

Vivienne Stacey's autobiography

This is the first chapter of the book:

Mission Ventured Dynamic Stories across a Challenging World

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Preface

I wish to express my thanks to Lindsay Brown for suggesting this book at a small meeting in Cairo in 1997 and for his gracious encouragement along the way. I am most grateful to each of the seven women who have contributed to the book. I also wish to thank my friend and former colleague, Phyllis Tring, for her many helpful suggestions about the manuscript. Colin Duriez, the General Books Editor of IVP, has also given me help and advice, for which I thank him.

Vivienne Stacey
Paphos 2001

Introduction

I have placed my own story first so that I can introduce you to the other seven contributors whom I have met in my travels round the world over the last forty years. We come from five different continents, and various religious and social backgrounds. I asked them to write about their early years and educational opportunities, about their journeys into faith and how God guided them to work across cultures. Each has described her pilgrimage. I also requested that each write something on why she married or remained single so obviously there are a variety of very personal views.

I marvel at the diversity of experiences. What do these eight women have in common? I think it is that God met with each of us, called us and for many years of our lives gave us unique opportunities to live and work in cross-cultural situations. Some of us still live outside the countries in which we were born. Ada Lum and I know all these women and each of them knows some of the others.

Probably such accounts of the lives and work of women could only come from the last half century. No other century has accorded women so much freedom to travel and to interact. It remains to be seen how women as well as men will meet the increasing opportunities of the twenty-first century in which there is likely to be more mixing of ethnic groups, cultures and beliefs. It would seem that Christians have travelled further afield in the first and twentieth centuries and that those centuries have also witnessed more persecution and martyrdoms than any other centuries. The twenty-first century may witness a renewal of the church which will draw in women and men who will fulfil Christ's manifesto to the church to share the good news with the whole world starting at any place. The Christian pilgrim, like Abraham, is always moving, whether across the street or across the world, looking forward to the heavenly city, 'whose architect and builder is God'. (Heb. 11:10). In compiling this book, in fact in all of my writings, I like to think of my friends of other faiths and of no faith, looking over my shoulder. I hope that students and graduates, men and women, people of other faiths and philosophies, as well as Christians will read this book. Much history has been written by men so maybe the frank recording of eight women's lives will be

refreshing.

Chapter 1: Vivienne Stacey

University

The war had just ended.

I was too young to qualify for Oxford or Cambridge which at that time both required students to be at least eighteen, so I gained admission to University College, London, popularly known as ‘the godless institution of Gower Street’. Even in the early part of the nineteenth century only Anglicans could study at Oxford and Cambridge. Rationalists, of whom Jeremy Bentham was the most famous, started the first college of London University in 1827, declaring in its charter that theology should never be taught and that there should be no college chapel. In October 1945 when I went up to College only 10% of us were straight from schools. The rest were ex-service people, mostly men, who worked hard all the time and were very serious. University College maintained strong rationalist and communist influences both among students and staff as I discovered when I explored what various student societies had on offer. One of our lecturers was a communist. It was not a private matter.

Conversion

Barbara, one of my friends in the English department, was a Christian. Before coming to college she had prayed that she would meet someone to whom she could introduce her Lord Jesus Christ. She decided I was that person. Barbara had soon realized that I was not likely to respond positively to an invitation to church. After a few weeks I asked her where she disappeared to every lunch time. To my astonishment she told me that she attended a prayer meeting run by students in the chapel of the neighbouring medical college. It was her turn to be astonished when I said I would like to come along, not to pray but to see what happened. I noticed the sincerity of this small group of students in their praying but could not understand how God (if there was one) could be interested in the small matters that they seemed to be concerned with. I thanked my friend and did not go to another prayer meeting until I joined them as a believer some months later. I was not at peace with myself and was aware that Barbara had an inner happiness that I lacked. Outward

morality did not satisfy me. My thoughts and attitudes fell short of my own standards.

In February 1946 Barbara invited me to a Christian youth meeting at the Royal Albert Hall. I declined to take a ticket but said that if I and my friend Betty Stops were out of the theatre in time we would come. Betty was a friend from my school days. We came. The first speaker, Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, spoke on the raising of Jairus's daughter. He quoted Luke 8:52-53, 'Jesus said, "She is not dead but asleep." They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.' They, in fact, laughed Jesus to scorn. I immediately realized that this was my position. I was searching for something that would make sense of life. I had thoughts about many things but had no centre to my thinking. I had not even considered Jesus. I had dismissed him as not relevant to the modern world. I had indeed been so dismissive that I had scorned him. The next speaker talked about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and I realized that if he rose from the dead he is alive now and can be encountered.

