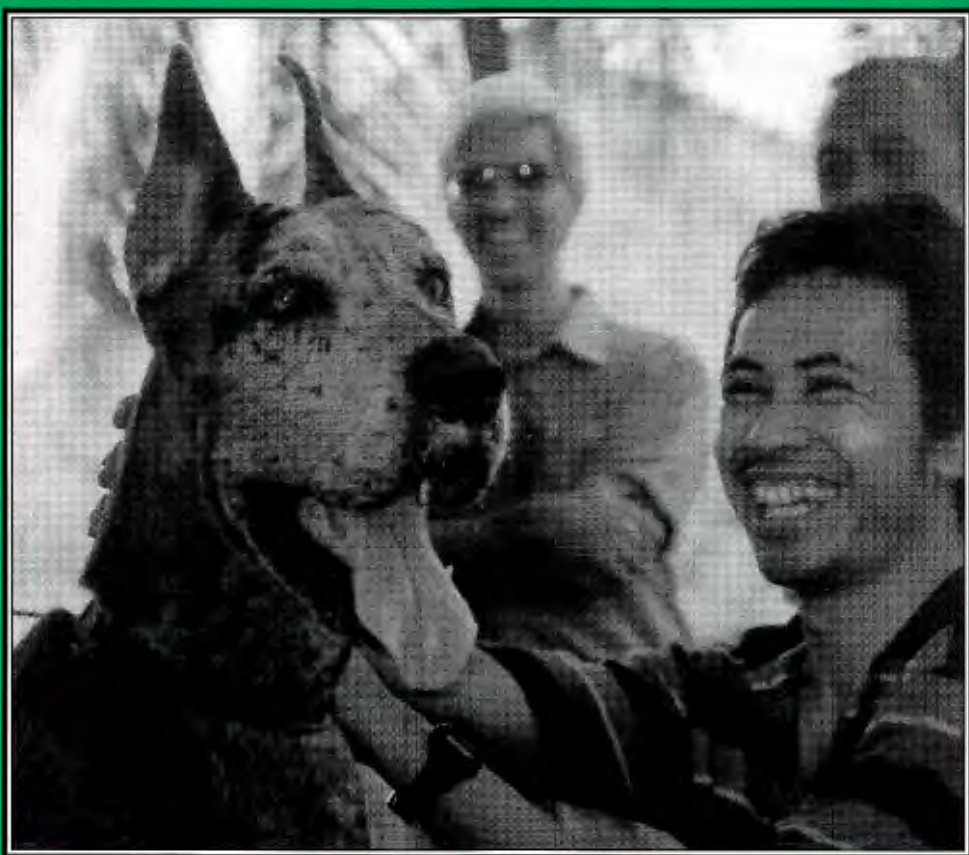


REFORMATION TODAY



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1996

153

The Carey Conference for Ministers

The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

8th-10th January 1997

Theme: Caring

Wednesday 8th Jan			Registration	<i>Robert Murray M'Cheyne</i> Geoff Thomas	<i>Preaching from the Old Testament</i> Baruch Maoz
Thursday 9th Jan	<i>Amos – who cared</i> John Currid	<i>Caring about inter-church unity</i> Earl Blackburn	<i>Isaiah 58 and caring for the disadvantaged</i> Peter Parkinson	PRAYER AND SHARING	<i>Hosea – who cared</i> Baruch Maoz
Friday 10th Jan	<i>Caring about theological education</i> Noel Espinosa	<i>Caring about evangelism</i> Erroll Hulse			

Please contact the conference secretary for further details and booking forms:
John Rubens, 22 Leith Road, Darlington, Co. Durham DL3 8BG.

Assistant Editor

Bill James is welcomed as assistant editor of *RT*. He and his wife Sharon have been assisting in the production of the magazine for some time.

Bill is Pastor of Emmanuel Evangelical Church, Leamington Spa.

International Fellowship of Reformed Baptists

A new IFRB brochure will be included in the next issue of
Reformation Today.

Cover picture: *There was excitement and joy when Amigo arrived to be chief watch-dog of the OMF campus in Jakarta. Note the pleasure on Jonah's face. Jonah is the janitor and in charge of security. In the background is missionary Eric Michael. It has been needful to step up security of the premises and the gift of the young Great Dane watch-dog was timely. Amigo is affectionate and gentle with the children who live at the headquarters but an effective discouragement to intruders.*

Editorial



*Setia Seminary, Jakarta, is being enlarged to accommodate more students.
At present 160 are being trained for missionary service.*

Robert Morrison and China Today

With a population of 1,200,000,000 China represents the largest nation, 21.3 percent, of the world. In addition to those living in mainland China there are about 56 million ethnic Chinese who live in other nations (21 million in Taiwan, 6 million in Hong Kong, about the same number in Malaysia, and two million in Singapore). Due to political tension Taiwan has recently featured in world news. Dr Stephen Tong, Mandarin-speaking evangelist of Jakarta, has booked a 50,000 seat stadium for a five night evangelistic crusade to be held in Taiwan in October 1996. Earlier this year the Communist regime in mainland China cancelled his crusade just before it was about to begin. Hong Kong is due to revert to China next year and nearby Macao in 1999. Macao was rented by the Portuguese in 1577 and became a Portuguese colony in 1887. Today the estimated population of Macao is 500,000.

It was from Macao that Robert Morrison made visits to Canton. When he began as a missionary China was completely closed. The emperor of China made an edict of capital punishment for anyone translating Christian literature into Chinese.

Recently American aircraft carriers representing awesome firepower stood guard to protect world peace between mainland China and Taiwan. In Morrison's day it was not America with high powered technology and aircraft carriers that commanded the oceans. Britannia ruled the waves. About the most stunning sight in those days was a fleet of British warships majestically powered by sails and decked with rows of cannons. A new epoch began after war with China in 1842. Hong Kong was ceded to the British and five so-called Treaty ports were opened. Before that China was impervious to entrance.

Our interest in Morrison is not academic. In terms of the approaching new millennium China is strategic. As in the opening of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan and many smaller nations in what used to be the Soviet Empire, China may also suddenly become open: open to the Reformed faith of our fathers but open also to the mindless chaos of the Toronto Blessing.

Estimates of the number of evangelical believers in China varies. There may be more real Christians there than in any other nation. The situation is precarious. The serious lack of teaching makes the Church in China vulnerable to errors and heresies of all kinds. With the good news of revival in some areas comes the bad news of wild sects and misguided practice. The need for Bibles is desperate. May the example of Robert Morrison stir us up in our interest, our prayers and our practical concern for China.

The English Puritans

While in Indonesia the editor was requested to introduce the English Puritans and describe the way in which their preaching and example was formulative in shaping the character of England. Some of that material is included in this issue. The occasion was the opening of a Theological Institute in Jakarta (see news). This Institute is designed to equip Christians working in various callings in society. In the process the students can earn a Master of Divinity degree (MDiv.). Seventy graduates have applied for the course in which a well-qualified dean will act as full time tutor, director and adviser. As described in the article, the Puritans believed in applying the gospel to every area of life. They provided an example which can inspire us today.

The International Fellowship of Reformed Baptists

Reformation Today which began in 1970 is the official journal for the IFRB which began in Toronto in 1990. With this issue comes a new brochure. Much can be achieved to promote unity and co-operation between Reformed Baptists. We greatly value unity with our Presbyterian friends and this is stressed within the brochure. In many countries those who embrace the heritage of the 16th-century Reformation are few in number and limited in resources. These sober facts underline the need for unity and co-operation.

Persistence in Prayer

John Palmer

In Luke 11 we read Jesus' response to his disciples' request, 'Lord, teach us how to pray as John taught his disciples.' In reply Jesus gave that outline which is known as 'The Lord's Prayer'. However, as was so characteristic of our Lord's blessed ministry on earth, he did not limit his answer to the self-perceived needs of the questioner. Instead he took the opportunity to teach vital and encouraging truths about the nature, duty, privilege and reward of persistent prayer.

