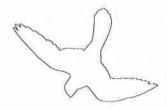
# BORN AGAIN

# in the SINGAPORE PENTECOST

# TIMOTHY TOW

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### PREFACE

When Dr Peter Masters, pastor of Spurgeon's Tabernacle, London visited Singapore in 1985, he was introduced to *John Sung My Teacher* which had just come off the press. He was deeply impressed by what I had written of the vivid experiences I had gone through in a Holy Ghost Revival that visited Singapore 1935 through Dr John Sung. From the fruits of the Singapore Pentecost, Dr Masters was persuaded that retelling to his School of Theology would benefit a new generation. The West could learn from the East. Hence, I was invited to London 1986 to deliver a series of messages which subsequently were put together into a book, titled *Asian Awakening*.

Since the publication of John Sung My Teacher and Asian Awakening a great number of copies have been sold, particularly the first book. In order to bring those in the Church whose faith is "halfhalf," nominal Christians, into a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus, I have Chapter I of John Sung My Teacher reprinted under this new title BORN AGAIN in the Singapore Pentecost. By popularising this chapter on how I went through the throes of the new birth, I pray many who are not far from God's Kingdom may be quickly ushered in. To adduce further credence to my testimony, I have appended the witness of my sister Siew Ai and brother Siang Hwa.

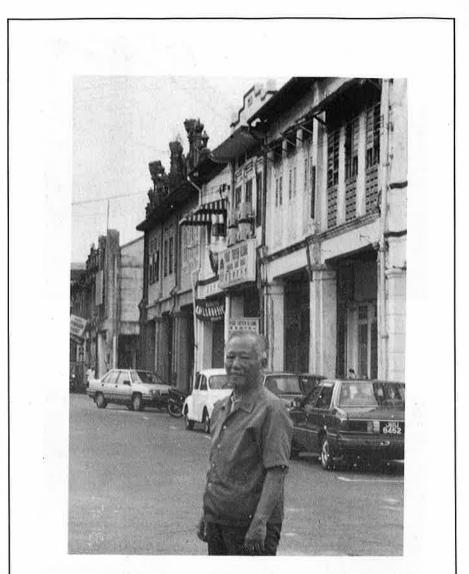
Not only were we gloriously saved during the heavenly days of the Singapore Pentecost, August 30 - September 12, 1935, we were endued with such courage and power from on high that we went everywhere proclaiming Christ, bringing more souls into the Kingdom. Our hearts were filled with joy and singing, our souls were throbbing with prayer and constant communion with the Lord. We saw and heard the testimony of many healed by the Doctor's prayers, anointing with olive oil the sick. But there were no tongues, neither the enforced coaching of tongue-speaking. Neither hearing of voices and seeing of visions, but a hunger for the Word of God. Dr Sung who read his Bible eleven chapters a day and thirteen on the Lord's Day urged us to buy Bibles (which few of us had), and read the Bible through in one year. It was not only a Holy Spirit Revival, but also a Bible-reading Revival, and a Bible-preaching and Bible Study Revival. If you come from a charismatic Church, and tongue-speaking and human words begin to sound hollow to you, do make a study of this booklet.

One special feature of the John Sung Revival was chorus singing with the most captivating tunes. These choruses are mainly evangelistic, with the view of delivering the struggling soul out of death into life. Hence the inclusion in the Appendix of a selection of John Sung choruses and hymns that so stirred our souls. It is also our prayer that by singing these choruses, some inquirer into the Faith may be saved, be "born again." All to the glory of God. Hallelujah! *Olo Choo, Chan Bee Choo.* Amen.

Timothy Tow



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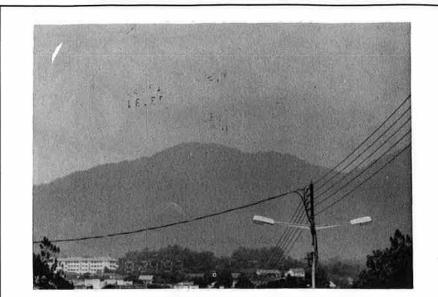
Author revisiting neighbourhood where his father had a medical clinic at 53 Jalan Station, 1933-1936



The full length of Jalan Station



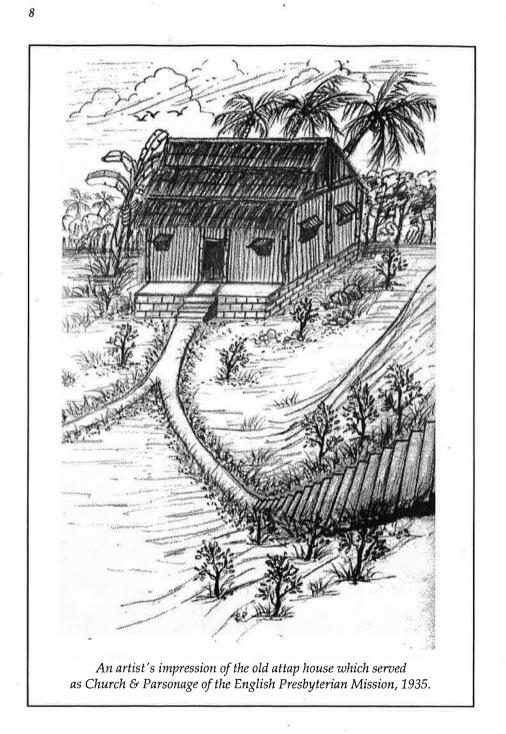
Kluang Railway Station, today, as it was in 1935.



Gunong Blumut which rises over 3,000 ft. above Kluang Town



The first house visible next to the tree was where we lived (No. 53) Notice the railway line running parallel to the row of houses.



#### BORN AGAIN in the SINGAPORE PENTECOST

#### 1935

August 1935 was a time of happy home-coming for the Tow boys, who along with their parents lived in Kluang, a railway town in Johore, Malaya — 80 miles from Singapore.

Under British Colonial Administration this was our Second Term School Holidays. To go to school in Singapore where a better education was sought at the Anglo-Chinese School of the American Methodist Mission, we boarded with Grandpa who was pastor of the E. P. Mission Church, 4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> miles Upper Serangoon Road. Every school vacation saw the four of us riding the Kluang "Express" to visit Dad and Mum.

Back in Kluang we attended the Chinese Presbyterian Church, for Church-going was a high tradition with the Tow clan. The congregation had just completed building a diminutive brick sanctuary which stood a stone's throw from the railway station. Recently arrived at the little new Church was a lady-preacher from China, who also taught a kindergarten class. She was Miss Leona Wu, a saintly woman in her late-thirties, recently graduated from Ginling Women's Theological Seminary, Nanking. She came from a wellknown family in Amoy, for she was an eminent pastor's daughter. Dressed always in a three-quarter length white linen *cheongsam*, with white stockings and white shoes, she wore an aura of consecration and holiness.

