

A GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED

THE STORY OF EVANGELICAL LITERATURE SERVICE



V.M. ABRAHAM
and
IDA DAVID

**A GRAIN
OF
MUSTARD SEED**

THE STORY OF THE EVANGELICAL
LITERATURE SERVICE

**V.M. ABRAHAM
AND
IDA DAVID**

EVANGELICAL LITERATURE SERVICE
95-A, VEPEY HIGH ROAD

MADRAS 600 007

Pub. No. 142- English

First Edition: 1994

Copies: 1000

Published in Commemoration of the 40th
Anniversary of Evangelical Literature Service,
INDIA

© Evangelical Literature Service 1994

J.R. Printech, 286, K.G. Rd, Kilpauk, Ms-10. Tel. 617931

Contents

Foreword	5
Introduction	6
PREFACE	7
Chapter 1: THE VALUE OF CHRISTIAN LITERATURE	8
Chapter 2: HOW IT ALL BEGAN	10
Chapter 3: EARLY DEVELOPMENTS	15
Chapter 4: INTO THE GARDEN CITY	20
Chapter 5: A SPIRITUAL CLINIC IN A HOSPITAL	24
Chapter 6: WITHIN A YARD OF HELL	27
Chapter 7: ENTERING CANAAN	31
Chapter 8: MADRAS LEADING SHOP	36
Chapter 9: NEW WORKERS AND TRAINING METHODS	38
Chapter 10: ENEMY TACTICS	41
Chapter 11: LITERATURE DISTRIBUTION LEAPS	45
Chapter 12: PUBLISHING IN FOUR LANGUAGES	47
Chapter 13: INTO THE FOOTPRINTS OF ST. THOMAS	51
Chapter 14: CONQUERING THE MEGA CITY	54
Chapter 15: COIMBATORE CENTRE	60
Chapter 16: THE MANTLE FELL ON THESE	63
Chapter 17: PURPOSE, PRINCIPLES, PILLARS	68
Chapter 18: A WORD ABOUT FINANCES	69
Chapter 19: COOPERATION IN OPERATION	72
Chapter 20: FURTHER INVOLVEMENT	73
Chapter 21: WHAT OF THE FUTURE?	74

Foreword

The Story of Evangelical Literature Service (ELS) is an account that ought to have appeared a number of years ago. It is in short a confirmation of that blessed truth that God is utterly dependable and that His faithfulness towards us never fails.

My introduction to ELS was in 1954. I had earlier read the biography of George Mueller but I was then a Christian just in name, though a good person even as the world understands goodness. By sheer accident, I stumbled upon ELS in Vepey High Road. I saw a number of second hand books, Moody Pocket books to be precise, being sold for just 25 naye paise per book. I began reading them Charles Spurgeon, Robert Boyd, D.L. Moody, F.B. Meyer and others. In the space of just some months, the Lord made it plain to me that sin is not just in the realm of our doings but in the realm of our very thought life that every covetous thought was equivalent to theft, every revengeful thought to murder and every impure thought to adultery. I recognized that I was no better than the vilest person on earth and that I needed the gift of God's salvation in Christ as much as any one else. In fact, the books that I read taught me; WHEREAS A SINFUL SELF IS JUST ONE DEVIL, A RIGHTEOUS SELF IS SEVEN DEVILS. The Spirit of God through the books that I read impressed on me that what had kept me away from experiencing Christ earlier in a personal way was my self-righteousness. I soon became a trophy of literature evangelism.

In the meanwhile, the Lord led me to establish a bond of close friendship with Donald David who soon had me to deputise for him in the CHRIST FOR MADRAS committees. This was the beginning of my introduction to diverse Christian ministries both in the city and in the country. Soon my wife and I found ourselves with our four children facing the crucial decision of entering full-time Christian work. The option before us was to choose one of the two combinations: either Evangelical Fellowship of India and World Evangelical Fellowship OR Evangelical Fellowship of India and Evangelical Literature Service. I chose the latter because of my friend, Donald David, who had at that time to proceed to England for a surgical procedure. I felt that one way of expressing my personal gratitude to Donald was to assist in ELS during his absence from India. What I have stated above shows the manner in which the Lord used ELS in my life.

Doubtless this is true of many other servants of Christ. ELS has always claimed that it is a MISSION and not just a book-selling agency. And that's a claim that I can vouchsafe as wholly true. ELS stocks both books that men make and the Book that makes men. While there's a big difference between the two, this I have to say that the former are not just the products of mere men. Indeed they are the works of Spirit-anointed authors which have stood the test of time. They continue speaking to us long after their authors have passed from the earthly scene. Even more they and the Bible whose message they expound keep conforming us day by day unto the image of Jesus Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us.

July 1994

John Richard

former Business Manager

E.L.S.

Introduction

This is very much a joint effort. Neither of the writers or any other contributor can lay claim to any great writing gift, but we felt the ELS story needed to be told, and have been happy to participate in relating events as we saw them.

Needless to say, much has been omitted that might have been included, but we believe the basic unfolding of God's plan has been recorded, which is the purpose of the book.

Many men and women have faithfully played their part over the past 40 or more years. Some have been named, but many have not - both nationals and missionaries. Without them there would be no story to tell. To each one we pay a very warm tribute. To our prayer supporters, customers and well wishers we also say a very sincere 'thank you' for your share in the ministry as well.

Though this book will perhaps serve as an historical record, its objective is to stimulate further launching out into unknown in order that many more will be reached through the printed word. The needs of India are so enormous, and every medium, whether preaching, radio, literature, films or any other, has its part to play in making Christ known.

It is our prayer and hope that readers will be encouraged as they see what God has done and will become involved themselves that together we shall see the Kingdom of God extended in our great land.

June 1994.

V.M. Abraham

Ida David

PREFACE

At the time the manuscript of this book was sent to the press, we opened another branch in Ludhiana (Punjab, India). I thus hasten to write a few lines on this new centre.

Last year I had a growing burden towards Punjab. To begin with I heard Punjabi's were opening up for the gospel. This burden became a prayer in my heart. In answer to this CMC Ludhiana opened up and asked us whether we would run the bookshop for them. I prayed over and over again and took the decision. When the spirit of God ordains advance nothing can prevent it. What an opportunity to serve Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu speaking people!

Ludhiana has a population of 15 lakhs. It is called the Manchester of India and will be considered as a Metropolitan City next year. Our shop is in the campus of the CMC hospital. Our sincere thanks to Dr. L.B.M. Joseph, Director, CMC, Ludhiana who was instrumental in our taking up this centre.

As you read how God has worked in one small part of his creation - Bangalore, Bombay, Coimbatore, Ludhiana, Madras, Trivandrum, Vellore may you realize that wherever you are, you too are part of his overriding plan and purpose.

Madras

July 1994

Selly Benjamin

General Secretary

Chapter 1: THE VALUE OF CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

Many people come to know Jesus Christ through reading a book or a tract. Christians are challenged and built up in their faith by the books they read, and the life of the Church is greatly enriched through the use of Christian literature. There are many thousands who would bear testimony to this truth. Let some of the great leaders of the past speak to us.

American Statesman, Benjamin Franklin once said, "Give me 26 lead soldiers and I will conquer the world," referring to the English alphabet in type.

Mahatma Gandhi's whole life while in Africa, was revolutionised by a booklet entitled "Unto This Last" by Ruskin.

It was the reading of the New Testament that led Sadhu Sundar Singh to accept Christ. Both Hudson Taylor and John Bunyan were saved through reading a gospel tract. The late Kenneth Strachan said, "85 percent of all Latins won to Christ are converted as a result of a Christian book, paper, tract or Bible."

Dr. Harold Cook of the Moody Institute says, "Literature can be our most efficient medium of mass communication of the Gospel. In terms of the price paid for it, the number of people reached, and the fact that the message can be read over again until it is understood, there is no other method that can compare with literature."

Martin Luther wrote nearly 100 books and circulated them throughout Western Europe, and as a result of his writings the reformation was born.

26 years before the Russian Revolution the Communists poured their literature into Russia. When Lenin took over Russia he said, "The people will never believe or understand communism unless they are indoctrinated with communism through the printed page."

On reading through old ELS reports and articles written by different workers, we have found a great many stories of those who have been blessed through literature in various ways. We will share just three of them.

A Doctor: "I was mentally ill because of a drug habit and was admitted to the Government Mental Hospital for treatment. I was bankrupt and totally without any reputation. One day as I sat deeply immersed in thought, a man handed me a tract. My uncle was with me at the time, so I handed the tract to him to read, His knowledge of English was not very good, and when such is the case, one tends to read aloud. What could I do but sit and listen? The tract was about a railway man whose job it was to couple the bogies together. One day in a drunken state he had torn a Bible from an evangelist, abused him and sent him away. Later that same day there was an accident and he was fatally crushed between two bogies. As he lay dying he asked for the Evangelist and as the simple gospel was explained to him he repented and accepted God's forgiveness. As my uncle finished reading this, I began to weep profusely and cried out to God to forgive me and cleanse me. I had peace and joy I never felt before and was sure my sins had been forgiven."

This doctor went on to become a great witness himself and was the means of bringing many to the Saviour.

An English Sadhu: "He was brought up as a Roman Catholic and had spent 12 years in India searching for peace, but became a wanderer from one place to another, from one temple to

another, in his search for truth. He studied Buddhism in Ceylon for 21/2 years, and knew considerably more than most people about the different religions of India. About two years ago he was in our Madras shop and bought a Bible (which he read in three weeks) and some books by Enrich Sauer. These, he told us recently, kept him from becoming a Hindu, for he admitted that he had met reality. However, he did not find peace of heart until August of this year (1962) at special meetings in Madras."

A Methodist Minister: "The book 'Continuous Revival' by Roy Hession has been a great blessing to this man, and he bought 20 copies to use as a means of preparation among his congregation prior to a series of special meetings. Two weeks later, over-flowing with joy, he came in to say that 18 out of the 20 to whom he had given the book had come into real blessing during the meetings, and he wanted 50 more copies!"

THE PRINTED PAGE

- * *The printed page can go where the human voice cannot.*
 - * *It travels cheaply.*
 - * *It leaps language barriers, and is never influenced by racial prejudice.*
 - * *It preaches the same message to everyone.*
 - * *It never loses its temper... never talks back*
 - * *It never tires, but works even when men sleep.*
 - * *It is never discouraged.*
 - * *It always catches a person in the right mood.*
 - * *It speaks without a foreign accent.*
 - * *It never compromises... never changes its message.*
 - * *It continues to witness long after its author has died.*
-

Chapter 2: HOW IT ALL BEGAN

All true Christian work originates from the heart of God. Although man is inevitably a part of its outworking, it is God Himself who initiates and makes known His purposes to individuals. This is the only possible explanation for the beginning of Evangelical Literature Service (Christian Literature Crusade in India) for the founder Donald David had no such ideas himself.

Donald was confined to a sick bed, unable to do much, spending many hours in solitude figuring out all he was going to achieve when he was well, but one day God broke through all his ambitious plans, "Will you be part of My plan to reach out to the people of India through literature?" Although Donald wanted to put God first in his life, it wasn't an easy decision to make, for he had a friend of some standing in the Indian Railways who had promised to help him get a good job there as soon as he was well enough. How could Donald surrender such prospects? Financial security is important to a young man, and Christian literature work didn't hold out great lucrative. But we must start at the beginning.....

When he was a boy of 12, Donald's mother and grandfather accepted Jesus as their Saviour through the ministry of Mr. Silas Fox, a well-known Canadian evangelist. This was the beginning of the whole family eventually coming to the Saviour and ushered in a new life style for this traditionally religious family. Donald soon followed his mother and made his own decision to follow Jesus after hearing a message on John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." But things didn't go smoothly. The young lad succumbed to many youthful temptations, so much so that at times he wondered if he really was a Christian at all. The ways of God are perfect and good, though it doesn't always appear so at the time, for when Donald was 14 he met with a football accident which literally changed his life. A severe blow on the nose from a fast-moving ball didn't appear too serious and he was able to finish the game, but next morning he had difficulty breathing and his face began to swell. He was taken to the doctor who said there was nothing to be alarmed about, but by that evening the swelling was much worse. After some days several front teeth were extracted to allow the infection to drain, but that didn't solve the problem and Donald's condition deteriorated. The poison in his system continued to spread, and another doctor was called who decided to cauterize certain veins leading to the brain in order to stem the poisonous flow upwards, but it was almost too late. "If he survives the next 24 hours there's a chance he will recover," the doctor said, "but I can hold out very little hope." Many prayed and the 24 hours passed, but the poison mercilessly spread through the rest of his body. Large abscesses formed and Donald was bedridden for long periods for 6 years, some of that time in traction. In due course the septicaemia settled in one hip which caused a great deal of pain and discomfort.

In spite of his limitations, Donald studied for his high school examinations while in bed and began to read Christian books and periodicals. These played their part in restoring to him the assurance of salvation, and later on through the Moody monthly magazine he read of the foundation and growth of the Moody Colportage Library—those low-priced readable books for the man in the street. About that time, a Christian friend, Mr. N. Daniel of The Layman's Evangelical Fellowship of Madras, visited Donald and felt he should share something God had put on his heart. "Brother," he said, "so many people are praying for you and you are not being healed, you must be displeasing the Lord in some way. Think about it and when I come next time tell me if this is not true." It wasn't easy for Donald to face the fact that he wanted his own way of well paid employment, especially in view of the promise of his Indian Railways friend, but he knew God had already spoken to him and he surrendered his life to the Lord to be a part of His plan. Mr. N. Daniel was, needless to say,

delighted to get the news at his next visit, and together he and Donald prayed and committed the future to the Lord. From that time on Donald began to get well. Healing was not dramatic, but gradual and steady, and after some time he was able to lead a reasonably normal life again.

THE PLAN UNFOLDS

In 1946 when Donald David had recovered from his long illness, the second world war was barely over and everything was difficult, not the best time at all to start a new business. An import licence was a necessity before anything could be ordered from overseas, and this was practically impossible to get. Of all the countries in the world, India must surely rank very highly in the amount of red tape needed to get things done. Bureaucratic bunglings, frustrations and delays were the order of the day, and it seemed as if nothing would ever be started. But God doesn't call His children to serve Him and leave them to their own devices or at the mercy of government departments, and as prayer was made a licence was eventually granted. That was just the beginning. Building up confidence with overseas suppliers was another hurdle. Who was this unknown Indian with no influential friends, Board or Church backing? Donald had little capital and to start with many publishers wanted payment in advance. A few took him at his word and what he ordered, and with that stock and what could be bought locally, a start was made.

A small room was set aside for the new work in the family home to start with, but this wasn't well located and after a few months a room was made available at Jehovah Shammah - the Church in Vepery, Madras founded by Brother Bakht Singh. This proved to be a good move for it made the work known to many more people, but the room was soon too small. Donald also wanted to reach out further to those beyond one church group, so three rooms were rented from a friend who had a property right on one of the main roads in Madras, Vepery High Road. The rooms were small but opened out from one to another and were reasonably convenient. There was no shop frontage, nor window display possible, but a large notice was erected which was very effective as many buses passed that way, in fact there were bus stops on both sides of the road just outside.

"EVANGELICAL LITERATURE SERVICE. Distributors of Sound Christian Literature true to the Word of God. *Books - Bibles - Cards - Pictures*"

said the notice. Donald thought the name sounded pretty impressive and summed up what he was trying to do!

At the beginning sales were slow. Some days nothing was sold at all, and Donald wondered if he had done the right thing launching such a work, but slowly things improved. One particular friend who owned a number of chemist shops, was a tremendous encouragement for he bought a copy of every new book that came in for some time. Greeting cards could be imported without a licence in small quantities, and were a great attraction. These provided an introduction to the shop for many, and gradually customer confidence was built up.

Donald's aunt, Grace Gabriel, enjoyed meeting people and talking about the Lord. She had a desire to enter full-time service and joined Donald in the shop about that time. Both of them received small salaries, though for Donald it was mostly a case of opening the till and taking what he needed! Wasn't he, after all, the "Sole Proprietor" as the ELS letterhead stated!

By 1951 things were going along fairly smoothly. Donald was always anxious to improve the business and with this in mind visited a few of the larger Christian bookshops in other parts of India, and also wrote away for a great many catalogues. This enabled ELS to become known, and many overseas companies were remarkably helpful in supplying literature. However, Donald still

felt he needed more help and training if the business was going to become the profitable concern he envisaged. One day he was sharing this with an English doctor friend, "I know of an organisation called Christian Literature Crusade in London," he said, "Perhaps they will be able to help you," and gave him the address. A correspondence commenced which was going to have great repercussions in the months and years ahead, but no one had any idea of that at the time. After some letters back and forth, the then leader of CLC, Mr. Phillip Booth, extended an invitation to Donald to go to London to work with them for a while to gain practical experience. However, CLC couldn't be financially responsible, he would have to pay his own way. What an invitation!

But how could he get the money for such a major trip? Donald felt that if God wanted him to go He would somehow provide, and He did! Largely through the generosity of an aunt, money was provided for a return ticket, but this didn't allow for many extras or spending money. Nevertheless this too was all part of God's plan, for Donald had much to learn not only in practical things but also in the way of faith.

The time in London was a great eye-opener. Donald had never met people quite like those in WEC/CLC who literally trusted God for their daily needs, and who went out where He sent to do what He wanted. He saw young people stand up and testify to God's call to Africa, Thailand or wherever, trusting God to supply the wherewithal to make it happen. Donald was amazed and felt God was challenging him to launch out in faith, but a voice said to him, "It's all right for these young people, they've got churches and friends to support them, but no one in India will support you - it just isn't the way it's done, even Churches can't support their own Pastors." How could he get away from such a challenge?

At the same time there were other difficulties to face. Back in India, Donald had never been expected to do practical things, like housework, hammer a nail, make his own bed or even clean his own shoes, but in CLC it was different and he didn't much like it. Sweeping the pavement outside the Ludgate Hill shop was the worst. He felt as if the whole of London was looking at Him! He decided to run away. "I'll go to America" he thought. "I've always wanted to go there. I can go my own way and not have all these problems to struggle with." Spending the money reserved for his return fare to India, he wrote letters to a few people he knew in America and set off. For some months he travelled around and was very hospitably received by many of the publishers with whom he had corresponded. Everything went well until someone took him to a conference at Winona Lake, Minnesota. There he heard a poem quoted at the end of a message about the boy with the five loaves and two fishes. The speaker ended by saying, "If the boy hadn't given his loaves and fish, seemingly insignificant though they were, the multitude would not have been fed." "That's for you," said a still small voice, "if you give yourself fully to me and the work you have started in India, I will bless and multiply it to the whole of the country!" Donald knew what that meant - Stepping out in faith, joining CLC and committing the whole of his future into God's hands. After a struggle he yielded, and simply said "All right Lord, you win, but as a seal that this step is of you, please provide my fare to go back to India. I won't tell anyone of my need, you must provide. God must have been anxious to get him moving for within quite a short time gifts came in to cover his passage. On the way back he stopped in London and shared God's dealings with the CLC staff, and made application to join them.

Completely unaware of all that had been happening, Ida Howlett, a young English missionary, had felt God's call to work with CLC in India, and at that time was helping at another Christian bookshop in Calcutta to prepare her for the time when CLC would launch its own work. On the boat back to India, Donald wrote introducing himself and shared how God had been dealing with him. Little did they know that in about two years time Ida was to become Mrs. Donald David!

At the beginning of 1953 the Evangelical Fellowship of India was holding its second annual conference at a place called Ramapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. As Ida was in Nagpur in Central India at another conference just prior to that time, Donald thought it would be good if she came south to Madras to see ELS which was to become the beginning of CLC in India. Let Ida take the up the story,

"When I arrived at Central Station, Madras, practically the whole family was there to meet me, mother, one or two of the aunts, brothers, and some hangers on. I felt quite swamped with so much attention! The next day I was shown over the shop, and though small, it was bright and attractive. There I met Bro. S. Abraham who had joined Grace Gabriel and had been looking after the accounts during Donald's time in England and the USA. I remember we all prayed together and committed the future into the Lord's hands. Donald and I managed to do some sight-seeing too and by the time we left for Ramapatnam felt we had known one another for a long time as we had so much in common."

Ida returned to Calcutta but not for long. Donald wrote asking her to go and help them as Grace was going on holiday. She never went back to Calcutta for there were further developments and Ida and Donald became engaged,

1954 was a year of new beginnings. Mr. Phillip Booth, the leader of CLC in Britain had meetings in Australia, and it was decided that he should stop in India on the way, and - as he put- "perform two marriages," ELS and CLC and Donald and Ida's. Both these happy events took place in March of that year.

ELS officially became CLC though retaining the name of Evangelical Literature Service, and was registered under the Indian Societies Act. ELS was already well known and it seemed wise to keep the same name, also there was another Christian bookshop in Madras having almost the same name as CLC, and it was felt, that this could create problems. In addition to that the word 'service' was better, especially in Indian context than 'crusade,' so ELS remained as it does to this day. Of the other marriage, this is not the place to say more, but it was indeed a very memorable occasion.