Jesus began with a parable (v 5-7). He outlined the case of a man who, faced with an unexpected guest at midnight, knocked up a friend of his to ask for the loan of three loaves of bread. 'Put yourself in the position of the man thus disturbed,' said Jesus. 'Which of you, faced with such a demand, would tell your friend to go away?'

For his hearers, such a course of action would indeed have been unthinkable. It is possible that we have known what it is to be called upon by an unexpected guest in the middle of the night, but for most of us this does not happen very often. In first-century Palestine it would have been far more common. Because of the extremity of the noon-day heat people often travelled in the early morning, broke their journey at some convenient inn and continued in the evening. Thus any unexpected delay could well result in their needing hospitality at such an hour. Nor did they have telephones to warn of their coming! Moreover, custom demanded that such a guest must be provided for, at whatever inconvenience to the host.

So the man went to his friend. We need carefully to note the circumstances. First of all, there was an urgent need. He did not go and say, 'I have set a banquet before my friend, but really another few courses would be useful.' The request was for bread, the staple diet. This is absolutely in line with Jesus' teaching in verse 3, that we are to ask our heavenly Father to supply our daily bread (not cream cakes!) – that is, what we need for life itself.

Secondly, the request was made from unselfish motives. The man had not found through carelessness that he did not have enough for his own evening meal. Through no fault of his own, a need arose; not for himself, but for a friend. Yet he was the one through whom the provision must be channelled.

Thirdly, it was a friend he approached for help. In his need he went to one with whom he knew he had ties, which meant that he could be confident of his help if at all possible. Indeed, true friendship involves obligation.

But there was a problem. The descriptions indicate that these were humble men. Such commonly lived in one-roomed houses which had a raised area at one end where the whole family slept. In such circumstances there would obviously be a difficulty in opening the door without disturbing the entire family. So there would be inconvenience involved in answering his friend's request.

Nevertheless, Jesus assumed that his hearers would agree when he asserted that no one, if he were truly a friend, would answer brusquely telling his friend to 'go away'. To drive the point home, he added (v 8) that even if he would not help the man because he was his friend, he would do so because of the man's 'importunity' (KJV). This is a word not often used nowadays, but combines the meanings of 'boldness' and 'persistence'. In the parable, the thought is that the man had to answer his importunate neighbour, if only because he wanted to get some sleep.

Now as Jesus was teaching about prayer, clearly the man being asked for bread is meant to represent God. At this point it becomes necessary to see the contrasts between even the best earthly friend and God. In the first place, God is a loving Father; and because he is God, his love is without limit. It can be relied upon, wholly and implicitly, unlike the love of even the best of men, which has a limit because man is sinful. In the second place, God, unlike man, does not sleep. Therefore, he can never be 'taken by surprise' when we ask him for anything. Before a word is on our tongue, he knows it completely (Ps 139:4).

Taking these two truths together, we are to come to the conclusion that God is always willing, indeed eager, to give us what is needed, in answer to our prayers. We are to trust that God is like this and on this basis we are to come to him in prayer. His throne is to us a throne of grace (Heb 4:16).

So, said Jesus, coming to the first lesson which is the purpose of the parable (v 9-10), if we believe that God is like this, we will have faith to keep on asking, seeking and knocking, until we are answered. In Greek these verbs are in the present continuous tense; and in this fact lies the whole point. It is importunity that we must cultivate. This is what God wants. We are to lay siege to heaven, fully confident that the answer will come, in God's perfect timing.

This is a truth which, rightly, raises certain questions in our minds. Answers to some of these are attempted here.

1. For what can we persist?

It is vital first of all to understand that the great promise, expressed as a general principle in verses 9-10, must be interpreted in the light of the parable and that Jesus taught this parable to illustrate the application of this lesson. Now the parable clearly teaches, first, that what we seek from God in the way of persistent

expectancy must be needed. It is paganism, not Christianity, to believe that we can receive whatever we ask of God if only we shout loudly enough. This is the principle on which the priests of Baal acted on Mount Carmel.

We are limited in our understanding. Something which we might think is absolutely necessary to the right government of the universe may well not be so in the eyes of God, whose thoughts are wise and infinitely wiser than ours. We should thank God that he does not automatically give all that we ask. This is especially true when we remember how ill-considered our prayers can sometimes be. D Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, 'I thank God that he is not prepared to do anything that I may chance to ask him.'¹

Moreover, in the parable the need was not that of the man who was asking; he had had his supper! He did ask for something specific, but only in order to give to someone else who was in need. So we too should approach God in persistent prayer for that which we must have in order to supply the needs of others.

Such requests will be primarily for spiritual blessings, as we see in verse 13. However, it would be wrong to limit this principle unnecessarily. There are surely occasions when it is right that we ask God for material blessings – like money – in order that we can give it to others. Remember the example of George Müller, supporting his orphans by praying to God to meet their needs – prayers which God in his love often answered in wonderful ways. In verse 3, too, we are instructed to pray, 'Give *us* today *our* daily bread.' Do we not have poor Christians in our congregations, or know of some in other parts of the world? Let us not be slack in praying that our heavenly Father will bless us with the money which he would have come to them through our hands. This is not the kind of praying which the 'Prosperity' teachers promote. If we think about it, in motive it is the exact opposite.

Yet we will miss the point of this teaching if we relate it only to material blessings. We are to seek grace from God – 'good gifts', 'the Holy Spirit' (v 11-13) – in order that we might live in a way which is good and useful and brings glory to him. There are many applications of this; let us just consider two.

In 2 Corinthians 1:3-6, Paul writes that God 'comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God... if we are comforted, it is for your comfort'. Now it is right in our afflictions to seek the comfort of our loving God, but it is better to seek it with the conscious desire that we might be able to help others when in turn they need comfort, sharing our experience of God to help them through their troubles. In any church there is surely plenty of opportunity for this. In our fellowship, a couple who lost an infant son gained great help in this way from two others, one in our church and one from another, who had been through the same heart-rending experience; they were better able to help than I who have thankfully been spared such sorrow.

Turning to Colossians 3:16, we find ourselves enjoined: 'Let the word of God dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.' To make us all wise to salvation, and in our Christian life, is the purpose for which God has given us his Word (2 Tim 3:15-17). He never intended growth in heavenly wisdom to take place in each of us as isolated individuals. Indeed, it would be hard to prove from the New Testament that Christian growth can take place except within the context of a local church. So here in Colossians we have a powerful motive for hearing the Word preached, for Bible study and meditation, and for memorisation of Scripture; namely to teach both the doctrine and practice to others. How blessed is the church where each member seeks to do this lovingly and effectively.

2. What is our attitude to be?

We are to come in prayer to God as our Father (v 2). This means that when we pray we are consciously to be depending upon that relationship. In confidence we come to the throne of the Most High God, because as his adopted children it is to us a throne of grace (Heb 4:16). We are to have a childlike confidence that he will do anything we ask which is in accordance with his will (1 John 5:14-15); that if our prayer is denied, it is only because in his perfect wisdom and love our heavenly Father knows that it is better so. John Owen says, 'Such souls go to God: and they are not satisfied with what they have done, and they go again; and somewhat still abideth with them, and they go to him again; and the heart is not yet emptied, they will go again to him, that he may have no rest.'²

It is because God is our loving Father that we can come with such boldness. 'If anyone should ask me,' wrote D M Lloyd-Jones, 'what I regard as the greatest defect in most Christian lives, I would say that it is our failure to know God as our Father as we should know him.'³ Perhaps nowhere is such a failure more evident than when we fail to persist in prayer because of it.

Consider Abraham as an example of such boldness, as recorded in Genesis 18. He pleads for Sodom, 'beating down' the Lord until he promises to spare the city for the sake of ten righteous men. Only one who is assured of his relationship to God can pray like this with confidence that God will not smite him down instantly for his presumption.

Boldness in prayer is one thing; irreverence is quite another. Some teaching on prayer is frankly blasphemous. It directs people to approach God with an attitude which should not be tolerated by an earthly father, much less the holy Creator of all. God is not an extremely handy person to have around because he is at our beck and call. He is the God who should be feared because he has the power to destroy both body and soul in hell (Luke 12:5). The only reason that will not be our portion is because of his amazing grace to us as guilty sinners.