Ever since her coming to Kluang (through Rev. A S Moore Anderson of the English Presbyterian Mission), the spirit of worship at the little railway-town church was transformed. This came about not only by her introduction of lively new sacred songs and choruses, for she was an accomplished musician, but also through her diligent visitation of the flock and heart-warming messages.

No sooner had we returned to Kluang for the school vacation than our spirits were further enlivened. For several weeks the lady-preacher in linen-white had been reporting from the pulpit of a great revival sweeping China. The revivalist was (in Hokkien pronunciation) Dr Song Siong Chiet. Known to the west as Dr John Sung, he was a brilliant American-trained doctor of science. A Ph. D. in Chemistry, he had given up a high position and good-paying job to preach the Gospel. Under his preaching, hundreds, yea literally thousands, were being saved and set on fire for the Lord throughout the length and breadth of China. Miss Wu urged the whole church to go and hear the preacher, now coming to Singapore! A two-week Revival Campaign was being planned at the Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church, which could seat a thousand people, August 30th to September 12th. The little congregation of sixty-seventy was astir with great expectations. At Lord's Day worship and at mid-week cottage meetings, Miss Wu led in fervent prayers for the coming of God's messenger. "Who is this Dr Song?" I wondered. The thought of hearing him thrilled not only Mum and Dad, but also my youthful heart. Mother was converted in her teens under Miss Dora Yu Tzi-tu, China's famed lady-evangelist, whose life and work had also greatly influenced Watchman Nee.

One day before the campaign started, Miss Wu led a sizeable number of her parishioners to board the train to Singapore. Not the least to join the pilgrim band were the Tow family. But, alas, minus me and second younger brother Siang Yew and fourth younger brother Siang Yeow! I was fifteen, Siang Yew twelve, and Siang Yeow eight. We three boys were detailed to guard the shophouse — Nansun Dispensary at 53 Jalan Station. Siang Hwa who was ten years old was the lucky one to board the train with Dad and Mum.

Two days after the church party had left for Singapore, while we were gleefully playing like the three blind mice when the cat was away, there came a sharp knock on the door of the shuttered shophouse. Telegram! As eager fingers tore open the sealed envelope, it read, "LOCK SHOP. COME IMMEDIATELY. GREAT BLESSING." (signed SIEW AI). Prancing with delight, like naughty boys let out from a stay-in class at school, we packed our meagre belongings and books, for school-reopening was round the corner. We caught the 3.30 pm "Express" to Singapore in the nick of time, arriving back at the Church-parsonage in the twilight.

The Church-parsonage was an old wooden attap house with a big sitting hall, flanked by two bedrooms on either side. This was built for the pastor and his family below a slope upon which stood a brick-and-wood Church sanctuary facing the road. Founded in 1883 by the English Presbyterian Mission, the Church sanctuary was in disrepair by the mid-nineteen-thirties. For safety it had to be torn down leaving the brick pillars standing, which became a haunt for bats and owls, and a hideout where we children could play out of Grandpa's sight. Now that the Church sanctuary was gone, the congregation was obliged to assemble in the sitting hall of the parsonage. Hence this combination of a Churchparsonage.

As we entered this our second home, the shades of night had already invaded the brown void of its high-roofed attap canopy. We were glad to be back in time to light the kerosene oil lamps for Grandpa in the gathering gloom.

Receiving his grandchildren as usual with outstretched hands, Grandpa thanked the Lord for our safe arrival, as he would pray for our going-out. Then he broke into a glow that outshone the oil lamps, as he related the joy of attending the Revival Meetings. He taught us a new chorus he had learned on the first day from Dr John Sung:-





Under the spell of a heavenly wonderment we three hungry boys had let dinner-time slip by. For we had "meat" to eat that we never knew before.

When Dad and Mum returned from the Revival Meetings with Big Sister who sent the telegram, with Siang Hwa and the younger ones, and there were also Third Aunt Alice, Second Aunt and Fourth Uncle trooping in, a chorus of praises, "Olo Choo, Chan Bee Choo," filled the house.

Suddenly, Father brought out from his room a parcel wrapped in old Chinese newspaper. A stern disciplinarian that he was, he now looked sheepish like a schoolboy going to see the principal. Beaming with a joy never seen before in all his life, he testified how the Lord had saved his soul at today's meetings. Not only that, he had snapped his life-long smoking habit, Hallelujah! Then he made a bonfire in the Church-yard under the durian trees of his tin of "Craven A" and packets of "Rough Rider" cigarettes, stock of Chinese "red" tobacco, "Luzon" cheroots, pipes and all. All these infernal titles I knew by heart, for I was Daddy's errand boy to the cigarette stalls. As the poisonous substances went up in flames and ash trays were also smashed, so vanished Father's craving for tobacco once and for all. Prior to this, Father had tried to rid himself of the bad habit with peppermint sweets under Miss Wu's tutelage, but to no avail. Praise the Lord, a spontaneous chanting of Dr Sung's Revival theme song flowed from every lip:

In the cross, in the cross, Be my glory ever; All my sins are washed away In the blood of Yesu.

For the three of us who were not "initiated", that spell of heavenly wonderment now grew into excitement: "O, that we could have been at the Revival Meetings from the beginning!"

When the old German "eight-day" wall clock struck eleven with a rusty note, Mother urged us all to bed. For the special English meeting scheduled for students was but hours away — 7.00 am the next morning! That night when I knelt to pray in bed, the presence of God was felt in the attap Church-parsonage as never before, as sounds of subdued vibrant prayers reverberated from every room through the chinks in her aged wooden partitions.

Early next morning, while the last shadows of night lingered still, Siang Yew, No. 2 of the boys and I mounted our bicycles. Never before did we pedal at such breezy speed — all the five miles to town. We made our way for the first time to Telok Ayer Street where the Chinese Methodist Church sat, like a fortress, and like a fortress she sits to this day.

Racing upstairs to the main auditorium of the four-storey Church complex which was solidly packed with young people, even overflowing into the aisles, our attention was immediately arrested by the doctor-preacher. Attired in a light white Chinese gown rarely seen in Singapore, with a shock of black hair flapping his high forehead, he was jabbing away in American English at the youthful audience in a hoarse voice, "You ought to die, to die!..." The strange-looking evangelist was charging away from one end of the pulpit to the other as he preached from Abraham's pleading with God before fire came down on Sodom and Gomorrha. Was Singapore a better city than Sodom? Was Singapore holier than Gomorrha? Were there to be found in Singapore ten righteous persons? Not a single one of us could stand before a holy, just and angry God! As the preacher thundered God's message with lightning effect upon a wicked city, the walls of resistance began to crumble.

When the invitation was solemnly given at the close of the message, a goodly number of boy and girl students capitulated. As one by one surrendered themselves to the Lord by going to the front, the preacher led them to confess their sins, item by item. "Do you worship idols? Have you disobeyed your parents? Have you stolen anything from your friends? Have you cheated in class? Do you go to the cinema? Have you done bad things in secret? Have you told lies? Do you play mahjong? Do you smoke? Do you gamble? Have you borrowed books without intention of returning them and they are now on your shelves? This is theft!... You ought to die, to die.... You cannot wash away your sins. But Jesus can. He died for you on the cross to pay for your sins. For you! For you!" Many a sob was heard as warm tears fell thick and fast, to the strain of:

Coming home, coming home, Never more to roam. Open wide Thine arms of love, Lord, I'm coming home.

