12: The gospel processions testifying of Christ:

Every place he went for meetings, Bakht Singh held gospel processions going round the city, town and villages, turning them upside down for Christ. The gospel procession was unique to his ministry, where on occasions tens of thousands of saints would march, several abreast, stretching out for miles in length, singing, praising, glorifying God and declaring His glory among the heathens and pagans. It was an expression of the church unleashed – the church without and beyond walls. In the days of his revival meetings, believers from all denominations and backgrounds marched together

showing forth the oneness and unity of all believers regardless of their colour, caste, class, denomination or doctrine. Witnessing such processions, non-Christians and nominal Christians would take note of it – saying that they had been with Jesus. What an impact such a godly procession made upon the people! Such processions were the best advertisement for Christ where people could see for themselves the transforming power of God in the lives of these singing and smiling people as they reflected the Lord Jesus Christ who came to seek and save that which was lost.

But the largest of all the gospel processions was the one that followed his casket to the cemetery in September, 2000, where hundreds of thousands marched before and after the casket, singing and praising God. Even though he had died, Bakht Singh's work and ministry followed him.

13: His working relationship with Western Missionaries and Missions:

Contrary to the notion of some of his critics that he was anti-foreign and anti-missionary, his record shows otherwise. From the beginning of his work, he linked with spiritual men and women who shared in his vision and mission. He always had an open heart toward God's servants whether they were nationals or foreigners. While some missionaries worked in harmony and in unity by identifying themselves with Bakht Singh and the Assemblies from the beginning, he also linked with Western Missions and missionaries of likeminded believers. His close working relationship with WEC (World Evangelization Crusade) and Operation Mobilization is very note worthy.

(a). Working in Partnership with World Evangelization Crusade.

In the early 1950s, Norman Grubb, then International

Secretary of WEC, visited Bakht Singh at 'Hebron', Hyderabad, at the recommendation of Wilfred and Nancy Morris, who were working with Bakht Singh at that time. After spending a few days with Bakht Singh and his co-workers, Norman Grub wrote the following:

"...What impressed me most on my Asian visit was my eight days with Bakht Singh of India and his co-workers and congregations. Here was to me a sample of the coming worldwide church of Christ, where every nation has its own anointed men of God, it is self-supporting and self propagating churches, which in due course will begin to send witnesses to all parts of the earth just as much as the churches in the West sent their witnesses to other lands... But in all my missionary experiences, I think, these churches on the New Testament foundations are the nearest I have seen to a replica of the early church and pattern for the birth and growth of the young churches in all the countries which we used to talk about as the mission fields. We found such oneness of the spirit with them. I was enthusiastic for the suggestion that others of the WEC staff give themselves to a teaching ministry in these young churches. I could by no means go along with critics who seemed more disturbed about disrupting a dead Christianity than backing a living movement of the Spirit. Bakht Singh was thankful for any help WEC could give of this kind and some in WEC were ready to respond. The result had been an unbroken co-operation for about twenty years. Women workers among the women, a couple on children's work. But two of the few [bachelors] give themselves wholly to these churches, living on the Indian level, and that it is no light thing in Indian villages or small town like, Noel Crocker and John Kennedy."⁴⁶

From the early 50s to the early 70s, about 20 years or so, WEC missionaries, mostly from England and a few from Australia and Canada, worked full-time or part-time in close

fellowship and partnership with Bakht Singh.⁴⁷ Mr. & Mrs. Geoff and Blanch Abbiss remained in India and worked full-time in 'Hebron' from 1964 to the mid 80s. Most of them worked in the Assemblies discipling and teaching. They made very valuable contributions to enrich and edify the Body of Christ in the building up of the newly converted believers from Kashmir to Kerala and from Kalimpong to Coimbatore. Both Bakht Singh and the WEC missionaries worked together shoulder to shoulder under the Lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Head of the Body, the Church. Bakht Singh, later known as the father of modern indigenous churches in India, worked in close fellowship with "White Western" missionaries, and they fully accepted his anointed leadership. The reason for this was that in Christ, there is neither East or West – in Christ all are one. From the beginning of his ministry, Bakht Singh worked as a 'team player' in close fellowship with both nationals and foreign missionaries who were spiritually like-minded, regardless of their backgrounds.

About their oneness in the ministry one of the WEC missionaries who worked in co-operation with him wrote:

"We were privileged to go on with Brother Bakht Singh and team workers in Andhra area. Here I saw something of God's work such as I have seldom seen before, and thank God for the experience.

Since returning, the Lord has led us to see we are to minister alongside (spiritually) this group. We expect to minister as He enables us to any of the Lord's people of North India (or elsewhere), but our vision is the same as Brother Bakht Singh's.

Now we begin to see how the practice of this vision works out. Brother Bakht Singh has, we believe, the mind of the Lord when he holds that the Lord's strategy for His Church in India is by the sowing of living Assemblies as centers of

evangelization throughout India. The raising up of such living Assemblies is His commission.

This is all the more vital ministry, we believe, in the light of the fact that most Christian work in India is supported by foreign money, and national workers are also; so such work would cease very soon if such supports were cut off, as it might well be. However, this work would continue, for it is financed and manned almost exclusively by national resources in Christ. Therefore, it has a more lasting value than any work based on a mission, a mission church or such like, and is, moreover, the New Testament pattern, I reckon. This group has accepted us into fellowship as one of themselves, which is a wonderful thing and a real answer to many prayers, since there would be little natural expectation of such occurring!"⁴⁸

Noel Crocker, another WEC missionary in India, wrote in 1955: "The Lord does seem to be urging upon us a closer link with people like Brother Bakht Singh than already exists, recognizing that we are one."⁴⁹

Brother Geoff Abbiss and Mrs. Blanch Abbiss, who worked full-time based in 'Hebron', Hyderabad, started a VBS in 1964 (Vacation Bible School – mainly for children). The Lord had been using the VBS ministry through the Assemblies scattered all across India to reach children of all faiths, and through them, their parents. About the beginning of VBS, in 'Hebron' Brother Abbiss wrote to the author in 2001:

"It was in Jan'64 that Brother Bakht Singh asked us to pray about having a Vacation Bible School in the summer at 'Hebron.' The Lord gave liberty to accept the invitation and so we shared fully with him what was involved. 'You buy what you want and give us the bills', he said. The week before the VBS started, we showed him the flannel-graph lessons, etc. – his view of them was brief, as he was about to leave for some weeks of ministry elsewhere in India. In 1965,

he was present for the full period of the VBS and saw with his own eyes what it was all about. He was thrilled and very moved to see the children coming in from 7.30 a.m. to start, and immediately told the bookroom to sell Bibles and New Testaments at half-price – in the next few days over 100 were sold! He was out, every morning to see the children arrive, and during the ten-day period he saw every class and section operating. His joy and enthusiasm were evident to all, and for one who bore daily the burdens of the churches, he experienced a real tonic those days. Some of the seniors, for their hand work, were making texts from plaster-of-paris, using several moulds – he was more interested and suggested fret-work for the boys, to make texts from thin wood. (Because of all that was involved we did not follow thro' on this, but his support for the VBS work was 100%).”

Besides the VBS the Abbisses were used of the Lord to train and equip those who came out for full-time ministry through regular, systematic Bible studies and ministry of the Word in the assembly. They were always available for Bakht Singh and saints to do whatever needed to be done both in 'Hebron' and elsewhere. These were trophies of grace prepared by the Lord and sent to India to build His Church along with Bakht Singh and his fellow-workers to show forth His fullness and oneness.

Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Jacobs, who worked with the Assemblies from the early- to-mid 60s were used of the Lord in starting the "Peace of God" Bible Correspondence Course which is still going on in three languages and reaching tens of thousands of non and nominal Christians all across India. While he was in India, Jacobs helped in teaching, training and equipping believers through a series of Bible studies. His articles in the Hebron Messenger were a great source of blessing to many.

Daniel Smith, formerly with the China Inland Mission,

worked closely with Bakht Singh as a teacher and a Convocation speaker in various Assemblies in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and India from the early 50s to the end of the 60s. The Lord used him greatly for the edification and extension of His kingdom. He deeply appreciated what God was doing through Bakht Singh and his co-workers. He was constrained to write a book on Bakht Singh entitled 'A Prophet of God, Bakht Singh of India,' primarily for the benefit of Westerners who had very little knowledge of what God was doing through this humble man of God. In the book he wrote:

"This little book about Bakht Singh is written for a specific purpose. It is not to exalt the servant of the Lord, eminent though he be, nor to popularize a genuine work of God. The purpose is quite different. Because of spiritual declension at home we believe that, the foreign missionary movement is receding. In Eastern countries, we see God is doing a new thing, which is beginning to break forth through men like Bakht Singh. We do not pretend there is perfection in Bakht Singh's work, but we feel it is one of the truest and purest examples in our day of God's ideal method of building His Spiritual House. ... The story is brief, for Bakht Singh will not speak of himself. Into this life story I have woven some of our mutual observations as we have talked together and some things I have learned from him; but in the midst is Bakht Singh's story and a brief account of his work and character.... There is something splendidly spiritual about his character, and that in itself is singularly edifying to believers everywhere. In addition, his ministry has made one of the deepest spiritual impacts ever made by a servant of God on the heart and life of India itself."⁵⁰

Based on his experience at the Holy Convocations in India, Smith wrote:

"Everywhere they (Bakht Singh and his team) go, there seems to be an upsurge of spiritual desire. Hindu converts

are increasingly numerous and meetings are amazingly well-attended. The living Assemblies founded are a mark of a new and gracious work of the Spirit of God throbbing with life and love. ...There is a great burden of prayer among believers... That the time given to pure worship on the Lord's day morning is a secret of growth hidden for centuries. In Hyderabad on the Lord's day, the worship went on from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. and even then the worship was cut off when it was most strong and vigorous.⁵¹

Smith then goes on to cite some examples of remarkable conversions of Hindus:

"There is one man living near us who had a rather remarkable experience. He went to a famous temple some time ago. But on entering the inner court, where the chief idol was, he could see nothing but a cross. Much perplexed, he returned home; and suddenly, as he walked in one of his fields, again he saw a cross rising up before him. Fully persuaded God was speaking to him, he sent for one of the brethren that he might learn the meaning of the cross. He was gloriously saved and devoted that piece of land to the Lord for the building of the Gospel Hall.

There was also a Hindu lawyer to whom the Lord spoke in a remarkable way. He was spoken to by the Lord and straightway gave up his practice to preach the gospel. His own mother tried to poison him. Then later, his wife, whom he loved very much, took off her lovely sari, put on rags, and went out from home. This was a great humiliation. He fell on his knees and prayed with strong crying and tears. While he prayed, the Lord gave him a promise. Comforted, he rose from the ground, dried his tears, and sat on a chair. While he sat, his wife appeared in the doorway. She was very humble. The tears were in her eyes. She said that while walking on the road, she had seen a great light and met 'your Jesus'. So she came back with a new heart to be her husband's

fellow-worker in the same grace. It is wonderful indeed how God speaks in this land. He is very busy with His great redeeming and renewing works.