So we must approach him in humility, which is by no means the opposite of boldness. Genesis 18 also teaches this in no uncertain terms. Abraham, so bold in his requests, yet says, 'Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes... May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak... Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord... May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more' (v 27,30, 31,32). Here are humility and boldness beautifully blended.

In this context we can also consider Jacob's prayer in Genesis 32:9-12. He confidently pleaded the promises of protection which God had given him, as he approached Esau who, last time they had been together, had been determined to kill him. Yet his plea was based on God's faithfulness. He confessed his own unworthiness of God's love. When that night he wrestled with God, he surely did so, as Charles Wesley put it, 'confident in self-despair'. Our confidence in God, which leads to our boldness as we approach him, must be rooted in the knowledge of ourselves as sinners which will always produce humility.

3. Why does God make us persist?

Some Christians have problems with the whole concept of God telling us to persist in prayer. 'If God loves us,' they reason, 'why doesn't he give us what we ask for straightaway, if he is going to give it to us anyway?' The question is valid; but it has valid answers. The most obvious is that stated in Isaiah 55:8-9, 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the LORD. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.' There are probably reasons why God delays answering our prayers which we will never know, certainly never on earth. As creatures – and certainly as sinful creatures – we are unable to understand them. However, there are also reasons which we can understand. Here are seven; this is not an exhaustive list.

i. To try our faith and make it grow. In Matthew 15:21-28 we learn of Jesus' dealing with the Canaanite woman who persisted in seeking deliverance for her daughter, even when he had seemingly refused to grant deliverance. In the end, however, he granted her request, on the basis of her great faith. This faith was expressed in her persistence and her understanding of his gracious nature. Her faith is recorded for our encouragement, to spur us to a like faith. Various trials come from God to test our faith and develop perseverance (James 1:2-3); and delayed answers are surely one of them. God would have us to be great in faith.

We must again remember that this is a world away from believing that the more we pray the more God is likely to change his mind. Robert Traill is wise here: 'No importunity did ever, or can ever prevail with God, to do that for us, or give that to us, that he hath no mind to do or give. All he doth and gives, is in love. Yet he puts

his people on importunity in asking, as if he were unwilling to give; when indeed it is that they may be more fit to receive, and that he may give more.’⁴

ii. So that we check and understand our motives more carefully. As the answer to our prayers is delayed, we ought to be asking ourselves this question, ‘Why am I asking for this? Is it from concern for God’s glory? Is it out of love for my fellow-men? Or is there selfishness, or some other unworthy motive, here?’ We should if possible always search our motives before we pray at all. Yet this is not always possible. If God were to answer all those prayers which he does answer the moment that we first asked, such opportunity for self-examination and correction would disappear entirely.

Sometimes as we examine ourselves we discover that, while what we are praying for seems to be good, our motives are far from pure. Do we really pray for the success of our gospel preaching only so that God is glorified and sinners are saved? Is there no selfish desire to be accounted ‘successful’ as a preacher, or as a church, in what we seek? Sometimes God waits until we have repented from wrong motives before he answers right prayers.

iii. So that we see more fundamental needs for which we should pray instead. This is closely related to the previous point. We may be praying for God to provide ‘daily bread’ for an unemployed Christian, and as we continue asking, we realise that we should pray for God to provide him with a job instead. Or we ask God to grant joy and peace to a believer who seems to lack them; but eventually, we come to see that this lack is due to some sin in his life which he refuses to acknowledge. So we begin instead to pray to the Lord to bring them to repentance from that sin. This means that we are now praying for what will initially bring the opposite of the joy and peace for which we first prayed; but which is necessary first, before God can rightly grant the other blessings.

iv. So that we are more fit for the blessing when it comes. Hopefully we are continually growing in wisdom, humility and other graces. An answer long delayed may lead us to say, when it comes, ‘I am glad that God did not give me this blessing when first I asked for it. Then I was not fitted to receive it without pride’ or, ‘Then I would not have used it wisely.’ Of course, we may not always have enough wisdom or humility to realise that this is why God delayed the answer to our prayers, even when this in fact is his reason!

v. So that we will value the gift more. Again, this is linked to the last point. Consider Jacob, wrestling with God. Remember, he had set himself apart to pray; this is why he had sent his company on ahead. Did he not value more the blessing of God which he had received at the cost of physical injury? Surely he did, for he had gained more than he had sought, a sight of the One whose name is Wonderful, and his personal, verbal blessing. Blessings gained at the cost of much wrestling and many tears are blessings prized indeed. Jonathan Edwards writes, ‘Fervent

prayer many ways tends to prepare the heart. Hereby is excited a sense of our need, and of the value of the mercy which we seek, and at the same time earnest desires for it; whereby the mind is more prepared to prize it, to rejoice in it when bestowed, and to be thankful for it.⁵⁵ John Bradford expressed it thus, 'He lingereth to grant our requests... that we might acknowledge his gifts with more gratitude and thankfulness when we shall obtain the same.'⁵⁶

vi. Because all things are not yet in place for God to give what we seek. All things work together for good to those the Lord has called (Rom 8:28). One way in which this works out is in the beautiful fitting together in God's providence of what does occur. God's timing is always perfect. How often do we – or should we – find ourselves saying, 'We praise you, Father, that you did this at just this time – not earlier or later.' If the provision or working of God for which we are thus praising him is something we sought in prayer, we see why it was that our prayer was not answered immediately.

vii. Because all of our life is lived in the context of a spiritual warfare. The Bible clearly teaches us that this warfare is primarily against 'principalities and powers'. It is mostly carried on by forces unseen to us in the heavenly realm. What we see occurring on earth are often – perhaps always – the results of these spiritual battles. So Daniel was told by the man who appeared to him in a vision that his prayers had been heard as soon as they began; but that the answer was delayed for three weeks, because the messenger was delayed by the 'prince of Persia' (clearly a fallen angelic being) for twenty-one days (Dan 10:12-13).

We do not know all the reasons why our omnipotent God, who is the 'Lord of hosts', does not choose to give instant victories to his angelic forces in answer to our prayers. Why have so many lands remained closed to the gospel for so long in the face of so much impassioned pleading by God's people? It is not that the Lord's arm is shortened that he cannot save. What we do know is that while Moses lifted up his hands to the Lord, Israel prevailed over Amalek (Exod 17:8-13). Is it not entirely possible that angels, though sinless, need to have their faith in God developed by exercise, by having to fight long and hard spiritual battles in dependence on him, with victory not immediately apparent?

4. Who is so to persist?

In verse 10, Jesus tells us that everyone who asks receives. This instruction is given to his disciples through all ages, to encourage us to ask. So all have a part in this promise. It was not given to a select few, an 'elect of the elect' – say to pastors, or to those given a particular 'gift of prayer'. The promise is for all. In James 5:17 we are reminded of the power of Elijah in prayer – commanding the rain to cease, and to recommence. Yet the point James is making is that he was a man just like us. There was nothing special about Elijah which gives us any reason to suppose that God will not hear our prayers in the same way. He does! For many of us have had

the joy of seeing God answering our prayers to bring sinners from darkness to light. What is answered prayer for drought or rain compared to this?

There is of course a restriction which is fundamental. For any prayer to be answered we must have a relationship with God. Jesus gave this great promise of answer to persistent prayer to those who are his disciples (v 1) and who can therefore call God 'Father' (v 2). His illustration was of a man seeking help from a friend, not a stranger or an enemy. Having this relationship, however, we have this privilege, however weak, insignificant, or young a Christian. This is why God has given it to us. He wants each of us to persist in bold prayer! It is his gift to his children in his perfect love. We need to cultivate this attitude of soul. 'The most fatal thing in Christian life is to be satisfied with passing desires,' wrote D M Lloyd-Jones.⁷

E M Bounds describes such prayer thus: 'Restless desire, restful patience, and strength of grasp are all embraced in it. It is not an incident, or a performance, but a passion of souls. It is not a want, half-needed, but a sheer necessity... Importunate praying never faints or grows weary; it is never discouraged; it never yields to cowardice, but is buoyed up and sustained by a hope that knows no despair, and a faith which will not let go... it never prepares itself to quit praying and declines to rise from its knees until an answer is received.'⁸

Now all who have ever tried know that prayer – particularly such wrestling in prayer – is far from easy. Satan does not only 'tremble when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees'. He also attacks that saint – and the strongest too – with all the weapons in his armoury! Yet 'he who is in us' (the Holy Spirit) 'is greater than he who is in the world' (Satan) (1 John 4:4). God's omnipotent grace is at work to help us to pray, because he wants us to do so. As we pray, God is for us, not against us. We may not always be conscious of this; but it is so. We need to believe it, and act upon it!

