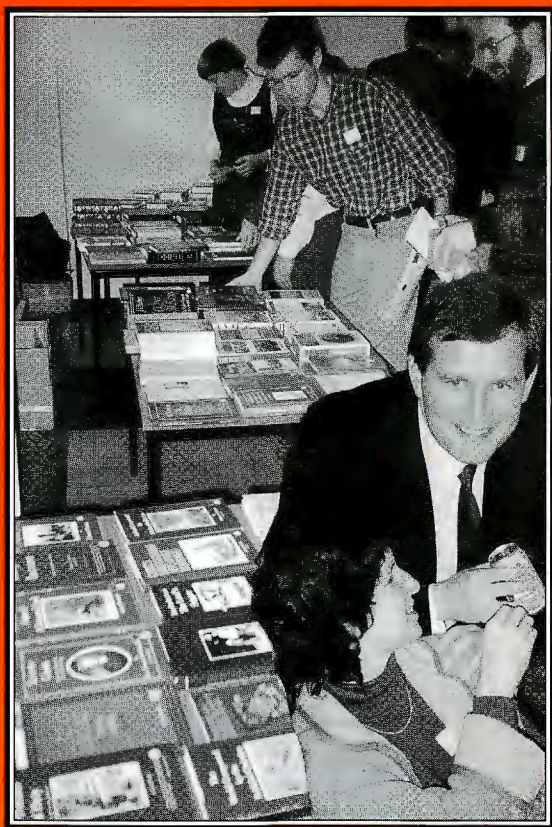


REFORMATION TODAY



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Featured above is Phil Arthur who presented an outstanding paper on Puritan Family Life at the Westminster Conference in London. About 250 attended. From the right are Mr Titcomb, long time supporter of the conference, Iain Murray, John J Murray and his son Andrew.



*Peter Milsom
(see page 19)*



*Jim Packer
(see page 23)*

Front cover: The annual Westminster Conference is a two day conference that meets at Westminster Chapel, London in December, this year on the 9th and 10th. Six papers are presented, each followed by questions and discussion. Joel Beeke from Grand Rapids presented a most valuable paper with the title, 'Anthony Burgess on Assurance'. The following day at Leeds Dr Beeke presented two very practical expositions on the Puritans, 1. The Puritan doctrine of Sanctification, and 2. How to benefit from Puritan literature. The photo of Dr Beeke and his wife Mary was taken at the meeting in Leeds and is set against the background of Puritan books currently in print. Besides making the books accessible to those who can afford to buy them the exhibition was designed to illustrate the theological renewal of our generation referred to in the editorial.

Editorial

The absolute priority of evangelism

Precedence is given in this issue to the work of evangelism: Perseverance in evangelism - the model of the sower and the example of William Steadman; and Paul's adaptability at Athens.

The suffering Church

China, Cambodia and Sudan are three nations at the top of the scale for suffering. In this issue special attention is devoted to Cambodia including the fascinating story of the survival of Christians there, a wonder in itself. The same story of survival is true of Sudan (as reported in the last issue RT160). Other nations high up the league for persecution are Pakistan, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Egypt, Iran and Nigeria.

The cavalier attitude that some adopt toward the persecution of the Christian Church needs to be challenged and corrected. It is true that there are places where the Church has survived persecution and even grown in spite of enormous difficulties. Apart from China, the most

outstanding example of growth in the face of persecution and oppression is Ethiopia, from a handful of believers in 1937 to above six million today!

But these outstanding cases must be balanced against more sombre scenes. During the 16th century the Inquisition wiped out the Reformation in Spain and Italy. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 spelled the end of the Huguenot cause in France. France to this day is one of the most gospel impoverished countries in the world.

Persecution prevents the advance of the gospel in most Islamic nations. For instance no Bibles are allowed in Saudi Arabia, no churches are tolerated and worship of any kind whatsoever is forbidden. The claim is made that since the beginning of the 20th century the proportion of Christians in Iraq has decreased from 35 to 5 per cent, in Syria from 40 to 10 per cent, in Iran from 35 to 2 per cent and in Turkey from 32 to .02 per cent.¹

These figures represent nominal Christian populations but nevertheless illustrate the point that repressive

conditions inhibit. The issue should be clear that it is absurd to think that persecution is advantageous. The apostle Paul urges that prayer be made for just government and civil leaders of righteousness in order that peaceable conditions will prevail which is an advantage to gospel promulgation (1 Tim 2:1-4).

Hebrews 13:3 must shape our attitude and response to the suffering Church. *'Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.'* We can respond by supporting appeals that are made to governments which have the influence to reduce persecution and which have the power to discourage legislation made with the express intention of persecuting evangelical believers. A case in point is the threatened anti-Christian legislation in Israel.

Pastors of the theological renewal 1950 - 1998

Two well-known ministers were taken from us recently, Bernard Honeysett (1912 - 25th October 1997) of Tenterden, Kent, and David Jones (1931-6th November 1997) of Sunderland. Both were subject in a comprehensive and radical way to the theological renewal that has been

associated with the *Banner of Truth* books. A review of that renewal has been held over to RT 162 to appear alongside a tribute to David Jones by Phil Arthur. In a personal capacity David Jones probably gave away more *Banner of Truth* books than any other minister. His father was a well-known evangelist in the mainstream of evangelicalism, a stream which was Pelagian both in salvation and sanctification teaching. David became pastor of the large Bethesda Baptist Church in Sunderland but when he espoused Reformed theology a parting of the ways was inevitable. With those who, like him, embraced the doctrines of grace David planted a Reformed Baptist church in Sunderland. Bernard Honeysett emerged from a much smaller grouping on the hyper-Calvinist side. He too was compelled to start again and planted the Reformed Baptist church in Tenterden, Kent.

David Jones and Bernard Honeysett have been called to higher service. May many who have the same zeal and discernment be multiplied to advance the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

1 *In the Lion's Den*, A Primer on mounting Christian persecution around the world and how American Christians can respond, 56 pages, 1996, available from Freedom House, 1319 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

Perseverance in Evangelism: the model of the sower

The parable of the sower (Luke 8:1-15).

Bill James

There are few subjects closer to the heart of Church leaders (and indeed all believers) than the extension of the Kingdom of God. We long for the growth of the Church; that the kingdom of Satan would be stormed, and many snatched from death to life to the glory of the name of Christ. We pray for a mighty work of the Spirit of God in our day.