As for me and younger brother Siang Yew, however, we joined the remaining silent crowd on tip-toe out of the Church hall. "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Gen 28:17).

When the next service resumed after lunch, Dr Sung led us, waving a white handkerchief (for he was his own songleader), in the chorus, "Ye must be born again! Ye must be born again! I verily, verily, say unto you, Ye must be born again!" This was so new to us! Like Nicodemus this was the first time I ever heard about being "born again". Expounding the story of his encounter with Jesus in John 3 verse by verse, Dr Sung pointed his finger at me, "Are you born again? If not, you can never go to heaven! Do you have the new life of Jesus in you? If not, you are bound for hell!"

Every word the preacher had said this time pierced my trembling heart. But Satan, who did his level best to keep me away from Christ, beguiled me with all kinds of sweet excuses. "But you are a Christian boy all your-life," he whispered. "You were baptised at birth, and now you're taking the Lord's Supper. You are a regular Church-goer, and you attend Sunday School. Your Grandpa is a minister. Your mother gave you to the Lord...."

Praise the Lord, at whatever Satan whispered into my ear, there came the Holy Spirit's rebuttal, loud and clear, through every quickened heart-throb: "But, you are not born again! But you are not born again! But, you are not born again...." Though crestfallen from my high selfesteem and pride of a strict religious upbringing, realising for the first time I could not save myself by my good deeds which I had tried to do always, I nevertheless stiffened against raising my hand to the preacher's call. As I struggled within, I caught a glimpse of younger brother Siang Yew's hand going up. While the struggle raged there came a nudge suddenly from his side. This shot my hand right up, as by an electric shock! As my hand went up, my sin-burden rolled down! I saw myself kneeling with Pilgrim at the foot of the cross, released forever from the sin-burden.

Rolled away, rolled away, I am happy since my burden rolled away; Rolled away, rolled away, I am happy since my burden rolled away.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (Ps 32: 1,2). O the joy of knowing that all my sins were now washed away by the precious blood of Christ! That spell of wonderment that grew into excitement, but abruptly deadened to a stony burden, now burst into sunshine flooding my soul!

O there's sunshine, blessed sunshine,

When the peaceful happy moments roll;

When Jesus shows His smiling face,

There is sunshine in my soul ... in my soul!

Now I began to experience the thrilling joy of a soul born again, a soul set free. Now I began to sing with spirits lifted to heaven the new choruses of His wonderful saving grace. Revival-time was sing-time, heart-warming sing-time, reverberating sing-time! Like Ezekiel in the spirit, our souls were lifted, as it were, to the outskirts of heaven.

Hallelujahs fill the heavens,

For the saints have all come home

To Jerusalem, to Jerusalem!

Joyfully they shout Hosannas: Come and crown Him King of kings

In the New Jerusalem, Jer-u-sal-em...

As I look back to that glorious noonday when Jesus washed my sins away, there must have been forty to fifty of us who went up to the pulpit. Assisting Dr Sung was the chubby Rev Chew Hock Hin of Paya Lebar Methodist Church. I can still hear him calling earnestly with outstretched hand in English, while Dr Sung pleaded in Mandarin, and Miss Wu interpreted into Hokkien, "Who wants to be saved, come right up to the front! Who wants to be saved, come right up to the front!" The earnest evangelists spared no effort to haul in every struggling soul.

Now that we were born again by the washing of regeneration of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) a wonderful surge of new life was felt in our innermost being. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom 8:16). That surge of new life soon burst upon our lips in a spontaneous cry of "Abba, Father", when the evangelist called us to pray. Hitherto, whenever I prayed, it was the perfunctory repeating of a few stock phrases or the mechanical saying of the Lord's Prayer. To pray to a Heavenly Father with tender filial feeling and with assurance of loving acceptance was something quite unknown before this day. I felt like a long lost orphan found by his real father.

As the revival meetings progressed and more and more were born anew, the auditorium of Telok Ayer Church was transformed into a power house. The phenomenon of tongue-speaking was wholly unknown nor any such manifestation of unbridled unruliness as intruding into today's charismatic meetings. As in the days of the Apostles who "lifted up their voice to God with one accord," every message was closed with the whole congregation standing to pray in a loud yet harmonious chorus of praises and supplications. As the petitions and praises welled forth in a lively stream from deep within (John 7:38), there was no need of padding up with so many repetitious and stuttering Hallelujahs. But one phrase so characteristic of the John Sung Revival was their fervent and spontaneous Hokkien equivalent, "Olo Choo, Chan Bee Choo" which also means "Praise the Lord."

In between meetings, small groups of young people, old people, middle-aged people could be seen gathered in their own corporate prayers, on bended knees. What a joy now to call on the Name of the Lord! What a release to bring our burdens to him!

Revival-time is not only sing-time. Revival-time is prayertime, earnest, fervent, united, corporate prayer-time!

One prayer chorus that caught on immediately was:



As newborn babe needing milk, I suddenly realised I had

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no Bible. Practically everyone of the forty to fifty who went to the front with me were in the same boat. Perhaps I could excuse myself for not owning one, since there were plenty in the Church-parsonage. The real reason why we possessed no Bibles of our own was quite obvious. Could a dead man eat and a blind man see? "Except a man be born again, *he cannot see* the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

The first good thing that happened to us that day after my brother and I were born again was to go to the Colporteur's table downstairs in the lobby to buy each one a Bible. During the two-week campaign I bought in all three Bibles. First an English Bible, then a Chinese Bible, and last but not least, a Chinese-English New Testament.

For the first time in my young life, I awoke to the importance of the Chinese language, since after a few English meetings Dr Sung switched entirely to Mandarin, our spoken national language. This was translated into Hokkien. Hokkien was the common vernacular of the Chinese in Singapore and remains to be what I'd call the "unofficial national language" of Singapore. (Singapore is 76% Chinese.)

Incidentally, Dr Sung had a male interpreter, a Government Chinese-language teacher who happened to be Miss Wu's elder brother. Unable to cope with Dr Sung's rapidfiring preaching, he had to step down after a few engagements. His position was filled by his sister our lady-preacher from up-country Kluang to the satisfaction of the whole congregation. Especially to me, for I admired her, she being Mother's best friend. How true is the saying, "The last shall be first, and the first last" (Matt 20: 16).

The Bible Society's stock of Chinese and English Bibles and bilingual Testaments sold out in less than a week. To cope with the situation large quantities were rushed from Kuala Lumpur the Malayan (Malaysian) capital. Revival came also to the Bible Society.