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Robert Morrison (1782-1834)



Robert Morrison based on a painting by G G Chinnery

Editor

Not the right time!

The worst possible time has sometimes proved to be the best time for gospel work to be promoted. Jesus sent his disciples back to Jerusalem at the very time that the dreadful scenes of his humiliation were still vividly in their minds. A missionary writing in 1921 viewed Morrison's enterprise in perspective and wrote:

'He came alone in the face of the opposition of the greatest commercial organisation in the world, the East India Company. No one was waiting for him. He would find no home prepared to welcome him, no facilities for language study, no readiness of people to receive him. They wanted nothing of what he had to offer. They had awakened as yet to no realisation of their need and no thought that the outer barbarian world had anything to give to them.'

After six years of work in China on July 16th 1814, Robert Morrison baptised Tsae A Ko, the first convert and firstfruits of Protestant missions in China. Morrison recorded this prayer, 'May he be the firstfruits of a great harvest; one of millions who shall believe and be saved from the wrath to come!' Nobody can accurately

assess how many Christians there are on mainland China today. Those who have studied the situation from the inside estimate from 25 to 80 million Bible-believing Protestant Christians, almost all of whom worship in house groups.

Our interest in Morrison is not academic. In terms of the approaching new millennium China is strategic. As in the opening of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan and many smaller nations in what used to be the Soviet empire, so suddenly China may become open: open to the Reformed faith of our fathers but also open to the mindless chaos of the Toronto Blessing. In the meantime the need for Bibles is desperate. May the example of Robert Morrison stir us up in our interest and our prayers for China.

Early life and preparation

Robert Morrison was born at Morpeth in Northumberland on January 5th 1782. When he was three years old his parents moved to Newcastle. He was given a basic education by his maternal uncle who was a school teacher. At this early stage he began to show an unusual ability to concentrate and retain material. At 12 he was able to repeat Psalm 119 from beginning to end. For just a short time he tended to keep bad company; this ended when at the age of 15 he was soundly converted. He was apprenticed to work in his father's shoe tool home industry and this involved working with his hands twelve hours a day. He worked with his Bible or some other book in front of him. So eager was he to use every moment that he moved his bed to the workshop in order to maximise study time. The little that he earned he saved to pay a tutor to teach him Latin, Hebrew and Greek.

Through reading missionary books and magazines the call to be a missionary was engraved on his heart. He kept a detailed daily diary. In it he recorded his hope that he would be sent to the most difficult part of the world. That prayer was certainly answered! He was affectionately attached to his mother and morally obligated to support her. She died when he was 20. He then felt free to embark on preparation for his vocation. He reached London on his 21st birthday where he began his studies at Hoxton Academy. His ability to apply himself to study was extraordinary. Soon he surpassed even the more advanced students. He combined practical Christian service with his academic work. At weekends he preached in villages around London.

The workshop at home declined. His father urged him to return. This he resolutely but lovingly refused. Instead he applied to the London Missionary Society. He was accepted by LMS after his first interview and instructed to proceed for further studies at the Missionary Academy at Gosport where the famous Dr Bogue was principal. Here he continued for 14 months before taking up studies in medicine in London.

Mastering the Chinese language

While on a flight home from Singapore I was waiting in a queue. The only magazine on a nearby rack was Chinese. Only by looking at the photos could I know how to hold it the right way up! How does one go about learning a language like that without the help of an expert? How did Morrison learn? At that time there was a minister called William Moseley who conducted a nationwide campaign to draw attention among church leaders in England to the desperate need of China with its population of 350 million. Dr Moseley was delighted to discover Robert Morrison and he introduced him to Yong Sam-tuk a young man recently arrived from China to learn English. Arrangements were made for Sam-tuk to share the same home with Robert. Immediately the two began language work. In spite of Yong Sam-tuk having a bad temper the arrangement was sensational in terms of success. Throughout his life Morrison laboured ceaselessly at Chinese. Irrespective of cost he purchased everything available in Chinese that would assist his knowledge of Chinese culture.

In 1806 Morrison returned to Newcastle to say goodbye to his father and relatives. He preached 13 times in the Newcastle area and made a short visit to Scotland.

Since the great British East India Company was implacably opposed to missionaries and prevented their passage to India or the Far East, Morrison had to take a ship to New York. He loved America and enjoyed the warm-hearted hospitality and fellowship for which Americans are so well known. A delightful incident occurred during this visit. As a matter of courtesy, a family gave Morrison their own bedroom. Beside the bed was a little girl's cot. On waking in the morning the child was alarmed to see a stranger in her parents' bed. Looking into his face she said, 'Man, do you pray to God?' Morrison responded 'O yes, my dear, every day; God is my best friend!' Immediately reassured the little girl went back to sleep.

The fierce attitude of the Chinese was notorious. Efforts to reach them were regarded as ludicrous. This general cynicism about China as a mission field is reflected in an incident in New York. It was the business of a merchant ship owner to monitor the passenger list. 'And so, Mr Morrison, you really expect that you will make an impression on the idolatry of the great Chinese empire?' 'No, sir!' replied Morrison, 'I expect God will!'

Conditions in Canton

A set of substantial two storey buildings had been erected on a site beside the river leading to the harbour. These buildings consisted of offices, apartments

and warehouses. During Morrison's time at Canton the English, Dutch and Americans were the only occupants of these buildings, at least until 1830, when the French arrived. This area, known as 'The Factories' was outside Canton where no foreigners were allowed unless by special permission. The Chinese made life as difficult as possible. Rowing on the river was forbidden. Chinese servants were not permitted. No women were allowed to live in the area allotted to the foreigners. A missionary who came later described the place as the nearest to a prison that one could imagine. Those whose business kept them in 'The Factories' made themselves as comfortable as possible and when Morrison arrived he was shocked by the luxurious table. When we think of his relatively poor background we can understand his feelings. He opted to save money and eat Chinese food but this backfired as it had an adverse effect on his health. Oddly he never had a second thought about the expense of books and his library was always expanding. The money spent would shock our wives today! Soon after his arrival he had 1,200 Chinese books. He ignored threats to his own life and the death sentence threat to anyone assisting foreigners with translation, and employed two Chinese, one of whom kept a phial of poison in case his employment was discovered. The man preferred suicide than to fall into the cruel hands of officialdom. Morrison counselled them to ignore the threats and eventually they became much more relaxed about it.

Initially Morrison worked on consolidating a mastery of the language and then the priority was the writing of a book of grammar for the Chinese language. Following that he set about writing an English-Chinese dictionary. These were prerequisites for translating the Bible into Chinese. In due course the British and Foreign Bible Society contributed more than £10,000 to the printing of the Scriptures in Chinese. In those days that was a huge sum of money. The British East India Company contributed £12,000 to the printing of Morrison's English-Chinese dictionary.

At any one time there could be 3,000 British sailors at the harbour at Canton. Morrison always showed the heart of a compassionate pastor and always felt deeply about their spiritual needs and sought to do his best for them. Sometimes sailors could be kept for up to six months in a foreign port. Regular travellers today keep a record of what diseases they have been inoculated against. In those days there was no such protection and about 100 sailors a year died at Canton.

Marriage and employment

February 20th 1809, was a memorable day in Morrison's life. On the same day that he married Mary Morton at Macao he received from the East India

Company the offer of a position as Chinese translator with a very substantial salary. Of course the Company policy was pragmatic. Translators were indispensable. Living in Canton was not attractive even at a high salary.