As was said earlier, 1954 was the year of new beginnings. The publishing programme commenced and "Calvary Road" was translated into Tamil and came off the press, then became a fast selling title even as it had been in other countries. There was another new beginning too. Right at the end of the year applications were received from the first new workers, or candidates as they were called at that time, "We had prayed about additional full time workers called of God, and anticipated Tamil/English speaking ones joining us, but God had different ideas to ours. He sent a couple from the north of India speaking Urdu and Hindustani— fortunately English as well! We didn't see how they would fit in, but since their English was excellent, at least, they would be able to work in Madras, or so we thought."

Noble and Coral Massey with their small son Ajay arrived after the best part of three days and nights on trains. They had travelled from Mussoorie in the far north which is at the foothills of the Himalayas, and were worn out but confident that this was where God wanted them to be. After a few days in Madras they weren't so sure! They were not used to the heat, and though it was "winter" in Madras the temperature was around 30. Fortunately they soon adjusted and commenced what ever training we were able to provide, mostly on the job' involvement. Towards the end of Noble and Coral's training period an invitation was received in Madras asking ELS to take over another Christian bookshop. This we were happy to do, but more so when we

discovered that the shop was in Mussoorie the place Noble and Coral had come from! *God's ways are truly amazing!*

Chapter 3: EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

MUSSOORIE 1956-1975

The shop to which our first workers, Noble and Coral Massey went, was called the Mussoorie Book Society. It had been established as a Trust for a great many years, but its future had become uncertain for various reasons Through Mr. Len Moules of WEC who was well-known to the MBS Board, the offer to run the shop was made to ELS, and we were happy to take it over and see our first branch shop established.

Mussoorie is a hill resort close to the India-Tibet border. During the summer it catered for many missionaries and well-to-do Indians seeking to get away from the great heat of the Indian plains. The shop became a thriving centre for many years, regular book displays in local schools, centres and conferences were held, and colportage trips to Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and other areas were undertaken. There was good local interest also, and at one time literature was sold in 10 different languages. One of the early workers in Mussoorie, Geoff Williams, writes of an experience in bookstall work:

"In the second week of our marriage, having just returned from honeymoon we were asked to take a bookstall at a Christian convention. We had very little money which was a small tent in which was a string cot/bed and and were glad to accept the accommodation provided, a tin bucket, an important household item in India. You can do a lot when you have a bucket, most of all have a bath! After a full day at the convention we were glad to lie down, but the bed unfortunately, rather sagged in the middle, making sleep possible only by hanging on to the edges! In the middle of the night we awoke scratching ourselves all over, and putting on the torch, realised that we were covered with red bites. We were victims of the Indian bed bug. There wasn't much sleep left for us that night. Next morning we had to take measures with hot water and insect killer to rid the bed of its unwelcome occupants. We will never forget the second week of our married life and the joy of doing a bookstall together with extra company!" (We hope they had good sales as well - Eds.).

The Mussoorie centre was able to procure its own import licence and a good deal of mail order work was done as well. However, as the biggest buyers of books were missionaries, who, after some time were unable to get their permits to work in India renewed, the situation began to change. Our own CLC missionaries were also leaving, and it became difficult to manage the centre efficiently. So in 1975 we withdrew from Mussoorie, and another literature agency took over the premises and remaining stock.

In addition to Noble and Coral Massey who pioneered the work, Aileen Howard, George and Roseleen Macdonald, Geoff and Pauline Williams from CLC. U.K. as well as Edna Turner and Dorothy Lambert from CLC Australia, all served in the centre at various times. Latterly WEC missionaries helped considerably and some national brethren as well. Ted West (Associate) from England also gave several years of service here. Edna Turner writes,

"It was always a pleasure to help all who came to buy or talk. Once such was a Hindu who was a secret believer in Jesus Christ. He had previously purchased a Daily Reading book which had been a great blessing to him, and it was wonderful to hear his testimony. It was like a glorious miracle."

Thank God for the printed word.

OOTACAMUND 1956-1990

Ootacamund on the Nilgiri mountains in South India is another hill station, 7,500 ft. above sea level. In the premises of the Union Church, (where C. T. Studd had been Pastor from 1900-1906 and his daughters were baptized) there was a tiny bookshop operating under the name of Bible and Book Depot which was managed by volunteers from the Church. In 1956 ELS was asked to take this shop over and our second shop came into being. Because of the beautiful landscape and ideal climate, many people, including missionaries, spent their summer holidays either at Ooty (as it is called) or one of the other hill stations, Coonoor or Kotagiri.

In the beginning a missionary couple who had transferred from WEC, Al and Bernice Monus, ran the shop for a few years, followed by Lila Lehman who was loaned to us by WEC. Mr. Alf Chote, a missionary friend, looked after the shop too for some time, but latterly a national worker, S. Barnabas, took over. A good deal of outreach work of many kinds was done in the area, and in 1975 the shop was considerably enlarged.

Mention must be made of the Nilgiris "Keswick" Convention bookstalls held at the three hill stations each year, which Donald David had run before ELS took over the shop. These continued unabated, and for many years played a great part in making the work known and enabled the missionary body to understand that we were there to minister to all the Churches, not just to one particular denomination. With the withdrawal of most missionaries by the early seventies, sales at the Conventions dropped considerably, and the ministry from the shop was also effected. However for the benefit of local churches and the Christian community, the doors of the shop were kept open until the Union Church decided to run it themselves in 1990,

KODAIKANAL 1957 - 1964

In 1957-1964 a seasonal bookstall was commenced at Kodaikanal on the Palani Hills in Tamil Nadu, which ran from March - June each year. As was the case with the other hill station centres, this mainly catered to missionaries, but bookselling trips into the area were undertaken in the sixties by national workers. Edna Turner and Aileen Howard managed this centre in the early years, but later one of our Indian workers, L. Devasitham took over.

LUCKNOW 1959-1966

This centre, called "The Book Nook" was commenced by Mr. Ken Getty of WEC and housed at the headquarters of WEC at Birwa House. The main feature of the work was bookstalls which were held in schools, colleges, hospitals and Churches; as many as 65 in three months at one time. George Macdonald, who ran the work for a few years writes,

"Our very first appointment was at La Martiniere Girls' School. We took our entire stock (Rs. 1,000) to the school in two trunks. The Principal was too busy to see us and asked us to come back the next day and to leave the books with her. We then proceeded to cancel our two other bookings for that day and two for the next day.

When we went back to the school the next day the Principal said, "Thank you for such a fine selection - I take the lot! So started a great round of bookstalls over several years, not only in Lucknow but also in Kanpur, Sitapur, Faizabad, Saharanpur and Bareilly."

Geoff Williams, who was stationed in Lucknow for some time, also writes of that time.

"Perhaps one of the most impressive memories was the opportunity to sell the Scriptures at the religious fairs, called "Melas". These were normally held at the time of some festival and usually in and around a temple site to which pilgrims came in their thousands. Almost overnight make-shift stalls for business would be erected along the roads leading to the main focus of the festival. Alongside the stalls were musicians, 'quack' doctors, jugglers, and any and everybody who had something to offer, as well as those who had nothing but their poverty — the beggars. Into this melee of people came the Christian bookseller with a bulging bag of Scripture portions hanging on one shoulder, and with an up raised arm he or she held aloft a selection of the four Gospels. A necessary item was a loud voice that could shout out over the clamour telling of the books that had a message of spiritual life. Standing in the heat of the day with the rising dust of countless shuffling feet passing by, it was always rewarding when a pair of those shuffling feet halted and was actually listening to what you were saying. Even more rewarding was to see a hand go deep into a pocket or undo the corner of a garment to make a coin available to buy a Gospel portion or N.T. It was usually the gospel portions that sold the most, but I always thought beyond the amount sold to the shuffling feet that perhaps had begun to shuffle heavenward."

DISASTER!

The most traumatic event of the Lucknow days was the flood, of which George Macdonald writes,

"The Gomati river was running high when the WEC family, including myself, gathered at Birwa House for their annual conference, but no one could have imagined what was going to happen in the next 24 hours and the weeks to follow. ELS was at that time situated on the verandah in two large custom built bookcases. The work was flourishing and we had just taken delivery of \$500 of greeting cards from the USA - a gift which miraculously arrived without customs to pay. A new missionary had also arrived a few days previously.

We started prayers at 9 o'clock when a servant burst into the room shouting "Pani ati hi, pani ati hi!" (the water is coming). The river bank had burst half a mile from us, and as we looked we could see a torrent coming our way. We had no steps up to the flat roof, only two bamboo ladders, one of which floated away before we realised how serious things were! We started getting the ladies up on the roof, but one who had a wooden leg broke two rungs of the ladder with the weight of it! By 10 o'clock we were all on the roof— about 40 of us. Soon after getting up we sang hymns and prayed for others much worse off than we were. The house was in 10 ft. of water but our roof was fortunately, 12 ft. above ground level. At that time many shacks were swept away and their occupants drowned. Two WEC men were in the city buying provisions and by midday arrived in a canoe to tell us help was coming. The army dropped bread to us in the evening from helicopters as we prepared to spend the night on the roof, and by mid-morning of the second day arrived with flat bottomed boats to rescue us.

Few things were saved from the house. As the water rose, we saw the entire ELS stock of books and cards float away! Also the unopened barrels of the new and the missionary's spare wooden leg!! There were countless snakes in the water, any of which could have killed with one bite. It was three months before the house was habitable again and we were able to make a fresh start with the Book Nook."

Mention must be made of the contribution by Ken Getty and many other WEC folk to the ministry of the Book Nook. Finally Aileen Howard (CLC UK) ran the centre from 1964-1966 before becoming sick and returning to England. At that point other ELS staff were not available so the centre was closed.

THIRUCHIRAPALLY 1961 - 1963

Early in 1960 the Pastor of the Apostolic Church, Trichy (as it was called), supported by many local Christians, encouraged ELS to open a branch there. The YMCA constructed a book room after accepting a small investment from us, and in 1961 the shop was opened. Though there was a great deal of enthusiasm and encouragement from local Christians at the beginning, the centre did not progress or become established mainly due to inexperienced and unfaithful staff, and after two years we were compelled to close it down.

PURASAWALKAM CENTRE

The early days of any work are always exciting. This was particularly our experience as we saw the work continue to grow after ELS was registered as an Indian Society in 1954. From the beginning an annual catalogue was produced which played an important part in publicizing ELS further afield, and mail order work gradually became quite extensive. We began to supply other Christian bookshops too, but as licensing was introduced after a few years this was only on a small scale to start with.

One feature of those years was bookstalls conducted in schools, which gave Grace Gabriel much pleasure, though they were hard work. Gracie wrote of one very worthwhile experience she had.

"While busily displaying the books, I felt a tug on my sleeve. Turning round I saw a girl about 12 years of age earnestly looking at me. She timidly asked, 'Can you give me a book that will show me the way to heaven? Lifting my heart to the Lord for His guidance I said, 'O yes! I have just the book for you.' and 'Rosa's Quest' (The Way to the Beautiful Land) was placed in her hands. Then I heard many voices calling out, 'Is that a good book, Miss? As the girls crowded around me I replied, 'Yes, it's the best as it points the way to heaven.' After the rush was over, the Principal of the school informed me that the 12 year old was a Jewess. She had attended one or two children's rallies and seemed to have made some sort of decision, but wasn't quite sure. Since then I've prayed much for her and also given her a copy of "Talking with God."

It isn't possible to go into much detail of the years from 1954-1956, but more missionaries and national workers joined, the early branches were opened, a few more books were published, and customers began practically falling over parcels which were either coming in or going out! The three rooms on Vepery High Road had become totally inadequate.

All along we had prayed much that other premises might be found, but nothing was forthcoming. Not far away was a building ideally suitable and located in the main shopping area, but it was already occupied. We had claimed it by faith earlier on but nothing seemed to be happening, so we became impatient and rented another property as we felt our need was desperate. However, this hasty step became our 'Ishmael' and for many years this place was a great burden to us. We were learning the hard way that God's ways are best even though apparently delayed, for after only a few months the ideal property we had been praying about earlier was offered to us!

These premises had previously been used as a Church so not too much had to be done, and after the seating was removed and the whole place decorated, in November 1957 we were able to move into the new place. Situated on the busy Purasawalkam High Road in Vepery, the shop is in the centre of the so-called Christian area of Madras, and it was here that the work grew from childhood to young adulthood. During the next 22 years every department developed enormously, but as time went by and the number of customers increased, and larger quantities of stock began

to arrive, more display space was desperately needed. Eventually the stock room and offices reached the extreme end of the old building, and any further encroachment by any other sector of the work would find the General Secretary pulling his desk out into the cycle shed that was just outside his door! Every available space in the building had been utilized. The work had outgrown the premises again.

Chapter 4: INTO THE GARDEN CITY

BANGALORE CENTRE

For some time this southern city had been laid on our hearts and when God's time came in 1960 the way was opened for two lady workers to go there and establish a book shop on Mosque Road in Fraser Town. Bangalore is one of the most industrialized cities in South India with a pleasant, moderate climate and is continually growing. After the shop was opened Grace Gabriel returned to Madras while Aileen Howard alone managed the centre for nearly two years before going on her first furlough.

Noble and Coral Massey, who had been transferred from Mussoorie, took over from Aileen and developed the work considerably. A scooter was used to get out to many bookstalls in schools, Churches and Bible Schools not only in Bangalore but also to Bangarapet and Kolar Gold Fields and the work went ahead with leaps and bounds.

In 1966 the Indian rupee was drastically devalued against the U.S. dollar and British pound, which meant that the price of imported books became too high for most people to afford. In order to overcome this problem it was decided, after prayerful consideration, to begin printing Indian editions of English books in India. After considerable search a second hand printing machine was purchased and set up in Shantinagar about 6 km. away from the book shop. Noble began a hectic time shuttling between the two places daily. In order to strengthen the press work, A.J. Christopher and Edwin Michael from Madras, were sent to help in the press. However, the press was small and not well equipped, and could mainly handle only tract printing for India Every Home Crusade, but some booklets were also printed and a few odd jobs done, so that the work was kept financially sound.

NEW BUILDING

By the end of 1968 V.M. and Leelamma Abraham V.M.'s vision to bring the shop and press into one place were put in charge of the Bangalore operation. It was under one roof, and this was shared with the rest of the ing for the fulfilment of the project took a few years, but ELS fellowship. Searching for a suitable place and pray- with the coming of C.T. John and Marykutty to manage the press in 1970, V.M. was free to concentrate on the overall development in Bangalore.

After a lot of personal interviews and correspondence with the Rev. John Mullins and the Pastorate Committee of St. John's Church, owners of the land we were hoping to purchase, Donald David and V.M. Abraham walked to the proposed site one day and stood in the midst of the thorn bush and ant hills. Lifting their hearts to the Lord they claimed the promise that was given to Joshua "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that I have given unto you" Josh. 1:3. The Lord was faithful, and early in 1972 the final Agreement was prepared for ELS to lease a piece of land from St. John's Church. This was registered in April of that year and signed by Bishop Sargent on behalf of the Church Trustees and Donald David and V.M. Abraham on behalf of ELS. The architects who had drawn the master plan of St. John's Church compound helped finalise the building plan, but on scrutinising the plan the Deputy Engineer of the Municipal Corporation informed us that "The plan for a Printing Press of 10 HP cannot be granted as per existing Municipality rules. However as I am interested in your project let me look into the new town planning proposals that may come into effect shortly." "Thank you, Sir," said V.M. and left the office. On several subsequent visits to his office either he was too busy or not available. But we kept trying. It was like the widow troubling the unjust judge to get her matter attended to. After

many days of pressure he wrote a favourable report which resulted in planning, permission being granted by the Municipal Corporation for the construction of a three storey building with 2000 sq. ft. of space on each floor. Praise the Lord!

FINANCE FOR THE PROJECT

Madras HQ had a building fund of Rs. 28,000 by that time which the General Secretary had offered for use in Bangalore, but the cost of construction was estimated to be Rs. 140,000. The Scripture Literature Press, a Brethren Publishing House (publishing in the Kannada language) was also in need of premises and offered to pay the construction cost of a portion they might occupy, so it was agreed to let them take over part of the first floor. However we still required another Rs. 76,000 to complete the project. At the time of starting the project, Donald David was General Secretary, and V.M. thought that Donald would somehow see the project through. But this wasn't to be. While the construction was in progress in 1972 the Davids felt the Lord's time had come for them to go to the U.K., and Noble Massey was appointed as General Secretary. Together with the Masseys we all lifted our eyes to the Lord and saw He was well able to supply all our needs. The Lord wonderfully supplied the necessary finance through various sources, especially CLC USA and Britain and the Liang Trust in the U.K., and enough came in to pay all the bills right down to the last one, so we were able to dedicate the new building in January 1973 without being in debt to anyone. Hallelujah!

THE NEW BOOKSHOP AND PRINTING PRESS UNDER ONE ROOF

The bookshop occupied about 400 sq. ft. while the print shop and staircase about 1,600 sq. ft. In addition to the portion used by the SLP we had two flats upstairs for staff quarters. The beautiful bookshop began attracting many more customers and sales doubled in the first year. The print shop was well lit and spacious, though we still had only the old machines. In general the work received a new lease of life and ELS became much more widely known throughout Bangalore in Churches, schools, Christian institutions and among the Christian public. With the moving of V.M. and Leelamma Abraham to Madras in 1975 changes in staff began to take place. C.T. John and Marykutty continued managing the printing press and J.R. Jayakumar was given charge of the bookshop which was later taken over by Edwin and Lily Michael.

In spite of all these changes the work continued to grow. In 1979 CLC USA donated an old Automatic Press which Milan Steffle and his son Steve from CLC USA personally came and fitted in Bangalore. This gave a great boost to the printing work for the next few years. The Steffles made tremendous personal effort to improve the layout, and many electrical and machinery installations were made in the print shop. They also left behind a large kit of machine tools for use in the press. With the addition of a Linotype machine as well as automatic cylinder machines the capacity of the press increased greatly, however the disadvantage was that the operation was letterpress.

By the 1980's printing technology in India was developing so fast that it became largely computer typesetting and offset printing, while D.T.P. and laser printing were also being introduced. As a result, much of our own book printing had to be done by the offset process elsewhere. Consequently our print shop was unable to find sufficient work to keep all the equipment going.

THE CRUCIAL QUESTION

After two decades of growth and changes in printing and publishing, by the late eighties the crucial question facing the management was whether or not it was necessary for ELS to maintain a Printing Press in order to accomplish our purpose in publishing. While the answer was not fully clear, one thing was sure if we were to maintain the press, it must be modernised at an enormous cost financially and manned by more highly skilled technicians - both of which we did not have. On the other hand there were a tremendous number of modern printing presses competing with one another, able to print books at very reasonable prices. We decided, after prayerful consideration to take advantage of these offers which would relieve ELS of heavy financial investment, as well as the management of a printing business which was not our primary call.

Another compelling incentive was our commitment to literature distribution and the great potential for this in Bangalore. We knew that if we expanded the bookshop into the press area, book distribution would increase greatly with the added floor space. The whole issue was discussed several times at Committee level and placed before the Lord. The final decision was made at the Annual Conference in 1989 to close down the printing press, dispose of the equipment and expand the bookshop the decision was unanimous and we felt sure was of the into the press area after necessary alterations. Though Lord, it was very hard for C.T. John to watch the closure of the press, especially after giving 20 years to the work. However, submission to the Lord's will and acceptance of the fellowship's decision, resulted in much joy and blessing in the lives of C.T. John and his wife Marykutty. The equipment was sold to two different Christian organisations and the technical employees of the press were given adequate financial compensation. They left us with gratitude and a sense of assurance that "In all things God works for the good of those that love Him." Thus after 24 years of operating a printing press it was finally closed in 1990.

ENLARGED BOOKSHOP IN BANGALORE

With the removal of the printing machine the whole ground floor was available for the bookshop. By removing one wall between the bookshop and the press a large hall was created to house the book display. It was necessary to give a good face lift to the whole building in order to make it really attractive, but there were sufficient funds after the sale of the printing machines to do this as well as pay for renovations and new furnishings. By October 1990 the whole building was completed. The 80 ft. frontage was mostly glazed, and as it faced St. John's Church Road it gave everyone a full view of the display inside. New stocks of books, wall texts and greetings cards were displayed on new shelves which made the shop very inviting and possibly the best in the city. It is certainly the largest Christian bookshop in Bangalore, if not the whole of India.

C.D. Abraham and his wife Jessy who managed the former shop so successfully are now in charge of the enlarged shop.

Here is C.D. Abraham's testimony.

"In 1983 I completed my Bachelor of Theology in the Hindustan Bible College, Madras. Before finishing my studies I prayed earnestly with fasting and prayer, regarding my future ministry. One day one of my friends who knew of ELS, came to me and said that ELS has a few vacancies, and why didn't I apply? I did so, and after completing the papers and going for an interview I was accepted as a trainee in April 1983. However, after receiving the appointment letter, I had other invitations from different organisations in Madras, offering a stipend and other facilities. I sought God's guidance and He confirmed that ELS was where He wanted me to be.

Before joining the work I knew very little about ELS, but in spite of difficulties I came to enjoy the ministry and was happy in the Mission God had called me to. At that time my brothers who were in Saudi Arabia came to know what I was doing, and they were not at all happy. Without asking me one of my older brothers made an arrangement to take me to Saudi. Twice he sent visas through his friends for me, but because I knew the specific calling of God to ELS, and felt He was with me, I rejected my brother's plans. From that time onwards the Lord began leading me in new ways.