To confirm us in our newfound faith, Dr Sung would autograph our new-bought Bibles with an appropriate verse, signing his name John Sung in English. One favourite verse of his was I Cor 15:58. Another was Psalm 23:1. Furthermore he told us to write on the front page of our Bibles the day, month and year of our second birth. So I printed in the best handwriting in every Bible I had bought: "Born again on September 1, 1935. Praise the Lord!" To strengthen my desire to follow the Lord, I added many a resolution in the back page for the next few years.

Dr Sung told us he read eleven chapters of the Bible a day and thirteen on the Lord's day. So he exhorted us to read ours everyday. If we read an average of three chapters a day, he said, we would cover 1095 chapters out of a total of 1189 in one year: Reading the Bible was no chore then, but a wonderful new experience: "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97).

As for me, attending the John Sung Revival Meetings not only made me realise the importance of the Chinese language, but also helped me to study it as a subject for the Cambridge School Certificate Examination. By reading the Chinese Bible through, which has a vocabulary of about 2,000 different Chinese characters, I had gained not a little to equip me for the test. Praise the Lord, this was one added blessing in reading God's Word in Chinese for me. Reading the Bible in English had also improved my English. When one of the earliest modern translations by Moffat appeared, I bought a copy to further improve my English.

Another benefit I had gotten from the Revival Meetings was the unction of "linguistic gear-shifting" of my native Teochew to Hokkien. The two dialects are very similar, nearer to each other than Portuguese to Spanish. The important element in learning any spoken language, however, is acquiring the right accent. It was a marvel for me a Teochew, who rarely had contact with the Hokkienspeaking before this, to adapt to fluent Hokkien after a mere two-week campaign. This was a gift of tongues from the Holy Spirit I had experienced in my own way! Not only was the Lord preparing me for ministry among my own people in Mandarin, but also to the various vernacular groups, and Hokkien was just the beginning!

Apart from Bibles, we bought each one a lightly-printed booklet of 130 John Sung Revival Choruses. Three quarters of these choruses were new to us who were hitherto either tethered to the 120 Swatow Presbyterian Hymnal or the bigger 200 Amoy Hymnal. Though we went to English school, we attended Church service, the Teochew in Teochew, the Hokkien in Hokkien. English services were not in vogue then. Nor was Mandarin spoken popularly as it is today.

Another piece of literature that was quickly snapped up was Dr Sung's "My Testimony" in Chinese. This Chinese text was soon translated into English by Mr Tipson, the English Secretary of the Bible Society, himself a fluent speaker in Cantonese. The sale of books was brisk not only because it satiated our spiritual hunger, but also because Bibles were sold at a subsidised price anyone could afford. The English Bible which I bought at the Revival Campaign was one printed on thin paper with imitation leather cover. It cost \$1.65. Chinese printed matter cost but a fraction of the English, which had not yet condescended to paperbacks in the thirties.

During the two-week campaign at Telok Ayer, Dr Sung preached forty sermons. The forty-first session was given to praying for the sick and the forty-second and last for testimonies and farewell. Although the doctor's sermons lasted two hours, there was never a dull moment nor the resultant embarrassing subconscious nod of a drowsy amen. For the messages were graduated and presented in logical progression. Not like some dry-as-dust lecture-type sermons based on some abstract truth, Dr Sung clothed the doctrine he was putting across in vivid, lively figures, like Bunyan in Pilgrim's Progress. He excelled most preaching biographical and allegorical sermons.

The theme of his message was further emphasised by an appropriately chosen chorus. This he made us sing time after time in order to drive home the message on one hand, and to keep up our attentiveness on the other. The preacher was no professional perfunctorily spinning out some stereotyped liturgy. A bundle of super-charged energy with one consuming passion to save souls, he used every audio-visual aid well in advance of his time, to put across the message.

Once while he was preaching on the Five Loaves and Two Fishes, he plucked out a French loaf from nowhere. And as he continued with the preaching he peeled. As he peeled he propelled the peeled pieces into the pool of faces. Upon whomsoever the morsels landed there was added a sweetness to the mouth upon that sweetness to the ears. And has not that double sweetness remained with me unto this day?

On another occasion Dr Sung fanned a little charcoal stove so that it became a miniature furnace. The fan represented the Holy Spirit and the charcoal stove our heart, kindled by the new birth. As it is written, "He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Luke 3:16).

The evangelist used the blackboard most as a form of visual aid. How he caricatured our carnality and spiritual impotence by chalking a big head which was our pride, a big belly our laziness, little twigs of hands and feet our inability to do anything good. John Sung was no graduate of an approved theological school, but he spoke with refreshing originality and with power. Some foot-bound old ladies were overheard assessing their preacher, "Dr Sung can make us laugh and also make us cry". Dr Sung spoke to every heart old or young, male or female. We young people enjoyed his sermons no less than the old, and there was not a word he said that we missed.

Half-way through the campaign, the preacher began to call for volunteers to his Preaching Bands. Now that we were saved, we were saved for a purpose — to witness Jesus Christ to those who had never heard. Dr Sung lamented the fact that Chinese pastors were consigned by an unconscionable congregation to every chore, big or small, in the church. The pastor was treated like an old amah, he said. Unless members would go out evangelising, the prospect of church growth was dim. With these admonitions he drew in batch after batch of volunteer preachers. Thus the Singapore Christian Evangelistic League was born.

Every band was made up of at least three members. As for me I teamed up with Grandpa and a younger brother. Every band was given a number. This was indicated on a triangular flag on which was imprinted the red Christian cross. The whole wording in Chinese read: "No. \_\_\_\_\_ of the Singapore Christian Evangelistic League". This flag was carried about without shamefacedness wherever we went witnessing. For a while the Lion City, for that is what Singapore means, was taken by storm. As the Preaching Bands were being formed in the course of the Revival Meetings, we went up to the pulpit to covenant with the Lord to preach Christ at least once a week. Dr Sung prayed movingly for us as hearts further yielded in solemn consecration. Every team would congregate at a monthly meeting on a Saturday afternoon at one of the Churches participating in this revival campaign, in a district by district rotation. Miss Wu, Dr Sung's interpreter and successor in Singapore, was elected president, which position she held year after year until her promotion to glory in 1974.

Like an army on the march the Preaching Bands could be seen at every street corner in the Telok Ayer district during recesses of the campaign, singing with one voice the famous theme song, "In the Cross... All my sins are washed away in the Blood of Yesu." This was followed with distribution of Gospel tracts and invitation to come and hear Dr Sung in Church.

A higher call came to us when Dr Sung followed up with an appeal for "whole-time consecration". Now that we had found salvation full and free from the Lord Jesus Christ, should we not further dedicate our bodies a living sacrifice to serve Him all our life? Like the ageing Paul calling Timothy into service, Dr Sung was enlisting beyond the "reservists" of the Evangelistic League "regulars" of the whole-time consecration.