Meetings in Guntur followed those at Bezwada. The work is comparatively new here, and the local church was formed only in 1954 during our campaign at that time. But there has been a most encouraging growth, and between 150-200 meet around the Lord's Table each Lord's Day morning. Sunday evening saw 600 gathered, and both morning and evening meetings during the whole week were [well] attended. One of the most encouraging features is the rapid spread of the testimony to the villages around. At least four new Assemblies have been formed in the past two years, and they are already functioning independently of the mother church at Guntur. That is the blessed issue when the work is begun on right foundations in the very beginning. And the dear believers not only gave me the best entertainment, but bought me a first-class railway ticket to my next place of meetings at Hyderabad, and added gifts of bath towels, sheets, and handkerchiefs – a sweet savour indeed from grateful Indian hearts. Their love has overflowed to me in every place. ⁵²

Smith enjoyed very cordial working relationship with Bakht Singh and the Assemblies until his retirement from India. Even after he went back to Canada, the friendship and relationship between them continued.

Ron Bissell was a British missionary who worked with Bakht Singh in India before and after the second World War. Because of his special contribution to the work in India he is worth mentioning. During the second World War he was called into the army and became a Major. During that time he married Evalyne Crowe, the elder daughter of Mr. Crowe, the pioneer missionary who founded the work in Ranchi, Bihar State, India, which was closely allied with the ministry of Brother T. Austin- Sparks and Honor Oak in England,

hence its link with the work of Bakht Singh. Bissell was a brilliant organizer and the smooth running of the later Holy Convocations, especially the feeding of many thousands of people, was due to his skills. He also had a limited speaking ministry in the Assemblies. He and his wife worked cordially with Bakht Singh until they moved up to the Nilgiris to run Brooklands, a missionary rest home which they did for many years.

Dr. Angus Kinnear, a British medical missionary of Dhonavur, Vellore, and then living in Bangalore, India, was used of the Lord greatly in the early days of the movement to give the much needed help in godly advice, counsel and support to Bakht Singh and to the infant Assemblies. He too, deeply appreciated what God was doing through Bakht Singh and his co-workers, which he recognized was truly of God. He also maintained his friendship with Bakht Singh till the end.

God raised up several others, both nationals and Western missionaries, some of them extremely gifted, men of integrity and honesty and transparency to help with various needs of this fast-growing movement of God. While most of them worked with Bakht Singh and the Assemblies until the Lord's appointed times, unfortunately some suffered premature parting of ways due to envy, jealousy, human frailties coupled with satanic attacks through fellow-believers.

(b). Hebronites & Operation Mobilization :

It is amazing the way the Lord brings people together to accomplish His work. Earlier we saw how the Lord brought WEC missionaries to work closely with Bakht Singh and the newly formed Assemblies in various parts of India, particularly in Andhra. They were matured and well-seasoned men and women of God who were used of the Lord as trainers and teachers to equip and edify the believers in the Assemblies.

In the mid 60s, in 1964 to be exact, the Lord brought George Verwer and the OM (Operation Mobilization) team and trucks to India to link up with Bakht Singh and the Assemblies. The OM-ers were young and inexperienced, but enthusiastic and energetic, radical and idealistic, their main burden being evangelism. OM made available their personnel, trucks and literature to undertake extensive evangelistic activities in partnership with Bakht Singh in Andhra and other parts of India. Bakht Singh warmly welcomed George Verwer and his team into their midst with open arms. As George put it, "Bakht Singh extended his love and acceptance of us much more than many missionaries."⁵³ Bakht Singh gave George and his team full co-operation and treated them as part of the Fellowship. The fact that he considered George Verwer and the OM Team as part of the 'Hebron Fellowship' was evident in the way Bakht Singh often wrote in the Hebron Messenger asking for prayers for George and OM:

"We praise God for the ministry of the Operation Mobilization Team. Their labours have been abundantly rewarded in Bangalore, Madras and Hyderabad. Many local young men and women have been accompanying them in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. They have gone from house to house. They have been able to make many precious contacts and sell Bibles, New Testaments, gospel booklets and other books in quite a large number. There is a growing hunger for the Word of God among the people in many parts of India and there is at present a most unusual opportunity to preach the gospel and put forth the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank God for the power with which these efforts have been put forth by the team. Some members of this team will be going to Mysore during the Christmas week and to Poona afterwards. We would covet your prayer."⁵⁴

"Brother George Verwer and others in the O.M. Team were much encouraged during their ministry in Guntur,

Tenali, Vijayawada, Masulipatnam, Eluru, Tadepalligudem, Rajahmundry, and Waltair. We had the privilege of sending the brothers from 'Hebron', Hyderabad, with them. In every place, they received a very good response from people of all classes. There was unusual hunger for the Word of God, and everywhere Bibles, New Testaments, gospel booklets and Evangelical books and booklets were in great demand. We do want to know God's mind as to how we should help those who have been brought under conviction or even those who got interested in the Word of God through this ministry. How we long for more co-workers who have real concern for the salvation of perishing souls and the spiritual growth of those who are saved." ⁵⁵

George Verwer and all the OM-ers who worked in fellowship with Bakht Singh were greatly blessed and really appreciated all that they were able to learn during their time in India. Some of them had come to India for training and to become strong men and women of God. Working with Bakht Singh and the Assemblies, they were trained and equipped to be exactly that, - men and women of God. Many of them still have fond memories of their time in India working with Bakht Singh and the Assemblies. In many respects each group complimented the other. Bakht Singh and the Assemblies were actively involved in open-air (street) preaching, gospel raids and gospel processions and marches. They were on the move completely for the Lord. OM-ers with their speciality in books and Bibles and gospel selling, enriched and enhanced the work of God in India as both groups teamed up and worked together. George found Bakht Singh very open minded and co-operative with him and his team.

"Here we were, we did not exactly look perhaps as shiny as we should, people travelling all around in these Old Trucks ... We were used to set up these book exhibitions at the Holy Convocations not just the Bibles and Hebron Books

... but he would let us bring in many other books, written by various authors on various subjects; he was very open minded, more than some people thought. He was more broad-minded than some of his co-workers and associates. We brought in Calvary Road,[by Roy Hession] and a great many spiritual and educational books, in big quantities throughout these Assemblies and sold in big quantities. I think some people in some assemblies were not happy about that, but he (Bakht Singh) put his blessing on that."⁵⁶

Based on his close association and experience with Bakht Singh, George Verwer observed that while some of his key men were extremely legalistic and narrow minded, he himself was a big-hearted person. To prove his point he cited an incident, "I preached at 'Hebron,' Hyderabad, one evening. Then after that I went and preached in the biggest church of South India, a denominational church in Hyderabad. When I came back they did not condemn me for that. Bakht Singh kept an open heart to me."⁵⁷

Bakht Singh himself took special interest in working with the OM-ers and making the best use of their personnel and resources – such as trucks and literature. When working with Bakht Singh in the 'Hebron Fellowship', George Verwer and his team submitted themselves to his leadership, and George allowed Bakht Singh to select the team for gospel campaigns. The traditional OM way was to send teams of young people from different denominational churches working together and being trained but in the case of 'Hebron Fellowship,' OM sent leaders and drivers with big trucks and let Bakht Singh choose the teams.

As George recalled :

"In early 1965, there were so many young people, particularly from 'Hebron' who wanted to go with OM in their truck for evangelistic campaigns from place to place. Bakht

Singh said he would pray and decide who would go in the teams. He said we should get the names from the Lord as to who should go. So there were a lot of disappointed people and a lot of happy people. I remember him launching out one of our teams from 'Hebron.' I was actually driving the truck. He sent us out, told us where to go. He sent us to different Assemblies in Andhra... I ministered in all these Assemblies both small and large. Sometimes meetings would go late into the evening. Some nights, brothers wanted to serve food. I would say I can't eat any food now, it is so late. I am going to bed. Because, in between the morning and evening meetings, we were going for open-air meetings and sometimes for gospel processions and marches with the believers from the Assemblies. Bakht Singh's co-workers in those days were specially famous for their marches in the streets. Then we would combine that with OM's ideas of book selling. So they were exciting days and God gave us that partnership together which went on for a number of years."⁵⁸

OM trucks and OM drivers and OM-ers were greatly used of the Lord in those days in India in many ways. First, they were used in evangelization through the existing Assemblies. Secondly, they were used to go to far away places, particularly in Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan and other northern states where there were no Assemblies. Thirdly, working with the OM-ers helped train many of the Indian young people who came out for full-time ministry. It was like iron sharpening iron. Fourthly, the trucks and the OM drivers provided much needed transportation to Bakht Singh and his co-workers. In those days, 'Hebron' did not own a vehicle and they had to travel on public transportation and often for long distances. Many could not afford even to pay the fare. Therefore, the OM trucks with OM drivers and mechanics were an invaluable assistance to Bakht Singh and his many co-workers to transport them as a team both to near and distant places for

Holy Convocations, gospel campaigns and other meetings.

On one occasion, Bakht Singh went for special meetings in an Assembly in Andhra. While he was there, he was informed of the sudden home-call of a believer in a distant Assembly. After the night meeting, he requested an OM brother to drive him to the funeral that was to take place the following morning, even though, they would have to travel through the night. After the funeral, they drove back to the Assembly for the special meeting the next day. Without the help of the OM truck and driver, this would not have been possible. Indeed, this partnership between Bakht Singh and OM was of the Lord for the edification of His Body, the extension of His Kingdom and for His glory.

The Lord also used the OM trucks to teach Indian young people much needed patience. Many of these trucks were old and often broke down while in use. On one occasion Bakht Singh and a truck-load of people were going to Calcutta from Kalimpong, in West Bengal, following the Kalimpong Holy Convocation. On the way, the truck broke down in a remote part of north-east India. There was no facility available anywhere nearby. They had to wait for several hours before the OM-ers could repair the truck. People were hungry and thirsty. A Swiss brother who had come to the Kalimpong Holy Convocation that year had given some Swiss chocolates to Bakht Singh. Instead of keeping them for himself, with fatherly love and concern he shared them with everyone on the team. He then told them that the Lord was in control and that they should learn to thank the Lord for every situation, whether bitter or blessing.

In retrospect, George Verwer joyfully recalled those days in India, particularly his time with Bakht Singh and the Assemblies as a time of great learning, equipping and maturing in the Lord for His work.

"Here is a man I greatly admire, not that he was perfect,

but he fulfilled the things that I had seen in the Word of God, especially the emphasis on prayer, care for handling the finance, and a simple life-style. Just living with him at 'Hebron' I can see the manner of his life, his absolute honesty and integrity in handling of money and his emphasis on prayer and many things, spontaneous."⁵⁹

While in India, Bakht Singh used Verwer often with confidence to speak at the Holy Convocations and local Assemblies both small and large, including 'Hebron.' In spite of all his youthful idiosyncrasies and limitations, Bakht Singh knew that Verwer was a real man of God, with a heart wholly committed to Him and to His Kingdom. That close relationship which began in India in the mid-60s continued until Bakht Singh went home to glory. They appreciated each other and encouraged each other in their respective calling.