“I love the ministry which God has given into my hand, and I am trying to do my best for Him each day.”

Chapter 5: A SPIRITUAL CLINIC IN A HOSPITAL

The early sixties was a time of much expansion. The well-known Christian Medical College and Hospital in Vellore founded by Dr. Ida Scudder, is about 120 km. south of Madras, and had been a target for prayer for treatment there, and it seemed such an ideal place some time. We knew patients came from all over India from which to reach out to people through literature. There was however, one problem. How could we get into the hospital? Who should we approach, and how could we overcome the red tape which we knew was inevitable in such a large institution? But God worked in ways beyond our expectation.

One day one of the Madras workers burst into Donald David's office with the news that the General Superintendent of the hospital was in the shop! We could hardly believe it, for in Vellore it was practically impossible to see him at all, but he had come to see us! As he looked around he admired the stock we carried, and said, "We could do with this type of material in our shop at the hospital." "We would gladly help in any way we can," replied Donald. "Really?" said the General Superintendent, "then will you come and take over our hospital bookshop?!" What a surprise, it seemed incredible, yet wasn't this what we had been praying for? The hospital, even by 1960, was a huge institution where thousands of patients, their relatives and visitors, doctors, nurses and paramedical personnel moved about every day. It is the largest Christian hospital in South Asia with many departments and specialities employing over 3,500 staff, and has as its motto, "Not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

We were soon able to move there, and for a while ran the bookshop for them, but before long an Agreement was signed enabling us to operate our own branch there. In the early days the work was run by L. Devasitham who, before joining ELS, had been in the army and was used to 'military discipline' as he called it. He was willing to go anywhere and do anything, so much so that for some time he slept under the stairs of the Outpatients Department, unaware, in all probability, that one of the pillars of CLC/ELS was sacrifice!

The book display was set up in the Outpatients Department waiting hall and corridor. A few shelves and racks were portable and provided an open display while the majority of the stock was displayed in glass cases that had been part of the hospital bookroom. The new stock from Madras headquarters filled these showcases and an attractive display was set up. A sign board 'ELS Book Stall' was placed on top of the main show case and people began to find many new titles on the shelves. From the beginning sales were encouraging as literature and gospel portions in various languages were available at the stall.

A BOOK TROLLEY FOR THE HOSPITAL WARDS

The bookstall catered to the need of outpatients and visitors, but we were concerned that inpatients were not able to benefit. However, thanks to earmarked gift, we were able to purchase a specially designed trolley for this purpose. This was wheeled around the beds of patients giving them an opportunity to see and purchase the books of their choice.

AN OPEN DOOR - BUT MANY ADVERSARIES

For nearly a decade this spiritual clinic ministered patients and visitors, and many spoke of blessing received. This was not pleasing to the enemy who started a counter attack. A group of

people began to put pressure on ELS to 'enlarge' the stock to include some of the titles which do not fall within ELS/CLC boundaries. We shared our position with the hospital authorities and made it clear that ELS operates to minister life to people through literature and seeks to please God and does not provide other kinds of books. The medical staff and students were active in the Evangelical Union stood with us and encouraged us, and after considerable dialogue with the concerned parties, Satan was defeated and we were given a new lease of life in the campus. Our own room was provided for us outside the Outpatients Department, and we were able to function as a separate bookshop within the campus! What a victory!

THE NEW BOOKROOM

The new room, which for a time was provided rent free, offered plenty of freedom and more opportunity to develop and increase distribution. However in the early seventies things began to change as Devasitham went through a very difficult time. His wife Manohara suffered a prolonged illness and eventually died. The burden of caring for three children and looking after the work as well became too much for Devasitham, So C.V. John and his wife Mercy were given responsibility of the Vellore centre. Under the enthusiastic and energetic work of the Johns the ministry began to grow considerably. In the first year sales doubled, and John's personal witnessing too, brought many results. One Muslim scholar was thoroughly converted and baptised and began serving the Lord full-time in south India, with the new name of Abraham. Commented a customer in 1982, "More people hear and learn about Jesus in this place daily, than in any other place in the whole of Vellore."

FURTHER CHANGES

In the mid-eighties, C.V. John and Mercy moved to Trivandrum which was opening up, while M.T. Philip and his wife Soubha took charge of the Vellore shop. By that time the C.M.C.H. had constructed a new shop in the centre of the campus, which they gave to us for a nominal rent. This shop, though small, had glass windows and provision for a proper name board, and, being located in the centre of the campus no one can fail to see it! ELS provided a totally new set of book shelves and fittings for the shop which made this 200 sq. ft. shop very attractive. Distribution of literature increased greatly and the shop became busy throughout the day, so much so that staff had to be increased.

Milan Chandra Naik is a senior staff member of ELS from Orissa who joined the Philips in Vellore. Besides assisting in the shop he helps the hospital Chaplaincy Department by conducting chapel services for patients and staff in the Hindi language. The hospital has chapel services in many languages conducted by 16 chaplains. Both the hospital administration and ELS are happy that we can compliment each other and work together for the building of His church.

Here is a short testimony of M.T. Philip.

"While studying for my pre-degree, there was an election in the college. After the result of the election was announced, I decided to go home. On the way my friend compelled me get into the lorry into which all the elected candidates had crowded. I almost fell three times from the lorry that day. Then a thought came to my mind. I die like this what is the use of my life?' So I made a decision that I would not go to any more political meetings, but I would serve the Lord. After my pre-degree result I went to Bible College. Here I was given a weekend assignment to arrange the literature room, and I started filling the bags for those who were going out for literature ministry. I was very attracted to this work and also started going out for literature evangelism, which

continued throughout the next year as well. I became very interested in Christian literature work and carried a lot of gospels, tracts and New Testaments and distributed these all over Bangalore city, for I believed Isaiah 55:11. I even got the first prize for distribution!

Then I came to know that ELS is an organisation doing a literature ministry. I joined first of all, for two months and prayed much about it, and God spoke to me and showed me that this is where He wanted me to serve Him. So I committed my life for the ministry.

After joining ELS a few of my relatives wanted me to resign and go along with them to the Gulf countries. But I refused and testified to them that I did not want to make money but to serve the Lord. Even though I had a lot of financial problems I am very much convinced that God has called me to His service through ELS.”

Chapter 6: WITHIN A YARD OF HELL

MOUNT ROAD CENTRE

In 1961 Madras became the first city in CLC's history to have two bookshops! One day the Rev. Cyril Thomson, then Pastor of Christ Church, Mount Road told us that the Church were looking for a way to reach out into the area and were planning to open a Christian bookshop. "If we provided you with the premises rent free, would you run it for us?" he asked. What an offer! Mount Road is right in the centre of the very busy down town area of city, surrounded by shops and cinemas, one of which was the very popular Devi theatre situated right next door. This made us aware that we would be operating within a yard of hell, and we prayed that we would be a good testimony to the crowds of people thronging the area. We named the shop "Ambassador Book Centre" as we felt this was better for a shop in the commercial area of the city. Noble Massey, - a gifted artist, painstakingly cut the sign board and made it to stand on top of the building in order to draw the attention of passers-by. A set of simple furniture and fittings were provided along with adequate stocks of literature. C.M. Varghese, a young graduate from a Bible Seminary, had just completed his training at ELS headquarters, and being an enthusiastic and pleasant bachelor it was decided to put him in charge of the new branch. As a room on the first floor was also made available to us, Varghese decided to live on top of the work as well!

The inauguration day was encouraging as many Christians came to the function and made purchases. Thereafter it became a different story. From the next day people dropped into the shop and asked for school books, science and technology books, stationery and all sorts of things except the books that were displayed on the shelves. Varghese, a polite and patient young man, had to constantly say, "Sorry, we do not stock it." Then a few college students would rush in to buy greeting cards, but after quickly reading through the words on the cards, would drop them back on the rack and ask, "Don't you have other cards without these pious words?" The Christian words and texts on the cards were too much for them! So for the first few months the shop was busy with people though the till was practically empty.

IDENTITY PROBLEM OF THE AMBASSADOR BOOK CENTRE

When the bookshop was christened Ambassador Book Centre it was hoped that the general public would not hesitate to visit the shop as it did not openly proclaim that it was a Christian shop. Though this was right to some extent, potential customers upon entering the door, soon discovered the nature of the stock and left. This began sending negative signals to visitors, while Christians who did not know about the shop often were not aware that a Christian bookshop had come to Mount Road. Eventually customers became less and less and Varghese began feeling very discouraged. After all the training he had received and having a zeal to serve the Lord, "I'm wasting my time in this bookshop," Varghese began thinking, yet he was sure that God had brought him to ELS to serve Him in the field of literature.

After a couple of years he decided to marry. Though it was good for his young wife and himself to continue staying 'on top of the work,' the first floor room was too small for a couple to make their home, especially when there were visitors. So as Varghese and Annamma were able to find accommodation elsewhere, the first floor room was returned to Christ Church. This freed us from paying municipal tax, for although the shop was rent free we found paying the tax difficult owing to the poor sales.

NEW METHODS INTRODUCED

It was sad to see our beautiful Christian bookshop in the heart of the city being bypassed by hundreds of potential customers. After considerable thinking, praying and listening to the wise counsel of concerned Christians, it was decided to make some changes, even though it appeared to be a big departure from our normal policy. In ELS we trust the Lord to meet all our needs, including good sales in our centres, and will handle only evangelical literature. This had been our stand all along, so when the suggestion to stock a limited quantity of clean secular books like the "Teach Yourself series or some stationery, in order to bring customers into the shop, it sounded like worldly counsel which would take us away from our 'faith' principles. Our understanding of the faith principles and policies in those days prompted us to keep on praying and dusting the books and expect good sales to happen! However the Word of God in John 21:6 came to us with fresh impetus and we realised that it is the catching of the fish that is more important than the way or method by which it is caught. "Throw the net on the right side of the ship' to us meant that the Mount Road shop display a limited number of secular items as well as evangelical books. Then we would be able to tell customers, "Yes, we do have the book you are looking for as well as something else on the next shelf which you have probably never seen before!" We found this worked well. While picking up stationery items or a 'Teach Yourself' book, parents noticed the cheap English Bibles for children, and attractive, colourful Bible story books for smaller children. So it was that people began browsing around and spent more time in the shop. More customers came in and gradually the sale of evangelical books also increased. We were learning to generate sales.

In the course of time sales increased steadily. Christians visited the shop and found both evangelical and secular books on the shelves, but many were confused as to who owned the shop or what its purpose was, so after a few years of using the neutral name of 'Ambassador Book Centre' we decided to revert back to 'Evangelical Literature Service' which stated clearly who we were and what we stood for, and a new sign board was erected.

By the mid-seventies ELS Mount Road had become a popular Christian bookshop for local people including government office staff, as well as tourists and visitors from overseas. One customer commented, "A small shop but really beautiful. I've been to big churches and shrines and did not find God, but here I really find God's presence." At Christmas time it became crowded and the atmosphere was suffocating inside the little shop. Whether it was being pressed against one another inside, or standing outside the shop in line for someone to come out in order to find a place inside, it was to ELS that customers came for Christmas cards. On almost all working days in December, the Mount Road shop was our busiest and the one which needed most help from headquarters.

EXPANSION AND COUNSELLING CENTRE

By 1980 the ministry had far outgrown the shop. Earlier we had tried to get back the upstairs room that Varghese and Annamma had vacated, but without success as it had been let to another company. However, when God's time came things began to happen, and we were delighted to be offered the room back by the Church just when improvements to the shop were planned! This time rent was charged, but by then we were better able to afford it. At that time all the furniture and fixtures were renewed and an air-conditioning unit installed. What a boon it was!

In 1980 there was also a change of staff as Varghese and Annamma were put in charge of the Purasawalkam shop and a relatively new couple J.R. Jayabalan and his wife Saroja took over in Mount Road.

We had long felt the need to have a place for counselling where we could pray with needy ones who came into the shop, and the newly acquired first floor room was ideal for this purpose. However, we were reluctant at first to keep the room for counselling only as we badly needed more selling space and there was additional rent and rates to pay, but we knew the Lord had provided the room and would take care of the financial side of things. Several keen Christians volunteered to take turns and help with the counselling and many seekers found comfort and peace there. Jayabalan, along with some friends, also organised a tract distribution ministry just outside the shop to the thousands who passed by. Some responded and came into the counselling room where they accepted the Lord. Mr. Venu Gopal was one such, who, after being converted and baptised changed his name to V.G. Paul and is now serving the Lord full time. Another Hindu, Mr. T. Ashok bought a Bible and was eventually converted and baptised. These are but two of many who were blessed through the counselling ministry.

The Lord is no man's debtor. He blessed the bookshop the counselling ministry, so much so that the income too and sales increased remarkably after establishing generated through the sale of literature was more than sufficient to take care of the rent and other expenses of both the shop and the first floor room!

As Jayabalan and Saroja carry on the responsibility of this centre, Jayabalan has this to say:

"I graduated in Botany with the idea of joining a Tea Plantation as a planter. I spent much time studying books on tea planting and tea manufacture and used to go to the tea factory at 4 a.m. when the actual manufacturing began. My father was one of the best tea manufacturers in the Nilgiris.

"At the same time I enjoyed English literature, and spent many hours in the Government Library at Coimbatore, but I knew nothing about Christian literature. It did not even occur to me that Christian literature existed. One day I attended a meeting in a Church and made my commitment to the Lord. Then I really started reading the Bible.

"The first Christian book I read was "The Country I love Best by Oswald J. Smith. This aroused my interest in Christian literature, but I did not know where to go or what to buy. I went to the only Christian bookstore in the city but was very disappointed. There were books on many subjects, some anti-Christian, and I even bought a book which raised doubts about the virgin birth. I was full of questions. Surely these things were not according to the Bible? I came to Madras in 1973 where Saroja and I were married, but our first child died on the very day of his arrival. That shattered me. I felt the acuteness of the pain severely, but this moved us to pray earnestly and seek the Lord's guidance for our lives.

"In the meantime I was told about ELS. When I heard that there existed a ministry through literature, I wrote to the then General Secretary informing him of my interest. Saroja and I were called for an interview, and when we got home prayed very much. My conviction said, 'Yes, you must go and join' but my reason said, 'No.' After three days, in spite of some reluctance, we were convinced that it was the Lord's perfect will that we join ELS. Later Mr. V.M. Abraham visited Madras from Bangalore. I was very nervous when I first met him, but he was very cordial to me and I soon began to feel at ease in ELS.

"On the job training I received in ELS was tremendous. First I was asked to go to the trade department as an assistant. I did not know simple maths to work out discounts. Once I included in a parcel some Inland letter Forms for Rs. 1.50, but on the invoice wrote Rs. 150 and sent off the V.P.P. When the customer pointed out the error I was very disturbed, but the love and patience shown to me made me much more alert afterwards. Later I worked in the Mail Order Department and Purchase Department. Both departments helped me a great deal to increase my knowledge of customers, book titles and publishers.

"Saroja worked in the Tamil Publications Department, and in the beginning looked after the Ambassador Bible Correspondence Course. At home in the evenings and sometimes till late at night, we proofread the Tamil Living Bible N.T. Saroja also did the follow-up work for the 'Call from Canaan' programme, broadcast by the Sisterhood of Mary. We read all the letters from listeners and wrote to them, praying much for them. This work helped increase our understanding of the needs of people, and caused us to grow a great deal spiritually.

"The showroom was the main area of our ministry. However busy other departments were we had to give a helping hand whenever there was a need in the shop. This was the common rule, and even the busiest accountant was not spared showroom duty. We enjoyed introducing the latest titles and helping people to buy books, and there was good competition among the workers to read and introduce books to customers.

"After five years of training in various departments, Saroja and I were transferred to the Mount Road branch. This is only a distance of about 3 kms. from headquarters, but unlike Vepery, Mount Road is a non-Christian area. A cross-section of the world is right there on our doorstep, and at night the area is very much alive. We started distributing tracts, and many Christians working in the surrounding government offices volunteered to help us. The first man to be converted was a very orthodox Hindu. After baptism, he gave up his secular work and joined Bible College, and is now in Christian work. A recent convert is a commercial artist who works in the Sultanate of Oman. Many foreigners visit the Mount Road shop, and we consequently keep tracts in various European languages. There are many occasions when I have felt like giving up, but the reason I continue in this ministry is because the love of God constrains me, and I believe the Lord's name will be glorified."

Chapter 7: ENTERING CANAAN

NEW HEADQUARTERS BUILDING PROJECT

As far back as 1961 Donald David had encouraged all the workers to pray earnestly that ELS would be enabled to purchase the Purasawalkam High Road premises so that one more storey could be erected on top to accommodate the growing work. However, when the landlord was approached he made it clear that he would not sell the property nor would he make any additions to the building. The property was very old and leaked heavily during the monsoon, and was also badly infested by termites. Nevertheless the location was the best spot on the busy main road where we very much wanted to continue in spite of hardships and inconveniences.

By the late seventies the situation became so desperate that alternative premises became our greatest need, and much prayer was going up to the Lord. V.M. Abraham, who had been appointed General Secretary in 1975, along with another senior worker, made a personal visit to the landlord Mr. C.R. Kulasekaran in Trichy to impress upon him the great need of ELS, and again requested him to put another storey on the building. However there was no change in the stand of the landlord. The only advice he gave was that ELS should feel free to move to any other place of their choice if the present place was not adequate. Not very helpful!

SITE AT VEPERY HIGH ROAD

As we continued to pray about the matter we realised that because of the size of the work and any future expansion, it was essential that we acquire a site and construct a building according to our own specifications began This would surely be a big faith project but we began looking around for possible sites in Purasawalkam Vepery or Kilpauk. The land had to be on the main road in a prominent shopping area, but this was very difficult to find as there was very little land not built on in these busy areas except that which belonged to religious institutions. But then the Lord worked for us and showed the place of His choice.

V.M. takes up the story and relates in some detail the many problems faced: "Early in 1977 as I was walking home one evening after the midweek prayer meeting at the Assembly, an elderly sister, Dr. (Mrs.) Helen Matthews who had been at the same meeting, happened to mention that the American Baptist Mission intended to sell a portion of their land at Vepery. Matthews that ELS was interested in it and asked her to pray also. (It was in the home of this sister and her husband that Donald David had started the first ELS shop, just on the opposite side of the road to this vacant land.)

"The next day I called Dr. Knoll, the representative of the ABM in Madras and negotiations began. An agreement was prepared to sell 8 grounds (one ground is 2,400 sq. ft.) of their land on Vepery High Road to ELS, leaving the remaining land for the use of the Telugu Baptist Church. However, when the demarcation of the land and excavation for our compound wall began, some people from the Church objected to the sale of the land and the work was stopped. The Secretary of the Church also sent us a letter advising us not to go ahead with the project. They further removed two big trees from the land that was intended for us. Though the Pastor and many 50 members who knew ELS were sympathetic to us, others were out to create trouble and hinder our progress.

"At this time the word the Lord gave us was Psa. 138: 7,8. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, Thy right hand shall save me. The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.' We were assured that God was with us.

"In order to appease the Telugu Baptist Church the ABM gave them two more grounds and reduced ours to six. Then our architect, A.C. Rajan was authorised to make preparation for the boundary wall and begin construction. After that there was no further trouble."

THE URBAN LAND CEILING ACT

This new act of the government was a blessing as well as a hindrance at the time of the transaction. A blessing, because the Property Association of Baptist Churches being the owner of the land, though not permitted to sell their land to private individuals, were permitted to transfer property from one registered Society to another which enabled us to procure the land for a very reasonable price; a hindrance, because various procedures which considerably slowed down many decisions of government departments, had to be referred to this new ULC Act.

APPLICATION FOR BUILDING PERMISSION

(Quotes from V.M's diary)

17-10-77-'On 15th Oct. 1977, our building licence application was submitted to the Madras Corporation. It took nearly four hours for our architect to explain all the documents to the Corporation authorities as the entire proposal was an unusual one. Finally the executive engineer ordered the papers to be accepted and the details looked into later on. On his return the architect remarked, "It will be keep praying." 18-10-77 - "With God all things are a miracle if the licence comes through, but we will possible." Matt. 19:26. Yes Lord, we will trust in Thee.'

After two months the Corporation referred the building plan to the Madras Metropolitan Development Authority (MMDA). In January '78 MMDA approved the plan and returned it to the Corporation. We were then directed by the Corporation to produce a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Urban Land Ceiling Authority. Who then demanded the land Returns of the Baptist Association be filed. To complicate the matter further, Dr. Knoll had left the country for some time!

At that time the word the Lord laid upon our hearts was "With God all things are possible. The just shall live by faith."

14-6-78— Tamil Nadu ULC Act revised and now permits construction for Charitable Trusts. But Madras Corporation wants further clarification on the Society's registration of the Property Association of Baptist Churches.'

15-6-78 "Today the PABC (owner's) Advocate produced an affidavit and handed it over to me. At 3 p.m. architect Rajan and I met the Assistant Engineer and produced various papers including the affidavit. God worked! The Engineer accepted the papers and promised to put up our case by Monday the 19th and assured us that building permission could be ready in three to four days!

'It looked as though the Tamil Nadu Urban Land Ceiling Act was revised just to accommodate ELS!!

20-6-78— Permission received from the corporation with a demand note to pay the licence fee of Rs. 5450. Praise the Lord!"