When this call was made I was one of the first to go up front. In all there were 85 old and young. One of the young men a few years my senior who stepped forward that day, September 8, 1935 was (Rev) Quek Kiok Chiang. He is now moderator of the Bible-Presbyterian Church of Singapore and Malaysia and a leader of the Twentieth Century Reformation Movement, the International Council of Christian Churches. Another who did not make a public profession but always looks back with joy to the John Sung campaign is third younger brother Dr Tow Siang Hwa. He is another pillar of the B-P Church, President of Far Eastern Bible College, founder and editor of RPG Daily Bible-reading work-books with a worldwide circulation. Indeed, the spirit and vitality of the B-P Church has stemmed in great measure from the Singapore Pentecost of 1935. Before the doctor's appeal, insofar as I was concerned, it was crystal clear what I should be when I grew up. When I was born, Mother gave me, like Hannah gave Samuel, to the Lord. Grandpa prayed the prayer of dedication. From a tender age Mother would tell me of her vow and that when I grew up, I should serve God as a pastor. Thus, as the working of the Holy Spirit in my heart deepened with the quick passing of the days of the Revival Campaign, I was resolved to give the Saviour my all.

As Dr Sung related how a young man surnamed Lee was taking the Gospel to Mongolia, with overgrown beard and feet shod with Chinese straw-sandals, I vowed to carry the cross, if need be, even to Tibet! Such was my zeal to serve my Lord, constrained by His dying love and reinforced by Mother's vow.

Now the Whole-time Consecrators were to be doubly nurtured above the Preaching Bands. Whereas the Preaching Bands had a scheduled monthly meeting, we consecrators, on top of that, had another. This second monthly meeting was in charge of Mr Phoa Hock Seng, a Government school teacher. Gloriously saved from dead Anglicanism with his whole family of many sons and daughters, he turned his big bungalow house at Pasir Panjang on the remote West Coast into a preaching station, and from a preaching station into a Church. After World War II he was ordained pastor of his Church. Under his wife still living today, they built a sanctuary on a slope of the Pasir Panjang hills overlooking the Singapore Straits. This Church not only serves its own congregation, but others who come here to camp during school holidays.

Though Dr Sung laboured day and night without let-up, he never seemed to tire. What was the secret of his strength? No doubt he was sustained by "one chicken a day". He would not eat pork as relished by the Chinese race, because he disdained such an unclean animal. He was given dilute chicken soup to sip on the pulpit in order to make up for profuse sweating in the course of intensive preaching. Whereas Samson's strength lay in his unshaven long hair, Dr Sung's strength came from the joyful satisfaction he derived from his work — the countless souls saved, campaign after campaign. "For the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh 8:11).

Thus in between the preaching sessions the good doctor found strength to counsel and pray with the heavy-laden and broken-hearted, and time to read from anyone who would unburden his or her heart to him by letter. After every Revival he would carry in his personal luggage a bundle of such letters. Thus he was not only an evangelist and a preacher but a pastor as well — to an evergrowing flock in the Far East.

On the flat-top of Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church there stood a curved-roof Chinese pavilion. Here with the cool seabreezes blowing in from Telok Ayer Basin, Dr Sung would be reclined on an easy chair as those who needed further spiritual help went to see him. Out of curiosity I also went up the pavilion, only to be solemnised by more tears of repentance on bended knees. One I could recognise was Elder Heng Mui Kiah, father of Rev Philip Heng. Not only tears of repentance, but tears also of restitution and reconciliation. Stolen sums of money were publicly returned to the Lord. Feuding elders and deacons of the same church made up with one another. Heading a list of sinners come to repentance was one Rev Huang Han Kwang, pastor of the "self-supporting" Mandarin-speaking Jesus Church of China. I can remember him well for his pockmarked face. A stout man, he can be identified seated next to Dr Sung in the photograph of the 85 whole-time consecrators taken in the Telok Ayer Church compound, September 1935.

On the last day at Testimony Hour, he was one of the first to witness with beaming moon-face how he came to be born again at the Revival Meetings. "Praise the Lord", echoed Dr Sung, who abruptly had him stand down in order to give a long line of others a chance. The testimonies went on without let up, punctuated by spontaneous choruses of "Olo Choo, Chan Bee Choo". I would have gone up the pulpit to say a word for the Lord had I not felt inadequate as a school-boy. Since I did not go up my conscience troubled me, but I made it up by testifying for my newfound Lord at the Literary Society of my class in the Anglo-Chinese School. Only then was my conscience salved! Time will not suffice to retell a fraction of the vivid testimonies I had heard which remain deeply impressed on my mind to this day. Let me relate three or four more of the outstanding ones.

Mr Gan was a rich import-export merchant with head office located in the Telok Ayer district. Was it by this geographical proximity that he was drawn to the Revival Meetings? I cannot say. This man came with his three wives to the meetings, and he and his three wives, together with their sons and daughters, were gloriously saved. He made an appropriate settlement for his second and third wives, and committing his business to his eldest son, went about his new enterprise as an itinerant evangelist. He became one of Father's bosom friends so that whenever his preaching circuit would take him to Johore State in Malaya (now West Malaysia) he would preach at Father's church and stay in our house. He continued faithfully year after year to the end. He published a commentary on the Song of Solomon in Chinese.

The two wives of a commercial artist whose studio was on Cecil Street, next to Telok Ayer where the Chinese Methodist Church is, were surely attracted by our singing. They both came to the meetings and were also gloriously saved. Both the young women came not only in tears of repentance, but also to offer their lives to serve the Lord fulltime. They both left their unrepentant husband to study at Chin Lien Bible School, the continuing ministry of John Sung through Miss Leona Wu in Singapore.

Before World War II the elder of the two women, Madam Ang, migrated to the inland Malay State of Pahang. There she founded a Church on a hillock at the gold-mining town of Raub. After the War she built another at Bentong an adjacent town, both of which were visited by this writer and the Rev Hsu Chiang Tai, another John Sung convert, in our missionary journeys to inland Malaya in the early fifties.

Mr Lim Kim Seng was a Buddhist when he came to the Revival Meetings. A young man of nineteen, he gave up his old religion. With no promise of support from anywhere he also went out preaching Christ. He affiliated with a Brethren group and later founded a Church at Bukit Panjang (Long Hill) which flourishes to this day. Now nearing seventy he keeps going, preaching Christ as he first did half a century ago!

One great haul of souls by Dr Sung extended to a remote part of Singapore Island — to a chicken farm by Johore Straits in the backwaters of Lim Chu Kang. Mr Sim Eng Koon with his wife and several farmer-and-fisherman sons and daughters were among those who entered God's Kingdom by "violence". As they had to travel a long distance to town and were further bogged down by their farm work, they prayed for a way out. "Olo Choo, He answered our prayer," said old Mr Sim. "In one night all our 700 chickens were taken by a sudden epidemic. This released us to go to the Meetings to hear the Word." Mr Sim and his wife, sons and daughters, were all turned to the Lord like the house of Cornelius. Whenever the monthly meeting of the Preaching Bands came around, he would be seen trooping into the meeting hall with his wife, sons and daughters, after riding 20 miles in an open lorry to town. Mr Sim was a man of ardent prayer and how I felt drawn closer to God as he wrestled with Him in prayer! He was a tower of strength in the Evangelistic League until he was called home. I always enjoyed his testimonies of God's mighty workings in his life. particularly, deliverance from Japanese soldiers who landed on their farm by the sea after they had crossed the Johore Straits.

