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**HOW WE TAUGHT
THE
DYAKS TO TITHE**

By J. ARTHUR MOUW

J. Arthur Mouw, who formerly was a student at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, has labored in Borneo with his devoted wife for nearly twenty years under the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

Cover picture:

A converted Dyak witch-doctor points heavenward.

How We Taught the Dyaks to Tithe

The story I am about to relate is concerning the work of the Lord in the Belitang area of West Borneo. This region was opened to the gospel in the early months of 1935 and four years later, there was a total number of 2,640 baptized believers. When I speak of these I do not mean mere professors, but real possessors of the divine life that comes by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, accepting Him wholly and finding Him wholly true. In short, they were truly born-again.

It is not my purpose in this article to tell how the gospel was preached or how it bore fruit but, suffice it to say that, added to the number above, there are 1,400 more believers now than in 1939. I mention 1939 because that was the year, under God, that the Church finally became one hundred per cent self-supporting. I say "finally," because this did not take place over night, nor was it easy. It took the leading of God and the positive conviction that an organization could not long exist if founded on sand, the sand of foreign finance. We were convinced that no structure so built could long endure when foreign help ceased to be a reality.

Today, in a region within a radius of fifty miles of our home and as a monument to the power of the gospel there stand ten churches, each with a parsonage, where the pastor and his family live. The churches and the parsonages were built by the Christian Dyaks; there is not one cent of debt, nor did any money come from America to help erect these church buildings. Better than this, is the fact that the pastors are completely supported by their respective church groups and, at this date, there is enough padi (unhulled rice) in the church granaries

to feed the pastors and their families for more than a year, with harvest time only six months away.

How did this miracle take place? To begin with, let me say that absolutely nothing concerning this work has been original. The call, the preaching, the teaching, the pattern, are all found in the Word of God. They were given and proven long before I was born.

One Sunday morning in 1935, while walking from our house up to the rubber grove to give the message to some 900 Dyaks who had gathered under the shade of the trees, God spoke by His Spirit to my heart and asked, "Why are you here?" I was startled but quickly replied, "Because Thou hast called me." Again the question came, "Why are you here?" And I answered in my heart, "Why, Lord, You said 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel'; the heathen are all about us, they need to hear and that is why I came." And for the last time the question came again, "Why are you here?" And then my heart broke, and I knew the only reply that mattered was one. I cried to the Lord, "Because I love You!" And, as scales dropping from my eyes, I saw the 900 awaiting my coming, awaiting my message, awaiting my enthusiasm and my spirit. In a flash, I saw they were leaning **too much** on me and I cried out to the Lord and said, "Lord forgive me."

I thought I loved these Dyaks and I believe I did in a way. I prided myself in the fact that they also loved me. But did I love them with a true love? True love is tender; it is also firm and strong. God's love is like that.

I walked on to the grove and the message I intended to give left me. With all my heart I endeavored to teach these Dyaks to look to God and not to me. I do not remember the message, but do remem-



Inside Emmanuel Church, which has 756 members—these earnest believers were once head-hunting heathen.

ber one statement. I said, "The day will come when I, as a foreigner, will not be permitted to stand before you as I am standing now; when I am gone, to whom will you look?" I did not know I was prophesying, but seven years later, in January 1942, I fled with my wife and family and escaped from the invading Japanese. I had long believed in self-support and had a vision for the future of an indigenous church in this part of West Borneo. But, believing and teaching are not enough—there must be action. Then I gathered the four native workers

around me, who had come from our Bible School in Makassar. These were not Dyaks, but native workers from other islands who came to help in the work. I gave what I thought was a good message on the subject of self-support. I was having a good time teaching these four workers. My heart was warm and enthusiastic on the subject. I showed them that "God loveth a cheerful giver"; "It is more blessed to give than to receive"; "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn"; "The labourer is worthy of his hire." These and many more scripture verses I brought to their attention, and they nodded their heads in assent. I noticed this and it added fuel to the fire. I felt the message was really reaching their hearts. Finally, I brought for my concluding argument the third chapter of Malachi, verse 10: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." I closed with words like these "And the reason I have given you this account from the Scriptures is because I believe God wants and intends us to help the Christian Dyaks to become self-supporting. I want you to teach the Dyaks to give to the Lord."