The fee was paid on the 21st and the licence obtained on the 4th of July 1978. When the news spread it was a surprise to many that permission for this large building had been granted so quickly, and that too without greasing the palm of any officials!

DESIGN OF THE BUILDING

The design of the building was drawn and redrawn over and over again in order to accommodate all our present needs as well as new facilities for the next decade. When the plan was quite clear in our mind the design was handed over to Mr. Rajan, our Christian architect. In planning, drawing and presenting the plans to government officials we were privileged to have his services as he was very understanding and co-operative and shared in our faith stand.

The building plan was drawn up to accommodate a bookshop of 1,200 sq. ft. facing Vepery High Road, an Administrative block and a large Warehouse behind, covering altogether about 4,900 sq. ft. on the ground floor. On the first floor was to be a Conference Hall, a residential flat with a guest room, and a staff dining room as well as a dormitory for trainees. The plan was prepared so that one more storey could be added when the need arose in future.

GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY

The ground breaking was held on Aug. 4th at 4.30 p.m. when about 80 people gathered at the building site. Bro. S. Abraham opened the meeting in prayer, and after a brief message by Dr. Michael John, the first sod was turned.

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS— A WELL IS SUNK

From August 5th onwards a daily average of 20 people were working on the site. Column pits were dug 6' to 8' in depth. The water table level at this site was only 8' down so this gave us great hope of digging an open well. One of the first things the engineers did was sink a well in the rear corner of the site. On digging down an additional 16' through the water, several springs of perennial water were found to be supplying this well, what a bonus! To this day the well remains the mainstay of potable water for the needs of ELS headquarters and beyond as it never dries up nor does the water level go down a great deal, even when the city is parched for water. When there is great water scarcity in Madras, water from the ELS well is given to many people in the adjacent streets.

Termite Control treatment was done from the column pits onwards in order to avoid termites in the future warehouse.

SCARCITY OF CEMENT

As the construction was to be a first class concrete reinforcement work, the total requirement of cement was 4,000 bags, (200 metric tons). Cement supply at that time was controlled by the government and the little that was available on the open market had a high price tag. Any applications from private parties to the government normally did not come into the priority list as there were plenty of government projects requiring cement. The need in the country far outweighed production. What could we do?

Trusting the Lord, on 25th August we applied to the government for 200 tons of cement, presenting a copy of the building plan. Twenty days later the Assistant Director of Industries and Commerce stepped into our office to verify the genuineness of our application. Though he was a Hindu, having had his education in Christian institutions he had respect for Christian work, and

when he was told about our project and the urgent need of cement, he appeared convinced. However he wanted to personally verify the building site and saw for himself many column pits waiting for the cement concrete. At the end of the inspection he said, "This is God's work, I will give priority to your application." The following month we received the first quota of 75 tons, and later all our requirements were supplied by government quota!

THE MONSOON HELD BACK

During August-September large column pits were dug all over the site. This was required in order to make big column footings as the soil was somewhat loose. The monsoon season brought up the water level considerably and mud began to fill the pits. It was getting difficult for the men to stand in or around the pits to carry out the work.

Quotes from V.M. Abraham's diary.

21st Sept. This afternoon the water level has risen about 6' in the column pits. This is causing great problems. In the afternoon the contractor and I were discussing the situation on the site and feeling very discouraged. But I told him the only way out is through prayer. Our God is a God who controls the wind and the waves. He can control the rain and water. We will pray that for another two weeks it will not rain.

22nd. No rain in the night. Water receded to some extent.

26th. So far no rain. Praise the Lord!

10th October. We have been having very good weather, mostly sunny. Column pits are dry and concreting is going on. Praise God for His faithfulness.

21st. All column footings are completed.

23rd. Heavy monsoon started which is very good for the concrete work that is already completed. Praise Him. God controlled the weather and rain to suit our needs! Thank you Heavenly Father.

GOD'S SUPPLY

We had decided to erect the building in memory of Donald J. David the Founder of ELS India. Therefore we established a special building fund and put into this any money that came in. After making full payment for the site we had Rs. 80,000 remaining in the fund, but our total need for the building and furnishings at that time was about Rs, 700,000. All of us were aware that ELS CLC is a work of faith. It is God who causes us to grow and expand and it is He who supplies the needed resources for the work, be it personnel, premises or finance.

GIVING STARTS WITH US

God impressed upon us that the spirit of giving must begin with us first. We encouraged our own Staff to liberally give for this project, and they gave what they could. Restricting our overhead expenses, it was our practice to accumulate all available funds from book sales for projects. So a good amount was made available from the trade fund. Many of our well-wishers and customers came forward to give towards the project. Christian Literature Crusade from the U.K., USA, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, France, East Caribbean and Philippines all gave as the Lord enabled them. Other Christian organisations and individuals also gave help with their prayers and

finance, so that all our financial needs were fully met by God through His children everywhere. Hallelujah!

COMPLETION AND DEDICATION

About two months before the inauguration we consulted the architect, engineer, and interior decorator and fixed November 14th 1979 as the opening day of the new headquarters and bookshop. Plastering, plumbing, wiring, electrical work, glazing and painting were all in full swing. Sanitary and water connections were given by the Corporation without much delay or difficulty. The last items to be completed were the electrical (three phase) connections, floor polishing, shop carpentry and fittings.

After applying for the electric connection, it appeared that the department was sleeping over the papers. Their undue delay in taking action began to throw our programme out of gear, especially floor polishing. We ran from pillar to post in that department, but they wouldn't move. A friend informed us that there was a Christian Superintending Engineer in another area of the electricity department who knew ELS. When we explained our plight, he kindly contacted his counterpart in our area. The connection was given within three days! By the end of the first week of November (carpenter and interior decorator who was responsible to make the fixtures in the bookshop became overwhelmed with the job.. It seems he had bitten off more than he could chew! Cooperation from his team of workmen was not good and time was running out. Pressure from our side was mounting so that everything would be completed by the 12th evening, in order that we could set up the display on the 13th. The carpenter felt like disappearing from the scene altogether a week before the promised date for handing over the fittings, but some force, he says, held him back so that with great difficulty he was able to complete the work by early morning of the 14th November. That was almost too close!

Immediately the staff got busy in the shop and made a beautiful display. The mosaic floor was highly polished and shining, and all the display racks were filled with Bibles and books in English, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam. Office rooms were fitted with the necessary equipments, tables and chairs. Only the large warehouse was left free as the inauguration service was to be held there in the afternoon.

By 4 p.m. everything was ready. It was time for ELS India to have our national headquarters officially opened. More than 100 people gathered in the warehouse. As guests arrived refreshments were served, and then a short service began with the singing of the hymn "To God be the glory, great things He has done..." Greetings from several leaders were read out or shared in person, and a message was given by Dr. Ken McVety. A special Souvenir printed for the occasion was released by Mrs. Ida David. The Donald David Memorial Tablet Stone in front of the building was unveiled by Prof. E.H. Enoch and the ribbon was cut by Rev. Dr. Sam Kamalesan, inaugurating the new headquarters and the bookshop. After the guests left the premises a heavy down pour of rain came, which marked the end of a truly memorable day.

To God be the glory, great things He has done!

Chapter 8: MADRAS LEADING SHOP

PURASAWALKAM CENTRE-THE CONTINUING STORY

After the new Headquarters at 95A Vepery High Road was opened, as related in the previous chapter, what were we to do with the old shop on Purasawalkam High Road? Most of the stock and shelving had been taken to the new premises by the middle of November 1979, and the property was looking run down and dilapidated by this time. With the beautiful modern showroom at the new Headquarters which had plenty of parking space for vehicles, and breathing space for customers, was there any need to keep the old shop any longer? Would all our customers find their way to the new shop, or would some prefer to go to the old shop for convenience? Is there need in Madras city to have three evangelical bookshops, - Purasawalkam, Vepery and Mount Road - within a three km. radius? These were some of the thoughts and questions that faced us as we moved into the new premises. We needed to know the mind of the Lord in order to make the right decision. While waiting on the Lord we agreed to allow six months as a testing period to see customers' response to the new shop in Vepery as well as to the old one in Purasawalkam, even though the stock there was poor and the appearance left much to be desired. For nearly six months the Purasawalkam shop functioned more or less as an extension counter of the headquarters shop, but as time passed it was obvious that there was no drop in response at Purasawalkam while many new customers, including quite a few non-Christians were patronising the new shop. Between the two, literature distribution had almost doubled. This convinced us that the need in Madras is great, and the greater number of shops we can operate the better.

THE OLD HEADQUARTERS BECOMES A BRANCH CENTRE

At the beginning of the financial year in 1980 the Purasawalkam centre was declared a branch of ELS. Being in the best location of all ELS centres and a large building, this centre needed a manager with good experience and considerable sales expertise. C.M. Varghese was well qualified to take over this responsibility, so he and his wife Annamma, after handing over Mount Road shop to J.R. Jayabalan and his wife Saroja, took charge of the Purasawalkam centre.

A NEW LOOK FOR THE SHOP

Additional stock of all kinds was quickly purchased which encouraged more customers into the shop and sales increased. A few more workers were added to assist Varghese and Annamma. As sales increased remarkably, the need of a good set of new furniture and display racks became imperative. Narayanan our carpenter, was still around and agreed to build new racks one by one as and when we had sufficient funds. After about a year most of the shelving was renewed, and the shop began to look really bright and attractive.

A FACE-LIFT FOR THE BUILDING

For many years we had been approaching the landlord to upgrade the property, but he had refused to do anything, however by now the old building leaked every time it rained heavily and the roof needed replastering. It also needed treatment against termites that heavily infested the premises, and the frontage also looked very poor and old-fashioned. When all these improvements were presented to the landlord, this time he readily agreed that the work be done. His change of mind really surprised us, but now we began to understand the Lord's mysterious ways of working through people. Had the landlord given his consent to our earlier requests, we would have settled down to just improving his property, and missed out on trusting the lord for a new headquarters of

our own. Our earlier disappointments were God's appointment. So with the help of our architect, A.C. Rajan, we were able to give a complete face lift to the building along with all the necessary repairs. This made the shop much more attractive and inviting.

By the mid-eighties the shop was satisfactorily stocked with a large variety of Bibles and books and sales increased dramatically. More display racks have since been added each year in order to give face display to all items as far as possible.

AUDIO SECTION

With the introduction of a high powered music set, the audio cassette demonstration and sales have taken on a new dimension. It became so busy and involved that one person had to be deputed full time to the audio section. A great variety of Christian music in English, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Hindi has been made available. People continually flock to the cassette section for their favourite cassettes. Later on, video cassettes too with a Christian message were introduced and met with a good response.

A TREND SETTER

Over the years the Purasawalkam Centre has taken the lead in retail distribution over all other centres. The shop often sets new trends and leaps ahead in stock, display and sales, and our younger shop managers look to Purasawalkam for inspiration and new sales techniques. We give God all the glory, and praise Him for the gifted and capable staff He has given us.

Chapter 9: NEW WORKERS AND TRAINING METHODS

RECRUITMENT

With the establishing of the new headquarters in Madras in 1979, many applications to join from young men and women began pouring in. Many thought it was a good business house and a decent place to work. However, when the work and its philosophy was explained, most of the applicants did not respond as it involved full commitment to the Lord and His service.

Nevertheless, the Lord has wonderfully provided a few dedicated young people year by year who are prepared to undergo the training, which is by and large 'on the job'. We have not felt we should advertise for more workers, but young people often approach us after having watched the lives of their relatives or friends who are part of the staff of ELS.

INTERVIEW

After application is made the General Secretary will normally hold a lengthy discussion with the candidate. First of all it is necessary to ascertain whether or not the applicant is soundly converted to Christ, then his commitment to the service of the Lord is examined. The third point is to find out how serious his interest is in literature work. The next step is a test on spiritual maturity— his Bible knowledge, experience, qualifications, fellowship, Church affiliation etc. Then the General Secretary takes time to explain what ELS is and its goals, the cost of such work as well as the blessing which could follow. Finally the candidate's educational qualifications and general knowledge are examined.

When the above standards are satisfactorily met, the General Secretary prays with the prospective worker and sends him away with literature like Floodtide magazine, the ELS story folder, a copy of Principles and Practices, etc. He is asked to wait on the Lord and seek His mind as to whether ELS is the place for him to work. If yes, he then has to send a formal application with full bio-data and copies of certificates as well as a one page testimony of his Christian experience and call. He also has to produce letters of reference from his Pastor and if possible, Christian leaders who know ELS. Once these documents are received and found satisfactory, at the next Advisory Council meeting the candidate is admitted as a trainee. However, if it is considered necessary, a further personal interview with the candidate is conducted by the Council before a final decision is made.

Training is given at Madras headquarters and is for one year. Occasionally part of the training is given at branch centres too, in order to enable the candidate to learn the work thoroughly.

TRAINING IN THE EARLY YEARS

In early days training was not only a time of learning the work, but also a real test of one's commitment and call. Training was also more personalised and informal. An early trainee often had the privilege of living and eating with the Founder and learning personally from him. At the same time however, the trainee had practical jobs to do each morning before opening the shop, and it was not uncommon to be asked to sweep the shop floor and wash the bathroom when the sweeper or office boy was absent. It was a case of doing everything related to the work and learning under the close watch of one's elder brother or sister, without waiting for someone else to do the job. There was no room to think, "That is not my job," you just went ahead and did it.

GRACE GABRIEL - A SPECIAL TRAINER

The lady trainees who came to ELS from its inception until the end of the seventies, had the special privilege of getting their training under 'Aunt Gracie', who was in charge of headquarters showroom.

It was the policy of CLC/ELS to encourage couples to join the work but Grace Gabriel, one of the first workers and a pioneer was never married. However she always claimed that she was wedded to ELS and as much was a fully qualified partner. In this claim she also had the unique privilege of playing either wife or husband according to her mood! She loved to do long hours of service in the bookshop, but whenever she saw more than three or four people in the shop she felt she needed additional staff around to help the customers or watch the shop. She would then press the little call bell attached to the sales counter to call someone to come to the showroom. If the response was delayed at all the bell would go again accompanied by a yell from Gracie calling the youngest worker to come quickly!

Whenever a couple joined ELS, the wife was given to Aunt Gracie to train. The first day was easy as she was told to go round and observe all the stock and cupboards of cards, books, etc. reserved for special customers. The next day a piece of cloth was handed to her with strict instructions to keep it as her own until the day of her death or on leaving ELS, whichever came first!

Every day she must liberally use that duster to clean the books and the shelves for a specified length of time, and while doing the dusting and cleaning, titles, names of authors, and the publishers of the books must be learned. She was given a copy of the ELS catalogue to help in the learning process. Within a few days she was expected to remember the books called out by Aunt Grace and where they were located, and quickly pick them up to give to a waiting customer. She must also learn all the different kinds of greeting cards for every occasion. Alertness and full attention to the work was expected.

The trainee, being a young wife, might want to see her husband for a couple of minutes at times and would disappear from the shop to the office. On her return Aunt Grace would give her the first instalment of a lecture on shop discipline. "You'd better understand that I am a great disciplinarian. Where did you disappear to while arranging those cards?" When the reason was given the girl got the second instalment! "Work while you work, meeting your husband comes later." Aunt Grace would also keep a watchful eye on the movements of the husband so that he did not distract his wife from her duties even when he is called into the shop to help. Receiving a super-abundance of daily advice, correction and rebuke from Aunt Grace, the trainee girls often had a season of crying, weeping and nose-blowing in the shop, but the gnashing of teeth was reserved for home!

Though strict in discipline and teaching, Grace Gabriel was very loving, compassionate and prayerful. She loved the customers and cared for them and took trouble searching through the whole stock to find a special title for a particular customer, and also appreciated the hard work of trainees or staff and spoke very highly of them in committee meetings. She was sincere and honest in all her service, and taught the younger generation the need and value of a dedicated and prayerful life. Many of the ELS staff who have had the privilege of learning from her and working with her, have the above testimony, and thank God for such a dedicated person as Aunt Grace.

TRAINING IN THE EIGHTIES

Since the eighties when we have had a number of trainees at the same time, we have conducted classroom lectures on subjects like Mission, CLC, ELS and Constitution, Statement of Faith, History of ELS, Business aspects of the work such as publishing, purchasing, display, publicity, sales, accounts, mail order, mobile work, book tables etc. These lectures are conducted by several senior, well experienced staff.

At times, staff from other organisations join our training lectures, and we are glad to include them in the relevant part of the course. Our own trainees are also given the opportunity to attend ELS conferences, retreats, seminars etc. as well as workshops, conventions and seminars conducted by other literature agencies. Periodical assessment of the performance of trainees is made, and while most of them have gone through the testing and training, some have left. Successful ones are accepted as Junior Staff in due course, and given greater responsibility. After a further two years of work and assessment a Junior staff worker can be upgraded to Senior Staff level. By the time a worker is accepted as Senior Staff, he or she is expected to have a thorough grasp of the goals and purposes of ELS, and be able and willing to take on much greater responsibilities.

Here is a short testimony from Wilfred Balraj. Though young, he has been upgraded to senior staff in recent years.

"I have been familiar with the ministry of ELS right from my early days. Uncle Donald, as I used to call him, and family and our family, used to go to the same Church. However, it wasn't until I was a teenager that I was born again, and began to read Christian books and was greatly blessed. Later I felt God calling me to full-time Christian service, and while doing theological training I realised that the printed page is a great way to influence the minds of people. Sometime after that I felt God was calling me to a literature ministry because Christian books had influenced me such a lot spiritually. As a result, today I serve God in ELS. When we go out for bookstalls it is often a lot of hard work and the going is tough, but it is a joy to help people to buy good Christian material. I am very grateful to God for helping me serve Him in this way."

Chapter 10: ENEMY TACTICS

UNFAITHFULNESS

The eighties were years of fast growth on all fronts, Many books were published, and a huge quantity literature was distributed throughout India, and a good deal to overseas countries as well. It was a time of training young people and calling them to a greater commitment to the Lord's work through literature. We were able to help other literature agencies in training personnel, the art of display, the technique of sales and continuing in the work without subsidy. Above all there was spiritual blessing and good unity among the workers. However, at such times Satan is particularly active, and he began causing many problems. One worker gave into temptation and yielded to immorality, and almost at the same time another seemingly spiritual and trusted brother who was responsible to handle the day to day finances of the Mission, very subtly misappropriated a considerable sum of money. When this was discovered and the worker confronted, he admitted what he had done and repented and refunded a small amount of the money, but we felt it right to dismiss him. Sadly however, within six months he died of a paralytic stroke. However, that wasn't all.

INDISCIPLINE AND REBELLION

While the boat began to rock in these storms, a handful of junior workers thought it easier and more profitable to go against the tide, even to follow the ways of the world, and they began pulling against the fellowship instead of with it. They gave themselves into the hands of trade unionists who guided them skilfully and taught them to oppose all that is godly, and to fight to bring down the work.

As ELS has ministry in various states of India, only missionary minded workers are accepted into the work. Whenever there is a need for additional staff at any centre, trained and experienced workers from headquarters or other centres are sent to fill the vacancy. Over the years we have found that the ministry has been carried out more effectively by moving workers around according to the needs of the work. When asked to go and work in other centres three young workers refused and decided to rebel. All the other workers were greatly ashamed and humiliated in this action of the three young men, but no amount of godly counsel would prevail.

THE BATTLE BEGINS

By the end of 1984 a great battle was set in array against ELS and all it stood for. We knew it was a spiritual battle against the forces of darkness, immorality and rebellion, but to the men of the world it was the trade unions fighting against authorities and employers. Threatening letters were sent to ELS and its leaders. Receiving no response, the trade unionists gathered forces in front of headquarters shouting slogans and hurling abuses at ELS personnel. This went on for a whole day. Their loud-speaker was turned towards our premises, so you can imagine the noise and confusion! The General Secretary and his family were subjected to much abuse. However, the shop and offices continued working quietly, though all the staff felt very sad and some were afraid. We did not outwardly react as they hoped, instead we praised the Lord for enabling us remain firm against these emissaries of Satan.

All along we refused to discuss the whole sordid affair with the trade union leaders for they could not understand or appreciate spiritual issues or principles, but with the erring ELS workers we held several rounds of talks, offering to accommodate them if they repented. Talks were also held

with interested Christian leaders too, but sadly the workers would not listen. They continued to be guided by their advisors and initiated much trouble for ELS, in addition to dragging us before government departments and courts of law.

At the outset of these problems the Lord gave us His promise as found in Isa. 54:17 "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgement thou shalt condemn...."

For two years the battle intensified, and with the help of various influential people in government circles these workers calling themselves "suffering brethren" tried to move several government departments against ELS. False reports were presented and the government was instigated to specially scrutinise our work. During that time, the diary of the General Secretary reads, 'March 2nd 1985. Today three officers from the Sales Tax Enforcement dept. visited and inspected the ELS premises and three shops, H.Q., Purasawalkam and Mount Road. They spent the whole day examining our books of accounts and by 6.30 p.m. gave us a good written report. Praise the Lord! This raid was the first in the history of ELS and apparently came through outside pressure. In the end the officers asked us if we have any enemies!

Oct. 8th 1985. Today the Registrar of Societies visited Society's funds. A few days ago the Sub. Registrar had us to enquire about the alleged misappropriation of the come and examined our accounts. The Registrar personally verified all relevant accounts and took separate statements from C.R. David, the chief accountant and myself. After satisfying himself that all was as it should be, the Registrar told me that a certain person had given many complaints to the Inspector General of Societies about ELS and us personally. "That is why I have been asked to verify your accounts," he said. "Now it seems to me that these complaints are false."

