



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Chiangmai, Thailand

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Dear Friends,

I am writing this from Chiangmai, the capital of Northern Thailand. Thursday night I traveled by bus from Bangkok to the border town of Mae Sot which sits right on the Burmese – Thailand border. Mae Sot is known as a “wild west” town and is the home of smugglers, soldiers of revolutionary and warlord armies, spies, and cross-border traders in blackmarket drugs, weapons, jade and teak. Mae Sot is also home to several Church of God members and their families. Traveling by bus at night we were stopped at several checkpoints and Thai Border Patrol police boarded and inspected our papers. At one stop, over 10 people were taken off and arrested. These were illegal Burmese returning from Bangkok traveling without passports. They are usually detained a short while – a “fine” is paid – and they are on their way.

We gathered together Friday evening in the “upper room” of Davidson Lebey’s house to hold a Sabbath bible study – all sitting around on the floor Thai style. Present were Davidson, his wife and children; Samya, Juliana, and their 2 sons; and Ma Oo. Samya and Ma Oo were recently baptized at the Feast of Tabernacles in Chiangmai. Both of Juliana’s sons are now healthy. The youngest, Ne Ne Po, has recovered from TB, no longer coughs and is putting on weight. They give God the credit for his recovery and thank their brethren from around the world for their prayers. We talked in the bible study about God’s Calling and what it means to be chosen by God. Our Karen brothers and sisters need messages of encouragement and support. Every day, they face problems unheard of in the free societies of America and the West. They gain great comfort and strength in the knowledge that they are not alone, and that brethren in other parts of the world share their calling and are praying for them.

I then flew Saturday morning to Chiangmai. We held a bible study in my room at the

hotel where 6 adults, 5 teens and 2 children attended, including Davidson's sister Moo Kapaw and her husband Maung Maung Cho. Davidson and his sister Moo Kapaw are both children of Saw Ley Bey, long-time minister, now deceased, of the Church of God in Burma.

David Mya Maung also came with his family from Mae Sariang in the mountains to join us for Sabbath. His daughters, 17 and 15, have been attending an SDA school and doing well in their studies. But, now the school administration has told them they can no longer attend unless they pay tuition, or become baptized as SDA's. This form of blackmail is common in Thailand and is very effective in gaining converts. People in Thailand, especially minority hilltribes such as the Karen value education and make great sacrifices to see their children go to school. Many submit to being baptized so they can continue their education. David's daughters do not feel they are ready for baptism, and they are not willing to compromise. As a result, the family has decided to take them out of the SDA school and put them into another school. Parents must pay for their children's education in Thailand. Please pray that God will provide them with their needs so that they can continue to learn without the pressure to be baptized.

Jack Aung Min and his wife Elizabeth showed me a "dummy" of the *God's True Holy Days* booklet in Burmese. The translation is complete and, after a thorough check of spelling and grammar, the booklet will now be printed and distributed. This translation into the Burmese language will allow us to reach many other hilltribe minority groups who do not read the Karen language. This also means that Lazum Brang can use this booklet in his own work. We are now translating several other booklets into both Karen and Burmese and are working on a Bible Correspondence Course for the Asian brethren who do not speak or read English. There are many bible courses that have been published. We must choose the most "translatable" text and then edit out the dated material and idiomatic phrases that cannot be translated. It takes a lot of work in the English language first to prepare each lesson for translation.

I am leaving soon for a trip to India and Sri Lanka. I will visit scattered brethren in both countries. There are many scattered Sabbatarian groups in Southern India. Few were ever associated with our own COG heritage. Many are there as a result of the missionary work of the SDA's, Church of God 7th Day, and the 7th Day Baptists in the 1800's and early 1900's. There may even be a remnant of Sabbath keeper's who can trace their roots all the way back to the Apostle Thomas who evangelized in Southern India. In fact, there is one interesting Christian group called "St. Thomas Christians", who no longer observe the Sabbath, but apparently did at one time. Others have even sprung up from reading Mr. Armstrong's writings of the 1950's and 60's.

After Madras, I will travel to Sri Lanka and try to contact brethren scattered from the breakup of the WCG. I do not know what I will find. Please pray that God guides me in the right direction.

Lazum Brang is staying at home for a few months with his wife. She just bore their third daughter, "Lazum Doi Bu" on December 27, and Brang needs to stay home to help take care of her. In the meantime he continues to work on the bible school building he is erecting in his hometown of Na Mawn. The work is time consuming because there are no sawmills near his area. Each beam must be hand-hewn. But Brang is determined to get the building done by the beginning of Monsoon in what corresponds to our summer months. Pastor Brang writes in a letter dated January 5, the following:

" In Burma there are many groups of the Church of God, but all the church members are scattered, and the small groups can not open bible school by themselves. The main problem is locational place, communication, foods and building for the students. Here in Lake Indawgyi Region, the foods are plenty, the locational place and communication are also good. For the next year-2001, in the Summer Vacation times, many young people from China border will come to attend at our bible Training Center. . . I have a great responsibility . . . for two girl students. One is Miss Khawn Din and the other is Miss Khawn Tawng. Their parents are very strong Baptists, but these two girls are very brave for their faiths, and now attending higher education, and they are our Church of God members and they need to finish their graduations."

Fellow-laborers in Jesus' fields, the small Churches of God in Burma and in Thailand need our prayers. Now we have young people 15-23 years old; all wanting to go God's way. They need proper education for their futures. Perhaps some will be led by God to become workers of the harvest of the end times. We don't know. Some come from China, some are Kachin from Kachinland and some are children of our Karen members. Children are our greatest gift and the hope for the future of millions of people. Let's remember these young people living far away who are just as much the youth of God's Church as the young people of our Western congregations.

In my next letter I hope to have good news for all of you after my return from India and Sri Lanka. Please keep praying for us.

In Jesus' Service,



Leon Sexton

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