A couple of evenings later as I was studying in my father's office I switched off the light and knelt down. In that instant I had a vision of Jesus. There was light in the room and he was standing ahead of me. I knew that he had died for my sins. His peace flooded my heart. The risen Christ met me in my need. This encounter changed the whole course of my life. I have no regrets, only gratitude to him. Life has been far richer than I ever expected.

The next day Barbara must have noticed a difference in me as she gave me a New Testament. I was puzzled as it was not my birthday, nor was it Christmas. I thanked her and decided to read it every day in the train. Soon after that I joined the small group of students in their regular Bible study and prayers. This was the Christian Union of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship (IVF) to which Barbara belonged. Those early experiences of group Bible study gave me a valuable foundation on which to build, as well as a model for future ministry. In the IVF the students themselves took decisions and ran the programmes, which included prayer meetings, Bible studies and evangelistic activities. They received guidance and advice from visiting field staff called travelling secretaries, but in essence it was a student-led movement. In 1947 IVF became one of the ten

founding members of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES), with which I have had so much contact over the years. I started to attend church on Sunday mornings and got permission from our parents to take my ten-year-old brother to Sunday School. After my baptism in 1947 my parents decided to start attending church. Some years later my mother became a believer, and finally so did my father.

Family background and early childhood

My father was a Londoner, the youngest of six children. He was born in 1894, just soon enough to remember a little of Victorian England with its horse-drawn traffic. He grew up in the East End where his father, from Somerset in the SW of England, had made good as a cabinet maker. Having left school at fourteen, he went to evening classes to improve his education. For some years he worked in a garage and then took up accountancy. He tried to enlist but was pronounced medically unfit for military service in World War 1. For a number of years he worked for a city firm of accountants and then joined the administrative staff of Imperial College, London. In his early thirties he met my mother while they were both on holiday. She was Welsh, from south Wales and had trained as a school teacher. They married in 1927 and set up home in Greenford, Middlesex, a new suburb of London. I was born on 12 July 1928. About three years later we moved to a semi-detached house in Ruislip, a few miles further out of London. The underground train line had just been built to reach Ruislip and beyond and so people started to move out to the suburbs. Our country lane eventually became a main road. My brother, Gareth, was born in 1936. Our parents had very high moral standards and simple tastes. My mother had reacted against her Presbyterian background and my father became a lapsed Anglican so we had a secular upbringing. However, Gareth was baptized in the nine-hundred-year-old village church, when I had one of few experiences of being taken to church.

Schooling

I was sent to school first for a about six weeks in south Wales where my maternal grandmother lived. I well remember the children wearing national costume and daffodils for St. David's Day. My teacher knew

my uncle and aunt and did not hold me too accountable for defacing a book and a few other mild misdemeanours. At the age of six I was enrolled in a Church of England primary school in Ruislip. I remember tormenting the vicar who could not keep order. I enjoyed walking the mile between home and school and playing on the way, as I was often in trouble in both places. I soon got myself expelled from my dancing class. I learned a lot from my high spirits and punishable escapades that proved an enormous help when I myself became a teacher.

My parents had few friends and did little entertaining but Mr Meyer, a Venezuelan, and his German wife visited my parents each year and they invited us to their home. In the 1930s they had long discussions and many forebodings about Hitler and his rise to power. At each six-monthly visit they always discussed 'the nightmare years'. Although I was very young I still remember the sense of foreboding that these adults had although then I did not understand it. World War II broke out when I was eleven. After experiencing some of the bombing and blitzing of London in 1940 our mother decided to take my brother and me to greater safety in Wales, while our father continued his accountancy and fire-watching in central London and visited us periodically. I can recall the fall of France and the chill that this news seemed to bring. We went to mid-Wales where my grandmother had moved to escape bombing. I hated my new school, Brecon County School. I was very resentful at having to leave my previous school which I liked.