There were many similarities between OM and Hebron ministries, but there were also differences, as Verwer observed: "...but there were tremendous differences between us because we were not a church planting movement at that time. We were evangelists, we were in training, and were still young and learning."⁶⁰ But one thing that was common between them which linked them very closely was the zeal for evangelization. By the time OM linked with Bakht Singh, the Assembly movement was very large, consisting of hundreds of local Assemblies in Andhra Pradesh alone. Yet Bakht Singh was sending people regularly in the streets, both in cities, towns and villages for evangelization. There was thus an immediate heart-linking in every Assembly to which Bakht Singh sent them. Going into the streets together, Verwer would also go with the teams, and the local believers from the Assembly would join the group that was sent from 'Hebron.' That was truly Biblical partnership in mission, with nationals and foreigners working together as members of the family of God.

Commenting on Bakht Singh's influence on OM team members and particularly on himself, Verwer said:

"I think his influence in connection with the church was much a strong point for him which was not so strong with us at that time. His influence on us certainly caused us to make church planting a major part of OM...working with Bakht Singh helped me to see the wide range of ways that God works and with that I need to emphasize the Church. And I have even since said the local church really is the key to world evangelization. As we spread all over the world, we try to find a church planting group like 'Hebron Fellowship' (local churches) that we can work with... In different countries like France we tried to plant churches and after one or two years the work was more or less indigenous and linked with an existing group."⁶¹

His fellowship with Bakht Singh was mutually beneficial. That helped to enlarge both of their horizons and widen their outlooks as it gave them both a more open attitude toward other Christians and ministries – whether foreign or national. This open attitude was very evident in Bakht Singh when he attended the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, sponsored by the Billy Graham Association. There Bakht Singh enjoyed close fellowship with various evangelical leaders from around the world, including Dr. Francis Schafer. This writer remembers that meeting very vividly. "I was waiting for Bakht Singh. Then Dr. Schafer came along and we greeted each other. When I told him I was waiting for Bakht Singh he asked me whether he could meet him for just a few minutes, which they did. Although they were poles apart in certain theological and practical areas, yet they accepted each other as brothers in Christ and as members of the Body of Christ. Due to the fact that Dr. Schafer and Bakht Singh influenced both OM and George Verwer, George was happy that these two men had met and had fellowship with each other."

"Bakht Singh was not an exclusive man. He was open to other believers and accepted them warmly. In fact, he dedicated all three of George Verwer's children at 'Hebron', Hyderabad. "He had more verses for children than I ever knew existed in the Bible," said Verwer.⁶²

Asked about some of the unique aspects of Bakht Singh's life and ministry Verwer commented:

"I think the principle of presenting the gospel – his approach to evangelism - open air, gospel raids, procession etc, in the Assemblies believers sitting on mats on the floor for meetings, for worshipping and prayer; music more authentically Indian, is a phenomenal example of contextualisation in its earliest days without compromising God's Word. The time set apart for pure worship on Sundays where brothers and sisters worshipping with tears was great and inspiring. All-night prayer and worship meetings of the Assemblies are very challenging and inspiring.⁶³

... In the West you can't get people to pray. We often keep waiting, there is a big silence, you are waiting for the next person to pray. In those worship meetings in the Assemblies, people worship one after another, sometimes they rub each other and then Bakht Singh sometimes will say, 'one at a time please;' or he will say, let the ladies worship or pray for a while and then men."

His knowledge of the Word of God was also a phenomenal thing. And all his messages were filled with the Scriptures. He was a man of the Bible. The Bible was the Book and he was like a walking concordance. He was a man of charisma.

He was a man of great faith, trusting the Lord for the impossible, launching out into the deep and that was tremendous.

He was accused of being charismatic because they saw healings, they saw some wonderful things, answers to prayer and miracles taking place, so there were false accusations. But he was a man of charisma.

But I am sure his emphasis on prayer, on church life, his exercise of faith, his love, his emphasis on worship has an impact in the West."⁶⁴

Unfortunately, certain co-workers of Bakht Singh did not fully appreciate the methodology of OM's ministry, and this caused misunderstandings and the eventual breaking of the close working relationship with OM and the Assemblies. Bakht Singh and George, however, maintained their cordial relationship with each other and for their respective ministries.

According to Billy Graham, "Bakht Singh is doing what needs to be done in India," said Verwer.⁶⁵

"Bakht Singh's ministry broke down the caste system, in that respect he was ahead of his time," said, Verwer.⁶⁶

Asked what was Bakht Singh's greatest impact on Verwer's life he said,

"Greatest impact – prayer life of Bakht Singh. I will say his emphasis on prayer, absolute confidence in God. That is why he ran the race to the very end. I think that is one of the most beautiful things about Bakht Singh. He has run the race to the very end.

He was a gifted leader. He was accused of being authoritarian. But how is one going to get anything done in a place like India, all those different backgrounds, all those different castes, poor people, rich people, doctors, uneducated, how is he going to get things done if someone does not take some leadership. Bakht Singh knew how to lead people."⁶⁷

George and his early OM leaders and team members who found their role model and ideal in the spiritual simplicity of Bakht Singh and his movement, threw themselves into the work whole heartedly. Many were married by Bakht Singh and looked up to him as their spiritual instructor. But being young, foreign, radical self-sacrificing and idealistic, they eventually met with the divisive forces of envy, jeal-

ousy and many other unworthy carnal motives which so destroy the beauty and loveliness of the unity of the Spirit in the Body of Christ. The result was that the beautiful working relationship George and OM members enjoyed with the Assemblies came to a halt, though the cordial relationship between George and Bakht Singh and the deep appreciation of what the Lord had been doing in and through them continued.

The Lord enabled Bakht Singh and his co-workers to implement various aspects of the New Testament Church within the cultural backgrounds of the people of God in India. He tried his best to do all things in obedience to His will in the light of the Word of God. Of course, being human he, too, had his frailties and he was the first to admit it because he was a man of humility. He also demonstrated that when we do God's work in God's way we will have the abundance of God's resources to carry out His purposes. Many had expressed that the local churches founded by Bakht Singh and his co-workers are the replica of the true New Testament churches which others can emulate by applying these New Testament principles in other countries within their own cultural backgrounds without compromising the Word of God. One can learn a great deal from the life and ministry of Bakht Singh in understanding the true meaning and the purpose of the Church in the world today.

End Notes

¹Bakht Singh, *Write The Vision*, (Unpublished papers, 1966).

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴V. K. Bawa, *Christianity Is Indian: The Emergence Of An Indigenous Community*, ed. Roger E. Hedlund, (Delhi, India: ISPCK for MIIS, 2000), pp. 130-34.

⁵It is interesting that Bakht Singh came to know Christ in Decem-

ber 1929, the same year Sadhu Sunder Singh disappeared. No one seems to know how he died.

⁶Author's interview with George Verwer, 1991.

⁷Daniel Smith, *Bakht Singh Of India: A Prophet Of God*, (Charlottesville, VA: Christian Aid Mission, n.d. 1959), p. 48.

⁸The Shanars are known today as Nadars.

⁹Y. Vincent Kumaradoss, *Christianity Is Indian: The Emergence Of An Indigenous Community*, ed. Roger E. Hedlund, pp. 5-6.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 4-10.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 12-23.

¹³John Webster Grant, *God's People In India*, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1959), p. 14.

¹⁴Stephen Neill, *A History Of Christianity In India, 1707-1858* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 403-404.

¹⁵Grant, p. 22.

¹⁶Moses Premanandham, *Christianity Is Indian*, ed. Roger E. Hedlund, p. 344.

¹⁷Smith, pp. 26-27.

¹⁸*Christian Mission*, A Journal of Foreign Missions, Winter 2000-2001.

¹⁹Author's interview with Dr. Christy Wilson at his residence, Gordon College, Massachusetts.

²⁰Bakht Singh, *Write The Vision*, (Unpublished papers, 1966).

²¹*Ibid.*

²²Bakht Singh, *Hebron Messenger*, (Special Edition, Part II, for Silver Jubilee of 'Jehovah-Shammah,' Madras, 24 July 1966, p. 7.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁴Bakht Singh, *Write the Vision*, (Unpublished papers, 1966).

²⁵Bakht Singh, *Hebron Messenger*, (Special Edition).

²⁶Bakht Singh, *Write The Vision*.

²⁷Smith, p. 52.

²⁸*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, May 8, 1966.

²⁹*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, August 21, 1966.

³⁰*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, February 6, 1983.

³¹*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, March 6, 1983.

³²*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, August 21, 1983.

³³Author's interview with Dr. Angus I. Kinnear on April 20, 1991, London, England.

³⁴Author's interview with George Verwer in 1991.

³⁵*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, May 12, 1968.

³⁶Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Best of A.W. Tozer*, Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, Inc.), pp. 217-218.

³⁷*World Conquest*, November-December, 1956.

³⁸Grant, p. 8 (Introduction).

³⁹Susan Billington Harper, *In The Shadow Of The Mahatma, Bishop V.S. Azariah And The Travails Of Christianity In British India*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), pp. 254-257.

⁴⁰First mention of a Holy Convocation in the Bible is Exodus chapter 12, verse 16 onwards. But the detailed account of the Holy Convocation is given in Leviticus chapter 23, where God was speaking to Moses saying, "Gather the children of Israel for the seven feasts of Jehovah." "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be Holy Convocations, even these are my feasts." (Leviticus 23:1). The seven feasts are: 1) the Sabbath, 2) the Passover--the Unleavened Bread, 3) the Feast of Firstfruits, 4) the Feast of Weeks, 5) the Feast of Trumpets, 6) the Day of Atonement, 7) the Feast of Tabernacles. These feasts are speaking of various aspects of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and the need for us to "feast upon" Him. Constrained by the Lord, Bakht Singh held the first Holy Convocation from December 14, 1941 to January 2, 1942 in 'Jehovah-Shammah' Madras. The main purpose was to bring together all the scattered believers all across the sub-continent of India and other places, to feast upon the Lord through His Word and fellowship with other believers. The Holy Convocation has been one of the salient features of Bakht Singh's ministry. A detailed account will be given later in this book.

⁴¹*World Conquest*, May-June 1956.

⁴²*World Conquest*, November-December 1956.

⁴³*Balance of Truth*, June 1955.

⁴⁴*World Conquest*, May-June 1955 by Dr. Morris.

⁴⁵*Hebron Messenger*, March 31, 1968.

⁴⁶Norman Grubb, *Once Caught No Escape* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1970), pp. 149-152.

⁴⁷Geoff Abbiss, Mrs. Abbiss, Noel Crocker, Dr. Morris, Bro. & Sis. Pethybridge, John Kennedy, Bro. & Sis. Kevin Thomas of Australia, Sis. Ethel Lockette, Sis. Walgreen, etc.

⁴⁸*World Conquest*, July-August 1956.

⁴⁹*World Conquest*, May-June 1955.

⁵⁰Smith, pp. 15-17.

⁵¹*World Conquest*, November-December 1956.

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³Author's interview with George Verwer in his London office, 1991.

⁵⁴*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, December 20, 1964.

⁵⁵*Hebron Messenger*, Editorial, April 25, 1965.

