



January 7, 1976

76-04

'Man of the Soil' Aids
India's Agriculture

By Larry Jerden
Adapted for Baptist Press

If there has ever been a man who could be described as a "man of the soil," it would have to be Maurice Cook.

Cook was raised on a farm and managed the family farm for half a decade. Pursuing more knowledge of the earth's soil, he earned a PhD from Virginia Tech, and became a professor of agriculture. He wrote a textbook on soils, was named the distinguished professor at North Carolina State last year, and is the university's coordinator of academic affairs.

But for this year, Cook, a deacon at Hayes Barton Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C. is a missionary.

"Nancy (his wife) and I have been trying to grow in spiritual maturity for several years," he said of his calling to India, where he is on a one-year tour as an agricultural missionary. "We began to realize that there are ties that bind us to the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

"The more we thought about how richly God has blessed us...the more we thought we should do something to identify with the world's impoverished. So we concluded the least we could do was to devote one year of the prime of our lives to world missions."

After volunteering for a one-year special project assignment through the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, Cook was assigned to Bangalore, India, primarily to teach in the state agricultural college, located across the road from the Baptist Hospital.

In the year he is serving, Cook is working in three areas; the hospital, in nearby villages, and at the college.

"Ivan Miles, who served two one-year terms here concentrated mostly on village work," commented Cook, "and I will continue that. But I want to concentrate more on the hospital acreage."

The Bangalore Baptist Hospital has about 10 acres available for cultivation and for raising cattle. Cook says the land will yield enough food for the hospital kitchen to feed the patients, and for the cows to produce enough milk for hospital needs.

"It will be quite a challenge to get the most out of the 10 acres," he said. "The dietician wants to get it set up on a cycle so she will know what vegetables she will have at certain times of the year. This will enable her to plan menus a year in advance."

In addition to the strictly "practical" uses of the hospital's land, Cook said he also wants to plant fruit trees around the building, "both for food and esthetic purposes." He has also been asked to landscape the new student center across from the agricultural college.

In the villages, Cook is part of the total ministry approach of the India Baptist Mission. While medical and health professionals from the hospital teach health and basic nutrition, Cook plans to teach the villagers how to grow the things that will insure they can practice what they learn about good foods.

"In the village I want to get a small plot to demonstrate with," he said, "and let them see what the best crops for their soil will do with good fertilizers and procedures they can duplicate. They might not change their methods quickly, but they are very gracious people and they will listen to what you have to say."

Many of the needs he has been asked to help with in the villages are "more engineering than agriculture," he said, "but I'll try to help anyway I can."

"They need their tanks deepened so they will have a water supply through the dry season--giving them a third crop each year, and the road from the village to the main highway needs repair."

Cook said he would also like to interest some of his agricultural students at the college in going out into the village with him, because he feels that the Indians themselves have the resources and technology to increase their own food production.

But, he admits, the food situation in India is far from being easily solved.

"If you look at selected statistics," he said, "the picture can look quite good. There is more fertilizer being produced every year, and new fertilizer plants are under construction. Wheat production has doubled in the past 10 years.

"But," he continued, "the fertilizer is still too expensive for most village farmers, and population growth keeps ahead of total food production. And food production is just one aspect of the problem here. Marketing is a big problem."

Cook admits it is easy to become overwhelmed at the magnitude of the hunger problem, especially in a country like India, and especially when he is only going to spend one year in it.

"So I guess we just chip away at a small group among the many millions," he sighed.

The "small group" he hopes to have the most influence with are his agriculture students. He is engaged in both a "professional" relationship with them and a spiritual ministry through the student center. He is directing the center the year he is there, and, in addition to having groups for Bible study and other activities at the center, he also has a Bible study group of students in his home.

"I try to convey knowledge to the students in my classes," he said, "but even more I want to be able to communicate in informal contacts.

"Being located at the university is strategic. It is highly respected in India and my impression is that we have very good relations with the people there.

"We meet people in state government and in India's agribusiness, so there are subtle influences we can have."

"I am going to try to increase yields and bring better water to villages, yes," Cook declared, "but it has to be something more than that. It has to be something long lasting. That is my goal--to leave something lasting. I might not make it, but that's my goal."

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Bicentennial Feature

Continental Congress; 'No,'
To Baptists on Equality

Baptist Press
1/7/76

PHILADELPHIA (BP)--New England delegates to the Continental Congress on Oct. 15, 1774, branded Baptists as "fanatics" and declared that their charges of persecution were unfounded.

Samuel Adams told the committee that the Baptists making complaint were no more than "enthusiasts who make a show of suffering persecution."

In response to the Baptist appeal for equal rights with the state church of Massachusetts, John Adams was quoted as saying, "They might as well expect the stars to change their course as to expect Massachusetts to give up the established church."