After six months we moved to a very old cottage with walls three feet thick, without electricity and water inside. This holiday cottage in the fishing village of New Quay, West Wales, belonged to a first cousin of my mother. In this Welsh-speaking area I went to school by bus, in a town seven miles away. In every school I attended we seemed to study A Midsummer Night's Dream and I became allergic to it for a while; my French also was adversely affected by changes of school. Our English teacher, Mr Meredith, however was young, tall, dark and handsome. He soon joined the navy, serving in a submarine which was torpedoed. I never forgot him and his tragic death. I felt a foreigner in Welsh-speaking Wales. School prayers were in Welsh and nearly everyone talked in the language. At school a small group of us were known as "the evacuees". I went to a Welsh Sunday School where the answer to every question

seemed to be 'faith' - something I did not have. I developed a great dislike of Welsh nonconformity. Everyone went to Chapel so I soon stopped going. For some years my only interest in visiting churches was to study the architecture.

After I matriculated at the age of fifteen we moved back to England. Our mother took a job as headmistress of a village school in Oxfordshire so that we could live nearer London as things seemed safe and it was so much nearer for our father to visit every six weeks or so. I went to a school nearby and studied English, Latin, French and History for two years in the sixth form. I remember a very nice family called Prue who lived in the village. The older son, Maurice, went off in the army and was killed in the jungles of Burma.

After a year our mother gave up teaching and we moved to a village in Northamptonshire that was still near my school. I enjoyed life in the sixth form and here became friendly with Betty Stops. We cycled to Stratford-on-Avon to see plays. Both of us decided to read English at London University. My first cousin, Victor, was shot down flying over Libya. When I was very small I used to watch him march past in his scout troop in Ruislip. As the war was ending we got news of concentration camps. By then I was seventeen and began to realize even more of the horror of war. It was not just that I knew a sailor, a soldier and an airman who had been killed.

Call to work abroad

A few weeks after my conversion Barbara, my university friend, invited me to another meeting at which a missionary, Mary Macdonald, spoke briefly about how God had called her to work among lepers in India. I was perturbed that she had studied English, the subject I was studying, as I realized that he might also ask me to work among lepers and I was unwilling. I left the meeting knowing that God had called me to work abroad. Another verse from Luke confirmed it for me, 'From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked' (Luke 12:48). I knew God had given me much - new life in Christ and the

benefits of a good education.

For a while I struggled but when I told God I was willing to do what Mary was going to do, I found that he did not require this from me, but he wanted my willingness. My initial focus was now on India because of Mary. The next year India became independent and Pakistan was created in the name of Islam. I had Muslim and Hindu friends in the college and I knew that it was hard to influence Muslims. Somehow this drew me to Muslims and I recognized God's calling to the Muslim world. I wanted to see what the living God would do for Muslims. I continued to collect information and to learn something about Pakistan and Central Asia. I learned about some missionary societies that worked in those areas.

The next question was what career I should follow. I wanted to be a writer. I was able to talk with a well-known Christian writer who had worked in China. She advised me to write articles and booklets but not to try to earn my living as a writer. My mother had warned me against teaching. I did not really know if I had any gift for teaching or not. So I decided to apply to Cambridge and London to do a postgraduate diploma in education. I asked God to guide through these two applications. I lost my papers for Cambridge but was accepted at the Institute of Education of London University. I discovered that I liked teaching. I prayed for a teaching post that would be good preparation for work abroad.

Preparation for work abroad

There followed three years in which I taught English and religious education for three years in Cheshire. I was keen to teach religious education as, since an Education Act in 1944, it became compulsory in state schools and I knew there was a shortage of teachers. I had the conviction that I should use my intellect as much for my faith as for my BA, so I had already taken some evening classes at the London Bible College and had started learning New Testament Greek. My predecessor in this teaching post was a Methodist lay preacher. People expected me to follow in her footsteps, and I started to receive invitations to preach in Methodist, Baptist and Congregationalist churches in nearby towns and in the villages around. I found it a change from teaching children. I cycled to the various locations within a ten-mile radius and solved the problem

of cooking as I was given generous hospitality.

I realized that I needed to do some more formal study of the Bible and Christian theology. The result was that I applied to the London Bible College and was able to do an external BD degree of the University of London. This proved very helpful to me when I eventually lectured in theological seminaries and colleges in many parts of the world. God guided me to apply to the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission, which later became the Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship, and latterly Interserve. I had reservations about joining a mission which for nearly a hundred years had been a women's mission. However, it had recently received Jack Dain as its General Secretary and Alan Norrish as its Field Secretary. It had a new policy of co-operation with other Christian agencies and was seeking staff for union theological colleges at the time I applied.