Oct. 21st, 1985. Today an inspector from the Income Tax department visited my office. He wanted to verify whether we were maintaining proper accounts, filing I.T. Returns, who our auditors were, etc. The whole I.T. file as well as the latest audited statements of accounts were presented to him. After examining them he was pleased. He highly commended the auditor, and then asked to use our telephone. Calling his office he said "All is OK. You need not come." Apparently his vigilance raiding team were ready to pounce on us if anything was amiss. Before he left our office he showed me a bunch of papers filed in their office by the ringleader complaining about ELS. Hence his visit.'

Though these visits, raids and scrutiny from government circles, and continuous threats from trade union leaders and wayward workers, caused tension and stress the peace and protection from the Lord was always our portion. The trade union leader stood like Goliath and ridiculed us, but like Moses of old we believed that the Lord would fight for us. The word He gave to us at that time was Ex 23:22, "I will be an enemy unto their enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries." The trade unions roared to devour us, but we trusted Lord and were silent. They moved the government examine the case carefully, but we were given a de sheet. Every time ELS was dragged before the government or courts, the authorities upheld our stand. God's enemies were scattered — hallelujah!

LESSONS LEARNED

"In all things God works for the good....." Romans 8:28.

Many lessons were learned from these difficult experiences. When great financial loss came upon the work by the unfaithfulness of one, other workers accepted the challenge and worked more

faithfully and earnestly trusting the Lord to make up the loss. When a few workers were led astray, all the genuine ones held together more closely and withstood the enemy.

Our financial management system was better streamlined. Checks and balances were introduced in many practical ways. Personnel administration became more businesslike, and greater attention was given to the recruitment of workers.

When pressure and trouble increased, our trust in the Lord also grew stronger. God stood with us and strengthened us, and gave us opportunities to testify before officials, non-Christian leaders and government authorities.

The Lord gave special grace to C.R. David, our chief accountant to represent ELS before many authorities. Before he set out to present our case he often met with the General Secretary, and time would be spent in prayer. Each time the Lord went before him and made the mountains a plain. But it was never easy. It was continually a walk of obedience and faith in the promises of God, though at times it took several months and even years, for the fulfilment of His Word. Some promises are yet to be fulfilled, but His word is true and trustworthy. C.R. David has this story to tell about himself.

"I was born into a Hindu family, an idolator, living with no meaning in my life, until Jesus found me and made me His child. By His eternal grace I came to know the Lord through a friend who shared with me God's Word as found in Romans 6:23. I was immediately convicted of my sins and committed my life to the Lord. At that time I was working in a secular company.

"From the time I was saved in 1957 the Lord was continually urging me to come out of my secular work and serve Him full-time. While this battle was going on, the company where I was working decided to transfer me to Bangalore. I was reluctant to go and as a result, I resigned from the job. However, a week later I met Mr. Azariah Benjamin who told me about ELS and encouraged me to join. We prayed together and he asked me to wait on the Lord so that I might be sure of His will. I did this and He confirmed the call and asked me to step into the work of ELS, which I gladly did. This brought a great calm within me. Previously I had been swayed between two opinions, whether to enter full-time work or not. This had brought confusion, but to my amazement, after I committed myself to the Lord's work, I found great peace. Eventually I joined ELS in February 1967.

"From that time the Lord has blessed me and it has been a great privilege to be an instrument in His work. In 1968 I was accepted as a full-time worker. I can never forget Mr. Donald David, the founder of ELS, how he prayed so earnestly for me and gave me a promise from the Word of God as found in Phil. 4:13.

"For the past 26 years I have been working in the Accounts Department, and during that time have been centres, the new Headquarters at Vepery, and the privileged to be involved in the opening of four EL Trivandrum, Bombay and Coimbatore centres. At one time when I was working in the Purasawalkam shop, a dejected man came in. As he approached I felt I should and speak to him. The Lord had really prepared him and I was able to share with him from the Word of God about the Lord and His saving power. He was very depressed and discouraged, but as I spoke with him he was greatly blessed and purchased a Tamil Bible. As he read the Bible he trusted the Lord as his personal Saviour, and later on committed himself to full-time service.

"I enjoy working in the Accounts Department. On seeing the great quantity of literature going out from our eight centres each day, my heart overflows with praise to God. The only thing I find

difficult is meeting with government officials on tax matters. They regard ELS as a commercial bookshop, and it is very difficult to convince them that ELS is a literature Mission which caters to the needs of the church and needy people.

"I was very saddened when some workers filed a case against ELS as an industrial dispute. Nevertheless, the Lord overruled and Satan's purposes were defeated Jesus said, "I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Glory to His name!"

Chapter 11: LITERATURE DISTRIBUTION LEAPS

A large percentage of the literature distributed through ELS is in the English language. As the variety of Christian literature produced in India in English is quite negligible compared to the wealth available overseas, right from the early days it was very necessary to import books. However, every book we imported had to be paid for in foreign exchange, and in order to do this we had to obtain an import licence. In the late 1950s we were given a quota of a few thousand rupees as a licence by the government of India. What we imported had to be limited to that amount, though there was a great need to get more books into the country. This restriction continued for many years and made things very difficult and frustrating, especially as the licence often wasn't issued on time. Geoff Williams writes of an experience in those days,

"We had a lot of hassle in getting our Import Licence one year, and after receiving no satisfactory reply through correspondence, decided to go and personally appear before the officer in the government department concerned. Our first child Judi was just six weeks old and a kind friend offered to take care of her while we were in Delhi. On arrival at the office we found ourselves ushered into the presence of the Deputy Controller of Imports, and that, without having to pay a bribe to the army of clerks we had to get past! She was a small lady who sat behind a huge desk which had for a background scores of files piled high up to the ceiling. Our hearts failed us as we thought our application might be buried in any one of those hundreds of files. What she lacked in size she certainly made up in voice, as she issued commands to an army of clerks and peons who rushed hither and thither to do her bidding. When our turn came to see her she listened to our story in an attentive manner, but when she realised that we had left our six week old baby to try to obtain the licence, it was too much. Perhaps it was because she herself was a mother, or perhaps the love for family and children which is so strong in Indian society struck a chord. Whatever it was, she began to bang on a large brass bell that sat on her desk. Her incessant banging on the bell ushered in a number of people to whom she related our story and gave a number of commands. In twenty minutes we left the office with the precious Import Licence in our hands! Yes, we did pray, and we know God answered prayer, but tears and children help!"

IMPORT LICENCING

By the late seventies the government had introduced a 'Newcomer' licence for which an established importer like ELS could apply after surrendering the previously allotted quota. If the importer qualified, he was eligible for a much larger licence. However, if his application was rejected he risked losing his old quota licence as well, and thereafter could no longer import at all. What were we to do?

Here was an opportunity to seek the Lord's will and exercise faith in His Word. It was very clear to us that it was God's will that more literature should be made available, but was it safe to surrender our quota licence and jump into the water looking to the Lord for the new licence? If our application was turned down what would happen? Wouldn't it be safer to go slowly and be sure to get the small quantity of books under the old quota scheme? Trusting in the Lord, we decided to go ahead in faith and an application for the Newcomer licence was made. Twice the papers were returned to us in order to comply with a few more formalities and red tape. Each time the papers were returned our knees shook, but we resubmitted them. Weeks went by without any news. Finally after almost 45 days a registered mail from the Joint Controller of Imports and Exports brought us a Newcomer Import Licence of Two hundred thousand rupees about ten times larger than the old quota licence! We read the details twice as we could not believe our eyes. We just

stood in wonder and amazement, and tears of joy rolled down our cheeks as we gave thanks to the Lord.

SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS

We lost no time in placing a great many orders with publishers in the UK and USA, and within a few months bulk bags of books began arriving. The shelves in all the centres were given a new lease of life with new books, and sales increased dramatically. The following year, by taking advantage of a new amendment made by the government, we applied for a Four hundred thousand rupees licence! However, in order to comply with government requirements we had to produce a detailed list of all our purchases over the previous year-names, addresses, invoice no., dates, and exact details of all the items on all the invoices. What a job! Our accounts department worked for days preparing the list which ran into many, many pages. We applied and waited. After a month the licence came, but this time we were disappointed to see it was for only half of what we were expecting - Rs. 200, 000 instead of Rs. 400,000. By this time we were getting more familiar with the clauses of the New Import Control Act and discovered that it was through an oversight on the part of the government department concerned that we were not given the full amount requested. But the case appeared closed. Would it be possible to request that the case be reopened? Would the department acknowledge their error? But the Lord reminded us of the story of Lazarus, who, though dead and buried, came out of the grave at the word of Jesus. We decided to appeal. For the next two months there was no communication at all from the government, but we kept praying. Then without any further explanation a supplementary licence for Rs. 200,000 was issued. How wonderful is our God!

When the government introduced the 'Open General Licence' scheme from the early eighties there was no further need for an elaborate licence application and we were able to import as much as we needed. The dearth of imported books was over. Our shops were well stocked and we began to supply books to other Christian bookshops allowing full trade discount. It was a tremendous step forward.

Chapter 12: PUBLISHING IN FOUR LANGUAGES

From the beginning the main thrust of ELS was distribution, but constantly the need to publish became very obvious as there was very little reasonably priced evangelical literature available, particularly in Tamil. As mentioned earlier the first book we published was Roy Hession's "The Calvary Road" in Tamil. Later on, with the permission of CLC London, an Indian edition of this same title in English was produced, and after a few years a simplified edition entitled "The Way of the Cross." All three titles have been greatly used. In the very early years however, publishing was not a priority mainly because of lack of personnel and adequate funds. In 1960 when Azariah Benjamin joined ELS, the Tamil Publication Department came into being. One of the projects Azariah played a major part in establishing was THE TAMIL CHRISTIAN BOOK CLUB.

This had been started by ELFI, but was later taken over by ELS. Under this scheme four books were published each year and distributed to the members of the Book Club at a subsidised rate. In those days the literacy rate was only around 30%, and the reading habit of those who could read was generally very poor, especially in the vernacular languages. So we sought to encourage more readers by providing them with books that were attractive and affordable. For a small annual subscription the books supplied each year were usually a biography, a Bible Commentary, a book on practical Christian living and a devotional book. By 1963 just under 1000 had joined the Book Club scheme, and this number was composed of a wide cross-section of people from college professors to students. The Book Club was described as "a pastoral ministry to mostly scattered or lonely individuals" and was greatly appreciated. Occasionally when on book tours we met subscribers who expressed how much the books had meant to them.

GROWTH OF TAMIL PUBLICATIONS

A significant work that was taken up in 1962 was the "Concordance to the Tamil Bible" by R.N. Asirwatham. By special arrangement we were requested to handle distribution of this large 850 page volume, which in those days sold for Rs. 15.00!

For many years ELS was able to assist the Sunday Schools in Tamil Nadu by the publishing of CEEFI books (Christian Education of the Evangelical Fellowship of India). These Sunday School lessons for teachers and students were published, stored and distributed by us for a number of years, until the EFI began their own CEEFI Tamil office in the early eighties.

The Tamil "Living New Testament" published for Living Bibles India, was another major work under-taken with the help of a team of Tamil translators and scholars, the editing of which was supervised by Azariah Benjamin and later by Wilfred David. The whole first edition of 25,000 copies were printed, stored and distributed by ELS. From the mid-seventies the Tamil Publication Department was handed over to Wilfred David. Until he retired in the early eighties, the Tamil publications of the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary and the follow-up of their radio programme CALL FROM CANAAN was carried out, as well as many other books including "Living Light". Reprints of important works were also carried out simultaneously along with the new titles.

In the mid-seventies we started using offset printing for major works. The first book done by this method was expert advice of the Production Co-ordinator of Living a reprint of the Tamil "Living New Testament". The Bibles International was most helpful at this time, both for offset printing as well as in choosing the right paper for any particular book. This advice helped us to reduce the thickness of the "Concordance to the Tamil Bible" by half by using the correct paper, and the appearance too, was much more attractive while the cost was almost the same.

Another Tamil project that was part of ELS for many years was,

THE AMBASSADOR BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE CENTRE

This was started in 1962 by Carl Lehman (WEC) whose wife Lila ran the Ootacamund shop for some time. It catered mainly for older children and teenagers, and by 1972 over 5,000 had enrolled in the Course, many of whom accepted Jesus as Saviour. There was no charge made, but the students living away from the bookshops had to pay return postage on their lessons. Joe Abraham, the son of one of the founding members of ELS, S. Abraham, ran ABCC voluntarily for many years, and later on Saroja Jayabalan took over. There were many testimonies from students, one of which read, "Though I am a small boy, I have surrendered myself to the Lord Jesus Christ. I have accepted Him as my personal Saviour. All things have become NEW in my life."

M. Ragunathan, Dudley High School, Dindigul.

ENGLISH PUBLICATIONS

In the beginning these were handled by Ida David, and gradually increased year by year. By 1972 some 30 English titles had been published as well as a number of booklets, diaries, calendars and stationery items. Later English publications were carried on by Noble Massey for a time, followed by V.M. Abraham from 1975-1984.

HIGH PRICE OF IMPORTED BOOKS

With the liberalisation of the import policy of the Indian government in the early eighties it was easy for us to get any books on to our shelves. This attracted many customers, however when they saw the prices of the books, they quickly put them back on the shelves! There were two reasons why imported books were so costly in India.

- a) The prices were set at the economic standard of the country where the book was published.
- b) When those prices were converted to the equivalent of the devalued Indian rupee, the cost became an unbelievably large amount.

We were very concerned about this, and in order to combat the problem and make books affordable to the average person, we began printing Indian editions of several popular English books, after obtaining permission from the publishers. Song books, devotional books, biographies, Bible expositions and sermon helps were produced in Indian editions. "Streams in the Desert" by Mrs. Charles Cowman and "Golden Bells" Hymn Book were particularly popular. Generally we found that the Indian edition of a foreign book can be sold at about 25% of the price of its overseas equivalent. The quality of production is good and acceptable to Indian readers. The reduced price also allows us to offer a generous trade discount to other bookshops who store and market our books.

PUBLISHING IN OTHER LANGUAGES

Up to the early eighties we published in Tamil and English only, but from that time other languages were being going on in Bangalore for two decades but very little taken up. A widespread distribution programme had publishing had been done, except for a few booklets, so we decided it was time that something more should be started. "Don't Waste Your Sorrows" was the first title

we published in the Kannada language and this was appreciated by many. We also published Kannada books for Operation Mobilisation.

Publishing has been undertaken and distributed in the Malayalam language by our centre in Trivandrum as well.

JOINT PUBLICATIONS

These were undertaken with Operation Mobilisation and Gospel Literature Service, Bombay. Several English books of Paul Billheimers' were produced under this, scheme, which helped to make available large quantities at still lower price.

When Wilfred David retired in the early eighties the responsibility of the Publication Department was passed to Benjamin Gnanamanickam, known in family circles as Benny. Benny, a teacher by profession, responded to the Lord's call and joined ELS in 1978 mainly to promote the Tamil Living Bible New Testament. He went through the training programme of ELS, and having worked in various departments, prepared himself for greater responsibilities within a few years. He also attended a good workshop in editing and publishing conducted by an outside agency, which helped him a great deal.

MARKET RESEARCH

Whole-heartedly entering into his new role, Benny first of all made many surveys. Various varieties of paper available in the country were studied, as well as printing presses in Madras that could do our work, artists available and translators who were ready to help us. While working on this, Benny gradually became familiar with the rest of the work in the Tamil Publication Department. Within a couple of years of taking over the already fast-growing work, many more titles began to come off the press and the whole programme was greatly accelerated.

Benny was also given responsibility for the English publications, hitherto handled by V.M. Abraham, and within a few years, between reprints and new publications, an average of 50 titles annually were coming from the Publications Department. Most of the books had a print run of 2,000 copies, while 5,000 or sometimes 8,000 copies were printed of exceptional titles. Over the years the reading habits of most people have improved also, and we find that an average print run of 2,000 copies are sold within a year or two now.

There have been many testimonies of appreciation for ELS publications from many readers. The price of the books is most affordable, the quality competitive, and the contents always theologically fundamental and biblical.

Benny who heads up the Publications Department has this story to tell.

"Being brought up in a God-fearing and missionary-minded family, I was exposed from childhood to Christian commitment and missionary challenge. In my late twenties the Word of God became very alive to me and I felt that God was calling me into full-time ministry from my cherished profession of teaching. However, I was not sure what kind of work God was calling me to, so I kept busy in the Church, where I worshipped and continued teaching my students.

"A few years later the Lord showed me a God-fearing girl to be my wife, but she was teaching in Madras. I did not like the idea of moving down to Madras from the cool climate of the Nilgiri Hills where I had lived all my life. While we were praying about it someone suggested that I should

apply to one or two Christian Schools in Madras, but before I could do that a letter came from ELS asking whether I would be interested in taking the post of Sales Manager of Living Bibles, Tamil Edition. I would be treated as a Staff Member of ELS but would be in charge of promoting the Living New Testament. I felt this was God's call to me.

"August 1978 was a very important month to me as I left teaching after 16 years, got married and joined ELS. Since then there have been times when I've wondered whether I should go back to teaching, and even a few definite calls have come, but after waiting upon the Lord, I have felt sure He has wanted me to stay on in ELS. Whenever there has been temptation to give up, the Word of God alone has led me in the right path. This is the only true guide. It has guided me time and again and its counsel and guidance are always right."

Chapter 13: INTO THE FOOTPRINTS OF ST. THOMAS

TRIVANDRUM CENTRE

Kerala State is located on the southern tip of India where about 3.4% of the total population of the nation live. Nearly 91% of the people are literate and 20% are Christians. It is believed that the Apostle Thomas arrived in this part of the country in A.D. 52 and propagated the gospel until A.D. 68 before going on to Madras where he was martyred.

It had been on our hearts to expand our literature ministry to this State for some time, and the subject was discussed at several staff conferences and accepted as a goal for prayer. Many of our workers too had hailed from this State, so staff was ready and stock was on hand to send, if we only had a place there. We not only prayed for an opening but we also shared our desire with many servants of God and Christian groups in Kerala. Those who knew about the ELS ministry were very keen for us to go.

One day we received a letter from Dr. Abraham Philip, a full time Christian worker in Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala, stating that a new lodging complex was being inaugurated in the city and the ground floor of that building might be available for us to have as a shop. If interested, he suggested we contact the owner, Mr. K. V. Thomas. We did not know Dr. Philip though he knew about us and was keen for ELS to have a shop there. This was good news and the Lord's answer to our prayers.

Rather than entering into much correspondence, Mr. K. V. Thomas invited us to visit the place and discuss the matter in person. When V. M. Abraham and C. M. Varghese saw the building they felt sure that this was the place the Lord had for ELS, and negotiations with the owner began immediately. Mr. K.V. Thomas being a faithful member of the Mar Thoma Church, had already taken the counsel of the Metropolitan (Bishop) as to whether or not he should rent his building to ELS. Thankfully, the counsel of the Bishop was positive, and Mr. Thomas was very happy not only to offer the building to us, but also felt privileged to be involved in the Lord's work with us. In consultation with his family, Mr. Thomas offered us the building at 50% less than the normal rent. What a reduction! We greatly praised God for His goodness, and an agreement was soon signed.

OPENING OF THE SHOP

Mr. M. T. Philip, a young graduate from the Southern Asia Bible College, Bangalore, had just completed his training in Madras, and was ready to take up the responsibility of the new centre in Trivandrum. Soon after his arrival in the city, Mr. Thomas, the owner of the property, not only gave Philip a place to stay in the new ledge, but also put him in charge of it when he was away.

A team of senior workers from Madras arrived in Trivandrum a day before the inauguration ceremony, and helped set up the shop for the big day, so that everything was attractively arranged. Church dignitaries from various denominations were invited for the opening function, and at 4.30 p.m. on 15th August 1977 about 100 people gathered in front of the shop. The main speaker was Commissioner George of The Salvation Army, while the chief guest to cut the ribbon was Arch-Bishop Benedict Mr. Gregorious of the Syro Malabar Catholic Church. On hearing that the Catholic Arch Bishop was our chief guest some eyebrows were raised, however, for us it was a door opened for Catholic customers to come freely to the bookshop.

Kerala is a land of rain. As people were gathering for the meeting in front of the shop the sky was overcast with dark clouds. Normally that would indicate the beginning of a heavy downpour. We

could do nothing but raise a quiet prayer to our God Who had shut the heavens at the prayer of Elijah. While the meeting was in progress a few drops of rain fell here and there, as if to remind the people that there was heavy cloud above them providing a sunshade instead of rain! After the inauguration when the crowd had dispersed there was a heavy rainstorm which flooded the road. The Lord had again been mindful of us.

EARLY DAYS.