⁵⁶Author's interview with George Verwer in London in 1991.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

Chapter 15

Man of God: Feet of Clay

"Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31).

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Corinthians 4:7).

This account is one of spiritual greatness and power, a brief history of a man who knew God intimately and followed Him faithfully, a man whose mind and thoughts were so saturated with the Bible and its heavenly wisdom, truly a man of God, who in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ was His treasure, and yet he was a man with feet of clay.

The purpose of this chapter is not to write a critical evaluation of Bakht Singh and his ministry, but is to show how human frailties can mar the work of God despite all human efforts to the contrary.

When Bakht Singh was young, he had a tattoo of a peacock put on the wrist of his left hand. It remained on his wrist even after his conversion, for he could not erase it; whenever people asked him about it, he said that the peacock had very legendary colourful feathers, which were the envy of other birds. Whenever the peacock danced, showing all of its beautiful and colourful feathers, it would feel proud of its enviable beauty; but when the peacock looked at its feet, which were so ugly, the bird would feel humbled and

would feel like hiding them. This is a true picture of Bakht Singh. Although the Lord had blessed him with a legendary photographic memory and other gifts, he often felt humbled, realizing his own human limitations. On the one hand, he was an expression of God's grace and glory while, at the same time, he humbly knew he was also a man with feet of clay. As he often reminded himself, he was what he was because of the sheer grace of God, and was thus in no way better than anybody else.

From the late 60s onwards, whenever Bakht Singh came to Syracuse he would ask the author and other brethren who were close to him to join him for a season of prayer. During such prayer, Bakht Singh would begin by confessing his sins, saying, "Lord have mercy on me, I am a sinner, I am not even worthy to be called Thy servant." At times, he would even weep while praying, confessing his sins and claiming the cleansing power of the Precious Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only then would he bring his praises and petitions to the Lord. The author, then still a young man hearing such words of confession coming out of Bakht Singh, often wondered and was puzzled because everyone looked up to him as a man of God and as a saintly man. But because he lived very close to the Lord, Bakht Singh also realized how sinful he was before the holy God. Bakht Singh realized his own unworthiness and sinfulness before God. He also knew that he was just a man full of human limitations and frailties that he could only do what he was able to do, by God's grace.

In private he was different than in public. In private he was a man of great wit and humour. Whenever those of us who were close to him like Noel Barrow, C.E. Dasan and others, gathered together for a meal or fellowship he would reminisce from his early days in the West by joking. Sometimes he would roar with laughter at his own jokes. He was also an excellent storyteller.

When he first went to England in 1926 it was very cold. He slept on the bed on top of the bedspread because people in India usually sleep that way. He did not find any blanket to cover himself and shivered with cold all through the night. He put on his coat and overcoat to ease him from the cold. In the morning, his landlady asked him whether he had had a good sleep. He replied saying, "No," because he was too cold to sleep well. Hearing that, the lady said, "Why, there were plenty of blankets. Didn't you see them?" Then the lady went and showed him that there were two blankets under the bedspread. When she showed him the blankets and explained to him how one should sleep under the blankets on the bed, he was so surprised and learned a good lesson. Based on his own experiences, he would tell many stories and use them to draw spiritual conclusions.

When he spoke to the people in the villages, his messages were filled with simple stories and illustrations, which at times were very humorous; however, when he spoke to sophisticated religious leaders, particularly denominational leaders and missionaries, he could be very outspoken, firm and stern. In this respect, he resembled the Lord during His public ministry. When He dealt with sinners and publicans He was more loving, caring and compassionate than when He spoke to the religious leaders. Then He was firm, outspoken and critical. Some people have judged Bakht Singh as being proud and arrogant with a 'holier-than-thou attitude;' in truth, however he was humble, loving, caring and down-to-earth. His only desire was to live to please the Lord and to serve others in love.

The preceding chapters have shown how God used Bakht Singh mightily in an unprecedented way in the history of the Church in India to show His fullness and glory during his more than sixty years of ministry. God accomplished great things through him both in India and in different parts of

the world. Through his life and ministry, God's Kingdom was extended, His Body edified, and His Name glorified. Even though the Lord has promoted him to glory, the work God began through him continues. "...that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." (Rev 14:13). He impacted his generation spiritually like very few people in the history of the Church.

His spirit of generosity and humility was in marked contrast to some of his fellow-workers, but at times could border on the naïve when it came to dealing with the influence of less broad-minded men including co-workers. This caused some irreparable damage in his working relationship with some of his co-workers and the ministry as a whole.

The following are some frequently asked questions, which need to be addressed:

Question 1: Why, after days of intense prayer and fasting for guidance, could they get it all wrong and make decisions, especially with respect to the leadership, which later would cause great havoc?

Answer: Bakht Singh fasted and prayed along with others seeking the Lord's guidance to bring about spiritual order in all the Assemblies in the light of the Word of God. His desire was to do God's work in God's way. He trusted his fellow co-workers, thinking they also had the same vision and commitment as he had. Moreover, he wanted to include some more in the list of 'chosen brethren,' but because some of his co-workers who were less spiritually minded, were not in favour of it. They did so, not based on spiritual reasons, but based on their own personal reasons. For the sake of peace and unity, Bakht Singh gave in, hoping the brethren would come around and eventually he might be able to include others as well in the leadership. Sadly, some of his associates were not in favour of his suggestions. The spirit

of carnality and self-seeking carried the day rather than the Spirit of Christ. If everyone had listened to Bakht Singh and his advice as he was led by the Lord, the eventual havoc, confusion and disunity might have been easily avoided. He should, however, have stood his ground rather than give in to the pressure of less spiritual men. He regretted this the rest of his life as it did affect the testimony adversely. Moreover, following his prostate surgery in 1982 and subsequent declining physical health, he lost the firm leadership and determination he had exhibited previously. Here again, this shows that while he was a man of God he was also a man with feet of clay.

Question 2: Why, with such a phenomenal knowledge of the Bible and its spiritual insights, did deep intractable problems usually connected with personalities, and divisions not get solved?

Answer: Wherever the Lord works, Satan also works. Everyone does not place the things of God before personal interests. When personal interests become paramount, God's interests suffer. Much of the cause for the personal conflicts and divisions were connected with the spirit of carnality and self-centeredness. Moreover, one's perception has so much to do with how one interprets and applies Biblical principles to resolve conflict, whether personal or corporate, like the conflict between Barnabas and Paul in relation to Mark. In such cases, unless it is a major theological difference, it is better for the parties to submit to those who are in authority or whom the Lord has raised up as spiritual leaders. Whenever people accepted and acknowledged the leadership and authority of Bakht Singh, things usually functioned smoothly; but wherever and whenever that authority was not recognized, divisions and problems persisted. Most of the WEC missionaries, for example, with the exception of one or two,

had worked in fellowship and co-operation with Bakht Singh, recognizing his spiritual authority. This was also true of Operation Mobilization and other para-church groups.

Question 3: How could such a highly trained and practical man at times appear to be naïve with regard to legal requirements, especially regarding trusteeship?

Answer: Because most denominations go to the extreme of doing everything based on their constitutions and man-made laws, Bakht Singh seemed to have gone to the other extreme of not paying much attention to legal requirements. Later on, unfortunately, that affected the overall work. Because we are living in this fallen world, we have to have certain rules, regulations, guidelines and policies to work with fallible human beings. Bakht Singh often thought that his fellow believers were as sincere as he was and that they would be guided by the Lord, the Word and the Holy Spirit just as he was. Therefore, he paid very little attention to legal requirements and infrastructure. Retrospectively we can see that it was a terrible mistake that the Fellowship was registered under 'Societies Act' rather than as a 'Trust.' Had it been registered as a 'Trust', much of the problems that are affecting the Fellowship after the home-call of Bakht Singh could have been averted.

Some people have criticized him for being 'senior trustee for life.' His intention was to protect the interests of the Lord's work. Moreover, because of past experience, he wanted to make sure that things would not fall into the hands of undesirable people. He did not seek any position out of any personal interests or for any personal gain. All the properties were registered under the Society of Trustees of Indigenous Churches in India; nothing was registered in his personal name. He did not own anything; he did not even have a bank account. In this respect he was above reproach and impeccable.

Question 4: Why did the nonsectarian spirit and concept of the one Body apparently fail to allow for the inclusion of fellow-believers in Pentecostal churches?

Answer : Bakht Singh loved and cared for all whether they were Christians or non-Christians. He loved all and hated none. But at the same time, he did not feel free to work closely with certain segments of the Christian community because he felt they did not follow the Word of God. For example, in the early years he had some bitter, personal experiences with Pentecostal churches. This author heard him publicly criticizing Pentecostals severely and in answer to the author's question as to why, he replied that in a number of cases in the early days they would publish handbills mentioning Bakht Singh as one of the speakers at their meetings. But they did so without consulting him. Moreover, he was not even present at the meeting. They evidently did that to draw crowds at their meetings.

In spite of all this, Pentecostals were allowed to participate in the worship meetings and take part in the Lord's Table at the assemblies. Moreover, whenever Pentecostals came to him for prayer he welcomed them with love and prayed for them. Of course, he was opposed to some of the Pentecostal doctrines and was very outspoken about them because he felt that they were not Biblical. Following his home-call, some of the Pentecostal Magazines wrote about him as the "Saint of the Century" and paid high tribute to him. But because of his critical stand towards them, some people felt he did not consider them as the part of the Body of Christ. That was not true. He often taught and practised that our relationship with fellow Christians is based on life and not doctrine.

Question 5: Why did God allow the 'strong lion of Punjab,' a body which could endure great hardship and self-discipline,

to waste away during the last years of his life, suffering humiliating weaknesses?

Answer: God is Sovereign and "His ways past finding out"- Rom 11:33. He does what He likes to accomplish His purpose. Many of the things with which the Lord deals with His children are beyond our human understanding and explanation. Why does the Lord allow suffering in a believer's life? Just the way the Lord allowed suffering in the life of Job, so He allows suffering in the life of His children for their own personal purification and for the purification of the members of His body. During the years when he was bedridden as his body and mind were wasting away, he continued to glorify God. Never once did he complain or grumble. His life was a mighty example to those young people who looked after him as well as to all who visited him from time to time. This period of prolonged illness gave those who were closely associated with him, time to fix their eyes on the Lord and not upon a man. That is the very thing that Bakht Singh was telling everyone.

Furthermore the Lord used His people to take care of him far, far better than any hospital, nursing home or any family members would have done. Even his own siblings and some of the medical doctors, after seeing the way he was taken care of, said the care he was receiving at 'Hebron' was exemplary (**world-class**) and exceeded the care that he might have received in any other place.

The Lord also demonstrated His faithfulness toward him by taking care of his every need. For example, he did not have to depend on 'Hebron' or any other local church for his financial needs or any other related expenses during those long years. Saints from different parts of India (primarily) and some from other countries sent in the needed gifts to take care of His servant. This shows that God allowed his long illness in order to mature His Body, the Church, par-

ticularly those among whom he had laboured, and to demonstrate the Lord's faithfulness and unfailing love. He was indeed a restraining force in the hands of God to prepare the believers for his home-call. All those who looked after him during the long period of sickness did so with love rather than out of duty. And that was a testimony to both Christians and non-Christians.