My other reservation was that it was a 'faith mission'. I realized that God had provided for its needs for a hundred years since its foundation in 1852 to work in India among Hindu and Muslim women hidden away in the women's quarters of their houses; and in hospitals and schools. I concluded that God would supply for the next century although few applicants now had private incomes.

I asked to be sent to wherever in Pakistan there was a training establishment to help Pakistani Christian women in their witness among Muslims. Jack Dain told there was only one such place - the United Bible Training Centre in Gujranwala. So I said, 'Please send me there.' 'We like an open offer,' he replied. 'I make an open offer,' I rejoined, 'but please send me there.'

After a year of Urdu study I was sent to the UBTC. I was commissioned by the Ruislip Baptist Church in September 1954 as their first missionary. John Doble, then in his first pastorate, preached from the book of Ruth 1:16, 'Your people shall be my people.' My parents, brother and about thirty people from the church and mission came to see me off at Euston Station, London, on the boat train to Liverpool on 2 October 1954. To the surprise of passers-by they made a circle around me, prayed and sang hymns until the train was about to leave.

Voyage to Pakistan, Urdu and orientation

I sailed on RMS Cilicia, one of the Anchor Line passenger boats. The voyage took eighteen days. We stopped at Gibraltar, sailed past Cyprus, called at Port Said and Aden, before reaching Karachi. The ZBMM had requested Mrs Allen, whose family had been connected with India for generations mainly through the army and education, to take me under her wing. We sat at the First Officer's table. Mrs Allen was celebrating her fortieth voyage to India and her eightieth birthday. She was a brilliant sharer of the good news of Christ. I learned much from her gracious attitudes and her natural conversations about God. Evangelism was a way of life for her. In Karachi I said goodbye to Mrs Allen as she was going on to Bombay. I stayed in Karachi for several days as trains were delayed by floods. A Scottish nurse and a Member of the National Assembly (MNA) were my companions on the lengthy journey to Lahore. I had a long discussion with the MNA, one of the few women members, on the Trinity. I was the sixth ZBMM member to arrive in Pakistan. After a few days in Lahore with future colleagues, I was escorted to Gujranwala by Dorothy Boswell. I remember looking out of the window of the train as we approached Gujranwala and wondering how long I would live there. After a year of language study in Sialkot and Murree it was to be twenty years before the Lord led me out to another part of Pakistan and to a different ministry which took me to every continent.

I enjoyed being a language student for a year. Living with Americans was a new experience as I had had no acquaintance with Americans before. My fellow language student, Gene, and I are still close friends. I doubt if we would have ever got to know each other if we had not been thrown together in the beginning. We lived in an old colonial house with thirty-two outside doors - quite a problem when we had to check security if a thief was around. One mission interviewer in the UK had grave doubts about my suitability for work where learning a language was essential. She had taken me to church and realized how unmusical I was. However, I found that if you put your tongue in the right place and controlled the amount of breath used with consonants, the sounds generally came out right. I learned about the customs and culture from my very gracious senior missionaries and from my students. I had never

heard of culture shock and had little idea of what Pakistan would be like. I knew my senior missionary was studying my reaction to the many flies that settled on the food stalls as we had made a brief stop on our way to Sialkot where I was to study Urdu for the winter. On my first leave from Pakistan in 1959 I certainly experienced reversed culture shock. I couldn't bring myself to buy clothes or shoes which had visible labels on them, or zip-up trousers! I was unable to guide foreigners about how to fill in a Post Office form and I had forgotten how to use a self-service restaurant.

Twenty years at the United Bible Training Centre in the Punjab, 1955 -75

I took up my post at the United Bible Training Centre, Gujranwala, in September 1955. The UBTC is an autonomous institution with a Governing Board made up of representatives of the main Protestant denominations in Pakistan and a few mission organizations. The Centre trains Pakistani Christian women to work with the Church and tries to help them be more effective disciples in their respective spheres in society. A two-year course was run to train evangelists and Bible teachers until 1966. One such evangelist was Esther John who grew up in a Muslim home in India. Through seeing the love of God lived out in her teacher and through Scripture lessons at her Christian school she had become a believer in Jesus as saviour and Lord. She sailed with her family from Madras to Karachi in 1947 to become a citizen of the new country created in the name of Islam - Pakistan. A Christian teacher in Karachi occasionally called at her home and talked with her. When her marriage was arranged with a man who did not share her faith she decided to seek refuge with Christians. Eventually she was baptized and helped to fulfil her calling. She came to the UBTC in 1957. Everyone loved her. We used to go together to visit homes in the villages around. She would speak of her experience of Christ and I would also give a little teaching from the Bible. She graduated in 1959 and went to work in another part of the country. I remember that she and a fellow student called Martha came to intercept me on the train as I travelled to Karachi for my first

home leave. I thought how wonderful it was to have such fellow workers and I looked forward to the future.