So how discouraging it is to live in days when conversions are so few. In many Reformed congregations in the Western world, baptisms are a rare highlight to be cherished. We continue to pray; we labour on. But we are also tempted to wonder if there is not more we could do. Perhaps there is something wrong with our methodology. Perhaps in our modern age there is some new approach which is required. We need only venture into our local Christian bookshop to be confronted with a whole range of alternative techniques for rapid church growth. There is the advocacy of signs and wonders: Power Evangelism. There are the proposals of the Church Growth movement. There is the excitement of the Toronto Blessing and other phenomena. There are Marches for Jesus which claim to change the spiritual climate. Then there is Willow Creek, and its radical approach of 'Seeker Services'. All of these methodologies claim great success.

But what do the Scriptures teach? How is the work of the Kingdom to go forward?

Even in the days of Jesus there were great hopes and expectations that the Kingdom of God would be quickly established. The announcement of the Kingdom had been made by John the Baptist, and its arrival had been heralded by Jesus himself. So how was the Kingdom to come? Having seen so many miracles, perhaps the Jews wondered if the Kingdom would spread simply by the supernatural powers of Jesus. Such might could be exploited in a military fashion to overwhelm the Romans and establish a theocracy. Or perhaps expansion would come by means of a mass political movement; Jesus was surrounded by a multitude of wondering disciples. Or then it might be that his healings would spread into all the world, and a new Utopian age would dawn, free from suffering and disease; the devil's influence would be put to flight. But the picture which Jesus paints is altogether different. Not that of political intrigue or military might or even miraculous displays. In the parable of the sower, Jesus presents the idyllic rural scene of a farmer going about scattering his seed on the ground. And as Jesus tells his disciples, the seed is the Word. The Kingdom of God is extended through the ministry of the Word of God. It is as simple as that. Perhaps we would be tempted to have something more dramatic, something to make a greater impact, yet here is the method which Jesus prescribes, and this is the way the Kingdom of God advances.

The sowing of the seed

Here we have defined the mission of the Church. We are to scatter the Word of

God as widely and as thickly as we can, spreading the gospel message to all the peoples round about. That may be through preaching from a pulpit, or private conversation, or literature distribution, or radio ministry, or leading a Bible study. But by whatever means and in whatever way the Word is spread. The only obligation of the sower is to be faithful in scattering good seed. And if only that seed will find the good soil of a receptive human heart, then there is spiritual life. One by one men and women and boys and girls respond to the message and ultimately bear fruit in their turn (Luke 8:8). That is the way the Kingdom grows.

It is striking that in this parable there is no emphasis at all on the technique or the expertise of the sower. Perhaps we might have expected a comparison between different sowers who went out with different techniques of scattering seed. One used Power Evangelism. One followed the techniques of Evangelism Explosion. Another used Seeker Services. The fourth was a skilled orator who could hold a mass audience in the palm of his hand. And then we could compare and contrast the different results from each technique, and the gifts and personality of each sower. But the text does not direct our attention to the gifts or methodology or charisma of the sower. Indeed, he is very much in the background, as he is throughout the New Testament. The preacher of the gospel is always just a clay vessel. His responsibility is very simple – it is just to distribute faithfully the seed which is the Word of God. Of course we must not be foolish in our presentation, nor be inept in our approach. We are to be as wise as serpents as well as harmless as doves. We are to be aware of the cultural context and opportunities of our day. But ultimately the focus of this parable is

not on the spectacular gifts or techniques of the evangelist. No, the supernatural power of fruitfulness is not in the act of scattering, but in the seed itself. The explosive fertility of the seed, the Word of God, is the key to spiritual new life. And the only barrier to a massive harvest is the stubborn resistance of the human heart.

The size of the harvest

We may be discouraged, but we should not be surprised when our evangelism does not meet with a massive response. Indeed, Jesus prepares us for the reality of much seed bearing little fruit. There are various reasons why our evangelism will be unproductive:

1. Stolen seed

In Jesus' day ploughing would take place after sowing. The farmer would scatter his seed upon ground which had not been cultivated for several months, and which would not be uniformly productive. There might be a path, for example, right across the middle of the field. And before he had a chance to plough the seed into the ground, some passers-by might have walked past and crushed the seeds underfoot. Or passing birds, attracted by the scattering of seed would have devoured the seeds from the open ground of the pathway. Before the seed of the Word of God has opportunity to grow and develop, or even settle in the human heart, it is snatched away. The hearer of the Word is distracted even before he has begun properly to consider the message. Or perhaps the hearer is so hostile that he would not even think of attending to the Christian gospel. Perhaps there is prejudice there. Perhaps there are some preconceived notions about the Christian faith being unbelievable, or wrong, or unpalatable. Perhaps there is an acknowledgement that the

cost of commitment would be too high. And so no sooner has the Word hit the ground than it is gone. There is no response, not even the beginnings. The tract is dropped; the spoken word is despised or ignored. It is in the terms of this parable trampled underfoot.

And Jesus points towards an active and malicious agency who will deliberately block any real consideration of the message of life (v12). At once we are reminded that we are in a battle, that the devil and his hosts are not unaware of our mission. And they will do anything to turn the hearts and minds of people away from receiving the truth.

2. Scorched seed

Some of the seed would fall on ground where large rocks lurked just under the surface. The shallowness of the soil would not be evident before ploughing, but if seed fell there it would not last for long. That ground would soon dry out in the sun and the seedlings would shrivel. This is a picture of hearers who receive the Word with joy (v13), but as soon as the young plant tries to send down its roots, there is no depth for it to become established. And as soon as the hot sun comes up, it dries up both plant and soil and the seed withers.

There is nothing so refreshing as an enthusiastic new believer. Perhaps he has been moved to respond by some tremendous sermon, or a powerful Christian meeting. Perhaps there is an element of peer group pressure; perhaps there is a very influential figure who has drawn him into the Christian way. And from the outset there is a great excitement and enthusiasm about this new-found faith. So this is like the seedling springing up out of shallow ground. But after some weeks or months

the enthusiasm begins to wane. A problem has come up. There has been some opposition from friends at work. There has been a realisation of the cost of commitment. Now the realities of Christian life have begun to bite. There are the trials and troubles of life, and this young believer had assumed that Christian faith would make life so much easier and more carefree. He did not embrace Christ only to find times of trial and trouble. This surely wasn't what was promised. And now that wonderful excitement, that euphoria of the moment of becoming a Christian and being embraced by Christian fellowship, all that has begun to fade. Now there is only disillusionment. There is no root. There is no depth. There was no conviction that this is the truth which demands my soul, my life, my all through thick and thin. And so he falls away.