In short, God knew what He was doing with His servant and He did all things well. Even in sickness, the Name of the Lord was honoured. Furthermore, it helped believers to realize that the Lord allows suffering in the life of His children regardless of who we are. We must learn to accept suffering as a gift from God and thank Him with all our heart for the trials and sufferings He allows in our lives. Ephesians 5:20 says "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Question 6: What caused the hatred and criticism by so many fellow Christian workers, especially foreign missionaries, at the beginning of the work?

Answer: As mentioned earlier in previous chapters, Bakht Singh was not against national or foreign missionary work in India, but he was against any work contrary to the Word of God, particularly by the denominational leaders. He was highly critical of the way they often misled people by not telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth of the gospel. For example, he was a very outspoken critic of modern and liberal missionaries as well as national workers who refused to emphasize that Jesus Christ is the only Savior.

When the Lord led him to establish New Testament churches, some people were converted through his ministry, they left their institutional churches established by foreign missionaries and their Indian counterparts and joined the assemblies. Naturally, many hated him and criticized him,

thinking he was against them. They called him, a 'sheep stealer,' and expressed their hatred towards Bakht Singh by punishing the innocent people who were formerly members of their churches and their employees who left to join the newly- formed Assemblies by Bakht Singh and his co-workers. Many lost their jobs, which they had in the missionary institutions such as schools, colleges, hospitals, orphanages, local churches, etc.

They hated Bakht Singh simply because he tried to do the Lord's work in a biblical way. When they saw that he was not ordained by any denomination nor had any Bible School training, he was just a 'layman' for them. Therefore, everything he did was contrary to their ecclesiastical and denominational background.

Dr. Bob Finley explained why some Christian workers and foreign missionaries hated him.

"In 1959, when I announced in our missions' newsletter that we were sponsoring Bakht Singh for meetings in US churches, the head of Evangelical Foreign Mission's Association (EFMA) telephoned me. For about 30 minutes he nearly chewed my ear off, telling me what a bad person Bakht Singh was and warning me about all the harm he would do among evangelical churches in America. I asked him if he had ever met Bakht Singh and he said he had not but he had heard all kinds of negative things about him from EFMA missionaries."

Why did they hate him so?

"For the same reasons the chief priests and Pharisees hated Paul. His new teachings were a threat to their privilege and power. Colonial missionaries resented Bakht Singh because of the unbiblical aspects of institutional 'Churchianity' and the need for renewal. Rather than respond to his preaching, the traditionalist continuously tried to discredit him."¹

Question 7: Why was he very exclusive and refused to work with other Christian groups?

Answer: This criticism is also not true. Bakht Singh was a bigger man in respect to his appreciation of and fellowship with men and works of those other than of his own initiating than many of his fellow brethren and close colleagues. This was particularly evidenced in his relationship with O.M, Billy Graham, WEC missionaries and scores of others including Carl McIntyre. This was also evidenced by his generous participation in both national and international activities and conferences, including the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974. He also participated and spoke at numerous conferences, groups and churches both in India and abroad (EFI- Evangelical Fellowship of India; EU- Evangelical Union; WEC-World Evangelization Crusade; ISI- International Students Inc. and so many other denominational meetings). He was a plenary speaker at the first Inter Varsity Convention (Urbana Convention, held in Toronto in 1946). He was a Trustee of Gospel Literature Service in Bombay, India. Bill Thompson, who had known and worked with him from the late 1940's, recalls the very unique relationship that Wilf S. Durham, his wife Christina Durham and Bill Thompson had with Bakht Singh for a number of years. The Durhams were the founding Trustees of Gospel Literature Service in Bombay.

"These all had a very unique relationship with Brother Bakht Singh. It was well-known he never wrote a book, yet there are many titles to his name. These are the fruit of the editing skills linked with the phenomenal Bible knowledge of Christina Durham. It was no small task to take a spoken word and to reduce to the written form, which was easily readable. The GLS, therefore, was to be the catalyst for the literature base of the movement and brought Bakht Singh into close working relationship with Bill Thompson which

continued well into his (Bakht Singh's) period of infirmity and covered a wide area of ministry. In 1952, Bakht Singh was asked to join GLS as a functioning 'Trustee, which, while it was quite out of character for him, he readily agreed to. In this he took a very faithful and active role, and it was the only sphere of his ministry where he was not the 'ultimate authority'. Many a time, good Christian grace overruled his differing judgments, but there was never a breach in those historic years of such a unique fellowship." ²

Whenever he received an invitation, whether it was from India or abroad, he sought the will of God and attended the meetings and conferences as led by the Lord. In India, after the Lord led him to plant New Testament Churches, he was extremely busy taking care of the needs of the flock in the ever multiplying and growing local churches. Therefore, very often he had to say "no" to the invitations that came from other groups or organizations.

Unfortunately, people who did not know him closely thought that he was exclusive, thinking that only those local churches established by him were the true church. That was far from the truth. No doubt in the early days, because he was very outspoken and highly critical of liberal denominations, some might have thought that he believed the Assemblies were the only true church: in fact, what he was trying to say was that salvation was only through Jesus Christ and not through any other means. His life and ministry proves very clearly that he loved all, cared for all and accepted all believers as members of the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, as mentioned in the previous chapters. But at the same time, he never entered into a joint-venture of evangelistic activity nor did he himself join with any national or international organizations which he felt personally were not completely biblical.

For example, he loved and appreciated both Billy Gra-

ham and Carl McIntyre but he refused to join any body/organization and other ministries officially. When Billy Graham came to Madras for his Crusade in January 1956, Bakht Singh was on the platform with Bishop Chellappa of Madras and opened the Crusade with prayer at the invitation of Billy Graham. According to Dr. Bob Finley of Christian Aid Mission, at that same Crusade Bakht Singh gathered 500 believers outside Billy Graham's hotel in Madras to pray all night. Later on, at Billy Graham's invitation, he travelled with him by plane to Delhi for further fellowship.

John Richard who first met Bakht Singh in 1956 had this to say about that trip:

"And that was a plane from Madras, now called Chennai, to Delhi. He was on that plane as a special invitee of Dr. Billy Graham who had finished conducting an evangelistic crusade in Madras, Kottayam and Palayamcottai. Dr. Graham wished to get to know Bakht Singh in person and this was realized in that first visit to Delhi from Madras on board a DC-3 Dakota Air Craft. I know this travel detail as I was the flight radio officer on board that plane along with Dr. Graham and his team, as was also Dr. Bob Pierce, the founder of World Vision International, an esteemed friend of Dr. Billy Graham."³

At the same time, Bakht Singh was not a member of any of Billy Graham's committees. That was also true of Carl McIntyre who requested Bakht Singh several times to join his organization, but Bakht Singh refused. All along, he felt that the Lord did not want him to join any organization, whether national or international. Nevertheless, he prayed earnestly for all those who served the Lord sincerely and wholeheartedly. His principle was to love and serve all equally as far as possible.

Some people criticized him of being a "sheep stealer." Bakht Singh's response to that was that all believers belong to the Lord Jesus Christ and not to any denomination. For

example, John Richard, former Executive Secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of India, had this to say about Bakht Singh's attitude toward the people of God in India:

"At a time when it was felt that Bakht Singh was drawing away Christians from other churches, he graciously accepted an invitation to participate in an annual conference of the Evangelical Fellowship of India, an umbrella body that brought together committed Christians from all the denominations. In so doing he recognized the presence of God's people in the larger body of the Church in India and nullified the prevailing criticism."⁴

Question 8: Why were charges of despotism often levelled against him by those on the inside as well as on the outside?

Answer: Bakht Singh was a no-nonsense leader. He always burned with zeal for the Lord and for His House. Therefore, he always kept the Lord's interests and His Kingdom first. He served the Lord above self and without any vested interests. That was reflected in his attitude and actions toward others. A casual observer may think Bakht Singh was authoritarian, but those who had worked with him know differently. As George Verwer aptly observed of Bakht Singh :

"He was a gifted leader. He was accused of being authoritarian. But how is one going to get anything done in a place like India, with all those different backgrounds, different castes, poor people, rich people, doctors, uneducated - how is he going to get things done if someone does not take some leadership. Bakht Singh knew how to lead people."⁵

WEC Missionary, Geoff Abbiss, and his wife worked with Bakht Singh very closely for about 20 years in 'Hebron' have this to say about him:

"I know that he has been accused of authoritarianism, if not dictatorism—others may have found him so, as they interpreted things, but that was not our experience. Let me

cite a couple of examples to prove my point: one was involving a young Indian brother and the other was in reference to my own personal experience with Bakht Singh. I recall that one of the younger workers had been given permission to go to a friend and colleague for a wedding. But just a few hours before he was due to leave 'Hebron,' he was called by Brother Bakht Singh and told that he could not go now. The young brother protested, 'Brother you gave me permission.' 'Yes, I know.' Brother replied, 'but you are needed at some special meetings beginning today, and I am sorry to disappoint you.' Now that may not be a verbatim account, though it conveys the meaning. He put the Lord's interests first, and in so doing, set such a good example of Christian leadership.

I had been requested to go for Sunday ministry to an Assembly about seven miles from 'Hebron.' I knew something of the situation there and that there had been dissension among the saints shortly before I was asked to go. Hence, I felt that perhaps it might be good not to have the Lord's Table but just have an open time of worship and a main message. So I spoke to Brother about this and he said that I should go ahead with the Lord's Table – after giving a suitable word of warning. His concern was that the main body of believers, not involved in the particular trouble, should not be robbed of obedience to and the blessing of the remembrance of the Lord and His sufferings for us. Recognizing his seniority and greater responsibility than mine, I gladly accepted what he said and conducted the Lord's Table."⁶

As a man of God, he always kept the Lord's interests first. Therefore he would pray and seek the Lord's mind for himself and for his co-workers. The author remembers an incident in 1978. "While I was with him in Holland, I felt that I should go to London to join some of my friends for that weekend, while Bakht Singh and C.D. Benjamin spent time in Holland. When I shared that with him, he told me that we

would pray and decide. After we prayed together, he told me it would be better if I stayed with them, so in deference to him I stayed back.

On the following day, which was Sunday, when we went for the service, Bakht Singh asked me to give an exhortation for the Breaking of Bread. After I gave the warning before the Lord's Table, asking the believers to examine their hearts before they partook of the Lord's Table, most people in the congregation started to weep and started putting things right with one another. The Lord in His great mercy brought about real spiritual unity and oneness at least for the time being".

Later that evening, Bakht Singh reminded me of the importance of doing things with oneness of mind. I had to give up my plans in order to fit in with the Lord's plan. So when Bakht Singh asked me to cancel my plans to go to England, I did so, not for any personal reason, but in the interests of the body of Christ - in this case, for the interests and well-being of the local believers in Holland. Being soldiers of Christ, we must be available at all times to serve the Lord, even if it means sacrificing our own interests and preferences, like the soldiers of an earthly army. During an emergency, every soldier knows his/her duty and personal preferences are set aside in obedience to those who are in authority. As soldiers of the Cross, our standards must be far above the standards of the world.