While I was on leave in the UK Martha wrote to tell me that our sister Esther had gone to heaven. She had been murdered one night as she slept. It was February 1960 and she was thirty years old. The police officer who investigated the case said, 'This girl was in love with your Christ.'

In Britain during the summer of 1998 ten empty niches over the West entrance of Westminster Abbey, London, the nation's most visited church, were filled with the statues of ten contemporary martyrs. The niches had stood empty since the Abbey was built in the eleventh century. The statues were unveiled during the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops led by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The twentieth century saw more Christian martyrs than any other century. One of the ten statues was that of Esther John. She was the first martyr I had known, but by no means the last.

Munir was a contemporary of Esther doing the same course at the UBTC. After qualifying as a teacher Munir came to the UBTC. After graduation she worked as an evangelist in a Christian hospital and then as a Bible teacher in a Christian High School. She later joined the staff of the UBTC and served for a number of years before marrying a pastor. With her husband she is now engaged in outreach to tribal people as well as teaching the local congregation in one of the more difficult areas of Pakistan.

Through the years a three-year part-time course for the wives of theological students has continued. From 1966 the Centre put a greater stress on short courses. One month a year a course was offered for nurses to help them in study of the Bible, understanding of Islam and witness to Muslims. Another month's course was held for girls who had just matriculated and were waiting for examination results. They came from all over the country to get a better grounding in their faith and a greater understanding of their Muslim neighbours and friends. Another course was run for teachers especially to help those who had the opportunity of teaching Christian Education in schools. Refresher courses for the wives

of pastors, Sunday school teachers' training weekends and a variety of other courses were offered with the aim of helping women to be lively and effective Christians in whatever situation they found themselves. The UBTC was called a centre because students came to it but also because staff could be sent out from it as requested, to run courses in hospitals, schools or church communities. This was the extension service.

In 1966 I became Acting Principal of the UBTC and soon after that Principal. Besides teaching and administration, my work involved some responsibility for building programmes and involvement in various church-related and mission committees. I was one of the founding members of Theological Education by Extension in Pakistan. I taught classes in Gujranwala and Lahore and wrote a workbook on the Old Testament. For fifteen years I was on the Board and Executive Committee of the International Assistance Mission and made about thirty visits to Afghanistan.

Relocation to Bannu in the North West Frontier Province, 1976 to 1991

In 1969 I had asked the UBTC and Interserve for six weeks' leave to visit four of the Arabian Gulf oil countries. I had realized that over half the nurses trained in the United Christian Hospital in Lahore took jobs in Kuwait, Bahrain, the Trucial States, the Sultanate of Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Libya. I wanted to have a clearer understanding of the situations in which Pakistani Christians were working in the oil countries. I did not realize that God was starting to call me to another ministry and that I would eventually leave the UBTC in 1975. Each year I travelled to the Gulf in the vacations. Then out of the blue in 1974 David Penman, Regional Secretary of IFES, asked me to join his pioneer team for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf. I set aside a week to reflect and pray, and concluded that God was calling me to continue to follow the Pakistani Christians in their dispersion, to work part-time with the IFES and to start writing for publication some of what I had been teaching over the previous twenty years at the UBTC. I wrote a proposal for Interserve which included my job description, how it might be financed and where in Pakistan I might relocate. When I submitted it to the Interserve leadership Jack Dain wrote back that my proposal was in the 'spirit of the

Lausanne Congress' which had just taken place. I left the UBTC in 1975 and returned to Pakistan the following year to live in Bannu in the North West Frontier Province with the invitation and blessing of all those concerned. Bannu had not been on my list of possibilities, but Dr Ruth Coggan, who had invited me there for my Christmas 'retreat', continued praying for me to know the Lord's will and made the original suggestion. Bannu proved to be an ideal fellowship base for me.