Ideally missionaries should be sent out from a local church or group of churches (Acts 13:3). On idealistic grounds some today oppose missionary societies *per se*. We cannot answer the criticism made of missionary societies. There are flaws. There is inevitable doctrinal compromise but not of primary truths. The higher principle of obedience to the great commission must prevail. The continents of the world have been opened by cooperative efforts for the simple practical reason that they would not yield to the efforts of individuals although I am sure that exceptions could be found. Morrison was supported by the reputable London Missionary Society (LMS). But even with that support he could have been expelled at any time through the political power of the East India Company. By working for the Company he suffered the disadvantage of having to lose missionary time but he secured his tenure in Canton.

Morrison suffered greatly in his family. He was a man who loved family life. The first sorrow to himself and his wife Mary was the loss of their first-born son on the day of his birth. By 1815 Mary was in such poor health that the only hope for her survival was to return to England. She sailed with Rebecca aged two and a half and John Robert aged nine months. Little did Morrison know that he would not see his wife and children for another six years! When they returned in 1821 it was only a matter of weeks before Mary contracted cholera and within two days she was dead. This was devastating. Rebecca was cared for by friends at Macao, and taking John, now aged seven, Morrison returned to work at Canton.

The establishment of a base at Malacca

From the beginning it was clear that the vastness of the work that lay ahead would call for an army of missionaries, men with appropriate gifts and resilience. The first to be recognised as having the qualities was William Milne, formerly a shepherd boy from Scotland. Dr Bogue recommended him as the most suitable candidate and he was sent out by the LMS to join Morrison. Robert was overjoyed at the arrival of William and his wife who was as gifted as he was. They were warmly welcomed at Macao. However Macao was controlled by Roman Catholics who were alarmed at the strengthening of the Protestant cause and would not give the Milnes permission to stay. Milne left soon and set off on a long missionary journey to Chinese settlements. He took with him 2,000 Chinese New Testaments, 10,000 tracts and 5,000 copies of a catechism that had been prepared in Chinese by Morrison. On his journey he was wonderfully encouraged by the famous founder of Singapore and

lieutenant governor of Java, Sir Stamford Raffles, who gave him letters of introduction to influential British officers and indigenous princes.

It had been decided to set up a substantial college and missionary base at Malacca on the Western coast of Malaysia. Here all kinds of missionary activity could be undertaken without the constant threat that was the case at Canton and Macao. Printing presses could be set up. New missionaries could receive language training. In addition the base was designed to be used in local evangelism with the setting up of a Christian school. To lead the way Morrison gave a gift of one thousand pounds. Further generous gifts were received and a substantial, well-designed building was erected on a suitable site. This work, directed mostly by William Milne, was to prove a principal advantage in the future evangelisation of China.

To add to Morrison's sorrows Milne's wife died in 1812 aged 35. Milne himself died at the early age of 37. He had assisted Morrison in the work of completing the translation of the whole Bible into Chinese. His death coming so soon after the death of Mary brought the deepest sorrow to Morrison whose spirituality can be seen in a letter he wrote to a friend:

'I have wept much on being left alone and desolate; and I have wept over my own sinfulness. I would that my heart were more set on heavenly things. I desire to be found actively engaged in my proper duties, waiting for the coming of my Lord... In consequence of Dr Milne's death I am going down to visit Malacca in February or March next, and have deferred my visit to England – indeed, I may entirely change my resolution, for none of the missionaries now in Malacca have made much progress in the Chinese language. A missionary as efficient as William was not every day to be found – but still the Lord of the harvest can thrust forth other labourers. I have now been fifteen years in this country and one half of these quite alone, but God has borne with my infirmities and has blessed the labours of my hands.'

Two years in England

With the death of Dr Milne it was imperative that Morrison spend time at Malacca where he worked for some time instructing new missionaries in the Chinese language. In 1823 he returned to England. On the way back he stopped at Capetown where he met Robert Moffatt. Back at home he was much in demand as a speaker. He worked hard to promote missionary interest in China. He set up workshops that would support the Academy at Malacca. His work in Canton was well known and he was introduced to King George IV.

In 1826 he married Elizabeth Armstrong of Liverpool. The same year the family returned to Macao. Rebecca was thirteen and John eleven. For the next six years Morrison spent six months of each year at Canton and the other six at Macao with his family. Relationships with the Chinese were on the decline and that, together with considerations of health, precipitated the extreme conclusion that the family would have to return to England. By that time there were four little children and together they set off with Elizabeth to England in December 1833. Robert never heard whether they arrived safely. His health deteriorated steadily and he died at Canton on August 1st 1834 aged 52. Unlike his contemporary, the pioneer missionary Adoniram Judson who was regular in daily exercise, Morrison never had that inclination or gift. In his work habits he was his own worst enemy and he placed intolerable strains on his body. He was held in highest esteem by the British ambassador to China, Lord Napier, who himself died shortly after Morrison. Napier's death was attributed to stress in dealing with the breakdown of relationships with the Chinese.

The character of Robert Morrison

Dr Morrison (the University of Glasgow conferred a Doctor of Divinity degree upon him in recognition of his Chinese work) evidenced the fruit of the Spirit as described in Galatians 5. He was endued most of all with the humility and meekness of his Saviour. His friends could hardly believe his submissive response to unfair treatment from the East India Company. He did not retaliate or grumble and in every major instance the Company reversed decisions that had been adverse for him.

His quiet and very serious nature was admired by the Chinese. His peaceable demeanour combined with remarkable reserves of patience and perseverance made him an ideal arbitrator. Situations that seemed hopeless were retrieved by his gentle yet firm manner.

He learned to mortify the temptation to fear. Included in the hazards he experienced was an all-out mutiny on the way to China in 1826. Guns blazed and fierce cutlass fighting broke out. Morrison's intervention prevented disaster for everyone on board. On the journey to America in 1808 the ship was delayed so long on the Atlantic by storms and damage that the threat of death by thirst and starvation was fast becoming a reality. When all were near to despair, deliverance came in the form of a sinking ship. The crew was saved together with enough food and water to complete the voyage.

Morrison believed in the absolute priority of prayer. Writing to his son John Robert he listed points of advice the first of which was: Mentally pray for

divine help in all affairs. His idea of giving was wholehearted investment of all his personal wealth in the work of the gospel.

What Morrison achieved

Morrison's pioneering efforts awakened missionary interest in Bible-believing communities throughout the world. A steady stream of missionaries increased until there were over 8,000 working all over China. Those who followed were able to take advantage of his work in pioneering the way with a Chinese grammar, a Chinese dictionary and the whole Bible in Chinese. There are few who are given the privilege of being unique. Morrison was unique in that he was the first. The establishment of the Anglo-Chinese Academy at Malacca was a joint effort with William Milne. That formed an ideal base from which to advance the work into the Chinese world.

Another pioneer was Hudson Taylor who caught the vision for evangelising the inland regions of China. Taylor went to China in 1853. He overworked and returned to England with broken health. He sailed a second time for China in 1866, this time accompanied by fifteen missionary companions. Hudson Taylor established the China Inland Mission. By 1931 the total number of missionaries on the field exceeded 1,300, the largest missionary agency in China. Because of the Communist seizure of power, the Mission was compelled to withdraw in 1951. Since then the missionaries have been redeployed in nine countries (Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia).

In concluding this brief biography it must be reported that Morrison was blessed in his family. His children proved faithful, John Robert especially so. At the age of nineteen he was appointed successor to his father as Chinese secretary and interpreter to the British Embassy. He possessed his father's gifts, spiritual, linguistic and natural to a high degree. He was the chief agent of negotiation through the war with China in 1842 and in arranging the peace treaties that followed. When he died in an epidemic at Macao aged only 28 he was buried beside his parents. Sir Henry Pottinger, in reporting the death of John Robert Morrison to the British government, declared that there was no one on earth who could replace him and that his loss was a national calamity.

May all this stir us to a more active interest in the needs of China today – needs which are as vast as China is vast.