The other factor to consider in regard to the charge of being authoritarian is that of culture. Many believers look up to their spiritual leader like a "Guru." In this case, in reference to Bakht Singh, many would ask him to pray and to find out God's will for them for everything from marriage to finding a job. They did this not only with Bakht Singh but also with other spiritual leaders. But with Bakht Singh, because of his spiritual leadership and fatherly im-

age, such respect was given to him. Thus this aspect is more cultural than spiritual. Even if Bakht Singh encouraged them to find the Lord's will for themselves, they would keep on running to him for everything. Of course, being human, he was pleased to be so appreciated. The fault was not his but rather with those who constantly sought his advice.

In certain cases, however, people had complained that Bakht Singh was trying to control them. For example, when they would come for the Holy Convocations or other special meetings in 'Hebron,' 'Jehovah-Shammah' or other places, they would go to him for prayer. Before they left he would say to them, "Don't go now, wait until after the meetings are over. Cancel your ticket."

Then they would say, "No, Brother, we have to go now," because they had already booked their ticket and they had to go. Then he would try to persuade them to cancel the ticket and go later.

Here again he did that primarily with those who were close to him because he wanted them to enjoy further fellowship by being at the meetings and being with other saints.

Question 9: What caused the mistaken concept of the role and position of those described as 'God's servants' when he knew so well the biblical pattern of church leadership?

Answer: Bakht Singh knew very well from the Scriptures that the elders and deacons should be the ones to shepherd the flock; but he began sending 'God's servants' to infant churches to shoulder the responsibilities temporarily as following the example of the Apostle Paul who sent Timothy and Titus and others to various infant local churches to help them build up and mature young believers and thus raise up spiritual leadership, who could be appointed as elders/deacons to carry on the work of God.

When Bakht Singh first began, he never realized that it would end up with 'God's servants' being a special class by themselves. In the early days, he transferred them from Assembly to Assembly. As the ministry began to grow, Assemblies began to multiply and God's servants became fewer and fewer when compared with the growing demands of the Assemblies. As a result, he allowed them to stay on in some Assemblies longer than he had first anticipated. Moreover, while some of these 'servants' were genuine men of God with the call and anointing of God, some of them were in fact carnal and self-serving. From his writings, preaching and teachings, we can see very clearly that Bakht Singh was opposed to 'God's servant' functioning as the 'pastor' in any local church. He sent these men with the desire to raise up leadership, who would eventually become elders and deacons there in the local churches so that the God's servant could move on to other places to start new work, like Paul sent Timothy and Titus and others. But unfortunately, in number of cases God's servants have failed in this.

Here again we can see human weaknesses and failure, demonstrating the fact that there is no perfect pattern or perfect spiritual work until Jesus returns. We must recognize this. The more the Spirit works, the more the flesh works. As long as we are in this fallen world, the eternal conflict between the spirit and the flesh shall continue to disrupt and destroy the plan and purposes of God. Moreover, Bakht Singh, because of his human limitations and the fact of his being an earthen vessel, thought that everyone was going to be as spiritual as he was. He tried to do everything for the glory of God.

His spirit of love, generosity and humility, and his willingness to work in fellowship with men and works of those other than his own initiating, were in marked contrast to some of his fellow-workers. This applies especially to a num-

ber of men of gifts and talents whose original contributions to the work, especially Bible teaching and evangelism, were significant and could have spared the whole movement from troubles which are still adversely affecting it.

Question 10: Why did Bakht Singh fail to bring about scriptural order in most of the local churches? A number of local churches began to divide even while he was still alive.

Answer: There were many major reasons. One is that he wanted to do everything according to the Word of God. He looked for men of impeccable character and testimony to shoulder the leadership of the local churches. In the early days, he was very quick in appointing elders, but later on they discovered that some of the men whom they thought to be spiritual were in fact carnal. That created many problems. Therefore, as time went on, they wanted to give more time before they set apart elders and deacons in the local churches; but as the ministry began to grow and Bakht Singh became extremely busy, there was not always enough time to pay the needed attention to the local churches and to the training of leadership.

Secondly, he did not believe in setting up a formal spiritual infrastructure, complete with policies and guidelines to help direct the full-time workers as well as other local leaders. This created a real vacuum. Moreover, as the work grew, Satan also began to work extra hard in bringing about carnality and worldliness within the Assemblies through carnal men and women. By the time Bakht Singh set apart chosen brethren in 1983 with a desire to assist him to put things in order in all the major Assemblies it was already too late. In March 1984, he along with the chosen brethren called for a meeting of some of the senior God's servants at Jehovah Shammah, Chennai, and requested the servants who were looking after the local churches to provide him with the list of names of

prospective elders/deacons of their respective Assemblies. And only four of the servants out of 50 or so presented such a list. He also laid down guide lines based on the Word of God to appoint elders/deacons in the local churches. Subsequent to that, he became very ill and physically was not in a position to pay the much-needed attention to the needs of the ever-growing local churches. In addition, he thought that the Lord would come very soon and that He would put things in order; but he failed to realize that our responsibility is to pray, to plan things and to establish the work step by step regardless of when the Lord comes.

The great lesson we learn from all this is that while he was a man of God he was also a man with 'feet of clay.' Nevertheless, we can praise the Lord for this trophy of His grace who made himself available to the Lord, whom He used so mightily to establish hundreds of local churches on biblical basis. We can learn a great deal from his life and example. These Assemblies, which the Lord has raised up through his ministry, may come alive to show more of His fullness and glory.

End Notes

¹Robert Finley, "Bakht Singh Demonstrated Biblical Missions," *Christian Mission, A Journal Of Foreign Missions*, Winter 2000-2001, p. 4.

²From a letter addressed to the author from Bill Thompson dated August 5, 2002.

³Reported by Dr. John Richard in a letter to the author dated January 31, 2002.

⁴Notes sent by Dr. John Richard to the author dated January 30, 2002.

⁵Based on author's interview with George Verwer at his office in London, 1991.

⁶From Geoff Abbiss' impression on Bakht Singh (from written notes to the author dated 2001).

Chapter 16

Conclusion

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: ...that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." (Rev.14:13)

Bakht Singh was a chosen vessel of God to call people back to Himself and back to His Word at a time when it was not practised among most Protestant denominations both in India and abroad. He was known for his undivided dedication, and devotion to the Lord to do God's work in God's way in the light of His word at any cost. In India, he was best known as a planter of New Testament Churches within the culture and linguistic background of the people, without compromising the revealed Word of God. He was raised up at a critical period of India's political history when the great transition from the 'British Raj' to the 'National' was at its peak. What was true with the foreign rulers was also true with foreign 'missionaries'. In this respect, he can be called the father of modern Indigenous Churches in India. He made an impact at the international level by challenging and influencing believers to do 'God's work in God's way' in obedience to the Word of God. He thus was more concerned about

the spiritual aspect of the church which transcends all barriers.

He prayerfully attempted to plant local churches that would exhibit Christ's fullness, unity, wisdom and glory. From the beginning, Bakht Singh's desire was to see all of God's people, gather together to worship and glorify the Lord together. To a large extent he and his co-workers succeeded in fulfilling this goal by establishing 'Jehovah-Shammah' (in 1941) and 'Elim/Hebron' (1950) and subsequently hundreds of local Assemblies across India and abroad. In 'Jehovah-Shammah' and 'Hebron' and in other Assemblies it was wonderful to see the way Westerners and Indians gathered together to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. As Bob Finley pointed out:

"As a planter of churches among many nations, Bakht Singh exemplified God's purpose for His kingdom as clearly as any man in church history.

In the Book of Acts, our Lord revealed a pattern by which His kingdom eventually spread in every people, tongue, tribe and nation. Clear examples were demonstrated in the lives of Barnabas of Cyprus and Saul of Tarsus. In the Twentieth Century the pattern was duplicated in the life and ministry of Bakht Singh of India, who went home to glory on September 17 (2000) at age 97.

In fact, I have never seen or read of a clearer example of God's pattern throughout the centuries since the kingdom of God was first launched on this planet almost two thousand years ago.¹

In his auto-biography Norman Grubb wrote,

"But in all my missionary experience I think these churches on their New Testament foundations are the nearest I have seen to a replica of the early church, and a pattern for the birth and growth of the young churches in all the countries which we used to talk about as the mission fields."²

These Assemblies were all inclusive and truly indigenous in the sense that they were self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing. Also they were relevant to the people of the land; therefore, there was no 'foreignness' about them. As Dr. Kinnear observed:

"Some of the special features of these Assemblies (local churches) were first of all, simplicity – it was going back to simple procedures, based on prayer, based on the Word of God, based on corporate worship of the Lord's people; secondly, the fact that it was scriptural and was Indian, free from the restrictions and limitations created by foreign institutions, missions or denominations. There was liberty and freedom to follow the Lord as the Lord led."³

Bakht Singh realized that New Testament principles can be applied without compromise to any culture or national background. Here one can see the wisdom of God. Therefore, people of any culture and background can identify with the New Testament principles of the Church, without feeling that it is imported from another country or culture.

The Lord gave him unusual vision both in the concept and the function of the New Testament Church. Among his many contributions, perhaps the most remarkable one is the practice of biblical worship, based on the Word of God. He taught that the believer's greatest privilege is to worship the Lord both individually and corporately, for, as believers, male or female, come to minister to the Lord and not to receive from Him, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.*" (Romans 12:1).

Throughout his ministry, Bakht Singh devoted himself as an instrument of God for the extension of the Kingdom of Christ. Therefore, he refrained from entangling himself with any political or social agenda. He took the words of Christ in

Matthew 6:33 very seriously: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

The Lord also honoured his faithful ministry. He taught people who came to know the Lord, to be examples to others both inwardly and outwardly. He encouraged them to be neat and tidy in dress and habits, and to live and walk worthy of God who had called them from darkness into His marvelous light. (Col 1:13) He also taught them the dignity of labour. Therefore, he believed that the transformation of a society can take place only as the individuals within that society are transformed spiritually. This has been true of tens of thousands of village folks in India most of them illiterate, who have come to know Christ through his ministry.

He also emphasized the all-inclusive nature of the local churches. He believed that every local church should be open to every believer in Christ who wishes to be a part of it, regardless of their caste, colour, language, nationality or whatever their position or possessions. It was so heart-warming to see that in many of these local Assemblies one could find believers from a Brahmin to a low-caste background, living together in harmony as members of the same spiritual family, sitting together, eating together and serving the Lord together as brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ. To demonstrate the oneness of all believers, at the time of communion, people were encouraged to drink from the common cups, symbolizing that, though we are many, yet we are one in Christ, and reminding all that "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16).

One of the social ills and curses of India has been the caste system, by which low-caste people are treated as the scum of the earth. As mentioned in previous chapters, this was practised even among Christians. From the very

beginning of Bakht Singh's ministry in the thirties, he preached against such practices from the Word of God and practically demonstrated the fact that all are one in Christ Jesus. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor 12:13): "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:28).