Following the Pakistani dispersions to the Middle East

In some ways I had been very vague or visionary. I had no idea how a call to the Muslim world would work out or how and where God would lead me. I had known that Pakistan was where to start, in the UBTC. Nearly twenty years later when Jock Anderson told me that my reports on the Gulf would lead to Interservers working there I had not ever dreamed of it. It was in the late 1980s that I realized that God had given me a worldwide ministry in training trainers, especially in the third world, and in challenging and informing, especially in countries of revival, renewal and missionary vision e.g. in South Korea, India, and Brazil. My writing ministry meant that materials and information to back this up could go into other languages. God led me into many things that were not on my agenda. Until 1974 I had no idea that I would spend fifteen years in a small fundamentalist frontier town of Pakistan near to the Afghan border. I began as a missionary from the West; I became a missionary from the East and I ended up a world Christian. Certainly my first visit to Kuwait, Bahrain, the Trucial States and the Sultanate of Oman in 1969 helped me in training nurses and teachers who took jobs in those lands. I returned again to learn more and to teach small groups in the countries I visited. Many of them were very isolated. However, in Bahrain an Urdu congregation had started in 1967. I began to realize something of the significance of Saudi Arabia as the religious and pilgrimage centre of the Muslim world, and of Egypt as the intellectual centre with its influence spread through the Gulf lands by Egyptian oil workers and engineers, and medical and teaching personnel. Pakistan became an Islamic experiment in statehood. I felt compelled to consider the tie-up of economics and

religion. I took a fresh look at the Bible to see how God had used dispersions of peoples to further his purposes; dispersions through political oppression as in the case of the Babylonians, through economic pressure as in the case of the patriarchs in Egypt. The dispersion for trade and commerce of Jews all around the Mediterranean Sea in the Intertestament period seemed to parallel in some respects the dispersions from many lands of people involved in oil production, the building of infrastructures as the Land rover replaced the camel, and cities grew in the desert. Religious persecution and mission initiatives were other ways of dispersion as we see from the Acts of the Apostles. Now there are dispersions into lands where Christians can be employed and also spread the gospel. Gradually I began to relate this to what was happening in the oil lands which in general had no indigenous churches. All this opened another world dimension to the sharing of faith. It became an urgent subject for theological, economic, geographical and strategic study. Coming to the Gulf from the East rather than the West coloured my perspective. Having seen the influx of tens of thousands of skilled, semi-literate and illiterate workers from Pakistan, India (especially Kerala) and Bangladesh, I asked a British university economist who lectured and wrote about the Gulf what the prognosis was for the next ten years. He told me that there would be the 'far Eastern connection' as Koreans and Filipinos arrived. I went to Korea in 1973 to suggest some preparation for the large numbers of Christians who eventually went to the Middle East. Maybe there were ways that they, like the Christians from the Indian subcontinent, might learn that God is Lord of oil and of dispersions. Maybe they would ask with the psalmist, 'How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?' (Psalm 137:4). God gave me visions of his glory active in the Sultanate of Oman and in some of the most unlikely places of the Middle East and Central Asia.

Pioneering with the IFES in the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf

IFES is a unique fellowship. I have been immensely enriched by the interaction between people of so many nationalities from each continent. It was a refreshing change from some of the Western dominated organizations that I have known. The 'ethos' of IFES is to help in the formation of national student movements as most appropriate for that

particular country. My association with IVF and IFES has been lifelong starting in my student days in 1946. I had been an associate part-time staff worker of IFES for the Middle East and North Africa from 1976 to 1993. I continued to be linked in an advisory capacity until 1996. I have always valued my contacts with IFES. In Pakistan I was a Board member of the Pakistan Fellowship of Evangelical Students for several years (1980 to 1990). I had contacts with many movements through my itinerant ministry.

My first tour for IFES was across North Africa. I kept a watching brief in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia until I found some one to take on that area - Donna Smith, who speaks fluent Arabic and French. The next assignment was a survey of Iran in 1976, with a view to placing a youth worker, mainly for students. I visited seven university towns and talked to educational and church leaders. Soon afterwards IFES seconded a Pakistani, John Ray, to work under Bishop Dehqani Tafti as a diocesan youth worker based in Isfahan. Subsequently I visited him several times until he had to leave Iran after the Ayatollah's rise to power. I visited Ankara and Istanbul in Turkey, and Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. I found it was easy to get into Lebanon during the civil war if one applied for a visa in Pakistan. I visited each of the Gulf oil states, with the exception of Iraq, and Libya at least three times. I was disappointed to have to refuse an invitation to Sulaimaniya in northern Iraq because it did not fulfil my safety guide lines for travelling alone. With the increasing oil revenues new universities and colleges started to appear in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Bahrain soon had a university and the Sultanate of Oman opened Sultan Qaboos University in 1986. There were no Christian students in most of these universities. Early on, most of the suitably qualified staff came from abroad. I kept IFES informed about these job opportunities as new universities and colleges opened.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s we ran Arab student conferences in Cyprus until it seemed better to link north African Christians with the French Groupes Bibliques Universitaires, and Egypt started hosting student conferences for Syrians, Jordanians and Lebanese as well as Egyptians.