In the beginning M. T. Philip was alone. His colleagues who came from Madras to attend the function left the next day. Philip opened the shop and waited for customers, but very few came. Hardly anyone looked at the display of beautiful greeting cards. In those days the local people weren't used to sending greeting cards. Some older people visited the shop and enquired about books like "Treasury of David", Matthew Henry's Commentaries in 6 volumes, or titles by Spurgeon, Moody, and such like. These were Pastors or keen elderly Christians who were interested in studying the Bible, but by and large there were few who had the habit of reading. As a result sales in the shop were very disappointing. Here we were in the capital of a highly literate State with a large Christian population, but it seemed we had to educate Christians to read Christian literature, encourage them to use Scripture greeting cards, and to give books for Sunday Schools prizes, gifts, etc. So Philip began to visit Churches with a small quantity of books and cards. Before going he requested the Pastors to announce the book tables, which most of them did. In this way people slowly came to know about ELS and what was available in the shop.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Gradually Philip began to see an improvement and sales slowly picked up. However being on his own wasn't easy, but he was too busy to think about a solution to the problem. His parents were concerned for him however, and arranged a wife for their son. Soon after their marriage, Soubha, the young wife, was happy to join her husband's ministry and to take the rigorous ELS training from her husband himself! This was mostly practical, but she did receive some training lectures from the boss at home.

As the couple gave themselves to the work, it began to grow, and so did their family for soon they had four sons in quick succession. The responsibilities of small children compelled her to stay at home, but often Philip would carry the day's accounts work home and get Soubha to help him. Life was quite hard going and very busy for the young couple. Yet they grew in the grace of God and took an interest in Church activities as well as training their children, and have a wonderful testimony of the Lord being their sufficiency and meeting every need.

BOOK TABLES

These were conducted in abundance in and around Trivandrum. To help with this work a three wheeler mini book van was provided. Its body was specially de signed and built in Madras and the vehicle driven to Trivandrum. By this time T. Rajan had also joined the team. Both Philip and Rajan used the van to go to schools, churches and conventions to conduct bookstalls.

THE MARAMON CONVENTION

This is perhaps the world's largest Christian Convention. A full week of meetings have been held annually for the past seven decades at a place called Maramon in Kerala. The venue is the wide banks of the river Pampa where a crowd close to 200,000 gather each day to listen to Bible exposition and gospel preaching, as well as mission and social work reports. A large number of

Christian organisations and publishers erect their stalls there each year. From the time ELS opened in Trivandrum, we have also been given a place to set up a book table at the Convention, and in order to help the team one or two experienced workers from Madras are sent to help.

Conducting the book table is a special challenge and often an exciting experience. As there are a great many booksellers at the scene, our stall has to be very competitive with a wide range of stock, a good display, and the best possible service. Stocks from Trivandrum and Madras are brought to Maramon a day before the Convention begins. It has always been an ordeal to get a suitable place allotted for the stall as a lot of booksellers pester the organisers for the best place. However, once a place is allotted, a temporary roof is constructed with coconut palm leaves, and a large banner with the ELS name is tied on to it. Tables and display racks are brought out from nearby places, and in a great hurry all the stock will be displayed.

The meetings commence at 7 AM and the last meeting finishes about 9 PM. So, it is a long day. Soon after 9 PM, the crowd disperses and only the stall keepers will remain for the night. As they watch their stall and try to sleep, it is not uncommon to have a torrential rainstorm and see the water level in the river rising a few feet. Being on a riverbed there is little that can be done, and sometimes we had to gather up all the stock and shelves during the night and move to higher ground. Next day, it all has to be set up again after the water has receded.

Though the convention stall involves a lot of work and many sleepless nights, the sale of the books is most encouraging and many very worthwhile contacts have also been made.

CO-OPERATION OF THE MAIN LINE CHURCHES

The Church in Kerala is quite strong. The bulk of the large Christian population belong to the main line churches, and so it is essential that Christian ministries have the whole-hearted support of the Churches. Though ELS is an inter-denominational organisation, many people mistook it for a certain Assembly project, most likely because our workers in Trivandrum belong to that group.

Early in 1990, C.T. John and his wife Marykutty were given responsibility of the work in Trivandrum. Though they had many years experience in the mission, it was mostly in printing press, so their knowledge of bookshop management was limited. But they accepted the transfer from Bangalore to Trivandrum and started to work there with much fear and trembling. However, God began honouring them and their close link with the Church of South India in general and their own membership in the local Church, helped build a better understanding of ELS among the Church people. Marykutty's active ministry among the women as well as contact with various fellowship groups in offices and institutions also contributed greatly to a better understanding of ELS, and broke down denominational barriers. Within two years of their taking over in Trivandrum the work had made great strides. Later the bookshop was given a face lift when a new set of shelves and fixtures were provided and a full glass shop front installed. The hard work and dedication of the staff have paid great dividends, and as a result of this many have been blessed.

Chapter 14: CONQUERING THE MEGA CITY

BOMBAY CENTRE

According to the 1991 census, Bombay is now the largest city in India with a population of 12.5 million. In the early eighties when ELS was enlarging its borders, the Lord laid a burden on our hearts to reach out to Bombay in a tangible way.

We were already serving several people there through mail order, but many requests were coming to us to open a centre in that city.

In 1984 at our Annual Conference, we set a goal to advance into Bombay and open a centre there. Prayer was requested for this as well as for the Lord to bring in suitable personnel for this advance. At the International Council meeting in July 1984, the council was exercised to accept this as a faith goal for CLC International. God's people everywhere, especially the CLC staff in many countries began to pray for this project to come into the visible.

PROCURING THE SHOP

For us in ELS the prayer targets were mainly two,

1. For the Lord to give us a shop in Bombay
2. For capable workers to be raised up, who were willing to go to Bombay.

As we began praying and searching for premises, Bombay appeared like Jericho with formidable walls around. Man's greed and love for black market money made almost all property transactions impossible. Although we did not have funds on hand we believed God would provide when the right place became available, and we continued to make enquiries. Several friends told us that it is not possible to purchase property in Bombay, as no one will openly make a full financial transaction.

Another friend questioned the need for a second evangelical bookshop in Bombay as there had been one small shop in existence there for more than three decades. But what was one small shop for a city of more than 12 million people?

We kept searching, but found that no one would let out their premises on a rental or lease basis. Renting or leasing had not been the practice in Bombay for decades. Though the prices were sky high there were shops available for sale to any who were prepared to deal in huge amounts of unaccounted money, so that ruled us out. It also appeared that the prices of such properties was escalating each day. A few trips were made to Bombay and contact made with several Christian leaders, but nothing was forthcoming. Time was quickly passing, but we kept praying and trusting in the God of the impossible. We believed that the God who made the Jericho wall fall flat will open a way for us to enter the great city of Bombay in His own time and against all odds.

GOD CALLS THE WORKERS

As we were praying and believing that God would show the place of His choice, we also invited volunteers from our ranks who would be willing to go to Bombay when the time came. At that time all our workers were from South India, so it was not an easy decision for them to make. Only a few had any knowledge of North or Central Indian languages, and for a south Indian to work in north India and vice versa is almost the equivalent of going from one country to another. Furthermore,

the life style in Bombay is quite different from that in other parts of India. The mad rush of life, competitiveness in business, high cost of living, over crowded trains and public transport, huge slums and skyscrapers side by side, large crowds of people everywhere with pick-pockets abounding, increasing violence, terrorism, immorality, the filth and the dirt, all these and more make living and working in this city very scary and quite dangerous.

On assessing the situation we knew that once the Lord had provided a place we could not just transfer a worker from the south to Bombay, no matter how capable he may be, yet we believed the Lord had His workers for Bombay in our ranks, though we did not know who they were at that time.

As we kept praying, C. V. John and his wife Mercy from the Trivandrum centre volunteered to take up the challenge of Bombay. How we praised the Lord for answering prayer for personnel. By this time C. V. John had had 10 years experience in ELS in addition to working with another mission before coming to us. Another advantage was his knowledge of the Hindi language as well as special training to work among Muslims.

Once we had the workers ready to go, the Lord showed the place as well. Asha Handicraft Associates was a Christian Society which operated an attractive shop for the sale of their products in the famous Maker Arcade at Cuffe Parade. As the Society had decided to sell their shop, they were looking for a Christian buyer, who also functioned as a Society, in order that there be a smooth and open transaction. Rev. A. S. Savarirayan who had been the General Superintendent of CMC Hospital, Vellore, was the President of Asha Handit Society, and knew ELS and what we were doing. He was very happy to offer the shop to us, and soon an agreement was signed between the two Societies.

It was wonderful to see God provide the needed funds with in two months, and to be able to pay the full price. The building fund accumulating in ELS over the previous seven years was fully utilised, some friends made personal contributions, and CLC centres in the UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the Philippines and East Caribbean, all contributed to the project. Tear Fund UK provided funds for the furniture and fittings, and ELS headquarters and the branches pooled resources and supplied a sufficient stock of literature.

WORKERS'S ACCOMMODATION

But that wasn't all. Once we had received the Lord's answer for a shop and personnel the next prayer point was suitable accommodation for our workers. Early in March 1987 Jayabalan and C. V. John were sent to Bombay to look for accommodation. After nearly three weeks they had no success, and Jayabalan returned to Madras leaving C. V. John to continue the search. Time was running out as the opening date for the shop was fixed for 28th April, and C. V. John's family had to arrive in Bombay at least a couple of weeks before the opening. By April 1st John was still knocking on doors and going from pillar to post. To Bombay people it must have been an April fool wandering the streets, but to John it was the foolishness of God in operation, which is wiser than men. Eventually the Lord led John to a retired journalist, Mr. A. G. Matthew, who was planning to sell one of his flats and leave Bombay. Praise God, Mr. Matthew, who was an honest and helpful man and was prepared to accept the full price in the open without any underhanded action or bribe! Communication between C. V. John and the General Secretary in Madras was kept up at regular intervals for the next few days until payment was made, and the signed documents, together with the key, were handed over to C. V. John. By the end of that week the Lord had provided a flat in Mahim where John's family took up residence well before the inauguration day!

FURNITURE AND FITTINGS FOR THE SHOP

Our carpenter Narayanan measured for the various fittings in great detail, in order to make use of every inch of space in the small shop. All the furniture was made in Madras to keep costs as low as possible, and about three weeks before the opening a truck with all the stock of books and fittings left for Bombay, along with Narayanan and his team of workers, to fit everything in place and to give the final touch to everything. A large sign board also had to be made on the spot and fitted to the front wall of the shop. As Narayanan was busy working on these things an Arab from the middle East visited him.

Seeing Narayanan's skill in carpentry, the visitor offered him an attractive job in his company in the Middle East provided he went with him immediately leaving whatever he was doing. There was big money in the offer and Narayanan was not a Christian and felt very tempted, but he promised to give an answer to the Arab businessman the next day. Throughout the night Narayanan thought about the large salary and the attractions of the Persian Gulf country. However, there

was something else he thought about. He was now involved in God's work and if he went away and didn't complete it, the ELS inauguration would be upset and God would hold him responsible. "What good will there be if I get plenty of money from the Arab, but have to face God's punishment?" he thought. Throughout the night he was very troubled, but by the morning he had decided not to accept the Arab's offer, and told him that the present work he is doing is for the Lord, and he dare not leave it unfinished.

MADRAS TEAM ARRIVES

So Narayanan and his workers continued and made everything ready by April 27th. By then a team from ELS Madras had arrived to help display all the stock in the new shop and to make final arrangements for the inauguration meeting on the 28th. Everyone worked hard and made the 450 sq. ft. shop a really attractive place in the Arcade. At 4 p.m. a good number of friends gathered at the shop, including the Methodist Bishop of Bombay, Elliot D. Clive as the chief guest. After a short message and greetings from several friends, and introductory remarks and a report from the General Secretary of ELS, the Bishop cut the ribbon and declared the centre opened. Thus the Lord answered prayer, and fulfilled the desire of ELS and CLC worldwide to establish a centre in Bombay from which to spread His Word among the millions of people in that city.

GOD'S PROVISION FOR THE CHILDREN

When C. V. John and his family moved to Bombay their greatest concern, and indeed, the whole of ELS, was the question of the children's admission to a school. They had four children and all were school-going age at that time. If all of them received admission to the same school near to their residence, it would be remarkable, but a school with a good reputation and near their home would be a miracle! All these were just idle wishes, knowing the reality of the problem they would be satisfied if they got the children admitted into any school.

Bombay Scottish High School is perhaps the most prestigious Christian school in Bombay, about two kilometers from the John's residence. There is always a long line of applicants waiting, and even access to the Principal's secretary is not given to request an application form. How could John get his children admitted when even rich families were being turned away? John discussed the problem with his childrens' former school Principal, Mr. Thomas Athyol who suddenly remembered that the Principal of the Bombay Scottish School was a former colleague! Armed with

a personal letter from Mr. Thomas, John took the letter to the Principal who ordered that three of the children be admitted right away and the fourth put on the waiting list. What a turn of events! The John family was overjoyed and so was the rest of ELS. Many long time residents in Bombay hadn't known it to happen before, and thought John must be someone very important! We knew however, that if it was God's will for the family to move to Bombay then He would not only provide accommodation, but also schooling for the children.

THE BATTLE BEGINS

The geographical situation of Bombay city is so widespread and the roads so congested, that it takes nearly two hours by public transport to travel from Mahim, where the Johns lived, to Cuffe Parade. None of the suburban trains have the luxury of door shutters. This enables hundreds of passengers to hang on to the door while the train is in motion. These trains are always so crowded that one need not make a special effort to board the train or disembark. All that is necessary is to stand with the crowd around the doorway, on the platform board, or inside the train to disembark. The sweeping push inward or outward takes you through if you are strong enough to withstand the pressure! John coped with this ordeal for some time but his wife Mercy, found it very difficult. Moreover it took nearly four hours daily to travel to and from the shop. After a while a motor scooter was provided which made the travel comparatively easier and less time consuming, as the journey was reduced to only 45 minutes.

FURTHER COMPLICATIONS

Though Cuffe Parade is a business centre, it wasn't easily accessible to the majority of Christians who lived far away from that area. Customers only visited the shop when it was absolutely necessary, as there were long distances to travel or drive. Sitting in the new shop with very little happening, C. V. John began to wonder whether ELS was in the wrong place. But how could this be wrong, since God had so clearly provided it for us? Sales in the shop were not at all encouraging, nor were they improving. The only thing to do was to go out and conduct book tables in Churches and conventions as had been done in Trivandrum, and invite folk to visit the shop. But there was no vehicle to carry the stock and taxis were too expensive and would not cooperate when it came to carrying a heavy load of books. In spite of these problems, John and Mercy managed to conduct many booktables, and often returned home carrying the stock in heavy trunks well past midnight.

PERSONAL WITNESS AND PRAYER MEETINGS

Though customers were few and sales small, the ministry went on unhindered. There were opportunities to witness personally to men and women in and around the shop. Having a burden for ministry among Muslims, John was able to point several Muslims to Christ, and Mercy began a special ministry among the women. A lunch hour prayer meeting and Bible study was organised on the mezzanine floor of the shop, and several employees of the shopping complex began attending.

THE BATTLE INTENSIFIES

When we entered Bombay we were not aware of how much it was the devil's stronghold, (2 Cor. 10:4-5 LB). Satan was there to discourage us with poor sales and little response as well as to frighten us with the high cost of maintaining the work. The health of the workers too, was touched.

By trusting the Lord and resisting the devil the enemy became even more furious. Persecution of our workers by some government departments began.

One day the municipal authorities inspected the Maker Arcade and noticed irregularities in several shops, our shop being one of them. The plinth level of many shops had been lowered below ground level and a mezzanine floor added, thus creating more space than the original building plan showed. Several years previously along with many others, the then manager of Asha Handicrafts had made the alteration in their shop, without apparently getting municipal permission. At the time of selling the shop to ELS, that manager had already left and the Board of Management was unaware of the alteration. Though we did not know anything about it, the municipal authorities, on finding the alteration in the building, charged C. V. John with criminal misconduct and filed a case against him as the person responsible. While many others escaped criminal proceedings by various means, mostly underhand ones, it became necessary for us to defend ourselves and our workers through the legal system. This involved ELS in considerable expense, and great tension and waste of time for John who had to appear before advocates and magistrates for a few years. When C. V. John and Mercy were in the forefront of this battle, the rest of us in ELS held up their hands in prayer, and we saw the Lord wonderfully give us the victory. His promise to us was in 1 Cor.10:13. "God is faithful, He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." The Lord provided a way out.

A CHANGE OF LOCATION

Through the shop in Cuffe Parade the Lord gave us a foothold in Bombay, but as soon as we stepped in the battle began. When we share the victory of Jesus we have to march forward in faith, and trust Him to lead us, not stand still and be overcome by the enemy. We realized that although Cuffe Parade was a business centre, it was not the most suitable place to establish a Christian book shop, so we began to ask the Lord if He would have us move to another area where Christians would find it easier to visit us. How wonderfully He answered! A Real Estate Agent offered us a package deal which enabled us to get a new shop under construction, a car park in the basement, a small flat to accommodate another family, and a one year old Jeep, all in exchange for our Cuffe Parade shop! It was almost too wonderful for us to believe especially when we were told that the new owner was willing to take over the court case along with the shop!

The new shop was in an attractive shopping complex at Dadar West near the Dadar railway station. This was an ideal central location, for it enabled most Christians in Bombay to have an easy access. Though the building was not ready for occupation we agreed to the deal, and took possession of the jeep and the flat at Andheri while waiting for the shop to be completed. The builder kindly agreed to stock our books and shelves in one of the unfinished rooms of the complex until the shop was ready. The finishing touches to the shop were done on a priority basis, and ours was the first to be completed among nearly 250 in the complex. It was handed over to us in October 1991. However, as the whole shopping complex is still under construction it hasn't been easy to carry out normal work in the shop, nor is it convenient for customers to creep in through the scaffolding and building materials scattered around.

MOBILE AND PRAYER MINISTRY

The newly acquired jeep has been very useful to take the books around to various Churches and Conventions, and book distribution has been maintained to some extent, even though there has not been a great deal going out from the shop itself. Mercy's ministry among women has taken on

a new dimension. Several prayer groups have been established, and a prayer chain set up to pray throughout the year, and many wonderful answers have been received. Mercy herself has attended Haggai Institute studies in Singapore, which has enlarged her vision for the lost a great deal.

As C. V. John and Mercy press on in Bombay, let us read John's story,

"I was born into a Christian family and my parents encouraged me even in childhood to seek after the truth. This helped me to accept the Lord Jesus as my personal Saviour in my early teenage years. After high school I found secular employment but one day the Lord reminded me of my earlier commitment to Him and asked me to consider the cost of following the world and its ways. Through the Vacation Bible School programme I made a lasting decision to become a disciple of the Lord Jesus and proclaim His message of peace. This led me into training at the South India Biblical Seminary. While I was there, Mr. V. M. Abraham used to bring books for special functions, and once he spoke to me about the possibility of ministering through literature.

"During the course at the Seminary, the Prayer Band played a major role in challenging me with the most needy field of Christian work, which was to take the Gospel to Muslims. As I met with those special people I felt the need to become better equipped to understand them and minister to them, and the Lord opened the door for me to study Islam and its theology at the Henry Martyn Institute in Hyderabad. One day while I was considering the next step, I was reminded of what V.M. Abraham had said earlier, so my wife, Mercy and I wrote to ELS to see if there was an open door there. We particularly wanted to continue reaching Muslims too. After a time we received a favourable reply, and joined ELS in October, 1975.

"Training at ELS under Sister Grace, V. M. and others, and taking a special management course, prepared us for the unknown future. We worked in Vellore and Trivandrum before coming to Bombay. Now we have great satisfaction and a sense of fulfilment in God's call to such a ministry.

"We work as a family and find our joy fulfilled in doing so. We have had spiritual thrills when someone comes to the Lord, whether from Islam, Communism or other backgrounds. My family has been strengthened to continue victoriously in spite of difficulties, for the Lord's Spirit has guided, strengthened and supported us.

"Many young people have come to us in search of a job, training or guidance, and we have had the joy of leading some of them to our Lord Jesus. This has been one of the great thrills in ELS for us. Yes, naturally there have been many problems but these have made us stronger as a result. Since being in Bombay we have been dragged to court, beaten by fanatics, and abused by unruly ones. We have spent nights in tears for deliverance from sickness or for unanswered prayers for urgent needs. But the Lord who has called us is faithful and increases our faith in Him to go on in the task He has given. God's work is not easy, but He is the one who bears the heavier portion of the yoke and gives us rest even in the hardest work."

Chapter 15: COIMBATORE CENTRE

Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu is a fast growing industrial city where business people from all over the country, and particularly from the north west, find many opportunities to increase their business. This has raised property prices in and around the city enormously. Literacy is high and the climate moderate. There is also a large, though scattered, Christian community. A number of our good customers at Ooty used to come up from Coimbatore. The city had been a prayer target for a considerable time, so after establishing the centre in Bombay we began seriously looking at Coimbatore with a view to starting a work there.

SEARCHING FOR A PLACE

Some Churches own prime sites in the city including shopping complexes, so as usual we began knocking on the doors of Church dignitaries and Committees. Although most individuals were personally sympathetic to the ELS ministry, when it came to committee level priority seemed to go to those with large funds. As our search continued, one Dr. Jayaraj Narayan heard of our need and wrote to us in Madras offering to build a shop on the first floor of his shopping complex in Coimbatore. As we were in the process of negotiating with a Church committee concerning their property at that time, we did not respond to Dr. Narayan immediately.