The answer on the part of these workers was, to say the least, disappointing. With one voice they responded: "It is impossible to teach the Dyaks to give; they are too poor." They were very poor, that was true; they could put all their earthly belongings in one five-gallon tin can. Rubber was only one and a half cents per kati (one and one-third pound) at the time. Everyone was looking for work and one could hire all the coolies he wanted for four cents per day, if food was furnished, or eight cents per

day if they furnished their own food. The argument "too poor" was not from the Scripture, however. God had said, "Bring ye all the tithes," or one-tenth of what you have. We could only ask one-tenth, but the workers reasoned, "Tuan, the Dyaks now go hungry four to six months out of the year; dare we ask them to give and make them hungrier than they are?" This was sound logic and the word "impossible" was used frequently. But logic is not faith, and faith cries, "It can be done!" I was frustrated—my own native workers did not believe the message given from the Word. They had not been taught it before. As far as they were concerned there was only one way—the old way—to continue to receive the monthly money from headquarters; headquarters received it from America; America was rich—why worry? I pled; I showed other Scriptures to them and explained that Philippians 4:19 was not for everyone, but only for those who take care of God's vineyard. Paul could say "God shall supply all your need" to the Philippians because the Philippians remembered Paul's need and that of the Church. The same promise would not be applicable to the Corinthians at that time.

I finally realized it was of no use to try to inspire or create faith in the hearts of these workers, for "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). They heard it, but there was no response, no willingness to obey God's command. So faith was not gendered in their hearts. They were cold toward the subject and finally said, "Tuan, we know it is impossible; we can't teach the people to tithe, they are too poor. But if you believe in it so much, why don't you teach it yourself?" I made one final statement saying, "God has promised in His Word to bless if people tithe; the Dyaks do not know about tithing or the promised

blessing; they do not know how to read or write. They can only learn about tithing from us. If we do not teach them to tithe, we will withhold the blessing God wants to give, and God will hold us responsible!" The argument did not work, and I was reminded again by my workers, "If you believe in it so much, why don't you teach it yourself, Tuan?" "I do believe in it," I replied, "but I want to teach them so that you will receive the blessing that will come by telling them." The workers looked at me with queer questioning glances and I could tell from the expression on their faces that they were perfectly willing for me to receive all the blessing.

I believed in tithing. I had tithed since I was eight years old, for my dear father and mother had taught it to me, and they practiced it. The tithe was the Lord's. No matter how poor we were, it was not touched! I believed David when he said, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psa. 37:25). My father never begged, and we never went hungry one meal in our lives. I believed in tithing, but here was the test: "Do it yourself!"

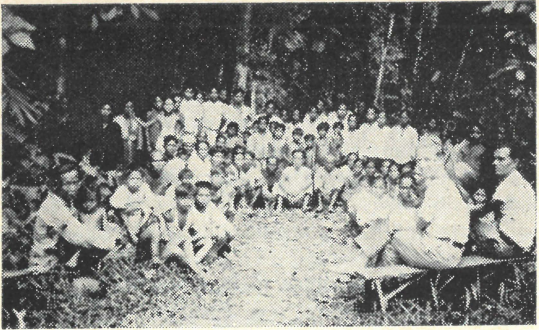
I began to visit the Christian Dyaks, going from village to village. I had at least two "doubting Thomases" (workers) with me to begin each service. Because of this, I must confess that I started out with fear and trembling, remembering some words of the workers, "We can't take away food from these hungry people."

In the first place, I asked the Dyaks if they knew how I got to Borneo. The answer was simple, of course: "By boat." America is a long distance away and it cost four hundred dollars for boat fare. Where did the money come from? Simple again was the reply: "Tuan is rich, has lots of money," they said. We had humble enough furnishings in our

jungle home, yet to the Dyaks, our table and four chairs, our set of dishes, our cutlery, etc., was wealth that they had never seen before. Thus the reply was, "Tuan is rich!" They believed I was and the argument I expected to use was not as valuable as I thought it would be. What I was leading to and wanted to tell them was that Christian men and women in America, through sacrificial giving, provided our outfit and paid our fare so we could go to Borneo.