3. Suffocated seed

Then there is the seed which falls amongst the thorns. Again there is an initially positive response. There is a determination to be a good Christian, to do the right things, to set out on the path of Christian discipleship. But then the time pressures come. Those early mornings for personal devotions become impossible. Midweek commitments are out of the question. Even Sunday services are squeezed. Life is just too busy. There is too much on. So many opportunities beckon: in career, in leisure, in family. Our new believer complains: 'Christian faith is important, yes, of course it's important, I know that – but just not right now.' And the right moment never comes. The late night at the office gives way to the sports event on the TV, which gives way to the dinner party, and then the DIY job on the house, and then the car needs attention, the bills must be paid.

Application

What applications can we draw from these three negative examples of the sowing of the seed? There are two:

a. Persevere

We live in discouraging days in the Western world. All around, there seems to be much ground as hard as rock, utterly impervious to the claims of the gospel. Then there are others who will make only shallow commitments. But the parable of the sower is a reminder that our responsibility first and foremost is to persevere in the sowing of the seed. That is the work for which we are responsible. In the providence of God some will be in areas less fruitful than others, but that is by his calling and appointment. In such a case, God is glorified by our faithful perseverance. Is that not the characteristic of the good seed which bears fruit? It is through perseverance that the good crop is produced (v15).

b. Pray

We must not only preach the Word, but also pray. In a prayer meeting, often the prayers are for the preacher. But this parable turns our eyes from him, and points to the real battle ground which is the human heart. We must pray for those who hear. All the evangelism we can muster will be of no effect, unless God comes and breaks open human hearts to receive the Word and give fruitfulness.

And our prayers are to be for enduring, persevering, fruitful converts. There is only one soil which produces a crop. There is only one type of professing Christian who is truly saved (v15) – those who retain the Word and persevere. The whole point of agriculture is to produce a crop – fruitful heads, full of grain. It makes little

difference if the Word is first rejected, or if a profession withers under trials. Our evangelism is only fruitful if there are believers who abide in Christ. The following parable (vv16-18) makes a similar point. ‘Consider carefully how you listen’ (v18a). Those who are truly converted do not turn away from the light, nor hide it, nor cover it up so that it cannot be seen. They do not allow the light to be squeezed out by other priorities. They grow and develop in their knowledge and love of Christ (v18). And such believers produce a good and enduring spiritual harvest. The reality of their profession will be demonstrated on the last day (v17). And it is such who are the object of our ministry – those who bear fruit of eternal significance.

Jesus is never impressed by numbers for the sake of it. Nowadays it is easy to be intimidated by the apparent numerical success of others. The ministries of others will sometimes prove much more fruitful than our own (and they need not necessarily be Reformed ministries). We will not begrudge that, nor stoop to ministerial envy, nor question the sovereignty of God. But equally there are some who attract great numbers at any cost. That is not our aim. There is no enduring profit in shallow evangelism which produces many professions of faith which do not endure. Our aim is to see fruitfulness which lasts, and this can only be by the faithful presentation of the Word of God, under the supernatural and life-transforming ministry of the Holy Spirit. Hearts must be changed, and that is not dependent on our gifts or technique; it is the work of God. So in discouraging days it is to God alone that we must turn, and pray afresh for his blessing, and his grace to persevere in the labour he has given us.

Perseverance in Evangelism: the example of William Steadman

Sharon James

William Steadman (1764-1837) belongs to the heroic age of itinerant preaching: the era during which the Particular Baptists advanced from the introspection of the early eighteenth century into an age of vigorous expansion. Indeed he was one of those who contributed to this transformation. He was in every way a huge figure. Powerful, outspoken, without any pretensions as to gentility, style or good looks, overweight in later years: Dr Ryland in his indomitable way used to refer to 'that great lump of goodness, Dr Steadman'! Pastor of a large church, the president of an academy, a great proponent of mission, a leader in associational life, he was perhaps above all a tireless evangelist. Throughout his life he could be found in all weathers, tramping through the dark muddy countryside to humble cottages where he would preach Christ and him crucified.

During his lifetime (1764-1837), the village preaching movement flourished: a home mission endeavour which paralleled the birth of the



William Steadman
*The supply of this portrait by the
Evangelical Library, London, is gratefully
acknowledged*

modern overseas mission movement. Deryck Lovegrove lists over seventy organisations, active in itinerant evangelism, formed in the period 1780-1830 by Calvinistic dissenters.¹ During this period also there was the vigorous spread of the Sunday School movement, and the multiplication of dissenting academies. Steadman typifies that active involvement in village preaching, church planting, Sunday School work and the training of a new generation of pastor-

This article is abridged from a chapter due to appear in 'The British Particular Baptists, 1640-1890' forthcoming from Particular Baptist Press, Springfield, Missouri, edited by Michael A G Haykin.

evangelists, which represents the most encouraging aspects of evangelical life at this time. He also displayed heartfelt joy at the commencement of the foreign mission movement, which he supported from its outset in 1792.

Outline of Steadman's life

William Steadman was born in 1764 in Eardisland, 5 miles west of Leominster. His godly mother died when he was six. Due to a serious sight defect, he was unable to read until the age of nine, and received little schooling. Finding himself then so far behind he became consumed with a desire for learning, and effectively educated himself. At the age of seventeen, with minimal formal education but many hours of private study behind him, he started a school. Eventually he assisted in the school run by the clergyman at Eardisland, who helped him lay down a sound foundation of classical learning.