In 1993 I had a particularly encouraging three weeks in India. This time

I worked in the South in the Bangalore area. The Indian Evangelical Mission (IEM) looked after me very nicely at their rural Outreach Training Institute where I gave forty-one lectures. One student came from the Friends Mission Prayer Band (FMPB), a Japanese couple from the Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF) attended and some other Indians from the North East of the country as well as the majority who were from South India. It was exciting to see something of the enthusiasm of indigenous missions. The IEM had 400 workers and the FMPB 500 at that time. Visiting local mosques was a new experience for many of those I taught and they were surprised by their cordial reception in four out of five mosques. India has over a hundred million Muslims - the largest minority in any country in the world - about 12% of the population. The other highlights of my visit were times with the Union of Evangelical Students of India (UESI).

Writing

I was determined to succeed as a writer in my own culture before I wrote for Pakistan and other lands. After the publication of a few booklets and two books by the Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship, Concordia Press published my book *Go and Tell. A Case for Christian Mission Today*. So then I started to write for the Christian Publishing House in Lahore, Pakistan. The Pakistani church at that time had less than two hundred titles in Urdu. Now that I had jumped the barrier and got published in the UK I thought it was very important to increase the numbers of Christian books in Pakistan though the editions would be much smaller than in the West. The need was so much greater in Pakistan.

My writing has been in four areas. First, I wrote material to help people to relate to Muslims, *Submitting to God*. *Introducing Islam and Women in Islam* are examples. Secondly, I wrote materials related to the history and growth of the Pakistani church, notably a biography of Henry Martyn which was published in Pakistan in Urdu and in India in English, as part of the jubilee celebrations of the Henry Martyn Institute in Hyderabad. It was later translated into Hindi and Marathi. *Thomas Valpy French, First Bishop of Lahore* was another biography published in Urdu about a man who was a very gracious sharer of good news. Thirdly, Bible Studies for

Enquirers and New Believers, Urdu in 1992 and English in 1994, was designed for Muslims. The fourth area was unexpected as far as I was concerned. Through my efforts at learning Punjabi by immersion in Punjabi villages I had come in contact with folk religion and the occult. There was no book in Urdu on this subject. After some years I knew that God wanted me to write on this subject and so I wrote Christ Supreme over Satan: Spiritual Warfare, Folk Religion and the Occult, which was published in Urdu in 1984, and in English in 1986.

Some of my articles appeared in about twenty languages including Korean, Kannada, Urdu, Dutch and English. From time to time I have written strategy papers as well as leaflets for special occasions. Some of my lectures have been videoed and I have also been involved in an English programme on the occult on Dutch TV for Europe.

The excellent professional studio at Columbia International University in South Carolina, USA, recorded for Distance Learning forty-six half-hour sessions of my course on Women in Islam in June 1998. Twenty-three audio-cassettes together with a handbook of supplementary materials were prepared for use worldwide either for credit for an MA course in Cross-cultural Studies or for personal use under the arrangements of the Muslim Studies Department of CIU. I continue to write articles, booklets and books in these four areas.

Retirement from Interserve in 1993 and church recommissioning

The transition to retirement from Interserve was easy and smooth. I continued to do the things I liked doing and had less committee responsibility. I was a freer agent, just accountable to two churches. God clearly guided me about the next five years (1994 to 1998 inclusive). With the prayers and support of Ruislip Baptist Church and Bishop Hannington Church in Hove, England, (where my brother and sister-in-law are members) and the encouragement of many others, I planned to continue writing, itinerant teaching and training of leaders who are keen to reach out and train others for work among Muslims. I took things at a slightly slower pace and put a greater emphasis on writing. I continued to live in my home in Paphos, on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, to which I had move in 1991. I am now on my second five year plan (1999

to 2003 inclusive).