JEEVAN CLINIC

Two of the senior staff, Benjamin Gnanamanickam to Coimbatore to meet with certain church officials and J. R. Jayabalan, accompanied the General Secretary their committee to explain our need of a suitable place there. S. Barnabas from our Ooty shop also came and joined the team. However we received no positive response from the church authorities, so a phone call was made to Dr. Jayaraj reminding him of his offer, who invited us over to the Jeevan Clinic where discussions began. Dr. Jayaraj is a member of the local CSI Church where Barnabas had opportunities to preach and set up book stalls, so they knew each other. The doctor also understood what the objectives of ELS were and the blessing of such a ministry. His building was at 100 Feet Road, Gandhipuram, a prime location in the city, and Dr. Jayaraj was happy for us to establish a bookshop in his premises. He offered to construct and give us the first floor of his building - about 2000 sq. ft. facing the road, at half the normal rent prevailing in the area at that time. The offer was so exciting and right there in his office we praised God in our hearts. Our only question was the size of the premises which were too big for a new work. We mentioned that in addition to a shop we also needed a place for our workers' living quarters. Dr. Jayaraj then offered to convert a portion of the space into living accommodation, leaving the larger portion for the shop. It seemed a perfect arrangement to us. We discussed a seven year lease and agreed to pay rent in advance toward the cost of the construction.

FUNDS FOR THE PROJECT

It was our practise to carefully budget each year and allocate funds towards projects such as building, publishing, staff welfare etc. Though the building fund had been used up with launching the work in Bombay, there had again built up a considerable amount in this fund by the time we found the place in Coimbatore. Consequently, we were able to send a substantial amount towards construction costs to Dr. Jayaraj as soon as the agreement was signed. The balance of funds needed were made available from the sale of the Print Shop in Bangalore, so once again God's timing proved to be just right. Tear Fund from the U.K. again came forward to help us with furniture

and fittings and stocks of books were pooled from the other shops of ELS and sent to Coimbatore.

INAUGURATION OF COIMBATORE SHOP

The construction work took much longer than was expected, but finally the premises were handed over to us in October 1990. A month before the building was completed our carpenter, Narayanan was sent to Coimbatore to begin working on the fixtures. As the day of opening approached, Churches, conventions and other gatherings were informed about the new literature centre coming to the city. The 50 ft. long glazed frontage of the shop with an equally long sign board above overlooking the main 100 Feet Road, was already attracting a lot of interest. On the night prior to the opening the shop was colourfully lit up and everyone couldn't but help notice the new shop. As usual a team from Madras headquarters came to make sure the stock was well displayed and classified for the convenience of customers. Books in English, Tamil and Malayalam were available and a large variety of wall texts adorned the long walls, while greeting cards and other novelty items attracted the young people. On the afternoon of November 7th, 1990 about 100 people, mostly Christian friends and Church leaders, gathered in the new shop. The Rt. Rev. William Moses, the Bishop of Coimbatore (Church of South India) who was our chief guest, cut the ribbon after a short speech welcoming ELS to Coimbatore, and the General Secretary introduced ELS and several leaders brought greetings or prayed.

PERSONNEL FOR THE SHOP

Though a new centre, the size of the Coimbatore shop made this ninth branch one of the largest. S. Barnabas who was managing the Ooty shop at that time, was born not too far from Coimbatore and was quite familiar with the area and the local Churches. Having had considerable experience in different centres of ELS including headquarters, it was thought right to give Barnabas and his wife Prema the responsibility of managing the new centre. Ooty shop which was quite small was taken care of by a local helper under Barnabas' supervision. So for a short while Barnabas was in the unique position of managing two centres at the same time! Two young men, David Kennedy and Regie Dinakar, were also sent from Madras to help Barnabas in the new Coimbatore centre.

Barnabas has this story to tell about himself.

"Soon after High School, I worked as a salesman in a cloth shop for a year, followed by another year as a clerk at a CSI School in Coonoor. During this time I had good training, but had no idea what the future held.

"In 1969 I helped Mrs. Lila Lehman in the Ooty shop, and later that year the General Secretary, Donald David, called me to Madras for training under Mr. C. M. Varghese at Mount Road. I was sent back to Ooty and from the 1st April 1970 took complete charge of the shop as Lila Lehman left India to return to her home in Canada. At this time I realised how the Lord had prepared me for ELS in both business methods and clerical work by my previous employment!

"I worked hard and sales and contacts in the shop increased. In 1975 the shop was expanded and this brought more people into the shop as well. In 1978 I was married to a fine Christian girl, and after a year the Lord blessed us with a baby boy who we named Emmanuel.

"Two years later the Union Church Management decided to run the shop themselves, and I was transferred to Bangalore ELS and worked as an accountant. In November '81 the Lord gave

Prema and me a baby girl, but after eight days she went to be with the Lord due to jaundice, which was a very sad and difficult time.

"In April 1983 I was called to Madras headquarters where I worked in the accounts department for three years. There the Lord added one more member to our family, another beautiful girl who we named Lydia. It was difficult to get proper housing in Madras, and on one occasion Emmanuel almost died but we cried to the Lord and He healed him. However, later on when Lydia was three years old, she became very sick and was called into the Lord's presence which was a very great blow to us.

"After some time, the General Secretary, V. M. Abraham told me that the Union Church Management in Ooty was once again asking ELS to take over the shop, and that I should return there. This we were happy to do, and on 1st April 1986 the shop was again opened under the banner of ELS. This time the ministry grew fast, and the Lord gave us many opportunities to serve Him there. "On November 7th, 1990 the new centre in the heart of Coimbatore was opened, and I was asked to take up the work. Shortly afterwards the Union Church Management in Ooty again told us they needed the shop for their own use, so the Ooty shop was finally closed down.

"For the past 23 years of service in ELS I have seen the Lord bless many people through the literature ministry. When I joined ELS it was like a mustard seed, but today it has grown like a banyan tree and thousands of people enjoy comfort under its shadow. All glory be to God."

Chapter 16: THE MANTLE FELL ON THESE

Leadership is no enviable task. Over the past 40 years there have been four to whom this responsibility has been entrusted.

1954-1972 Donald J. David and his wife Ida.

Donald's call to ELS has been related in an earlier chapter, and there is little more that needs to be said. However, there is one thing that stands out in all his letters and reports, and this is his concern for people above everything else. Their well-being and spiritual growth was his major concern. Perhaps this is part of the reason why there was so much development in ELS in the early years? After leaving India in 1972, Donald and Ida were based at CLC Alresford for about a year, before being asked to go to New Zealand to work, but sadly, after barely four years, Donald was called into the Lord's presence.

Of her own call Ida writes,

"Me - a missionary? That was the last thing I had in mind, but God had spoken very clearly to me through John 15:16, and it was something I just couldn't get away from. I had come to the Lord in my early teens, but it was only four years later that God's call to full-time service came so clearly to me. It wasn't an easy time to consider the mission field.

"The second world war was at its height and I was call-up age, so before Bible School could be contemplated, national service had to be faced. But that was all part of God's plan, for after a somewhat sheltered life, that service prepared me a great deal for the disciplines of Bible School and missionary training.

"How does God speak to us? Well, apart from His Word, He spoke to me from CLC's magazine FLOODTIDE. There I read an article by a WEC missionary about the tremendous needs and opportunities in India, and knew it was for me. CLC had no work there, so what was I to do? However I pressed on, feeling sure it was right to do so, and was accepted by CLC. After training in the London shop, experience in Birmingham and a further spell in the Ludgate Hill office, a sailing date was fixed.

"Not all the 'powers that be' were happy about a young, single girl going to such a vast, diverse land to start a new work. On the other hand there was a conviction amongst CLC leaders that God's time had come, and as He had called a worker it was up to Him to work the rest out!

"After a short time at WEC Headquarters in Fatehpur, U.P., and some language study at Landour, a request was received from the Manager of a Christian bookshop in Calcutta to go and help them for a while. As this was going to be good experience whatever the future held, it was agreed that I go. While there a letter came from Donald David, as related in Chapter three, and God's plan began to further unfold."

1972-1975 Noble Massey and his wife Coral

Noble and Coral were the first national workers of ELS. Before joining ELS Noble had worked at the Telegraph Office and Coral was a teacher, but they felt God's call and gave up their jobs. God honoured this step, and they served a total of 21 years in either Mussoorie, Madras or Bangalore.

1975-1993 V. M. Abraham and his wife Leelamma

V. M. narrates his own story,

“You can join as a candidate at our centre in Ooty and help the manager. You will be expected to do all kinds of work and will be given a small amount of pocket money and free accommodation. You are encouraged to trust the Lord to meet all your needs. We will be praying for you.’ This was the gist of the invitation letter the General Secretary, Donald David sent me in early March 1959. Al Monus, the missionary manager of the Ooty shop, came to meet me at the station but missed me in the crowd. A railway clerk who had travelled with me, kindly arranged with a porter to carry my bag on his head and walk with me to Farley - about 2 km by shortcut from the station and all uphill, to the Monuses house. Ooty was cold and my room even colder, especially between 5 p.m. and 9 a.m. each day which was when I was in the room. The missionary loaned me a blanket on condition that when I purchased one it should be re- turned. It was hard living in Ooty with very little money. As I couldn't afford to eat from a hotel, I started by own cooking, the technique of which I did not know. I made dry chapattis or boiled rice and ate this without any curry. The Monuses were very kind to me and invited me to eat with them at times. It was too costly also to use the kerosene stove provided for heating water for a bath, so one day I tried bathing in cold water, but just couldn't stop shivering. Thereafter I gathered dry leaves and made a fire to heat water. Within two months I had saved enough money to purchase a cheap blanket and returned the first one.

"In June 1959 I was asked to go to Madras headquar- ters and my real training began in the heat of Madras summer. Accommodation was the first problem. A camp cot was stretched in between the stock racks and the toilet of the Purasawalkam shop for me to sleep on during the night. Before 9 a.m. every working day this had to be folded and kept to one side in order to give walking space in the stock room or for access to the toilet. However, when stock began to increase I had to find somewhere else to go to lay my head.

“The next three months was a great experience of putting up with various cheap lodging houses in Madras lacking ventilation and air. There was always water scarcity during the summer too. One day Donald David said I could lodge and board with them in their guest room. This was a big luxury and a privilege to be a paying guest of the General Secretary! He also gave me a practical job to do every morning before going to the shop. I had to clean the ELS car.

"The day began in ELS by helping the office boy to open the shop and its windows, and dusting the office tables and chairs for the five of us who gathered for devotions. After this everyone went to the bookshop and spent about 30 minutes dusting, cleaning and arranging the books. In the office my first job was to check the mailing list and update it. After about 9 months I was given the Mail Order department to run. One day Donald David called me into his office and said that ELS was satisfied with my work and wondered how I felt about ELS as the time had come for making a long term commitment. I assured him of the Lord's call to me for the work, and then he a few friends for a meeting. This was done, and I was suggested I invite my Pastor and prayed over and commissioned as a full time Staff Member of ELS.

"Though the first 6 months of candidature were very hard going, the next three months were comparatively easy as I stayed in the shadow of the boss, but when I was accepted as a Staff Member I had to learn to trust the Lord more. Though ELS found simple accommodation for me and another worker, the meagre monthly allowance, and that too not a fixed sum, made the going

very difficult. Experience in Ooty came in handy and I began to do some elementary cooking. Even today after 33 years, I have not improved in this art! Work in ELS was not easy.

"In those days there were only five Staff members and one office boy at headquarters, who, apart from other duties, was often out doing odd jobs. As the Mail Order department was growing I learned to pack book packets and later on heavy parcels which were sent by rail or truck. The hours were long as the work began at 9 a.m. and the shop closed at 7 p.m. or later depending on when the last customer decided to leave. During most days in December the shop functioned till about 9 p.m. and those of us who were helping in the shop used to be on our feet most of that time. Being a young man of 22 at that time a good night's sleep brought back the needed energy to carry on the next day's full responsibility. It was a great joy being spent for the Lord. The singleness of purpose and concentration on the ministry made me decide to give my whole time for the work. I threw my entire weight behind ELS work without any reservation and found it highly satisfying."

MARRIAGE

"Five years before my marriage I began praying that God would reveal His will as to whom and when I should marry. In 1962 I took the verse 'It is not good for a man to be alone' seriously and agreed to my parents suggestion to visit the home of Leelamma's parents. Having met and talked with her briefly in the presence of her parents and others, I plucked up courage and requested her uncle to arrange a private interview with her. After meeting and talking freely with her about my calling, work and life-style etc. we felt we were made for each other. When I returned to Madras and shared the news with Donald and Ida they were very happy, but foresaw a very real problem. The ELS Constitution, which was based on CLC Britain's had a clause stating that "Marriage is permitted between the members of the Crusade only". The idea was to encourage couples to serve together. Often western countries had more women than men in the Crusade, so men of CLC could marry a lady staff worker of their choice. However, in India it was the other way round, as there were many more men than women. In the context of ELS it seemed that the best way to get couples into the work was to allow a bachelor to marry the girl of his choice and bring his bride into the work. So after a lot of practical consideration the constitution of ELS was amended deleting the marriage clause, thus giving the workers freedom of choice! Though Leelamma was very happy to join ELS immediately after our marriage, probably more for my company than the burden for the work at that time, we all felt it would be helpful for her to join a Bible Seminary for one year before coming into the work. So she was enrolled as a day scholar in the Hindustan Bible Institute for 1962-63 which she endured as a young bride! When the year was completed, Leelamma was admitted into ELS as a trainee under the care and supervision of (Aunt) Grace Gabriel.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A BRANCH

"By the end of 1968 I was asked to take over the bookshop and printing press in Bangalore. As the press was about 6 km. away from the bookshop the major part of my time was spent in the press while Leelamma looked after the bookshop. As a result of much prayer, faith and hard work, by 1973 the Lord enabled us to have our own building to house the shop and the press under one roof on St. John's Church Road. This gave a tremendous boost to the whole work in Bangalore.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE WHOLE MISSION

"In January 1975 the mantle of leadership fell on me. Leelamma and I accepted the responsibility with a great sense of inadequacy, but this helped us to trust the Lord more. As we began to grapple with the work, the Lord gave me a sense of direction to BUILD. It was to,

1. *Build up a more committed Staff*
2. *Build a headquarters building*
3. *Build up a strong publishing programme*
4. *Build up a large sales network.*

"Before the end of my first term in office (4 years) the Lord 'perfected that which concerned us' and we moved into the new headquarters building at 95 A Vepery High Road. This was one of the goals achieved, and by the time I had completed four terms as General Secretary I had the inner witness that the other goals of building up ELS had been fulfilled to a very reasonable level. Having fulfilled my responsibilities as God enabled me and having the mental satisfaction that the Lord was accomplishing His purposes, I felt very strongly that the time had come for me to move out of leadership. At the same time, I also felt that there was other leadership potential available in ELS to take over from me. However, at the request of the fellowship I continued two more years in the office thus completing 18 years in all as General Secretary.

WIDER MINISTRY

"Soon after accepting the leadership of ELS I became involved in CLC's International Council and was elected as an Area Representative for CLC South Asia. In 1979 I became Secretary of the Evangelical Literature Fellowship of India (ELFI), and later in 1989 was appointed its Chairman, which responsibility I still have as I write in 1993.

"In 1988 I was invited by the International Council of CLC to serve as a member of its Co-ordinating Committee, as Area Co-ordinator for Asia/Australasia. This was in addition to my work as Indian Field Leader, but as I was relieved of Field Leadership in 1992, I have since been full-time Area Co-ordinator. Through my work on the International Council it has been a great blessing to meet with people from many parts of the world, who have the same calling and ministry, and to share experiences and encourage one another."

1993 MRS. CELESTINE BENJAMIN

Mrs. Benjamin, affectionately known in her family and ELS circles as Selly, joined ELS some time after her husband Azariah Benjamin, in the early sixties. At the 1993 Annual Conference Selly was appointed as the General Secretary. Here is her testimony,

"In 1960 when my husband joined ELS, I wondered if I too should join or continue in my profession which was teaching. About that time, I became seriously ill, and one day heard the song, 'Count your blessings' being sung. As I listened I realized that no one in the house had sung that song. Who could it be? Then I began to think that perhaps it was God speaking to me. So I began counting my blessings and praising the Lord, and right then was instantly healed! At that time I dedicated my whole life to the Lord and His work, and when I was able, joined ELS. That dedication has kept me during the past many years.

"After 15 years of service my husband was led to join another Mission. However, he understood my commitment to ELS and allowed me to continue on in the work. But to continue was not an easy decision for me to make as it was a big sacrifice to work as a single person. Nevertheless, I knew God had called me.

"My years in ELS have been full of variety. In the early days I remember taking the mail to the post office, climbing the ladder to get stock from the attic, and at times packing parcels or spreading jam on the bread at tea time. I enjoyed working in all the different departments of the work. At the beginning I worked in the showroom (1961), Mail Order Department (1962-65), Trade Department (1968-72), the Accounts Department for a few months, English Publications for many years, and in the Purchase (Buying) Department between 1966-67 and 1973-1992. Besides this I also enjoyed participating in bookstalls held at schools and colleges. Finally the Lord brought me into the leadership. 1 Cor.1:27-29 came to me forcibly, for when the Lord calls a person He qualifies him to do the job, no matter how small and insignificant he may feel.

"The work has grown, and I thank God for His enabling. Over the years I have learned increasingly that God is faithful and can be trusted."

Chapter 17: PURPOSE, PRINCIPLES, PILLARS

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The goal of Evangelical Literature Service is to make evangelical literature available to all people, so that they may come to faith and maturity in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The outworking of the foregoing purpose may include, though is not limited to, printing and publishing in any language, books, tracts, magazines etc. with a clear gospel message, and distributing them by opening and developing literature centres and bookshops anywhere according to the need.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Based on the Bible we have accepted the following Principles as 'Four Pillars' on which the ministry is built.

1. FAITH

A dependence and trust in God to bring about His intentions and purposes through this ministry in spite of any unplanned circumstances.

We exercise faith in the will, power and providence of God to meet every need for both work and workers. Therefore, the expansion and outreach of the ministry is not determined by our visible resources but rather by the commands and promises of God.

2. SACRIFICE

We choose to accept a simple lifestyle, placing God's will before personal comfort and economic security, in order to fulfil our God-given commission. This involves among other things, moving workers from one place to another, uprooting the family, facing educational problems for children, possible financial difficulties, and cultural and language adjustment.

3. HOLINESS

By allowing the Holy Spirit to work in us, our ministry and personal lives must be pleasing in the sight of God. Every worker is encouraged to exercise personal holiness in their lives as this is essential in order to be an effective witness for Christ. The fruit of the Spirit is what the world needs and our lives and service should manifest this fruit.

4. FELLOWSHIP

The bond that binds us to Christ is the same that unites us with other workers as well as to other believers. Our loving care for fellow workers and submission to one another in the Spirit of Christ, are expressions of true fellowship in the ministry.

ELS is an inter-denominational ministry. However our fellowship and relation with any church or group is determined by the biblical and evangelical position of that body.

Chapter 18: A WORD ABOUT FINANCES

FAITH PRINCIPLES

ELS began as a work of faith. There was no capital to begin with but a strong faith in God who had called the ministry into being. There was no building, land, or any other assets. There were no directors, partners or share-holders, but a group of people who were prepared to put their confidence in God to meet their needs. In the light of God's Word assuring us that He would do that (Phil. 4:19) the idea of borrowing funds either for the ministry or for personal needs was alien to our thinking. The growth and expansion of the work depended upon God's supply and not on our resources. Bearing these principles in mind the work was guided right from the start towards becoming self-supporting, or perhaps more correctly, God-supported.

As Donald and Ida David were workers 'sent' by CLC Britain, the personal support funds for the Davids were also sent by CLC as they were able. As finance permitted, gifts were also sent to India by CLC to be shared among the national workers, as there was no salary paid to anyone. This support, though little, was given by Britain for the first seven years. By 1961 however, we were informed that they were unable to continue this, and encouraged us to look to the Lord. This was a great challenge to our faith, but it did help to point the way to financial sufficiency in due course.

LIVING ALLOWANCES FOR BASIC NEEDS

The financial policy of ELS is to use all available funds, after meeting overhead expenses, for the extension of the work. When it pleased the Lord to send us no more gifts for national workers' support, we really didn't know what we should do. Unfortunately the Indian Church did not find it easy to recognise ELS as a fully fledged missionary enterprise because of the nature of the work, which appears to be commercial. Therefore there was no financial help from Churches towards our work or workers, though some individuals did receive an occasional small gift. For a while the Davids, together with a few of the other missionaries offered to add their personal support funds to a National Workers Allowance pool, and we began to share equally among all workers. We all, both nationals and missionaries, accepted the fact that we were called to live sacrificially, and all were encouraged to live within their means. Simple living accommodation was provided for the workers.

Eventually it was felt right after careful consideration and much prayer, that a small percentage of sales could be set aside towards meeting the basic financial needs of our national workers. This was commenced in September 1964 when a new policy was introduced by which workers received a set amount from the profit of the trade funds. All overhead expenses were paid first before any payment was made to workers. The amount was graded according to the length of service of the worker and the amount of responsibility he carried. Thus, an accepted Junior Probationer, as they were called in those days, received a small sum as an allowance, but when that phase was successfully completed he was upgraded to the next category, with an equivalent increase in allowance. We found this worked well and gave each individual an added incentive to see the work grow. At the same time the Finance Committee was very concerned that the amount used for allowances should not jeopardise the development of the work, and had to exercise great care to keep expenses to a minimum.