I held my large Bible high and said, "Everything I have taught you has been from this Book. From it you have learned about creation, about the origin of sin, the serpent that beguiled Eve; but, best of all, you have learned of God's love, redemption and salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, and you have believed it. Is this book true?" With one voice they answered, "It is true!" Holding the Bible still higher, I asked, "Although you cannot read this Book, has it ever told a lie?" "Never a lie, Tuan, only the truth," they responded. I said, "Now I will teach you something new," and, turning to the third chapter of Malachi, I taught them the rudiments of tithing.

As their alert faces looked at me, I continued and finally, to make it very plain, I said, "Tithing really means this: if you have ten chickens, one belongs to the Lord; if ten eggs, one belongs to the Lord; if ten measures of rice (precious rice to them), one measure belongs to the Lord. And yet," I continued, "upon the authority of the Word of God, I can tell you God says He will bless, will open the windows of Heaven, will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, that He will not destroy the fruits of your ground, neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field." I could say no more. Most of them wore only a loincloth made of the bark of a



Examining a candidate for baptism.

tree. Many of the women's skirts were made of the same material. I sat down feeling I had utterly failed to get the message across. It is always hot in Borneo, but that night it seemed hotter than ever; the perspiration rolled off of me. The two native workers sitting on the floor knew I was having a hard time; they hadn't said "amen" once; they didn't even grunt.

Finally, the Dyaks began to talk, some very deliberately, others with haste. Their dialect was a different one and I had difficulty in catching many words. After a half hour they were quiet and sat waiting for me to say the next word. I asked, half doubting, what they thought about the message from God's Word and the plan He set forth. Very simply they said, "Tuan, we have decided to accept this plan. God has done so much for us; we have been wondering how we could show a little gratitude to God for giving His Son to die for us. This is a way." The speaker continued, "Tuan, we have chosen three men whom we know to be honorable. They will accept our gifts and once each moon, if it will be



Baptismal scene.

all right with you, they will bring them to your home." Just as simply as that, and it was all accomplished in their half hour of discussion. Would it be all right with me? Would it? I almost flew through the shake roof and up to the clouds. My two "doubting Thomases" gave me side glances and I scarcely dared to look at them. I could not say, "I told you so," for I did not have very much faith myself. What made the Dyaks so responsive? It was because . . . these people's hearts were still warm; they had only a few months before learned for the first time of a God who loves, who gave His Son. They were still in their first love, a love pure, trusting, believing.

We journey from longhouse to longhouse where there were Christians. Our message was the same, and praise God so was the response. We returned home and in a few weeks the "new moon" arrived, and so did some Dyaks. One morning we awakened to find them on our front porch; some had travelled two days. Some dozen chickens were tied to the railings; there was a high pile of cucumbers, many

eggs in a basket and two or three rattan carrying-bags full of rice. With a slight wave of the hand, pointing to all which was on the floor, the three men simply stated, "Ini tuhan Allah punja" (this is God's portion). We trust it will be all right; we'll be starting back today." My heart was full of praise and my eyes filled with tears, and . . . I could hardly see my way around on the porch—cucumbers, eggs, chickens, rice, fruit, vegetables, precious food to these Dyak Christians. That morning that old front porch became a cathedral. Each month it was so: our front porch groaned under the weight of squash, cucumbers, potato roots, rice and chickens.

Our hearts rejoiced, but trouble came as well. The Dutch administrator called me to his office, seventy-eight miles away. He was angry and said, "I understand you are taxing the Dyaks ten per cent. This is unlawful: only one can tax and that is the government. I command you to cease teaching this at once." I respectfully replied: "It is true we teach the people to tithe and give ten per cent of their produce, but it is not compulsory. It is given freely and of their own volition. It is not for me, but is for the support of their own Christian work." Taking my New Testament from my shirt pocket, I held it up and said, "I have never mixed in politics nor do I intend to. I came here to teach God's Word. In this Word, as you very well know, tithing is taught. I would not tell you how to run the government; please do not tell me how to teach the Word of God." Soon I found myself on the gravel path walking toward my little one-cylinder motor boat. I never heard from the official again, nor did he make any trouble. Each month God's "portion" came. We sold the produce, chickens and eggs, to Chinese merchants and bought nails with part of the proceeds. Then we started to erect Churches, a story

too long to tell here. God looked on as they brought their gifts of thanksgiving and love.