Today he is survived by several sons, one of whom is an elder and another a deacon. The eldest son Sim Choo Un is Senior Elder of Glory Presbyterian Church, chairman of their overseas missions committee. He is a separatist fighter in his Church against Ecumenism, a frequent co-labourer with this writer in our outreach to the Riau Islands of Indonesia. Said he to me of his father's conversion, "He smashed up his wine bottles, and threw his cigarettes and Chinese tobacco into the drain."

And so I could go on with many more accounts of the abiding fruits of a Holy Ghost Revival which swept not only Continental China, but also the sprawling lands and archipelagoes of Southeast Asia or Nanyang, as the Chinese call it. Last, but not least, of my first encounter with Dr John Sung is his practice of divine healing. Not like charismatic faith healers today who put healing above preaching, Dr Sung did not announce praying for the sick until one day before the event. In fact, he had emphasised elsewhere he was called to preach the Gospel and not to heal. In view of many in North China woefully lacking medical facilities and were groaning under a heavy burden of sickness and disease, he was constrained to this work of mercy in the Spirit of Christ. He was persuaded to do so by a missionary!

On that afternoon of the last day of campaign, many sick people among those who had received the Lord formed a queue to go up one side of the pulpit. The doctor knelt by a chair while the patients went up one by one and knelt beside him. A number of those closest to the doctor also knelt, praying with one accord. As each patient knelt before the chair where Dr Sung was, he dipped his fingers into a bowl of olive oil. With a quick smack on the forehead he commanded in a hoarse voice, "Be healed of your sickness in the Name of Jesus Christ!" At which the patient rose up quickly and left by an exit on the opposite side.

The healing session had taken a whole afternoon. At the final and closing session of the Campaign those who were healed gave testimony briefly culminating with "Praise the Lord, thank the Lord". To these praises came loud echoes from the doctor himself. Dr Sung was careful not to usurp any glory, and would rebuke sharply any who mentioned his name or gave credit to him.

I cannot remember seeing any blind man opening his eyes or any lame man who walked. But I can recollect those who, like Father, were delivered from their smoking habit. Delivered not only from cigarettes but also delivered from opium. Opium-smoking was a particular social evil of the Chinese race. In the thirties when Singapore was a British Colony one could see Government-operated <sup>†</sup>Chandu (Opium) retail shops. These were patronised by scrawny sunburned rickshaw pullers and pale-faced coolies. It was said of them that they would rather eat "black rice" than white rice. What a manifestation of the total depravity of the human heart. Praise the Lord, I saw one of the these scrawny opium smokers rise up to testify to the saving power of God with a new gleam in his eyes.

As for me I was healed of a recurrent gnawing gastric pain that had plagued me since childhood, though I did not go up to Dr Sung that afternoon. For the joy of the Lord was become my strength (Neh 8:10). As I had come to trust in the Lord, and to acknowledge Him in all my ways, this had become health to my navel and marrow to my bones (Prov 3:5–8). That there is a close link between a person's psychological and physiological make-up is a latter discovery of modern medicine.

As all good things must come to an end, the night of September 12, 1935 descended on us, a new generation of born-again, God-praising people, too soon! As the doctor himself led in the singing of "God Will Take Care of You", tears streamed down his face while our eyes became dimmed.

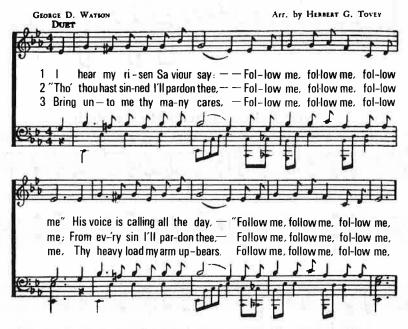
We share our mutual woes, Our mutual burdens bear. And often for each other flows The sympathising tear.

Committing us his Singapore flock to the Lord, Dr Sung bade us farewell. His next campaigns would swiftly take him to Muar and Malacca and up the Malay Peninsula to Seremban and Penang. From Penang Island he crossed the Straits of Malacca to Medan in North Sumatra, Indonesia.

On October 18, 1935 Dr Sung returned to Singapore for a week of "spiritual-nurture" meetings. Again the Church hall where he had so recently said farewell to his sheep was packed to overflowing. Many who came this time were from up-country where he had lately been. Through the second campaign in Singapore 21 Preaching Bands were added so that the Evangelistic League now swelled to 132. All inclusive more than 5,000 souls were won in Dr Sung's first expedition into Nanyang (Southeast Asia). The meetings closed on October 25 with further zeal infused into his followers.

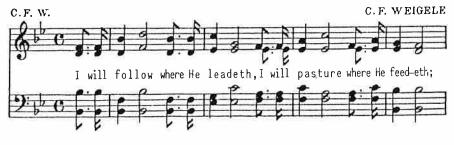
When the doctor finally took leave of us, I was one of the thousand disciples who went to the wharf at Keppel Harbour to bid him good-bye. How the triangular banners with the red Christian cross of the Preaching Bands fluttered in the wind as one by one wended up the gangway to say to one they had come to love, "Fare thee well". As he looked down with deep emotions at his spiritual children, like a mother leaving her brood, he felt the Lord saying to him, "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep. Feed them the whole Word of God in a Second Bible Institute." As for me, though I lingered on the wharf until my spiritual father was lost from sight, I no longer felt lonely and listless as before. I had the Risen Saviour with me and in constant communion. Wherever I went pedalling the bicycle I loved, He was always by my side. How I wished I could serve God someday, answering to His call through this song introduced by Dr John Sung:

#### Follow Me

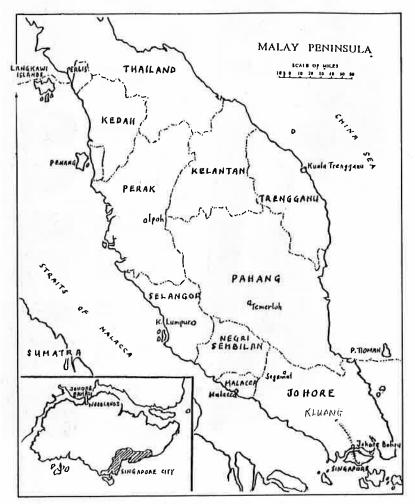


FULL CHORUS. (Or Soprano and Alto Duet.) For thee I trod the bit-ter way, - - For thee I gave my life a - way, all thy changing life I'll be - - Thy God thy guide on land and sea, In Lean on Mybreast, dismiss thy fears, - - And trust me thru' thy future years. ad lib DUET And drank the gall thy debt to pay, ---- Follow me, follow me, follow me." Thy bliss thro' all e-ter-ni - ty, --- Follow me, follow me, follow me " My hand shall wipe a way all tears, ---- Follow me, follow me, follow me."