As a teenager he neglected religion, but was convicted on attending a baptism at Leominster. He was converted in 1781 at the age of 17 and was baptised in April 1784. His pastor, Joshua Thomas, encouraged him to begin preaching and then to seek training at Bristol Academy. Taught by Caleb Evans, Robert Hall and James Newton, he was a contemporary with Samuel Pearce, later minister at Birmingham, with whom he maintained a friendship through correspondence.²

In 1789 he accepted a call to the pastorate at Broughton, a village of about 700 inhabitants, twelve miles from Salisbury in Hampshire. Most of the forty or so church members were poorly educated. Steadman was ordained on November 2nd 1791, and he remained at Broughton for eight years. This first pastorate was filled with discouragements. He experienced spiritual apathy and opposition from his own congregation, and saw few conversions. He started a Sunday School, but his members would not support it.³ He often lapsed into depression, exacerbated by frequent ill-health (he was prone to asthma throughout his life). But he would not be deterred from evangelism. With his good friend John Saffery, pastor of the Baptist church in Salisbury,⁴ he conducted an evangelistic tour in the Portsmouth area in 1792. That year he also commenced a pioneer work in nearby Stockbridge. He rented a room using his own pitiful means, and when the number of hearers outgrew the room he raised funds for an extension by means of an arduous itinerary on foot round different churches. One extract from his diary reads: 'went to Stockbridge, and preached... to a very few people. Was much dejected on that account, and also at the neglect with which the Broughton people treat me and Stockbridge; not one coming, either to sing, or accompany me in the dark...'⁵ In a letter written much later, in 1824 to Isaac Mann, he reflected that though few professed conversion, yet: '...the chief good

resulting from my efforts at Stockbridge has... consisted in the impressions they made upon the ministers and churches... Till that time no efforts were made to introduce the Gospel into destitute towns and villages in Hampshire and Wiltshire. The business of Stockbridge gave an impulse to all the country; and in the space of five or six years, all the younger ministers, both Baptists and Independents, and a number of members in their churches as occasional preachers, started in every direction; and there was scarcely to be found a village of any size destitute of evangelical preaching. This together with the experience I gained, and which contributed to fit me not a little for the stations I was designed to fill... has fully satisfied me that the work was of God...'6



Westgate Baptist Church, Bradford. The extensive building used to seat 750 but pews have been removed which reduces the number to 650. The church is in the Baptist Union. There are 61 members led by a lady minister. When asked whether the church was evangelical she was unsure about that and suggested that the church is interested in friendship ministries. One of the largest mosques in Britain has recently been built on the site adjacent.

On the last day of 1792 he read of the formation of the Particular Baptist Society for overseas mission (which had taken place on 2nd October 1792 at Kettering, one of those present being his friend Samuel Pearce). Steadman was overjoyed, and despite his poverty sent off a donation to Carey. With Saffery, in July 1793, he formed a society for the promotion of the mission. This not only raised funds in Hampshire and Wiltshire for the work overseas, but also encouraged village preaching.⁷

On April 16, 1793 he married Sarah Webb, a woman who was spiritual and evidently gifted. They were happily married for nineteen years.

Their first son, William, was born early the next year.

In June 1798 Steadman moved to Plymouth Dock (later Devonport), as assistant to Isaiah Birt. He saw greater visible success, with many more conversions than he had seen at Broughton. But his great life work began in 1805 when he moved up to Bradford to lead the fledgling Academy at Horton (later Rawdon College.)

Steadman recognised the dire consequences of an uneducated ministry. In his diary he noted of his new colleagues in the Yorkshire area: 'Most of the ministers were illiterate,

their talents small, their manner dull and uninteresting, their systems of divinity contracted, their maxims of church government rigid, their exertions scarcely any at all.’⁸ Starting from scratch, he had to overcome prejudice in the churches against ministerial training, and get the new Academy off the ground. In a real sense it was his baby, and he laboured here for the rest of his life, for the next 30 years. He only laid down the presidency in his 72nd year, and he died in his 73rd year. Much of his time and energy had to be spent travelling to raise funds for the institution; right to the end there were periodic questions as to its viability. Steadman regularly had to make real financial sacrifices to keep it from collapse.

The Academy opened at Little Horton, half a mile west of Bradford, in January 1806 with one pupil, another joined them in February, and two from Scotland a little later. These first students and the Steadman family lived in unpromising rented accommodation. Steadman’s house was so low one could touch the roof on entering it; moreover it was damp and cold. The student quarters were flimsy, cramped and unheated. These rather miserable premises were bought after eleven years, and then much improved in the mid 1820s. Student numbers eventually averaged about 15 for the four year course, rising to nearly thirty by the late 1820s. Local ministers could attend on a daily basis. The curriculum

consisted of English grammar and composition, Latin, Greek and Hebrew, plus geography, history, philosophy and other subjects. Steadman lectured twice a week on Theology, and there were regular sermon classes. The great stress was always on usefulness and ‘laboriousness’. Steadman encouraged the students to engage in itinerant preaching, and saw this as giving vital practical experience alongside taking the gospel to needy villages.

Many testified to Steadman’s warm, fatherly concern for his students. He attended 115 ordinations, and delivered 101 charges to new ministers.⁹ Afterwards he maintained a keen interest in their progress. When he retired, 157 students had entered the Academy, nine were still studying, 23 had died, 14 had left the ministry, and 111 were engaged in active ministry all over the world. Moreover, ‘all the neighbouring churches [were] supplied with ministers of his own training.’¹⁰

At Westgate Church, after just eight years he had baptised 164 people, and admitted 175 to the membership. By 1819 there were 263 members, and 300 in Sunday Schools. In 1823 numbers were such that a second Baptist church was founded. Eventually Westgate had to be extended, for with ‘hearers’ the congregation often numbered eight or nine hundred.

As if his labours in the church and

Academy were not enough, Steadman revelled in continued scope for his true passion: village preaching. From 1816 until his death he was Secretary to the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association of Baptist churches, and he used this position to promote village evangelism as well. He also maintained a keen interest in the overseas mission. His heavy workload was maintained even at times of acute personal distress. One grim eighteen month period (1811-12) saw the death of his beloved first born son, William, aged seventeen years, then his youngest son of seventeen months, then his wife, then the youngest remaining child. His second wife was prone to ill health and associated depression. But there were family encouragements. Eventually his son Thomas entered the ministry, and three of his daughters married ministers.

He maintained his responsibilities in church and Academy almost to the end of his life. One of his most outstanding characteristics was a genuine humility: he was acutely aware of his own faults. He was more than willing to submit to reproof from others. He examined himself as to his salvation and his motivation for service right up to the end. Another notable characteristic was determination and perseverance. Though largely self-taught, he acquired competence in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, Theology and the other disciplines he taught at Horton.