FAITH IN OPERATION

During the first 25 years of the ministry we faced great financial pressure. Resources were always too small to begin any project. Money for stock, shelves and fittings in any shop was always limited. Consequently a very careful selection of purchases was made. The amount available to pay allowances to workers was extremely small, but this helped us to exercise faith and live within our means with greater commitment to the Lord. Funds did not enable us to purchase any land or property, for there was very little available for that purpose. Yet it was within the first quarter of a century that ELS acquired most of its buildings and properties!

BUDGETING FUNDS FOR PROJECTS

As years passed by sales increased in all centres and the volume of finance handled became much more substantial. The need for a proper control of finances became very obvious, and we began to prepare a detailed budget at the beginning of each year. In consultation with all the shop managers, a projected sales turnover figure for the coming year was fixed as a faith target. Every centre was encouraged to achieve this target, and in most cases, it was exceeded. All expenditure was also budgeted by fixing a certain percentage based on the sales of the previous year. Consistent efforts on disciplined living as well as proper budgeting over a number of years, helped us to standardize overhead expenditure. By the 1980s workers' allowances were estimated at around 10% of sales. This percentage had been higher previously but though the figure was down the amount received by each worker monthly became greater, as sales had increased considerably. Funds were also allocated for projects such as building, publications and gratuities for staff welfare. Every year as and when funds were available, small sums were deposited in the relative bank accounts so that funds slowly accumulated. A Provident/Retirement Fund scheme was also established.

MOTOR VEHICLE SOLD

In the early eighties purchases mounted owing to the use of the large import licence we had been given, and the need to get plenty of stock for the growing number of shops. Often overseas suppliers expected payment even before stock reached our warehouse. Surface mail too, took three to four months from USA or UK, so it wasn't easy to plan ahead. Our limited finances were not sufficient to promptly pay all incoming bills even though sales were brisk.

At that time we had a van for mobile work and another small car for the use of the General Secretary. Though the mobile work was done only spasmodically, maintenance expenditure for the large vehicle was very high, and as the General Secretary was willing to go without a vehicle until such time as finances improved, it was decided to sell both vehicles. It seemed more necessary and honourable to us to pay suppliers' bills than to go about in the vehicles as debtors! The sale of both the vehicles drastically reduced overhead expenditure and also provided funds to clear pending bills. Later on, however, when the financial position became more stabilized a new Suzuki van was purchased.

PROFIT IN A NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION

ELS was registered as a Charitable Society with a 'no profit' motive so what happens if a profit is made? Though the Society enjoys a special status owing to its registration with the Commissioner of Income Tax, any profit that is not applied to the objects of the Society becomes liable for taxation.

The auditor we had during the early years didn't help a great deal as he considered that, being a charity, we should not make a profit! However when we put our case to another auditor more familiar with the latest tax laws, he wrote as follows, "As a Charitable Society, though operating without a profit motive, if you fail to make a reasonable profit incidental to your business, you have no justification to exist and enjoy the concession offered by the government of India. The government expects societies to grow and do more service in this vast country. It is to encourage such growth and service that the government offers special status and tax exemptions to Societies. Now if you do not make any profit you cannot grow, and if you fail to grow you are defeating your objectives!" This advice made sense to us and we decided to hire the new auditor!

Since then every year we have made a small percentage of net profit, and because of the advice of the new auditor, have been able to apply every rupee of this towards the objects of the Society, and avoid tax. This has strengthened our financial position considerably.

Further useful advice received from the new auditor concerned the need to apply business principles in a business-like way. As a result we introduced a number of measures into our accounting systems, checking and counter-checking various accounts, cash receipts and payments etc. The sales of each day are banked the following day and a bank reconciliation is done every month. All major payments go through the bank. Cash on hand is physically checked and balanced against the account book by someone other than the one handling the cash. These measures have not only helped to improve accuracy in accounting systems, but also increased speed and efficiency.

Chapter 19: COOPERATION IN OPERATION

From its inception, ELS has been happy to cooperate with like-minded Missions and Organisations, and have helped some of them commence and develop under our roof.

SERVICE TO ELFI

When the Evangelical Literature Fellowship of India was formed in 1954, ELS was a founding member. During the sixties the General Secretary of ELS, Donald David, served as Chairman followed after a couple of years, as Secretary. For a decade from the late seventies, V.M. Abraham also served as Secretary of ELFI. Presently he is Chairman.

BIRTH OF EHC

When India Every Home Crusade began its operation in this country, its Tamil Nadu office was housed in ELS and Donald David served as the first Director. As the work grew and staff increased EHC established their own office with a new Director elsewhere in the city.

TAMIL CEEFI WORK

When the Evangelical Fellowship of India expanded their ministry into Christian education they requested ELS to become the publishers and distributors of Tamil CEEFI materials. It was only in the early eighties that they took the work over and established their own office. LIVING BIBLES INDIA

ELS coordinated the translation, editing, printing and distribution of the Tamil Living Bible for the first twenty years on behalf of Living Bibles India.

For some time the IEM accounts were maintained in ELS as Donald David was its first treasurer. This responsibility was later passed on to Azariah Benjamin who carried out the work until he left ELS in 1974 to join IEM full time.

A BUILDING FOR SCRIPTURE LITERATURE PRESS

When we constructed our new building Bangalore in 1973 nearly 1000 sq. ft. on the first floor was specially built for SLP in order to accommodate their Kannada publishing work. Though the actual cost of construction of the space used by SLP was borne by them, no further financial obligations were made.

'CALL FROM CANAAN' RADIO PROGRAMME

The follow-up work of this Tamil radio broadcast was carried out by ELS at the request of the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary, Darmstadt as long as their Tamil broadcasting ministry continued.

While we have been glad to help these organizations, in order to keep the record straight mention must be made of those to whom ELS has been indebted for their assistance at different times. In the early days particularly, it would not have been possible to progress as we did without help from CLC UK and USA as well as several other CLC fields. Christian Life Missions, Moody Literature Mission, Evangelical Literature Overseas, The Bible Fellowship Hour and Taylor University have all made very major contributions to the work, for which we give thanks to God.

Chapter 20: FURTHER INVOLVEMENT

Being closely linked with Christian Literature Crusade, ELS was born with a missionary vision. Several missionaries from the UK, U.S.A. and Australia have worked with ELS. Their lives and service have brought inspiration and vision to our national workers as they worked closely with them, and given an increased burden for the regions beyond.

PERSONNEL – OUR GREATEST RESOURCE

One of the goals accepted by the Staff Conference in 1988 reads, "The conference welcomes the idea of our involvement in foreign fields in fellowship with CLC worldwide." We saw that in sharing resources with others, we would be helping to fulfil the Great Commission of our Lord. These resources up to now have been mainly in experienced and mature personnel with ability to teach and lead others.

In the mid-seventies we were pleased when the founders of ELS, Donald and Ida David went to New Zealand to take up responsibility for the work of CLC in that country.

We have also had a share in the training of workers for other fields of CLC.

In later years ELS has accepted administrative responsibility for the CLC work in the neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Sri Lanka, while financial matters are taken care of by their initiating fields, Canada and Australia respectively.

The General Secretary or one of the senior staff of ELS is a member of International Council of CLC. Having received much from CLC worldwide, ELS was happy to agree to the appointment of V.M. Abraham as Co-ordinator for Asia and Australasia of the International Council of CLC.

INITIATING AN OVERSEAS FIELD

In 1990 ELS had the privilege of becoming an Initiating Field. The work in Myanmar (Burma) began by the commissioning of Jacob Mung for the work in Yangon (Rangoon), and this continues as a missionary outreach. New publications are brought out each year in Burmese, and a good deal of literature is distributed in that book-starved nation from the CLC centre there.

Chapter 21: WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

As we look back over the more than 40 years since ELS first began, we marvel at God's unfolding plan. Many battles have been fought, both as a Mission and by individual workers, some too personal to relate in a story such as this. Faith has been sorely tested, but through it all God has led us forward, and we know He will continue to do so.

If government statistics are anything to go by, literacy is leaping ahead in India very rapidly. What a potential for literature evangelism and what an incentive to step out in obedience and faith trusting the Lord to reveal His plan, step by step, for the next 40 years! The fields are ripe for harvest, but labourers are few, and without labourers little can be accomplished.

The Founder of ELS, Donald David often shared from 2 Cor. 8:5 concerning the churches of Macedonia. They were, he pointed out,

1. Abandoned to the Lord
2. Attuned to His will and
3. Available for His service.

Surely the Lord's requirements are still the same today!

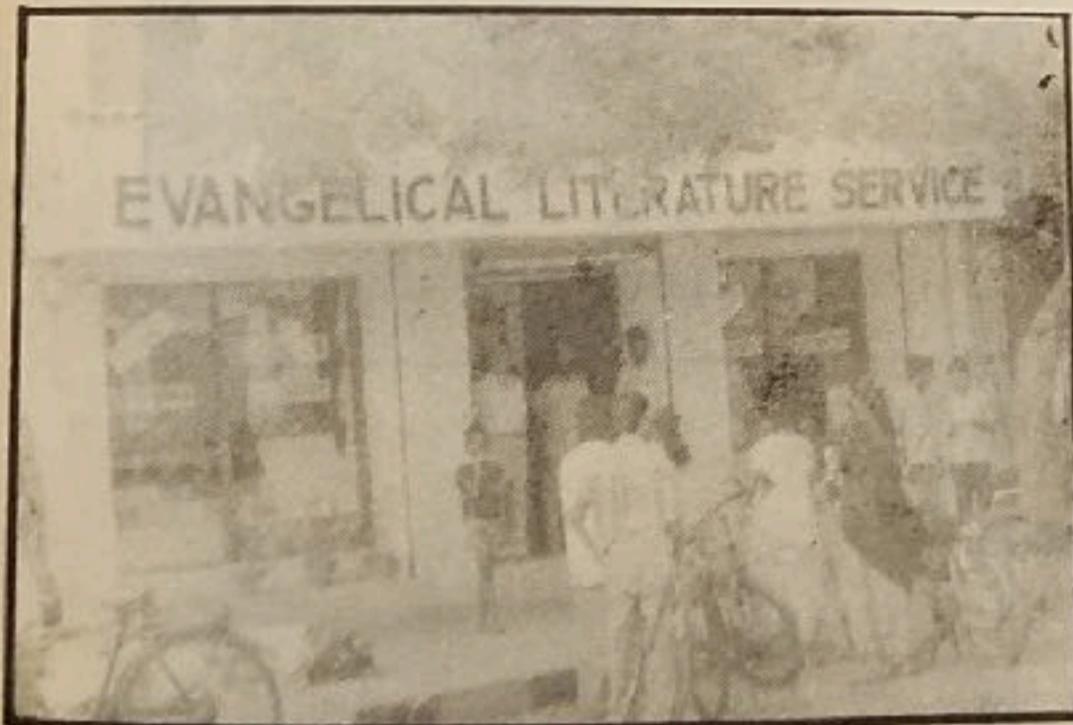


CO-FOUNDERS

Mrs.IDA DAVID & Late Mr.DONALD DAVID



HEADQUARTERS



PURASAWALKAM CENTRE



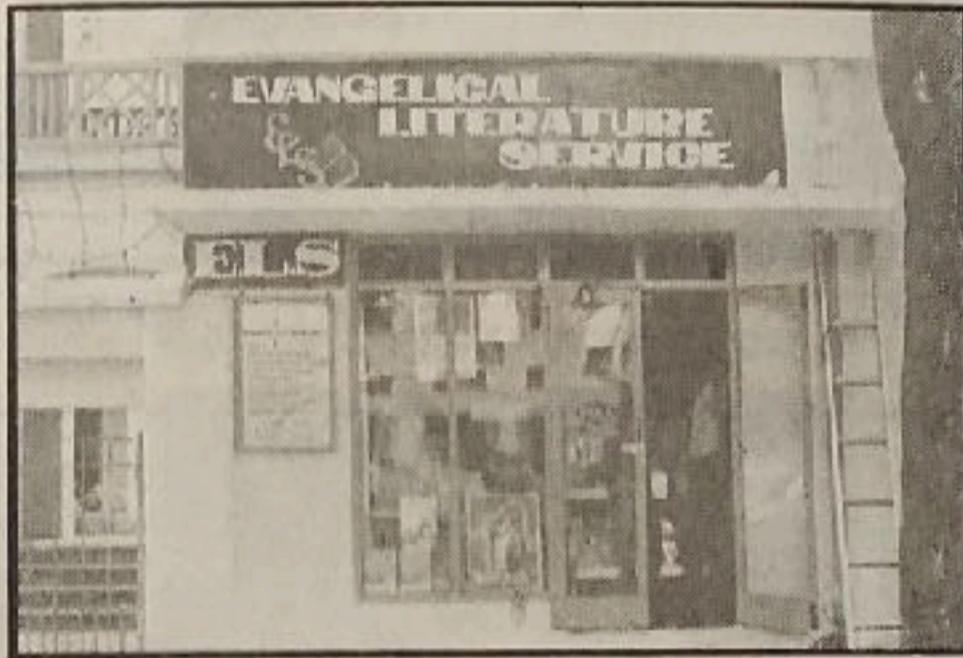
V.M. & LEELAMA ABRAHAM



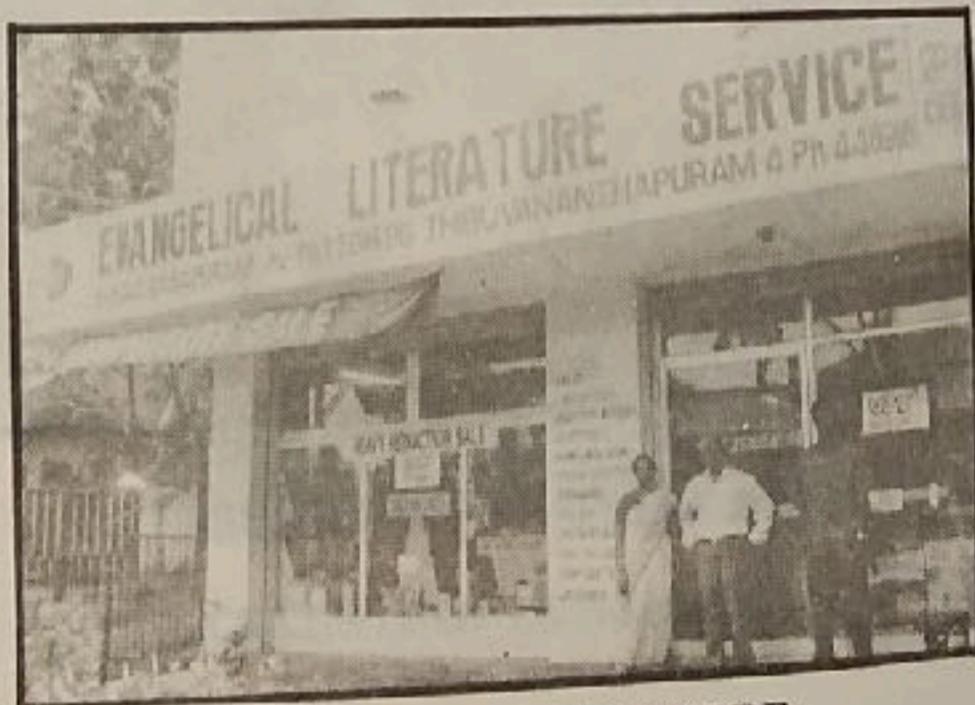
CELESTINE BENJAMIN



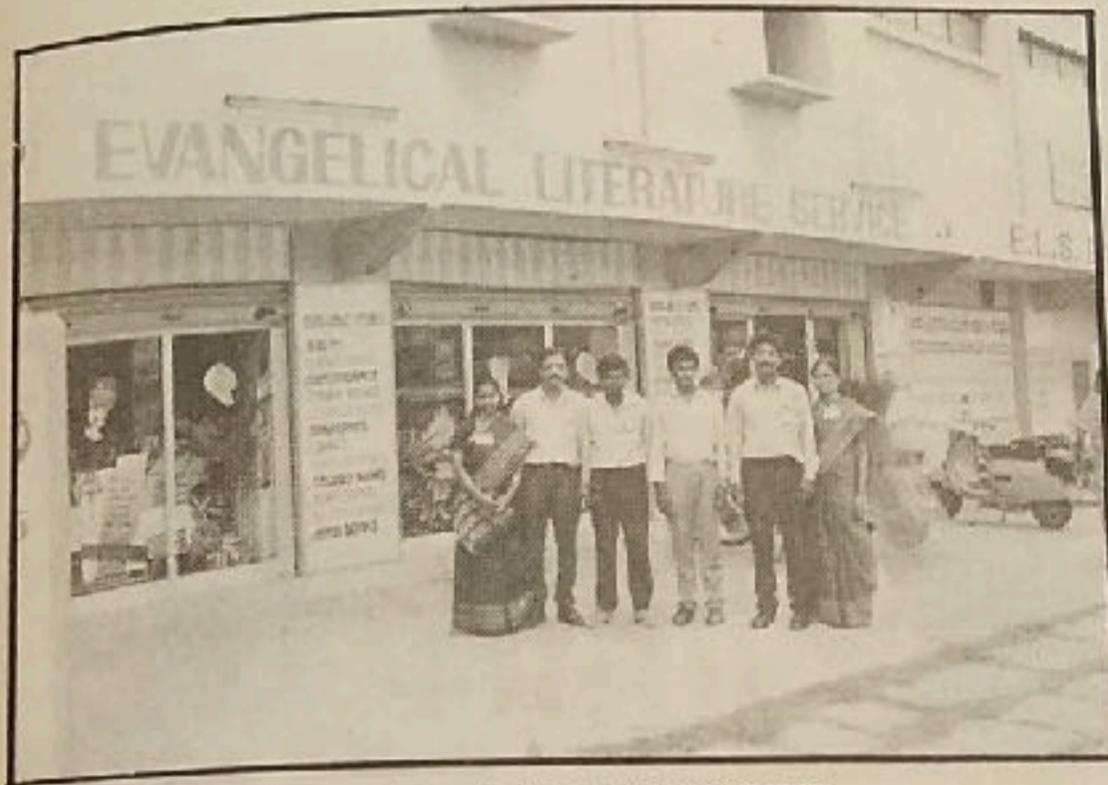
MOUNT ROAD CENTRE



VELLORE CENTRE



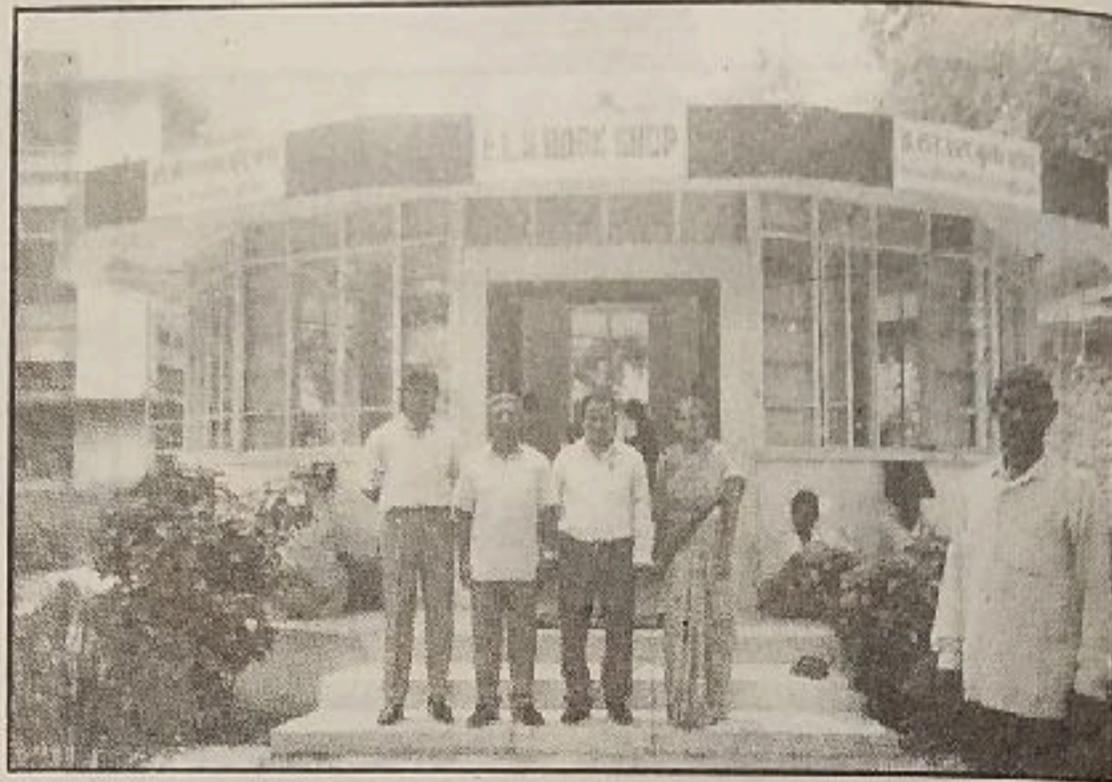
TRIVANDRUM CENTRE



BANGALORE CENTRE



COIMBATORE CENTRE



LUDHIANA CENTRE



BOMBAY CENTRE