I have seen many changes in Interserve over the years and the way it has developed and grown under good leadership and God's blessing. Nearly a year after I retired from Interserve my friends,

Bishop Jack Dain and his wife Hester, wrote on 24 November 1994, 'Last week we attended memorable Interserve meetings at All Souls Langham Place, London [...] Twenty candidates and returning partners were commissioned and we realized what enormous changes have taken place since Jack became General Secretary in 1947. At that time there were forty-five women missionaries working in India and Pakistan. Today the Fellowship numbers over four hundred partners, including men and women from several countries in Asia. They are at work in twenty-six countries from Mongolia through Asia to the Middle East and North Africa in a wide spectrum of specialized ministries but all aiming to make Christ known by deeds and by words.' I have witnessed all these changes and been a part of some of them.

I am deeply indebted to many who have prayed for me over the years including one member of the church at Ruislip who prayed for me every day from when I sailed in 1954 until her death at the age of ninety-one in 1998. Then there was Elizabeth (Elsie) Waugh, a missionary colleague, who out of the blue sent me £25 many years ago to help me in my writing for which I needed books. She prayed through the years until her death at ninety-one in 1998. Some of my brother Gareth's Cambridge friends joined in praying and contributing towards my support from 1960 until now. I know that others still pray for me daily, including my Pakistani student, colleague and friend, Munir. There are any others who pray regularly. I will never know what I owe to the prayers of others. I have experienced the kindness of God and answers to prayers especially in health matters. When I first had attacks of malaria which troubled me for years I rationalized that as I didn't die the first time, I supposed that I would be OK the next time. Those were the days of quinine injections. I was quite ill in 1964 with rheumatic fever. The Lord assured me that I would be completely healed. A friend prayed to that end using the words from Isaiah 53:5, 'by his wounds we are healed'. I had two years of sick leave in the UK in 1964 to 1966. I still remember being told by my

doctor, a Harley Street specialist, 'Go and rest for six months.' After that was completed he told me, 'Go and rest for a year'. I never lost the sense that the Lord was healing me and that I would be able to return to Pakistan. I learned to get around using buses and taxis and I was allowed to walk a mile on the flat every day. I discovered a new way of reading - read for an hour and rest for an hour. It improved reflection and I received many ideas for future writings. When I was quite ill in 1995 as a result of a possible complication from diabetes I asked God to give me fifteen more years of life (for writing) as he did to King Hezekiah.

I have experienced remarkable safety in travel. I once began to think that for planes to touch the landing strip and then go up again immediately was normal procedure until I enquired about it from a Christian leader who did more travelling than I. In a ministry that often involved physical and spiritual risk-taking I have always felt that the safest place is in the centre of the will of God. Sometimes I have been scared. Several of us visited Afghanistan in 1980 after the murder of two Finnish colleagues. There seemed to be a pall of fear over Kabul. God met us in our need and we were able to bring counsel and encouragement into a difficult situation.

'Why aren't you married?'

In 1 Corinthians 7:7 St Paul writes about the gift of celibacy. In the 1946 meeting in the Albert Hall one speaker mentioned that in serving God some might take a lonely road and not marry. I had a vague sense that this might apply to me. For years I did not embrace celibacy as positively as I might have done. I learned to thank God for being single in that I could not have maintained a lifestyle of thirty years of constant travel - travelling about six months of the year - never in one place longer than a couple of months, were I not single. As it was I was able to travel at short notice if necessary. I developed a fairly strong conviction that I would never marry but I did not rule it out. I never renounced marriage but I never sought it. Now I very much enjoy being single. I once had a conversation with an Arab student who was on standby for terrorist activities in the Middle East. He was studying in an Indian university but always on call. We were guests in the same Christian home. He asked me what my work was so I told him I was a writer. Naturally he asked

what I wrote about so I showed him what I had written that morning for a Bible study on St Paul's letter to the Romans. We had a short Bible study together after which he said, 'Do you mind if I ask you a question?' He asked, 'Why aren't you married?' I said, 'Before I answer you may I ask you a question?' 'Why aren't you married?' He replied, 'I am on special assignment.' So I said, 'So am I'. He understood perfectly. Later through the love of God he experienced in that home he became a follower of Jesus and sought a new way of life in yet another country seeking to share the good news about Jesus.

In the following chapters I will introduce to you some of my IFES colleagues. Some married when they were young, one later in life and the rest remained single. The question was not marriage or singleness but what is God's will. We are all still on pilgrimage trying to follow and obey our Lord until we come to the city of God (Revelation 21:2).