Ten long months, and then came harvest—and what a harvest! More rice than they had ever seen before; the pests had not bothered and they gathered their precious life-giving grain. I waited and hoped that some Dyak would come to me and say, "Tuan, it works; we have tithed and now the increase," but I waited in vain. I thought they would be surprised and there was keen disappointment on my part and a let-down because no one came and said, "it works". They showed no surprise. The Bible had never lied to them before,— why should it lie now? God said He would do it and He who never lied fulfilled His promise. They just took it for granted in simple faith. I was the one who was surprised and perhaps you, my dear reader, but not the Dyak.

Not long after this the people began to come to meetings in nice clothes. It happened almost overnight. The enterprising Chinese businessmen took advantage of the "miracle" harvest and began telling the Dyaks, "it isn't good to go to church without clothes." This advice worked, not only because of the Chinese, but because the Dyaks had secretly been ashamed of their near-nakedness. Soft bark is too hot in this tropical climate if worn above the waist; besides, it scratches and irritates and will not stand frequent washings. Now the Christians had extra rice, legal tender in the jungle, and it was traded for clothing. We had always hesitated to tell these people to wear clothing, first, because they were too poor to buy; secondly, we did not want them to think that a change of garb made Christians of them. We were glad to see them in their new attire, but happier because they did not try to imitate our mode of dress, but adhered to the native attire.

Soon the first church was erected, then another. Everyone helped to build the church buildings in which was to congregate the body of Christ. One large church, Bethel, had been built. There were 1,315 members. On the outside by the side of the path was a big crate. People pulled a latch with one hand and shoved a chicken into the crate with the other. At the top of the steps was a large box, three and a half feet high, two feet wide and eighteen inches deep, with a small hole in the top. In this was poured their precious tenth of rice. Mothers would lift their children as they put their cupful into the bin as well. Close by stood the basket to receive the eggs and a little farther on was the empty five-pound butter can with a slit in the top for the few coins someone might have. Such is offering time in a Dyak church in West Borneo.

Today, thirteen years after this story began, the war has come and gone. We fled in 1942 after the Japanese came and in the providence of God, were able to reach America safely. For six years these Christians were without a foreign missionary, but the native workers carried on. Today all eleven of the original churches, but one, are still functioning and giving as never before. Four others have been added since the war making a total of fourteen. Once the people here were poor, but now, according to Dyak standards, they are prosperous and neighboring tribes come from far and near to buy, barter, or trade something for the rice of the Christians which the heathen often lack.

I have written about self-support and to this realm, under God, we have attained, but now comes the bigger step of building the Church into a self-governing organization. The foundation is laid, now comes the structure. It is here we must walk softly

for we have not travelled this road before. We dare not lean on our own understanding; mistakes are usually the result when we do.

The native workers seem very happy. They receive a certain amount of cash per month, plus all the rice that they, their wives and children, can eat. Besides this, the Dyak church members bring eggs, vegetables, chickens, fruit, etc., to them. There is always money in the treasury, and we use any surplus for expenses in reaching new tribes. God always honors His Word and obedient hearts. His Word was our only pattern, our specifications; this Word accepted by warm-hearted, trusting Dyaks made the recording of this narrative possible. Pray for the Church of Christ in Borneo.

P.S.—By the author, April, 1952:

Two of the fourteen churches are now in the territory of other societies laboring in West Borneo, so we still have twelve. Besides this, there are eight self-supporting grammar schools and many hundreds now know how to read and write. There is a fine Bible School with sixty-five students, being taught by Mr. and Mrs. Schisler, Miss Kemp and Miss Marsh. **Pray for all these and for the more than 4,000 Dyak Christians.** Yes, **pray ye** the Lord of the harvest that He may send more laborers into His harvest . . . for there are thousands yet in that vast area who know not nor have they ever heard the message of the gospel of Christ.

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