In order to break down the caste system and class system, he reminded the believers in Christ again and again of the fact that, in Christ, every believer is equally precious, equally important and equally necessary. He not only preached this fact loud and clear but also practised it with his identification with people of all castes and classes. He treated them equally and loved and cared for them as Jesus did. Because of his love and care, he endeared himself to everyone who in turn responded with love and affection ; that is the reason why people everywhere gravitated toward him. He was a spiritual father to many, so they would come to him for prayer, counsel and spiritual guidance.

In order to breakdown the caste system in a practical way, Bakht Singh also introduced the love-feast or the common meal following weekly meetings and special occasions, such as Holy Convocations. Here, people of all classes and castes who were converted to Christ were encouraged to sit together and eat together as members of the same family.

He also denounced all the evil practices of traditions and cultures which encroached even into the area of Christian marriages. In India, normally, it is common practice for people to marry within their own caste, class, profession, language, state and even colour; whereas Bakht Singh's primary emphasis was for the people of God to marry according to the perfect will of God. He not only preached this, but

in many instances he encouraged believers to do accordingly.

For example, he taught believers that once they were born again, they were the same before the Lord as man and wife. Therefore, they should marry according to the perfect will of God, a believer marrying a believer rather than believers marrying according to their caste or class background based on the traditions of men. In Andhra and other parts of India, it is a practice even among Christians, that a man from a certain caste should always look for a woman from a similar caste, and vice-versa. Bakht Singh denounced such practices and he urged believers that the only thing that matters is the perfect will of God.

In fact, Bakht Singh was the match-maker, for the author who was born and raised in Kerala. His wife, however, is from Gujarat and therefore is socially, culturally and linguistically very different. He asked us to pray to know the Lord's will concerning our union in holy matrimony. After much prayer we both were led of the Lord to get married. And by God's grace, in spite of all our differences, we are happy in the Lord and serving Him together. There are several such examples of inter-state, inter-caste or inter-class marriages.

Bakht Singh taught that many marital problems and other social conflicts are essentially spiritual problems rather than social or cultural. He took marriage very seriously and therefore, after waiting on the Lord, he devised a special marriage ceremony, including the vows. He did not follow the traditional Christian vows but instead created his own. Please see appendix D.

Both in Andhra and other places, where the caste system played a very significant part in the social life of the people, Bakht Singh, by God's grace succeeded in breaking down such walls by building bridges of relationship across caste and class systems.

He also taught people to love, fear, honour and respect God and encouraged believers to demonstrate these spiritual principles in their attitudes and actions toward God and man.

He acknowledged the Headship of the 'Living Christ' over the church and therefore he practised and encouraged all his co-workers and believers to seek and do the will of God in all things, at any cost. He believed and taught that the Church, which is the Body of Christ, consisted of all believers world-wide and existed to express the fullness of Christ the Head. Therefore, the visible Church is the revelation of Christ in the world today to show forth His life, His love, His light and His liberty.

Bakht Singh accepted the Bible as the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation, and to the best of his knowledge he tried to apply biblical principles in every aspect of his individual and corporate life, whether small or big. Therefore, he did not believe in any policy or church constitution which was contrary to the Word of God. He denounced traditional and ecclesiastical practices which he felt were not completely founded upon the revealed Word of God. This brought Bakht Singh into constant conflict with denominational leaders and traditionalists who thought that he was against them. In the light of the Word of God, he believed in the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9) and the plurality of elders to lead in every local church rather than it being run by one individual.

He believed and taught that the ultimate goal of God for every believer is to be conformed to the image of Christ; therefore, everyone should become a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and should follow Him in the light of the Word of God by the power of the Holy Spirit, as he did.

Being a man of faith, Bakht Singh trusted God for his every need, both personal and corporate. He also encouraged his fellow-workers and fellow believers to do the same. He demonstrated to his fellow-countrymen, as well as to

Christians all over the world that if you do God's work according to His will, God will provide for every need without having to publicly appeal for financial support from anyone. He taught his fellow-believers to give generously as unto the Lord in the light of the Word of God. Practically all the Assemblies throughout India totally depend upon God for their every need, demonstrating the fact that God is able to supply them without the help of man.

Many Christian organizations start their ministries in India, later go abroad to appeal for funds, particularly to the USA and other parts of the West, are in marked contrast to Bakht Singh and his ministry who trusted the Lord for every need. By his life and example, Bakht Singh demonstrated to his fellow-Indians and people everywhere that the God of the Bible is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Through his life of faith and ministry, Bakht Singh helped the people everywhere to see the greatness and awesomeness of the God of the Bible, Whom he loved and served faithfully for over sixty years. Indeed, he has left a spiritual legacy for us to follow. Of course, some follow and some do not, which has caused problems in some Assemblies, yet in most cases, these Assemblies still stand as a reminder of the words of the Lord Jesus .. "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18)

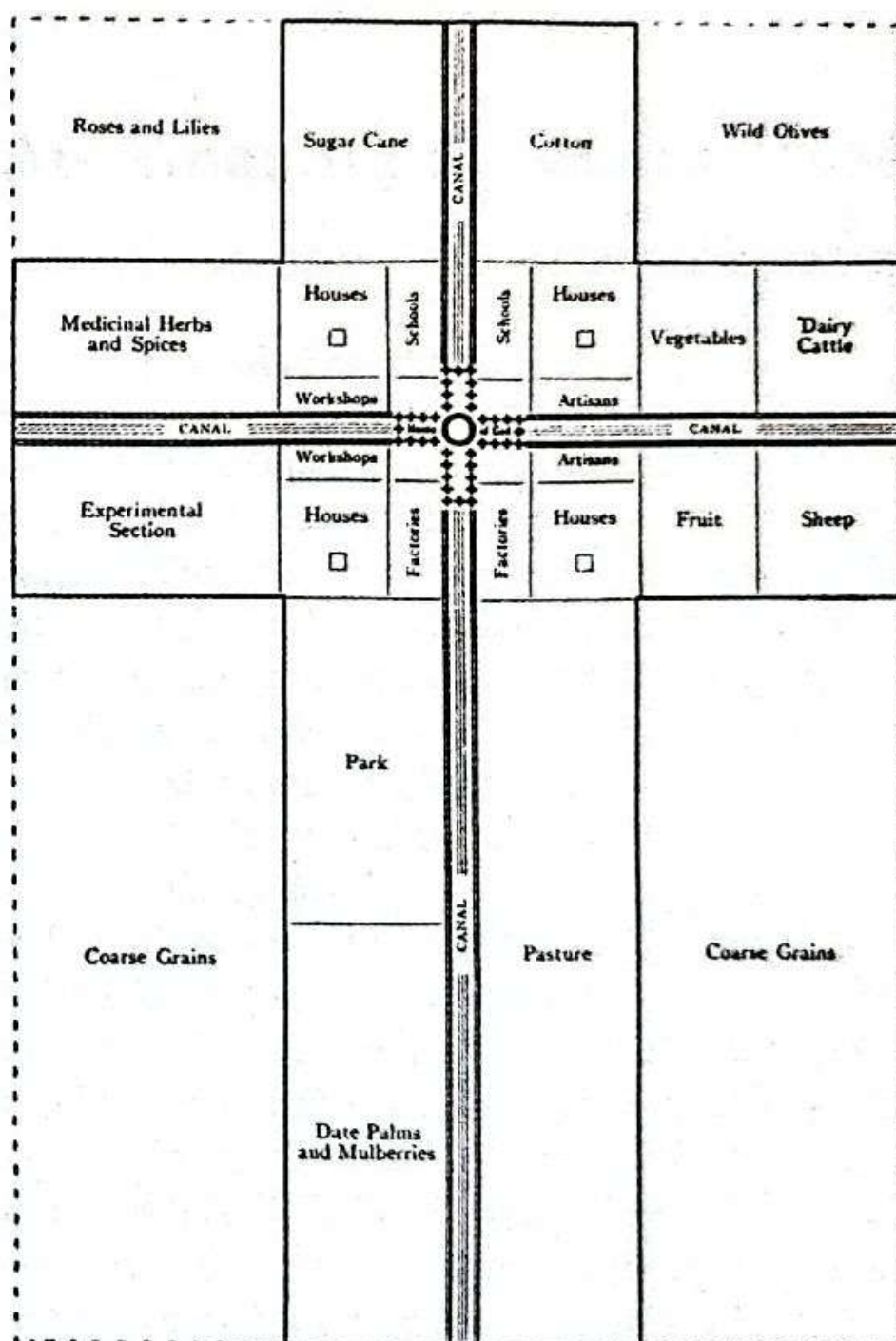
End Notes

¹Robert Finley, "Bakht Singh Demonstrates Biblical Missions," *Christian Mission, A Journal Of Foreign Missions*, Winter 2000-2001, p. 2.

²Norman Grubb, *Once Caught, No Escape*, (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1970), p. 152.

³ Author's interview with Dr. Angus Kinnear in London, England, 1991.

Appendix - A



"Bro. Bakht Singh's plan for an Ideal Christian Village in India before the Lord called him for the full-time ministry."

Appendix - B

An Amazing Servant of God

During the period of my service for our dear Lord and Master Jesus Christ for the past sixty-two years, I have seen to my horror and disappointment many a great preacher, tele-evangelist and missionary fall from grace and their high-profile position. This has brought great shame and mockery to the Church in general and to the Lord in particular.

Most of these "great men" fell from the pinnacle of glory into the abyss of sin because of:

Gold (greed of money)

Girls (sexual immorality)

Glory (pride)

As I think of my dear brother Bakht Singh of India, I thank God He kept His servant from these powerful and filthy pitfalls. He led a pure Christian life before God and the watchful eye of the people around him. His godly life spoke more eloquently than his words. Brother Bakht Singh was a man of INTEGRITY. Not only many of his friends and followers knew this, but also some of his enemies and critics were well aware of it and were secretly afraid of him!

Bakht Singh, who had such a brilliant mind could have earned plenty of money, had he pursued his professional ca-

reer or launched in any profitable business, but he gave it all up in favour of serving his Lord – very often in the teeth of opposition and persecution. He was a humble man, who was totally dedicated to Jesus Christ. Hence he was not affected by the subtle seduction of gold, girls and glory.

Groundless accusations :

While conducting a city-wide campaign in a Malaysian city, a Senior Pastor of a large denominational church met me and burst out “I am going to report you to my Bishop- for stealing my sheep!” Taken aback, I asked him what he meant. “Whenever you come to our city, my church members – even those who do not regularly attend my church – go to your meetings. This is because you are stealing my sheep!”

“Excuse me Pastor”, I answered calmly, “I don’t know who your sheep are. This is a combined city-wide outreach and people from various churches attend these meetings. Your Bishop is a good friend of mine, and I could lodge a report to the Bishop against you!”

The Pastor was rudely shocked and demanded, “And what are you going to report against me?”

“I will report to your Bishop that your sheep stole my grass. If you had fed your sheep with the unadulterated Word of God, they would not go to other pastures, would they?”

The Pastor looked baffled not knowing whether to laugh or to cry! He would have been honest if he had done the latter.