His convictions and perspectives on ministry

The priority of evangelism; Calvinism as an incentive to evangelism

Steadman was not a great orator but he was above all concerned to preach Christ. His son commented that in the sermon classes at Horton, his father could overlook the lack of anything in some of the offerings that were presented: but never the lack of Christ. Another of his great emphases was on plainness in preaching. He abhorred any obscuring of the message with flights of oratory, lest the uneducated members of a congregation miss the clarity of the gospel message. Linked to this was his stress on direct challenge to the hearers: 'What would you think of that man who saw his neighbour's house on fire, and knew the family were asleep in it, and yet took no pains to awake them and save them from the flames?'¹¹

In a ministerial charge to one of his students Steadman urged: 'Do not let us be fettered, in our addresses, by any apprehensions of running foul of the Divine decrees, or opposing the doctrine of man's inability. We honour the Divine decrees most effectually, when we use the means our Lord himself has prescribed for their execution; and bring the inability of man most effectively to light, by delivering to him the solemn messages with which we are charged; and which messages we know, unless

they be accompanied by the life-giving energy of the Holy Ghost, will be uniformly rejected... Nothing is more plainly revealed in Scripture, than the duty of Ministers to preach the Gospel to sinners without distinction...' ¹²

In his own preaching he never hesitated to appeal directly to sinners. Steadman's adherence to Calvinism inspired rather than inhibited his evangelistic fervour, and it was maintained without a contentious spirit. In an Association circular letter of 1807 he argues that as 'protestant dissenters, as calvinists, as baptists' they have urgent reason to associate together, yet 'we love all who love Christ, and wish to demean ourselves towards them in such a way, as to convince them of the sincerity of our affection and esteem'.¹³ He then exhorts the churches to show love and unity 'with the contrary of which you know we are often upbraided'.¹⁴ Most vital of all he urges them to show that even though they consider it a duty 'wisely and calmly to contend for those lesser points in which we differ from our fellow christians' yet the 'chief and united and most zealous attention' should be directed to 'that object which is common to all the disciples of Christ'¹⁵ ie. the preaching of the gospel. In this, he led from the front and went out preaching in all conditions, whatever the discomfort or physical cost. This continued into old age: a sterling example for his students.

A robust stand for believers' baptism, without a party spirit

Steadman was convinced of believers' baptism, and maintained the closed table position in the controversy that was raging at the time, but he did this without a contentious spirit. When preaching away he did not make an issue of this, but would participate in or administer the Lord's Supper in open communion churches.¹⁶ He was eager to befriend all who loved the Saviour. He built friendships with the other ministers in Bradford.

In the circular letter of 1825 he wrote: '...our attention then, as Baptists should be directed to that which is confessedly of the first importance. How can we have a testimony in the consciences of others, that we are sincere in our professions respecting the ordinance of Baptism itself, if we are uninfluenced, or but feebly influenced by those considerations by which Christians of every name are impelled to promote the spread of the Gospel, and the salvation of souls..?' ¹⁷

He argues that though baptism is not of the first importance, yet it is not of little importance. It is the command of God. Infant baptism 'is an evil of no inconsiderable magnitude... It is our earnest wish that our sentiments and practice should spread as widely as possible.'¹⁸ But what is the most effective means by which this may be achieved?

Not to be continually dwelling upon the discriminating points, much less

to content ourselves with making proselytes from other denominations; but by a zealous and persevering endeavour to spread the gospel of Christ, with a view to the conversion of sinners to God.¹⁹

He argues that new converts will generally submit to the ordinance, and from experience he argues that those churches who are most zealous in evangelism are those who have been most 'successful in the admission of candidates to the ordinance of Baptism'.²⁰ Moreover, this concentration on evangelism will commend Baptists to all true believers of whatever name.

His significance

Steadman effectively transported all that was best from the Bristol Academy and brought about a transformation in the Baptist scene in the north. In 1787 the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association included seventeen churches; by the year of Steadman's death in 1837 there were 65. Whitley comments: 'This progress was due directly to evangelism steadied by education, and these were incarnate in one man, William Steadman.'²¹ A suspicion of education was effectively dispelled, as Steadman produced men who had evangelism and church planting as the primary aim. Even in rough and primitive conditions it was always assumed that all ministerial candidates should study the biblical languages. This reflects a high view

of the Word of God which is all too lacking today.

He was convinced of the need for a trained ministry: thus his devotion to the Academy. Deryck Lovegrove has used local records for a comprehensive study of the nationwide impact of academies such as the one at Horton. He comments of this period: 'In one church minute book after another the appointment of a minister from one of the new institutions is marked by a revitalisation of church life and the appearance of an expansionist outlook.'²² This was certainly true of the Baptist churches of the north, but also further afield, as they were impacted for good by Steadman's students. Torbet comments that Steadman and his students 'revived nearly defunct churches in industrial and city areas',²³ which gave leadership nationwide in the task of evangelism.

Steadman typified the revived spirit of the dissenting cause during his lifetime. He urged Rippon to set up a society devoted to itinerant preaching at home: by 1835 this body employed one hundred full-time missionaries.²⁴ In 1809, Steadman, John Fawcett and others initiated the Northern Itinerant Society. Steadman was convinced of the importance of associational life, that in isolation the churches would never effectively engage in fulfilment of the Great Commission: thus his wholehearted service of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association.²⁵ He was firm in his convictions, for example on the

Doctrines of Grace and on baptism, but he had a generous attitude towards all Bible believing Christians. He would not accept any who denied the Trinity, and firmly opposed the errors of Rome, but was very willing to fellowship with believers among the Methodists, Church of England, or Independents. His commitment to overseas mission is reflected in the fact that the 111 students still active in ministry when he died were to be found all over the world: including Asia, Africa and the Americas.

The ongoing impact of his life and work in the north was immense progress continued at Westgate, in the Association, in home mission, and in the Academy.²⁶ His life must afford encouragement to pastors: he was patient during years of little success, of opposition, and hardship. Even though dead, his life still speaks of the glory of wholehearted obedience to the Great Commission. He was a giant of a man.

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Evangelism at Athens: Paul's adaptability

Steven K Mittwede

Examples for ministry from Acts 17

What Christian, what minister of the gospel would not desire to emulate the apostle Paul? Paul was a man, as we are, but unlike Paul most of us do not have ministries that we would confidently hold up as exemplary. Paul, on the other hand, wrote to the church at Corinth, 'Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ' (1 Cor 11:1). To be effective as Paul obviously was, what adjustments in our attitudes or perspectives might be necessary?

A key to Paul's success was a willingness to be whatever (whenever and wherever) God wanted him to be. Paul endured all sorts of affliction, persecution and mocking because he saw himself only as an earthen vessel through which God might receive glory (2 Cor 4:7).