I Will Follow Where He Leadeth



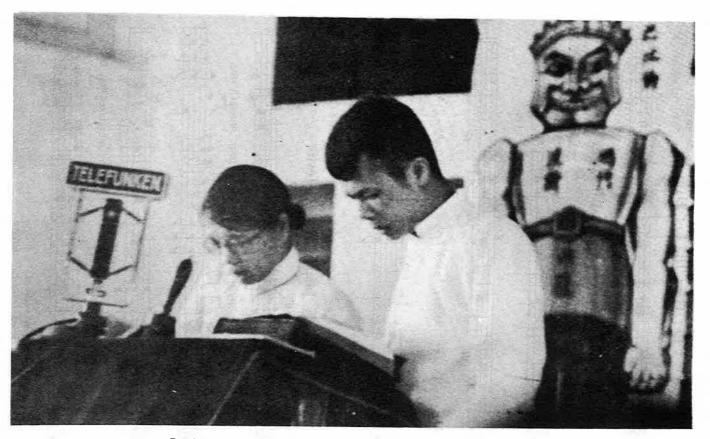




Map of the Malay Peninsula



Telok Ayer Methodist Church, as it appears today.



Dr John Sung preaching at Telok Ayer Methodist Church with Miss Leona Wu interpreting.



#### TESTIMONY OF DR. TOW SIEW AI

The year was 1935; the month August. There was much expectancy in the air as family folks talked of the soon-coming of a famous evangelist from China, Dr John Sung. It was reported that he had held many mass rallies on mainland China and had saved myriads of souls.

I was then in my first year of studies at the Singapore King Edward VII College of Medicine and living with grandfather at the English Presbyterian Mission Church quarters in Upper Serangoon Road. Father, Mother came from Kluang, Johore where Father had a Medical Clinic with my brother Siang Hwa and a few younger children. We attended meetings from early morning till late at night. The main theme of the good doctor's message was on repentance. Father was so stirred that he decided the other children left behind in Kluang should not miss such blessings. Accordingly he instructed me to send a telegram to Siang Hui (Timothy) who was left to hold the fort with Siang Yew and Siang Yeow to close shop immediately and come out to Singapore to attend the revival meetings.

For two whole weeks we drank in the blessings of his teachings, and no one was too tired to be present for the day long meetings. Dr Sung stressed on the riddance of sins, the rebirth and the imminent return of Jesus Christ. His style of presenting was unique. He would burst into singing such stirring songs and choruses that nobody could go to sleep. Many young hearts were moved. These decided to dedicate their lives to the saving of souls for the kingdom of God.

On the last night of the meetings, Dr Sung called for the dedication of those willing to follow the way of the cross and serve the Lord Jesus all their lives. On that last night, as if to confirm their faith, a huge cross formed by white clouds against a bluish background appeared in the sky over the Telok Ayer Church. This was seen by many. As Miss Alice Doo my aunt and I were walking towards the Church, we looked skywards, and were thrilled to witness this amazing phenomenon. It was truly an unforgettable event.

That same night many young people went up to the platform to dedicate themselves to the service of the Lord Jesus. Amongst our family four members offered themselves for this fulltime ministry. They were my Fourth Uncle, my Third Aunt and my brothers Siang Hui (Timothy) and Siang Yew. Dr Sung also organised Evangelistic Bands to each of which was given a triangular white flag with a red cross to go out and witness for the Lord, especially on Sunday afternoons. Up to this day the Evangelistic League is still carrying on its work, although much of the original fire of revival has waned.

As a result of her dedication to the fulltime ministry, Third Aunt Alice, who was a nurse at the Singapore General Hospital, resigned her job and returned to China with Dr Sung to study in a theological school. After her training in Nanking she worked faithfully for the Lord for many years in the South China Coastal regions. Before the Communists overran the Continent, she was invited to hold evangelistic meetings on the island of Formosa (Taiwan). During her sojourn in Taiwan, China became red. So she stayed on to establish a Christian witness at Kwan Tze Ling and Tainan. She served there for many years winning many souls for Christ.

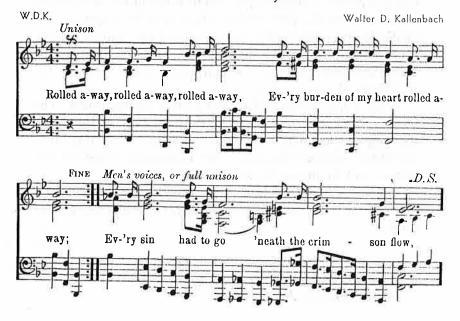
She returned to Singapore finally where the Tow clan is rooted. For two decades she continues to witness for Christ, using her flat in Pandan Valley as a retreat for Christian women and girls.

A far greater result of the John Sung revivals is the birth of the Bible-Presbyterian movement. Rev Dr Quek Kiok Chiang, my brother Rev Dr Timothy Tow Siang Hui who were both reborn during the John Sung meetings have worked ceaselessly to preserve the fundamental faith. As the old Presbyterian churches had come under the Ecumenical movement, they broke away and organised the B-P Church and missions in the Spirit of John Sung. Today the B-P movement covers most of the Asean countries. Together with my other brother Rev. Dr Tow Siang Hwa, the work has been extended to Australia. This is in obedience to the Lord's Great Commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all countries. Whether older or younger, all our leaders have the zeal to burn out for Jesus Christ. And to honour the good doctor who had done so much to revive the Church, Siang Hwa has called the Sanctuary of the Calvary-Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church the John Sung Memorial Chapel.

As Dr Sung has stressed so much on the nearness of the Lord's return, we shall all endeavour to serve Him in everyway possible. May this work of love for the lost souls of men be blessed by the good Lord Himself till He comes. All praise and glory be to God for all His goodness upon our generation since the John Sung Revival.

Even so, come Lord Jesus. Amen.

## **Rolled** Away



## TESTIMONY OF DR. TOW SIANG HWA

I am what I am because of the blessed ministry of Dr. John Sung. During the Revival Meetings of 1935, I found salvation in Jesus Christ, and I gave my life to the Saviour. I learnt the blessedness of feeding on the Word, the power of Gospel choruses, and the power of corporate prayer.

Three sessions a day for 14 days, we sat at the feet of this man of God, feasting on the Word of life. John Sung brought forth the treasures from the Book, the mysteries of God's Word. His dominant theme was Repentance — out with sin; Sanctification — welcome to the Word and the Holy Spirit; Confession — confess Christ before men, testify of God's saving grace.