Pramano Pangestu, an engineer at Malang with Rev Sutjipto Subeno of Surabaya on the left



Susan Subeno and daughter Samantha

Indonesia

In *RT152* David Brighton gave a description of the progress of the gospel in Indonesia. *The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith* is now published in the Indonesian language. On page 23 of this issue of *RT* there is a photo of Mr Yan Kawatu with the newly published Confession which provides an excellent teaching model for several large Baptist denominations in Indonesia.

Recently the editor returned from seminars held in the cities of Surabaya and Malang. The subject of the seminars was 'Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility'. The main reason for the visit was to participate in the opening of the new Institute of

Theology in Jakarta under the leadership of Stephen Tong. The aim is to equip graduates to apply biblical principles in their secular callings. Seventy graduates have applied to study for M Div in theology. A full-time dean, Joshua Lie, will provide the tutorial help needed. The Institute is in need of a Reformed library replete with reference books old and new. Any help that can be given will be greatly appreciated.

There were preaching engagements in a number of churches. While in Jakarta two days were spent with the students of Setia Seminary where 160 are training to be missionaries and church planters in Indonesia. Also there was a two day conference with pastors of the Mennonite churches.



Rev Liem Kok Han of Malang

Banner of Truth Trust

Iain H Murray, one of the two founding trustees of the Banner of Truth Trust in 1957, will hand over the leadership of the publications and editorial work to Dr Hywel R Jones from 1 November 1996. Mr Murray will continue to serve the Trust in a non-executive role. He anticipates carrying on his ministry of writing and preaching at home and overseas with particular responsibility for ministers' conferences.

The appointment of Dr Jones as editorial director continues the Trust's policy of having an experienced minister of the gospel in a role which involves a world-wide teaching ministry through literature, conferences and other means. Like



*Joshua Lie, dean of the new
Institute of Theology*

Mr Murray, Hywel Jones is both a preacher and an author. His works include *Gospel and Church; Commentary on Philipians; and Only One Way: Do people have to believe in Christ in order to go to heaven?*

Dr Jones has been engaged in the work of the London Theological Seminary since 1977 and was principal since 1985. His presence will be missed by board, faculty and students. He values the relationship that has existed between Banner and the LTS since its inception and envisages a continuing link.

It was an unforeseen pleasure to Iain Murray that his successor at Edinburgh should be the same person who succeeded him as minister at Grove Chapel, London, in 1970. Dr Jones has also served churches in Llandudno and Wrexham. He chairs

the discussion sessions in the annual Evangelical Movement of Wales Ministers' Conference in Bala.

Russia

Grace to Russia is a mission which seeks to translate, publish and distribute Christian literature for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The literature is Reformed in nature and addresses both the evangelistic needs of the lost as well as the doctrinal and practical needs of Christians. It is distributed free of charge and without obligation to all who ask; however it is primarily intended to equip pastors and teachers in order that they may be 'able to teach others also' (2 Tim 2:2).

Recently 20,000 copies of *Today's Gospel* (Walter Chantry) and *The Shorter Catechism* have been printed and 4 more titles are being translated. There is a serious shortage of materials for pastors in the CIS and it is not unusual for them to use handbooks for Sunday School teachers for sermon preparation. Providence Bible Church, Box 481, San Lorenzo, CA 94580 has been working closely with Grace Baptist Church, 135 Highland Dr, Chambersburg, PA 17201, both of USA and they rejoice to be in contact with Pastor Georgi Viazovski in Minsk who has the same goals and vision to provide much-needed instruction and cultivate sound Christian doctrine.

Pastor Viazovski, who trained at the London Reformed Baptist Seminary, has a burden for church planting and reformation. As an indigenous Russian speaker, he has a great advantage and edits and publishes a quarterly Reformed magazine, *In the Beginning*. He also distributes translations of the works of authors such as Jonathan Edwards as well as those of contemporary Reformed writers.

Evangelical Press also shares the burden for Reformed literature to the CIS and has a full-time worker, Valeri Grigorik of Belarus, now living in Vitebsk who, with his wife Irena, trained at the European Missionary Fellowship School of Evangelism, Welwyn, Herts.

EP directors Willis Metcalfe and Roger Fay made a recent visit to encourage Valeri and Irena who translate EP titles and seek to market and distribute the books throughout the CIS. This work is of a missionary nature but an attempt is being made to establish long-term indigenous literature work by way of commercial sales to established churches which is a different approach from the one outlined above but both are vital. Persecution has left its legacy of legalism and division amongst believers and it is important that those in established denominations also have access to such literature.

Titles include *A Divine Cordial* by Thomas Watson and *Alive in Christ* by Stuart Olyott and *God's Way of Peace* by Horatius Bonar.

The response so far has been quietly encouraging and sales are slowly climbing with interest in Vitebsk, Minsk, St Petersburg and Moscow amongst both Pentecostals and Baptists.

Pray that through every effort God will equip his Church, and raise up men who preach the gospel of grace in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Tibet

For centuries Tibet, mystically fascinating and the home of the Dalai Lamas, was closed to outsiders – some intrepid missionaries and explorers gained entry only to be expelled or put to death. Today, after 45 years of Chinese rule, Tibet is open to tourists. Tibetan Buddhism still holds its people in spiritual bondage but rays of gospel light are at last shining on the ‘roof of the world’ where the Christian message has been so long resisted.

Protestant missionary work was pioneered by Moravians in 1885 from a North Indian village on the edge of Tibet. Evangelistic work was continued by British and European missions in ethnic Tibetan areas of China in the early 20th century and a few converts were made. Since Chinese rule began in 1950 the Cultural Revolution saw most Tibetan monasteries destroyed. Although the Tibetans have since

rebuilt many of these and tend to remain devoted to their ancient religion, there has been a breakthrough for the gospel with at least one house-church in Lhasa. Christians from China occasionally visit the group taking in much-needed Bibles and Christian literature in Tibetan. There are unconfirmed reports of another house-church in Lhasa and two or three other groups in other major Tibetan cities. Most of the monasteries in Lhasa and some outlying villages have received tracts but outreach resulting in conversions remains painstakingly slow.

There is reliable evidence of Christian fellowships in ethnic Tibetan areas of China and a few scattered Tibetan believers in Northern India and Nepal. Yet the language of the biblical gospel remains unintelligible to the Tibetan thought pattern which revolves around ‘merit’ and re-incarnation. For example the necessity of being ‘born again’ is understood as relating to re-incarnation! Only persevering prayer and evangelism in the power of the Spirit can break through. Yet here and there are gleams of light. The Spirit of God is at work!

Taken from April 1996 *OMF China Prayer*, OMF International, Station Approach, Borough Green, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 8BG, UK.

The Example of the English Puritans



*Mr Yan Kawatu, head of Protestant Division of the Indonesian Department of Religion.
Photo taken on the occasion of the opening of the new Institute of Theology.
See editorial comment.*

Editor

Why should Christians in Indonesia (see Editorial) and other countries be interested in the English Puritans? The answer to that is that the English Puritans have left to the Christian Church a most valuable library of expository books. In recent years there has been a rediscovery of this literary heritage.

Who were the English Puritans?

When the 16th-century Reformation took place three distinct sectors of reformation developed: the German, the Swiss (including France) and the English. Of these three the weakest and least hopeful was the English. At first opposition was fierce. 277 Christian leaders were burned to death at the stake during the reign of Queen Mary. She earned the title 'Bloody Mary' during her reign from 1553 to 1558. Thankfully her reign was short. Yet it was out of the

shed blood and burned ashes of the martyrs that the cause of Christ grew and prospered. It was during the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603) that the Puritan movement was born. Godly ministers multiplied through the nation.

These ministers supported each other in a godly brotherhood. At first the Puritans received the name Puritan because they sought to purify the National Church of England. In later times they were called Puritans because of the purity of life that they sought. They set out to reform the Church of England. Their desire was to conform the national Church to the Word of God in government, worship and practice.

Queen Elizabeth was head of the national Church and she opposed and blocked reformation. When James I (who reigned from 1603 to 1625) came to the throne there was hope that now reform would progress. Instead the struggle intensified. It did not improve when Charles I came to the throne in 1625. Ministers began to despair of improvement and some left for America where a new race of Puritans developed. The situation came to a climax when civil war broke out during the 1640s. During that time Oliver Cromwell became the supreme governor in place of the King. When Cromwell died there was no one suitable to replace him. The nation returned to the monarchy. Charles II came to the throne.