I suspect that we usually have no problem in admitting our weakness, our baseness or our fragility as his vessels. We are often painfully aware of our limitations, whether in the area of boldness, language acquisition or growth in cultural understanding (for cross-cultural workers); we have, at least to some extent, a realistic perception of ourselves (although some of this may be false humility). But are we willing to be viewed negatively by others for the sake of the gospel? Are we willing to be criticised by the ones to whom we minister? Do we suffer under the misconception that we need to be viewed 'positively' if we are to have spiritual input into people's lives?

Toward the goal of imitating Paul, it is a profitable exercise to gain an understanding of how Paul was perceived by those with whom he had contact in a ministry context. Acts 17 gives three striking examples of how Paul was viewed by those to whom he went.

In Thessalonica, after successfully persuading some of the Jews, Paul and company were derided as 'men who have upset the world' (Acts 17:6b).¹ Another way of stating this is 'these that have turned the world upside down'.

In essence, Paul was accused of stirring things up, of subversive or revolutionary action. Of this passage Matthew Henry wrote:

In one sense it is true that wherever the gospel comes in its power to any place, to any soul, it works such a change there that it may be said to turn the world upside down. The love of the world is rooted out of the heart, and the way of the world is contradicted in the life; so that the world is turned upside down there. They would have it thought that the preachers of the gospel were mischief makers wherever they came.

Because they persuaded people to turn away from idols to the living and true God, from malice and envy to love and peace, they are charged with turning the world upside down, when it was only the kingdom of the devil in the world that they have overturned.²

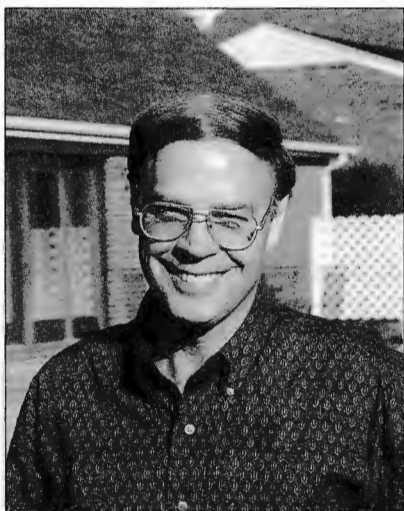
In the Middle East where I work, it would seem that the last thing that I need is to be labeled a subversive (in fact, all Protestants and particularly sincere followers of Jesus Christ are viewed as terrorists by the government here). On the other hand, shouldn't our message have a revolutionary effect on the lives of the people with whom we share? Who but a subversive would bring such a revolutionary message?

In Athens, certain philosophers with whom Paul conversed said of him, 'What would this idle babbler wish to say?' (Acts 17:18b). The word here translated 'babblers' is literally 'seedpicker'. According to Rienecker, this term was 'first used of birds that pick up grain, then of men who pick up odds and ends in the market, and then transferred to men who were zealous seekers of the second rate at second hand, and finally to generally worthless persons'.³

Again, usually we strive to put the best face on our ministry; we want to leave a positive impression on our target people. But the gospel ministry carries a high price. Rather than being praised for eloquence and reason, we are likely to be belittled as people of no account with little to say. Certainly this is true for those of us who live and work among Muslims. A revealing question that we might ask ourselves is: For whose reputation are we zealous, our own or God's? Who is on trial?

Later in Athens, we see Paul in a different light. Paul, while addressing the men of Athens on Mars Hill said, 'For in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, "For we also are His offspring"' (Acts

Sowing the seed of the gospel is achieved in many different ways, by books, by radio and by education. Heritage Baptist Church is a Reformed Baptist church which has grown steadily necessitating the extension of the sanctuary. A principal means of reaching out to the town has been through Heritage School which is under the oversight of Pastor Tim Hoake. There is a present capacity of 220 children which does not cater for all who apply. The leadership at Heritage stress the place of prayer which is an essential and integral part not only of church life but of evangelism. Pastor Ted Christman (featured opposite) is warmly welcomed in the secular senior school in Owensboro. As many as 85 senior students voluntarily attend the Christian Union meeting before school commences.



17:28). Rather than a seedpicker, Paul here proved himself a scholar. The first phrase of this verse comes from the Cretan poet Epimenides of Cnossus (c 600 BC), specifically from his poem 'Cretica'. The second phrase is from 'Phaenomena' by the poet Aratus, a Greek who lived about three centuries before Paul. Elsewhere in his letters, Paul quoted the Greek poets (Menander in 1 Cor 15:33, and again Epimenides in Titus 1:12.) Of this verse, Matthew Henry made the following comment:

By this means it appears not only that Paul himself was a scholar, but that human learning is both ornamental and serviceable to a gospel minister, especially for convincing those that are without; for it enables him to beat them at their own weapons, and cut off Goliath's head with his own sword. How can the adversaries of truth be beaten out of their strongholds by those that do not know them?⁴

If we are not willing to be viewed as subversives or seedpickers, are we at least willing to invest the time and effort to become scholars? How many of us can quote, even in our native tongues, poetry (or anything else for that matter) that was written 300-600 years before our birth? Beyond that, how much of our adopted culture (for those ministering cross-culturally) do we know as insiders, by virtue of our study of its literature? Paul's knowledge of Greek poetry was not just vague familiarity; rather, it was expressed in his strategic and active use of pithy truths in order that his hearers might be drawn and ultimately convinced of his message.

In light of Paul's example, we might ask ourselves some probing questions with the goal of prodding ourselves to become more effective ministers of the gospel:

1. How are we perceived by those around us? How do our neighbors evaluate us?
2. What must we do, how might our lives (even our daily/weekly schedules) need to change if we are to imitate Paul, even as he did Christ?

Granted, Paul may not have desired or sought the epithets hurled at him in Thessalonica and Athens, but the epithets reveal something of the nature of his ministry and what faithful, witnessing believers have been up against through the ages. On Mars Hill, Paul proved himself a scholar; to gain that status no doubt required much study.

Thus, it would seem that a litmus test for ministry in Acts 17 is threefold: Are we willing to be viewed as negatively influential, that is, as subversives? Are we willing to be defamed or mocked as people of little or no account; that is, as seedpickers? Are we willing to be literate, broadly conversant people; that is, scholars? The first two require not a sheeplike acquiescence, but rather a willing, focused surrender. The latter will very likely require a reprioritising of our lives, specifically a commitment to study so that we can communicate the good news of Christ in appropriate, effective ways to a wide variety of people within our target audiences. As we – by his grace – cultivate willingness in our lives, we become more serviceable vessels in the hand of our Master, and his purposes will be accomplished in us and through us.