The conference was attended by Samuel and John Adams, Robert Treat Paine, and several other New England statesmen. Baptists were represented by Issac Backus, James Manning, John Gano, Morgan Edwards and others. The Continental Congress had convened earlier to plan concerted action against England.

In a rousing plea for separation of church and state, Manning said, "We claim and expect the liberty of worshipping God according to our consciences, not being obliged to support a ministry we cannot attend."

Manning referred to the Baptists' stubborn fight to repeal the clergy tax whereby they are forced to support ministers of the state church.

Paine minimized the Baptist complaints, saying that the exemption laws had ended persecution and that no point of conscience was involved.

Backus promptly repudiated Paine's assertion. Referring to certificates which Baptists had to secure before they were exempt from the clergy tax, the Baptist leader declared that he could not submit such a certificate without acknowledging that civil authorities have power which belonged only to God.

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**Baptists Fight Hunger,
Poverty in Ethiopia**

By Phil Stfickland
For Baptist Press

Southern Baptist missionaries in the Menz district live only 217 kilometers from Addis Ababa, the capitol of Ethiopia. That's just 135 miles. But that 135 miles takes all day in a four-wheel Landrover.

The Menz district has a culture which may be as close to the ancient biblical culture as any in the world today. The people are shepherders and farmers. Transportation is by foot. The standard dress is long woolen robes. In the remote highlands, I felt the need to run my watch back about 2,000 years. But in these remote highlands lay perhaps the clearest answer to the crucial question, "Can Southern Baptists really do anything to help meet the world hunger crisis?"

There are four Southern Baptist missionary families in Menz.

Jerry Bledsoe is a veterinarian. He and his wife Rosie have two sons. Bledsoe is the second veterinarian ever appointed as a Southern Baptist missionary and is the only one now on the field. He leads a busy life. In the course of a year, he will treat over 5,000 sheep and up to a thousand cattle.

Bledsoe also has been trying to improve the local stock. He has introduced new kinds of cattle that give up to six liters of milk a day compared to one liter a day for the local cows. They also provide a third more meat than local cows when slaughtered.

Sixty improved heifers and seven bulls are now a part of the Menz district because of the mission's efforts. One of those bulls alone has been responsible for 50 new calves.

They have also introduced improved varieties of sheep that produce seven pounds of wool compared to one pound by local sheep. Of the 120 improved sheep introduced in Ethiopia last year, 70 were the result of the Menz missionaries' ministry. The chickens that they have traded to the people--a good chicken for a bad one--have already caused a noticeable increase in egg size and production all over the district.

Lyn Groce is an agriculturist. It seems to run in the family. His father-in-law was the first Southern Baptist agriculture missionary appointed to Africa. Groce currently is the only person in Ethiopia doing research in crop production at altitudes over 9,000 feet (Menz is high in the Ethiopian highlands).

He has been trying to determine what grows best in the area and has tried over 30 varieties of barley and wheat. Now he has 10 planted, from which he will choose the two or three best varieties.

Pasture grass has been more of a problem. He has planted 60 varieties and has yet to come up with a single improvement.

The real success has been the flax. Groce has been able to grow flax that is nearly twice as large as the local flax.

Ray Lindholm, meanwhile, is teaching the people that there is more that can be done with flax than just eating it (Menz is the one place in the world where the people eat flax). Lindholm wants to teach the people there how to use flax to make sacking, rope, thatch roofs, and adobe. And they are anxious to learn. He was the one who taught them to weave rugs, a project which brought nearly \$30,000 United States into the Menz district last year.

Then there is Dr. Sam Cannatta who treats people by the thousands. In clinic after clinic, they wait for Sam to come with his quick wit, ready sermon, and life-giving knowledge. For many people at Menz these mission efforts literally mean life; for others, hope. The truth of God in Christ, like good sheep and wheat, is spreading in Menz.

"When saw we thee hungry...? If ye have done it unto the least of these...ye have done it unto me." (Matt. 25:37) (BP)

Where hungry people live is irrelevant. Christians are called to respond whether the hungry live in the next block or in Calcutta. Distance may cushion us from the reality of the need, but distance does not effect the Christian's responsibility concerning that need.

The Bible clearly portrays a God who loves the poor and wants to deliver them from their poverty. Psalms 9:12 and Isaiah 41:17 are but two of scores of scriptures that speak to this point. The Bible also recognizes that the poverty problem will never completely be solved ("Ye have the poor always with you"), but leaves no doubt that the poor are to be recipients of our concern and ministry.

Responding to the poor is seen as an indication of genuine love (1 John 3:17). In both the Old and New Testaments it is made clear that those who neglect people in need are subject to God's judgment (Amos 5:11-12, Matt. 25:40-46).

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