The struggle in the Church was renewed with even more conflict than before. An act of Parliament was passed which required conformity to rules which the Puritans simply were unable to follow. In 1662 over 2,000 ministers and leaders in the Church of England were forced to leave. Rather than compromise their consciences they left. Historians regard the Puritan period as coming to an end in 1662. However it was after 1662 that the Puritans wrote some of their finest expositions. John Bunyan was imprisoned for twelve years after 1662. It was in prison that he wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Two Puritans who lived through this later period require special mention.

John Owen (1616-1683) is called 'The Prince of the Puritans'. He was a chaplain in the army of Oliver Cromwell and vice-chancellor of Oxford University, but most of his life he served as a minister of a church. His written works run to 24 volumes and represent the best resource for theology in the English language. On several important subjects such as the Holy Spirit, mortification of sin and apostasy, he is unexcelled.

Richard Baxter (1615-1691) was a prolific writer and included in his works is *The Christian Directory* which consists of a practical detailed application of the gospel to every aspect of life. This is probably the most comprehensive exposition of its kind ever written.

In Baxter's exposition of the Christian life we see the Puritan idea that grace is to permeate nature.

During the pre-Reformation time grace and nature were separated. This is the concept of a two storey universe. Upstairs is spiritual and holy. Downstairs is sinful, fleshly and unholy. For example the clergy were forbidden to marry as though marriage were earthly and therefore sinful. Luther partly reformed this and brought grace alongside nature. For example he married an ex-nun, Katherine. John Calvin went further and taught that grace must permeate nature. The earthly must be sanctified by the heavenly. The Puritans went further still and taught in more detail than Calvin that biblical principles must be applied to every aspect of life. There are biblical principles or biblical ethics for marriage, the bringing up of children and the home, for teachers and university professors, medical doctors, lawyers, architects and artists, for farmers and gardeners, politicians and magistrates, for businessmen and shopkeepers and for men of commerce and trade, for military men and for bankers. To the Puritans the dichotomy (division) between nature and grace, the prevalent view of medieval theologians, was essentially wrong. It is not as though the heavenly things are holy but earthly things cursed or tarnished. To the Puritans grace must penetrate and permeate all earthly life and sanctify it. Even the bells on the horses are sanctified to the Lord (Zech 14:20).

In contrast to this the Anabaptists retreated from society on the grounds that society was sinful and corrupt. The Anabaptists discouraged men from becoming politicians or magistrates. With regard to war Calvin and the Puritans taught that defence was lawful. The Anabaptists were pacifist and would have nothing to do with military affairs. It is important that we remember that there are different kinds of Baptists. For instance John Bunyan was a Baptist firmly in the Puritan tradition just like Reformed Baptists today. We see how close the Reformed Baptists are to the Presbyterians (the children of John Calvin) when we compare the 1689, 2nd London Baptist Confession of Faith with the Westminster Confession. 28 out of 32 chapters are virtually the same. These Confessions of Faith represent the high water mark of Puritanism. The English Puritans followed Calvin's example in being involved in all aspects of life.

For example Calvin was active in promoting education. In 1559 he founded the Geneva Academy with the aim of building a Christian Commonwealth. This Academy drew students from all over Europe and by the time of Calvin's death in 1564 there were 1,200 students. The Puritans likewise were passionately concerned for education and high academic standards. Almost all the Puritans were graduates of Oxford and Cambridge. Sidney Sussex College and Emmanuel College, Cambridge, were famous Puritan institutions of learning.

Calvin was concerned about provision for the 5,000 refugee families that flocked to Geneva between 1542 and 1560. He was instrumental in the establishment of two hospitals and in one there was a cloth making industry as well as weaving and jug making. (cf *Building a Christian World View*, vol 2, p 242, edited by W. Andrew Hoffercker, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1988.) I have described Calvin in positive terms. Like Luther and like all leaders he had clay feet. There were authoritarian trends in Geneva which marred Calvin's ministry. The essays in the volume edited by Hoffercker are commended for presenting a balanced view of Calvin and not one which idolises that Reformer.

This universal interest in human welfare and social concern is reflected in the lives of the Puritans. As we look back at this period we should note that pressures and trials can bring the best out of Christians. The high quality biblical exposition balanced in doctrine, experience and practical application came out of tribulation. In our generation the republishing of these resources by the *Banner of Truth* in Britain, and latterly by the American Publishing House *Soli Deo Gloria* has made available many valuable Puritan books.

The question is asked, Why are the Puritans effective in teaching Reformed theology whereas so many others fail? The answer is that the spiritual genius of the Puritans lay in their being men of prayer. To them theology was not merely an academic or intellectual exercise. Reformed theology is designed to transform lives and to inspire action. This genius was a spiritual genius in which the Puritans kept prayer, doctrine, experience and practical application in balance and harmony. Today we hear the cry that Christ unites but doctrine divides! Give us Christ, not doctrine, is the cry! To the Puritans that was shallow nonsense. Christ comes to us wrapped in biblical teaching, that is, doctrine. Furthermore doctrine directs life. Doctrine is essential. It is basic to everything but it must be applied in a loving and persuasive manner.

The Puritan example of applying Christian doctrine and the cultural mandate

The New Testament letters of Romans, Ephesians and 1 Peter illustrate the principle of a threefold application of the gospel: first our position in the church, second marriage and the family, and third our position in the world.

First the life must be changed and brought under the dominion of Christ. From the Church as the centre where the believer should be inspired by the preaching he goes out into the world. There in the world he is to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt 5:13-16).

As we see from the Westminster Confession and the 1689 Baptist Confession the Puritans believed in the doctrines of grace such as election and particular redemption (Rom 8:28-30). They followed Calvin in resisting false human rationalisations. For instance they resisted the idea that God only loves the elect and hates the non-elect. This error is called hyper-Calvinism. It is a very serious error which is recurring today. The Puritans were experts in their understanding of the concept of common grace although they did not use that term. Their teaching accords fully with the way in which the doctrine of Common Grace is expounded by Prof John Murray (cf Works). They believed that the Holy Spirit is constantly active in restraining evil and promoting good throughout society. The Puritans believed in the universal love of God for all mankind (1 Tim 2:1-6; 2 Peter 3:9). They believed in the universal provision of God for all mankind according to the covenant made with Noah as representative of the whole world (Gen 8:20-22 and Ps 145).

The Puritans maintained that the cultural mandate to explore and develop all creation was based on Genesis 1:28-30. The Christian is to strive to be perfect in every good work and as he so strives he knows that it is only God who can make him perfect in every good work (see Heb 13:21 KJV). Included in good works is every aspect of labour and research. Every lawful calling is to be pursued with biblical principles as a guide. The important principle is that the Puritans worked from the inside out, that is from the Church out into the world. It is right that Christians encourage the reformation of society in every realm: education, politics, economics, medicine, science. However it is possible to become so engrossed in our secular calling with all its exacting requirements that we lose the balance of Church and family. Balance is essential. The Puritans exemplified this balance.

Sermons were preached on themes such as universal care about detail in work which included the need for absolute trustworthiness, reliability and honesty in fulfilling contracts or agreements. The Puritans were strict in opposing corruption and nepotism in business life. They did not hesitate to preach on texts such as: 'The LORD abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight' (Prov 11:1).

Almost all the Puritans preached consecutive expository sermons and so covered every subject in the Bible. But they were prepared to break with this method whenever it was necessary. During the civil war in the 1640s a town was invaded by Royalist soldiers. These soldiers behaved very badly. Part of their bad behaviour was swearing and cursing. The minister of that town was a Puritan by name Robert Harris. He preached a sermon on James 5:12:

Above all, my brothers, do not swear – not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your Yes be Yes, and your No, No, and you will not be condemned. This was so effective and so convicted the uncouth soldiers that they threatened to shoot Harris if he preached from that text again. Fearlessly the next Sunday he announced as his text James 5:12 and began to expound! He saw one of the soldiers preparing his gun ready to shoot him. But the soldier was restrained and did not have the courage to shoot the preacher. The belief in following biblical ethics in all matters cost the Puritans very dearly. In the worship of God they were not prepared to compromise by submitting to rules made by men or formed by tradition.