Steven Mittwede is a mineral geologist/technical translator and church planter, serving for the past 7½ years in the Middle East with International Missions, Inc.

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News

Unevangelised Fields Mission

Peter Milsom, formerly pastor of Deeside Evangelical Church and more recently of Malpas Road Evangelical Church, Newport, South Wales, has been appointed mission director of Unevangelised Fields Mission. The offices of UFM are at Swindon. Well-known leaders of Reformed conviction, such as Andrew Anderson, are involved in the Mission.

About 70 missionaries connected with UFM are working in a variety of countries including Brazil, Papua New Guinea and Ivory Coast. While pastor at Deeside, Peter Milsom ministered in East Africa himself and is burdened by the need for young people to devote their lives to the mission field.

Peter Milsom stresses that the task remaining is the most difficult of all because of the remoteness of the smaller groups. He points to the work being done in the upper reaches of the Amazon where there are hundreds of tributaries and peoples that can only be reached by boat. A combination of practical and linguistic skill is required as well as physical fitness and stamina. UFM's brief for their new director is not to be desk-bound and next February he plans to see some of this pioneering work in the Amazon at first hand.

Lebanon

A report by Pastor Joseph Hewitt

I counted it a great privilege to visit this country during October and November this year and to be able to meet and preach to such warm-hearted people. Church services were lively in singing,

fervent in prayer and very reverent. I was encouraged though I had gone to encourage them! Overall evangelical churches in Lebanon are strong and growing with the younger age group predominating. The church situation seemed to me much healthier than in the UK.

My hosts were Rev Samuel Kharat with his wife Rhoda and their children Louban and Johnny. Samuel is pastor of the Evangelical Baptist Church, Bikfaya. He also lectures at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut and expects to receive his doctorate shortly for his thesis on 'Counselling'. He is a most self-effacing man and took me everywhere with him, visiting people in their homes, attending funerals and events such as the 25th anniversary of the Arabic broadcasting work of Far East Broadcasting Association, and the 10th anniversary of the Bible Society.

Everyone seems to be in a hurry and driving fast round sharp bends was hair-raising though the spectacular views made for memorable journeys. There are no trains and appear to be no traffic lights, speed limits, seat belt restrictions or law enforcement on the roads. It must be remembered that Lebanon has endured 18 years of intermittent civil and very destructive war in which about 200,000 Lebanese people died and terrible damage was inflicted. I was told that the country, though formerly rich in many ways, lost about 60% of its economy to the Syrians and about 14 million Lebanese now live in other countries, leaving less than 3 million at home. Many of those remaining, including Christian believers, carry

scars of emotional trauma. Now, though, Lebanon is full of re-building, roads, apartments, bridges, and there is peace. Though the presence of about 2 million Syrians is resented, prosperity is gradually returning.

Bikfaya Baptist Church serves more than 30 villages in a mountainous region where there were no other functioning evangelical churches. With a growing congregation of about 200 they are entering the third phase of building a suitable building. There are now five daughter churches.

Brazil

A report by Andrew King

The FIEL (meaning 'faithful') publishing house is run by a team led by an American, Richard Denham. He and his wife Pearl are experienced missionaries, having been in Brazil for over 40 years. Richard is a gospel entrepreneur, an 'ideas' man of immense energy and constant planning, with a big view of what Brazil needs and of what God can do. He is currently pastoring the Grace Baptist Church in São José dos Campos, as well as heading up the FIEL work. He is involved in evangelism, building projects, real estate arrangements, pastoral care, translation, editing, conference organisation – you name it. He and his wife Pearl are both over 70!

One of the big impacts of my visit to Brazil, participation in the 1997 FIEL Conference (550 delegates) and visits to local churches, has been to make me far more thankful for the mighty army of Americans that God has used and is using all over the world.

Brazil is a country of great gospel opportunity and great need. The

phenomenal growth of evangelicalism, particularly of the Pentecostal variety, must be a cause for rejoicing. But Brazilian evangelicalism itself has its weaknesses. The dominant Pentecostal movement, of which the Assemblies of God are the largest and best grouping, is by its very nature weak on the sufficiency of Scripture. Prosperity teaching, extreme emotionalism and wild claims to supernatural activity are rife, and make a strong appeal in a nation where so many live in abject poverty. Many non-Pentecostal churches lack a theology which is tough enough and biblically rooted enough to withstand the claims of the Pentecostals. Strongly Arminian preaching has tended to produce many spurious converts. The presence of a growing Reformed movement is therefore very encouraging. A recovered emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the sufficiency of the person, work and Word of Christ, and the work of the Spirit in regeneration is vital.

Brazil desperately needs good expository and biblical theological material. The only commentary set currently available is the Tyndale series – helpful, but by no means always the best available. As far as I am aware, there are no books of Biblical Theology. No Vos, Goldsworthy, Clowney, Motyer, Strom, McComiskey. Furthermore, there seem to be few role models of genuinely expository preaching. This is perhaps not the strength of the American scene, where many of the missionaries originate. Most pastors that I spoke to do not spend much time in exposition, and they have very little help or support in what they do attempt.

A group of Calvinistic Presbyterian pastors has started a Puritan grouping, with its own conference and magazine.

There is some fear amongst the Reformed Baptists that this will herald a split in the Calvinist ranks. I trust not: a true evangelical ecumenism is too precious to squander. The positive aspect of the interest in British and American Puritanism is the genuine concern for strong preaching, with an emphasis on application to the heart and life.

The crying need in Brazil is for good literature from every century, but especially good expositions and good role models for expositors, to encourage lively, vibrant understanding of the sufficient and authoritative text of Scripture and the challenging application of it to the present day. Brazil needs good preaching and encouragement and training for young preachers. It needs Bible Colleges that actually teach the Bible rather than rigid academic courses analysing non-evangelical theologies

In *FIEL publications*, *PES* (Evangelical publications, directed by Bill Barkley, which has translated and published most of D M Lloyd-Jones' works as well as works by Spurgeon and others) and *Puritan Project*, Brazil has its equivalent of the Banner of Truth Trust; but it also needs its Bryntirion, London Theological Seminary and Cornhill courses as well as younger ministers' conferences. It needs 'Welwyn' and 'The Bible Speaks Today' series. The Church in Brazil is like a young man – strong but needing wisdom – needing to grow in theological dimensions and in powerful biblical preaching.