The meetings were never dull. John Sung made the Gospel alive, real and relevant. His preaching was simple, but simply powerful, Spirit-filled. No coaxing, no psychological conditioning, no mass choirs and persuasive music, no army of organizers and counsellors, no commercialism and mass media buildup. Only the pure Word of God spoken in power. And God's Holy Spirit worked at every meeting. Sinners openly repented in tears, confessed their sins, testified of their new birth with joy. Miracles of conversion were seen by the hundreds, day after day.

What a hungering and thirsting after righteousness. The crowds filled the Telok Ayer Methodist Church before each meeting and left with reluctance at the end. Everyone loved the Bible. Gospel choruses were commonly heard on the streets and in buses. Singapore saw revival.

My first memory of John Sung was the opening meeting. Early in the morning the hall was filled. Dr. Sung led us in the chorus

"Saviour, Saviour, hear my humble cry. While on others Thou art calling Do not pass me by." His preaching was into the heart searching, pricking, convicting. His appeal brought instant response. No holding back when God's Spirit is working! This reaping of souls was seen at every meeting.

My last memory of Dr. Sung was the tearful farewell at Keppel Harbour. He led in the singing of "God will take care of you." Hundreds wept openly as the ship pulled away. What a man. No social graces. Only God's grace! Fearing only God, he preached without fear. He never held back. He rebuked sin without compromise. Sinners repented. Lives were made new — by the thousands. Many continue to this day. He exposed and rebuked the modernists. They hated him.

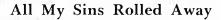
I thank God for John Sung. He implanted the seed of love for the Lord in my heart. He led me to understand God's love and God's salvation.

He taught me to love the lost, to thrill at seeing souls saved. He set the example of utter loyalty to the Word, and utter devotion to promoting the Gospel. Above all, John Sung taught me to hate sin and to love righteousness.

John Sung was a man of prayer and the Word. These filled his day, every day. His devotion to Christ was complete. His zeal was like a consuming fire. He burned out for his Lord. That is why he was called "Flame for God in the Far East" by Leslie Lyall of the OMF. Only Jesus, always Jesus — that was his theme each day. No social functions, no idle talk, no sight-seeing, no recreations, no welcome dinners.

Only Jesus, always Jesus! My heart will praise, My song I'll raise. Saved and healed me, Sanctified me. Glorious Lord, Soon coming King! John Sung was a man of prayer and the Word. These filled his day, every day great achievement! He knew the meaning of full surrender. He followed His Lord single-mindedly, relentlessly, resolutely. He cared not for self or for any other thing. Only Jesus, always Jesus! What is the spirit of John Sung? Have you caught a glimpse of it? It is simply this: following Jesus everyday, regardless of consequences and all else. Following Jesus until the very end, to hear His "well done."

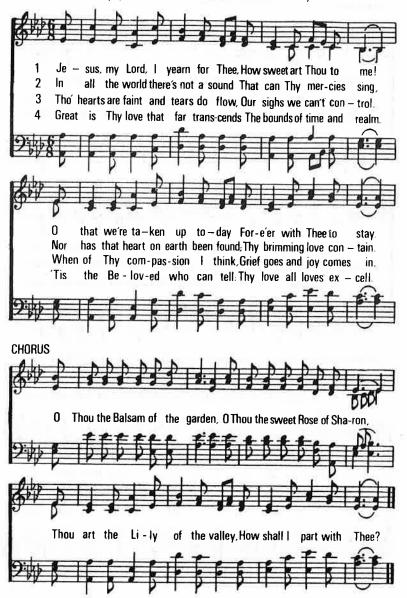
Elisha prayed for a double portion of the spirit of Elijah. What is your prayer today? As for me, this is my prayer: may just a portion of the spirit of John Sung fall on me. And not on me only, but on all who yearn to follow Jesus. May the Lord revive us all. Amen.

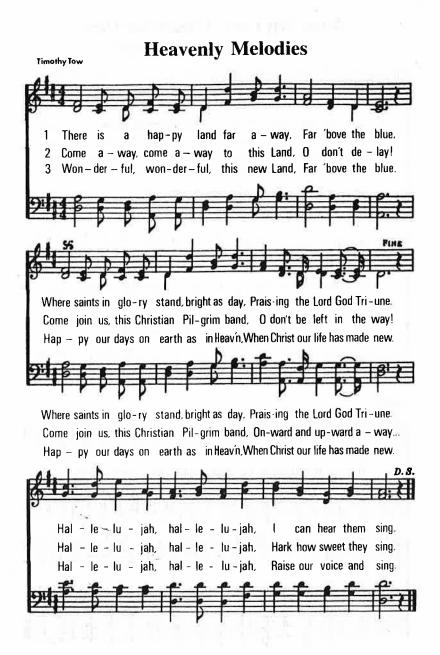




## Jesus, My Lord, I Yearn For Thee

(Hymn taken from JOHN SUNG CHORUSES)



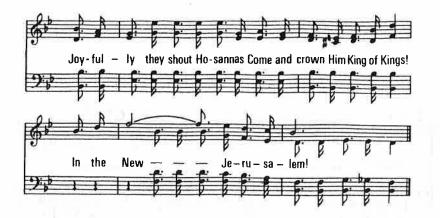


Near the Cross



In the New Jerusalem Bethel Hymns T.Tow glo-ry land a-bove.We are pilgrim band now headed for the 1 We're a land of glo - ry where the saints are gather'd round His Throne. No more 2 that In heading near-er near-er for the land that's now in sight. Will you 3 We are travel·ling thru the wil-der-ness be - low. We've a home that's far ades - pair. But an e-ver-last-ing sighs nor tears nor sor-rows nor fair? Is your name for - e - ver to the Ci - ty bright and join us way be-yond the blue sky and the stars. song of vic-tory flows from e-very tongue. In the New Je-ru-sa-lem! in the Lamb's book of Life? writ-ten Chorus heavens For the saints have all come home Hal – le – lu – jahs fill the Je — ru — sa — lem! Je - ru-sa-lem! To To

44







Come Unto Me With Your Heavy Load

Into My Heart



## **BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR**

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• Calvin's Institutes Abridged, Vol. 1, Bk 1 & II

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- A Glimpse of the Life & Works of John Calvin

Not only were we gloriously saved during the heavenly days of the Singapore Pentecost, August 30 - September 12, 1935. We were endued with such courage and power from on high that we went everywhere proclaiming Christ, bringing more souls into the Kingdom. Our hearts were filled with joy and singing, our souls were throbbing with prayer and constant communion with the Lord. We saw and heard the testimony of many healed by the Doctor's prayers, anointing with olive oil the sick. But there were no tongues, neither the enforced coaching of tongue-speaking. Neither hearing of voices and seeing of visions, but a hunger for the Word of God. Dr Sung who read his Bible eleven chapters a day and thirteen on the Lord's Day urged us to buy Bibles (which few of us had), and read the Bible through in one year. It was not only a Holy Spirit Revival, but also a Bible-reading Revival, and a Bible-preaching and Bible Study Revival. If you come from a charismatic Church, and tongue-speaking and human words begin to sound hollow to you, do make a study of this booklet.

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