The same was true in business life or in commerce. The Puritan work ethic became famous. It is called the Protestant work ethic. This means that the worker always gives his best service honestly. He never steals time or goods from his employer. On the other hand the Christian employer must be fair to his workers and treat them well (James 5:1-6).

Scrupulous care about detail is reflected in the Puritan document known as the Westminster Larger Catechism.

What is the 8th Commandment? Answer: *The 8th Commandment is; Thou shalt not steal.*

What duties are required by the 8th Commandment? Answer: *The duties required in the 8th Commandment include the following: maintaining truth*

and faithfulness and justice in contracts and commerce, between man and man; rendering to every one his due; restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof; ... avoiding unnecessary lawsuits, the care to preserve and respect the property and rights of others just as we care for our own.

The Puritans excelled in preaching in a practical way and many of their sermons reflect this concern to be practical. Here are some examples of sermon titles taken from the famous Cripplegate sermons preached in London and recently republished in six large volumes:

What light must shine on our work? (Richard Baxter)

How may child bearing women be most encouraged and supported in the time of childbearing? (Richard Adams)

How may we inquire after news not as Athenians but as Christians? (Henry Hurst)

The Puritan hope and the future

For the second petition of the Lord's Prayer, *Thy kingdom come*, the Westminster Catechism suggests that we should pray that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fulness of the Gentiles be brought in, the Church furnished with all gospel-officers and ordinances, purged from corruption and countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrates.

The Puritans believed in the present reign of Christ. They taught that we ought not to be discouraged by the darkness that prevails. We can always expect the fierce opposition and hatred of Satan. Yet we are to observe the sovereignty of God. We are to remember the promise that Christ will reign until all his enemies become his footstool. When his programme of world evangelisation is complete he will come and conquer the last enemy which is death (Ps 110:1; 1 Cor 15:25). The Puritans held that we are in the last days, that is the last and final dispensation. It is during this time that the mountain of the LORD'S house will be established as chief among the mountains (Is 2:2). It is during

this time that the stone spoken of by Daniel as he interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream will become a huge mountain and fill the whole earth (Dan 2:35 & 44). According to the Puritans these are the times when we must intercede that the nations become the inheritance of Christ and the ends of the earth become his possession (Ps 2:8). The Puritan Westminster Confession is not premillennial in its teaching.

The Puritan view makes way for hope as it declares that the great apostasy foretold in 2 Thessalonians 2 is fulfilled in the papacy (see ch 25 paragraph 6). That is important because it means that we are to resist a negative attitude of defeatism as though Satan will have the final victory. We are to fulfil the great commission to teach all nations. As Iain Murray shows in his book *The Puritan Hope* the eschatology of the English Puritans lay at the heart of the great world-wide missionary movement of the 19th century. This positive view of the future known as the eschatology of victory has tremendous implications because it inspires vision. It motivates effort and enterprise. If we believe that evil will overcome everything we will be subject to fear and despair. We will not be inclined to attempt very much. If the gospel is destined to prevail in all nations then we will be inspired to attempt great things for God. We will seek to win the nations for Christ. And winning the nations for Christ means that the hearts of men and women are renewed and brought into obedience to the gospel. The kingdom of God is within us. From that position of being 'in Christ' we then apply the teachings of Scripture to every sphere of life as Calvin and the English Puritans sought to do.

With regard to culture we have a mandate to develop every sphere and bring every area of human life under the rule and dominion of the Prince of Peace (Ps 8). We are to pray always that his justice will prevail. We are to pray the prayer of Psalm 72. We must plead that the Prince of Peace will prevail. We expect him to defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy. We are to pray that the whole earth be filled with his glory as the waters cover the sea (Ps 72). These prospects were believed by the Puritans as most certain of fulfilment. The future was as bright as the promises of God. These promises have a radical effect on our prayer lives. May we be stirred up to give the LORD no rest until he establishes his Church and makes her the praise of the earth (Is 62:6,7).

Tyndale Rediscovered

William Tyndale: A Biography by David Daniell, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1994

A review by Kirsty Birkett

Daniell's biography is the first major one in many years and may well prove to be a classic in Reformation history. Tyndale is one of the most important men in English Protestant Reformation history, having provided us with the English Bible. Although he did not manage to translate the entire Bible, his words have shaped English translations ever since, and for that reason it can be said that Tyndale shaped the English language itself. Individual phrases, sentence structure and the shape and flow of the language can in many ways be traced to Tyndale's work.

It is a thoroughly scholarly work, yet very easy to read, and comes at an important time in the writing of Reformation history.

There are two streams in recent Reformation writing against which Daniell's work is set. The first can be seen in his extensive footnotes and depth of scholarship. He has read widely in the period, not just about Tyndale personally, but a whole range of documents from that time. Daniell takes care to place Tyndale in context. Not only are we presented with Tyndale as a person, but with early 16th-century England and what it would have been like growing up and living there.

This sense of 'what it was really like' is part of a very welcome trend towards 'realistic' or 'social' history giving the story from the point of view of the ordinary person at the time, not just official institutions or movements. Such histories of the Reformation, for instance, will include testimonies from ordinary tradesmen and women, as well as leading politicians and churchmen. Places are described, along with the kind of architecture and countryside around, and the kinds of food eaten. This does not make the history necessarily more 'accurate', but does place the leading figures in a more realistic setting and (I think) make the history more enjoyable to read. We are not just told, for instance, that Tyndale was educated at Cambridge; we are given examples of the kind of things he would have studied, whom he would have met there, and what living conditions were like. All this is not speculation on Daniell's part; it is thoroughly researched from contemporary accounts. Dry academic history is turned into a thoroughly good read.

The other main strength of Daniell's book is the stress on the importance of the Reformation. This is in contrast to a second recent trend which downplays the Reformation. Over the last twenty years or so, this revisionist movement has been gradually rewriting Reformation history, stressing the old religion that survived rather than what changed. This has arisen partly from the 'ordinary people' trend, showing that people before the Reformation were genuinely devout and that the old religion was alive and well. Such a move is a good one in that it has uncovered many aspects of popular pre-Reformation religion; but it gives the reader the impression that there was never anything else. Very little attention is given to popular *Protestant* religion. Instead, the Reformation is characterised as top-down, imposed by a small powerful élite and being primarily negative. The Reformation, it is said, had nothing positive to offer, but only destroyed the strong beliefs previously held. Anything 'good' produced by the Reformation would have come from pre-Reformation religion anyway.

An example of this is the publication of the Scriptures in English. It has been argued that the Church already had a tradition of giving the people the Bible for devotional use, and would sooner or later have provided the whole Bible in the vernacular (thus avoiding all the turmoil that resulted from the unauthorized translations). Daniell challenges this. The English New Testament was available in a printed 'Gospel harmony' which loosely conflated incidents in the four Gospels; but it was mostly passages about Mary, much of which was not in the Gospels at all, and only gave a very simple outline of the Gospel story. Daniell comments that this in no way suggests the Church would have 'sooner or later' satisfied the people's eagerness for the Bible in English. 'What is missing', he writes, 'is the other nine-tenths, the doctrinal heart, of the Gospels.' It is not true that before the Reformation there existed vigorous Christian piety at the popular level, in need of nothing else. It 'ignores the fact that during the English Reformation, lay men and women were so hungry for the Bible in English that they were often prepared to die for it'.

Daniell's biography of Tyndale is an academic book and so is not everyone's idea of weekend reading. If you have an interest in Reformation history, however, don't let the academic weight of it put you off. It is not just interesting but often fun, and makes an important push in defence of the necessity for a Reformation. At £25 (hardback) it's not cheap, but you can request your local library to get it in, or drop heavy hints about birthday presents. If you want to be encouraged about God's work in rescuing the truth for our forebears, then do read this book.

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