Not a few missionaries and those in the denominational hierarchy in India and Pakistan had time and again accused Bro. Bakht Singh “stealing sheep.” One suspects that behind this negative criticism there was a lurking spirit of jealousy. The fact was, multitudes flocked to hear Bakht Singh, because he expounded the Word of God with simplicity, clarity and authority. The gravitating force was not the man, but

his Master – Jesus Christ – and His dynamic Word. Bakht Singh always drew the attention of his audience to His Lord and Master, Jesus Christ – not to himself.

His total commitment :

Bakht Singh's commitment to Christ:

Those who had known him and heard him preach, would have perceived that Bakht Singh radiated Christ in his life. He loved Jesus Christ with a passion and always yearned to do His will – whatever the cost. He was not afraid nor ashamed to kneel down and pray for others in public places such as the airport, market place, the park and other places.

Not only did Bro. Bakht Singh encourage other believers to engage themselves in open-air and street preaching, but also he joined them and led them in this vital ministry. Tract distribution was an integral part of the street preaching. He, like the Apostle Paul, believed “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to everyone who believes it” (Roman 1:16), and he lived it out in his everyday life.

His commitment to the Bible:

Bakht Singh believed with all his heart that the Bible was the revealed Word of the Living God. He loved the Bible. He studied seriously and consistently. He carried the Bible wherever he went. He preached the gospel of the Bible in season and out of season. The Word of God was saturated in his personal conversation with others, in his letters and in his preachings. He made no apology for proclaiming Christ as the **One and only way to God** (John 14:6). He preached with authority and deep conviction on sin, judgment, death, and hell – as well as the glorious way of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. He boldly ex-

posed the erroneous teachings of some preachers who misled and confused many. Like his Master, he castigated the false teachers without fear or favour.

I have never heard a preacher who quoted the Scriptures so profusely and freely without notes! This was because his brilliant mind was filled with the precious Word of God. The Word of God was his food and drink, so to speak.

His commitment to His call and mission:

There were many attractions and distractions which could have easily shifted one's focus, but Bro. Bakht Singh had his priorities in their proper places. Like the Apostle Paul, Bakht Singh was **"not disobedient to the heavenly vision"** (Acts 26:19). His deep passion to save precious souls gave him a compulsion to communicate the gospel.

The "vision" which Christ so clearly gave His servant, to form local churches firmly based on the New Testament teachings, consumed his whole life that he never turned right or left, but consistently laboured day and night to fulfill the "heavenly vision."

Any other church-planter of this calibre would have let others to have made Bakht Singh a Bishop or Arch-Bishop over a thousand large assemblies and hundreds of small churches which the Lord enabled Bakht Singh to establish all over India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, but he was happy to call himself "Bakht Singh- the servant of God." What unswerving dedication! What humility! What a man of God! Was it any wonder that God used His servant so mightily – not only in South Asia but also around the world? The striking phenomenon today is that pockets of believers from South Asia, now living in Paris, Europe, Canada and USA (the expatriates) are gathering in the Name of Jesus as they were used to gathering in their home lands, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka – according to the New Testament pattern!

Author of this book on Brother Bakht Singh :

The Lord has provided the most appropriate and qualified person to write the book, "Brother Bakht Singh Of India – An Account of 20th Century Apostolic Revival" i.e. my dear friend and brother Dr. T.E. Koshy. Dr. Koshy has worked closely and faithfully with Bro. Bakht Singh for many years and is one of the six brethren appointed by Bakht Singh to lead and shepherd the New Testament local churches in South Asia and else where after he went to glory. A distinguished scholar, conference speaker, communicator, and soul winner, Dr. T.E. Koshy has done extensive research on Bro. Bakht Singh before embarking on this hard and arduous task. I am confident that this book will richly bless and challenge thousands, if not millions of readers around the globe.

Dr. G. D. James, *Founder President*
Asia Evangelistic Fellowship International.

Appendix - C

Frontiers

Dear Koshy,

Now concerning our time with Brother Bakht Singh in 1964: It's not often in one's short life that we are privileged to meet someone whom we can clearly experience as "a man of God." Brother Bakht Singh is one of those rare persons. You'll remember the story, that when I was in the missionaries' conference in Madras, he came in to lead in prayer, which took a full 10 minutes! Even more amazing, when he got down off the podium and was walking back out of the meeting, he looked right at me and said, "Come," even though we had never met before. This is not dissimilar to the Lord Jesus calling two of His disciples as recorded in John 1:39! I got up and followed him to 'Jehovah-Shammah,' and there I was perfectly at peace at doing whatever I was told to do, including the prayer meetings at 5 :00 a.m. and midnight!

I always thought it was interesting that, although Brother Bakht Singh wasn't very happy with Pentecostals, yet he himself had a magnificent gift of healing. One time when I had a terrible stomach ache, he called me in for prayer, quoted several Old Testament references (without the text), and my stomach ache was immediately gone, never to return.

Perhaps the most amazing experience, however, was when I was in Hyderabad at the Holy Convocation during a time when there was famine in the land. They were told they could not get a shipment of rice, and I was sure that Brother Bakht Singh would cancel the convocation because there was no way they could feed 5000 people. I looked in the kitchen and there was only one bag of rice. Brother Bakht Singh simply said, "The Lord will provide." He did, because all those people ate two rice meals a day. It never ran out, although I never did see any shipment of rice arrive, either. I can't prove it, but I'm quite convinced that the Lord repeated His miracle of the widow's oil and I know that it was a tremendous experience for me to learn to walk with almighty God, as did our Brother Bakht Singh.

Affectionate greetings to everyone there.

Greg Livingstone

General Director, Frontiers

*International Headquarters
England.*

Appendix - D

Marriage Vows

The following are the marriage vows devised by Bakht Singh and used in hundreds of marriages all across India.

BRIDEGROOM:

I...(the bridegroom) very solemnly declare in the presence of God Almighty that I have no impediment whatsoever within me, to hinder me from a happy, normal and healthy married life. I call upon all that are present here, in the presence of God Almighty and the Lord Jesus Christ my loving Saviour, who loved me and gave Himself for me, that I take (bride) as my wedded wife, fully believing that she has been chosen for me by my loving Saviour according to His perfect will revealed through the Word of God. I promise to love her, and cherish her. I promise to be faithful, loyal and true to her, in sickness or in health, in adversity or in prosperity. I promise to share with her everything in the Lord, regarding her as my friend, companion, co-worker and joint-heir of the grace of life. I promise to begin my day along with her on my knees, with the Word of God. I promise to end my day along with her on my knees with the Word of God. I promise to keep my body as the temple of the Holy Spirit

and regard her body in the same way. I promise to give my Lord the first place in my heart and life, and give Him His portion joyfully, faithfully and regularly. I promise to glorify and magnify the name of the Lord Jesus Christ throughout my married life. May the Lord help me.

BRIDE:

I (the bride) very solemnly declare in the presence of God Almighty that I have no impediment whatsoever within me to hinder me from a happy, normal and healthy married life. I call upon all that are present here in the presence of God Almighty and the Lord Jesus Christ, my loving Saviour, who loved me and gave Himself for me, that I take (Groom) as my wedded husband, fully believing that he has been chosen for me by my loving Saviour according to His perfect will revealed through the Word of God. I promise to love him and cherish him. I promise to be faithful, loyal and true to him in sickness or in health, in adversity or in prosperity. I promise to keep myself in subjection to him and regard him as the head of the family in the Lord. I promise to share with him everything in the Lord, regarding him as my friend, companion, co-worker and joint heir of the grace of life. I promise to begin my day on my knees along with him, with the Word of God. I promise to end my day on my knees along with him with the Word of God. I promise to keep my body as the Temple of the Holy Spirit and regard his body in the same way. I promise to give my Lord the first place in my heart and life, and give Him His portion joyfully, faithfully and regularly. I promise to glorify and magnify the name of the Lord Jesus Christ throughout my married life. May the Lord help me.

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About the Author

Thottukadavil Eapen Koshy has been a close associate and co-worker of Brother Bakht Singh for more than 40 years. He is one of the six brethren appointed by Brother Bakht Singh to oversee the affairs of the Assemblies associated with his ministry worldwide.

Born and raised in Kerala, Koshy holds degrees in Literature, Philosophy (B.A.) and L.L.B. from Bombay University, Theology (AMBC) from England, an M.A. in Journalism and Ph.D. on Mass Communications from Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York. He was a Fellow of the Washington Journalism Center, Washington DC.

Dr. Koshy is the founding elder of the International Assembly Church based in Syracuse. Currently he serves as honorary Evangelical Chaplain at Syracuse University. He is married to Dr. Indira Koshy, a graduate of Christian Medical College, Vellore, India. They and their son Jay and daughter-in-law Susi currently reside in Syracuse, New York.

(Continued from Front Flap)

helped to dispel the misconception of those who think that Christianity is 'foreign' and not relevant to the people of India.

This is a story of an ordinary man who committed himself fully to God. The Lord used him mightily to do extraordinary things in spite of his human frailties and limitations. Furthermore, this book reveals a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ who feared the Lord, loved Him, walked in all His ways, and served Him with all his heart. Because it details the unusual work of the Holy Spirit through Brother Bakht Singh, this biography will challenge and inspire its readers worldwide.

Brother **Bakht Singh** *Of* **India**

WHAT OTHERS SAID ABOUT BROTHER BAKHT SINGH

"Bro. Bakht Singh is an Indian equivalent to the greater Western evangelist, as skillful as Finney and as direct as Moody. He is a first-class Bible teacher after the order of Campbell Morgan or Graham Scroggie."

- **J. Edwin Orr**, *British Church Historian, Author, Evangelical Awakenings In Southern Asia.*

"I have never seen a man who has a greater knowledge and understanding of the Bible than Bakht Singh. All our Western preachers and teachers seem to be children before this great man of God, Bakht Singh of India."

- **Robert Finley**, *President, Christian Aid Mission*

"What impressed me most on my Asian visit was my eight days with Bakht Singh of India, his co-workers and congregation. Here was to me a sample of the coming church of Christ... In all my missionary experience, I think these churches on their New Testament foundations are the nearest I have seen to a replica of the early church and a pattern for the birth and growth of the young churches in all the countries which we used to talk about as the mission fields."

- **Norman Grubb**, *Missionary Statesman, Teacher; Author, Once Caught And No Escape.*

"The arrival of Bakht Singh turned the churches of Madras upside down... Crowds gathered in the open air, as many as 12,000 on one occasion to hear this man of God. Many seriously ill were healed when Bakht Singh prayed for them, even deaf and dumb began to hear and speak."

- **Dave Hunt**, *Author, God Of The Untouchables*

"To this day Bakht Singh is a foremost evangelist and preacher in India, farther Asia and in the United States."

- **J. C. Pollock**, *British Author, Earth's Remotest End*

"I have never heard a preacher who quoted the Scriptures so profusely and freely without notes! This was because his brilliant mind was filled with the precious Word of God. The Word of God was his food and drink, so to speak... he radiated Christ in his life, he loved Jesus Christ with a passion and always yearned to do His will whatever the cost."

- **Dr. G. D. James**, *Founder President, The Asia Evangelistic Fellowship International.*