Cuckfield, West Sussex

A new pastor for Cuckfield Baptist Chapel
 Begun in 1772, Cuckfield Baptist



David Sprouse with his wife, Natalie, and Jessica the youngest of their three children

Chapel survived into the second half of this century. In 1961 the work nearly terminated but one faithful member held on and appealed for help. The editor pastored the church from 1962 to 1986 during which time Cuckfield Baptist Chapel was the base out of which sprang the *Whitefield Fraternal* which still functions. This concept was adopted by John Armstrong under whose leadership *Whitefield Fraternals* have prospered and grown in the USA. Cuckfield was also the local church base from which the *Carey Conferences* were first organised as well as the literature work of *Carey Publications* and *Reformation Today*.

David Ellis was pastor from 1988 to 1997. During this time a healthy interest and some participation developed in the Lord's work in France which was previously the area of Pastor Ellis' labours. The church at Cuckfield also gained first hand knowledge of local churches in Kenya when David and his wife Barbara spent periods of time in rural areas teaching pastors and their wives who assembled for summer schools. When Nigel Lacey joined

Keith Underhill in Nairobi, Kenya, David Ellis took the pastorate at the Baptist Church in Stowmarket.

In September 1997 David Sprouse was inducted into the pastorate at Cuckfield. Members and visitors have already expressed encouragement under his preaching. We pray that his ministry will continue to be blessed to the honour of the Lord.

John Wimber

John Wimber died on November 17 aged 63. His ideas helped to plant 700 churches, 450 in the USA and 250 in other countries including 49 in Britain. Wimber and his wife were converted through the Quakers in 1962. To test his ideas on church growth he began a Bible-study group in his garage in 1977 which grew to become several congregations. In 1982 he initiated the Association of Vineyard churches. As the Vineyard Movement expanded John Wimber became an international conference speaker, song-writer and author, his best known books being *Power Evangelism* (1986) and *Power Healing* (1987). He was the senior pastor of the Anaheim Vineyard Christian Fellowship from 1977 to 1994. Wimber was an all-rounder, as Geoff Thomas says, 'he hunched over that piano of his and sang his songs in that husky voice. Irresistible! His song cassettes sold in 100,000s. These Americans can do everything!'

From 1982 to 1986 Wimber lectured at Fuller Theological Seminary. His lectures on 'Miracles' and 'Church Growth' proved the most popular ever at Fuller. In 1984 he organised a conference at Central Hall, Westminster, London. This was a great

attraction for evangelical Anglicans who took to Wimber's combination of Pentecostalism and church growth practice. In 1985 Holy Trinity, Brompton (later to become the centre in the UK of the Toronto Blessing) sent 50 from its congregation to encourage St Barnabas, West Kensington, where the attendance had shrunk to about 10. Five years later that number was 600.

In the early 1990s Wimber suffered from cancer from which he seemed to recover. In 1994 he predicted a revival in his church. At that time the Toronto Blessing spread widely with large numbers travelling to Toronto for 'the blessing'. In due course The Airport Vineyard church was expelled from the association because of the excesses of the TB.

John Wimber was a Pentecostalist with a capital P. He laid great emphasis on the supernatural gifts of the Spirit. His fame has much to do with his popularising of signs, wonders and miracles. Despite the fact that by the criteria of medical reality they did not work and in spite of embarrassing failures such as the non-healing of David Watson, the Vineyard movement expanded. The real reasons: practical church planting, energetic evangelism and practical care for the poor. About a week before he died Anaheim Vineyard took up an offering of 750,000 dollars for the poor.

Perhaps more than any other, Wimber's life raises the question of cessationism. The vineyard mentality is one in which we are required to perform the miracles of the apostles. Does that not lead inexorably to fanaticism as exemplified by the excesses of the TB? I believe it does.

A Biography of Jim Packer

To Know and Serve God, *A Life of James I. Packer* by Alister McGrath, Hodder and Stoughton, 340 pages, £16.99

A book notice by the editor

The story of Jim Packer, born in 1926, is well told by Alister McGrath, Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, and Professor of Systematic Theology at Regent College, Vancouver.

From a young age Jim was studious. Vulnerable to bullying, at the age of seven he was chased into the street where he was hit by a vehicle. A skilful operation on the front lobe of his brain saved his life. A protective aluminium plate was placed over the injury. This made most sports inadvisable. On his eleventh birthday his parents were reluctant to give him a bicycle. Instead they gave him a old typewriter. Subsequently over 30 books and a tremendous number of articles have been hammered out! Even now Jim does not use a pc! Over two million of his books have sold around the world. His injury made him unsuitable for military service.

He won a scholarship in classics for Oxford University and began his studies at Corpus Christi College in 1944. In his first year a theological library was donated to the college. Jim seemed the only one interested in such a library which included the 16 volume set of John Owen. The pages were uncut. He began by cutting his way into volume six: mortification of sin. For Jim this was a major

discovery. Subsequently he has exercised a world-wide influence for Puritanism.

At critical points Packer's writings have virtually changed the direction of evangelicalism. First, to the amazement of many, he exposed the Pelagianism of Keswick teaching. Then when evangelicals were faltering he wrote *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*. When clarity was needed by the Reformed Movement he wrote *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. When others compromised Packer held the line on the doctrine of eternal punishment.

After the National Evangelical Anglican Conference at Nottingham in 1977 it was clear that the Reformed Faith was not on the Church of England agenda. Jim immigrated to take up a teaching post in Regent College, Vancouver, where he has enjoyed a widely influential ministry for the last twenty years.

Packer has always been an Anglican in ecclesiology. This means comprehensive-ness. All who profess Christianity are embraced. The question is begged, 'What is a Christian?' McGrath likewise is comprehensive and thus entirely misconstrues the concern and actions of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in particular when Packer co-authored a major tract, *Growing into Union* (with Anglo-Catholics!). Today Packer is a leader in Evangelical and Catholics together movement. He abhors what he terms belligerency!

Great issues which merit further debate are raised by this valuable Anglican biography.

The Tragedy of Cambodia

Deborah Pennington

The Kingdom of Cambodia is a country of some nine million people neighbouring Thailand and Vietnam. Its population consists of a majority Khmer people and several small indigenous groups. Phnom Penh, the capital, has around a million people.

Its political history has been turbulent culminating with a genocide of unbelievable proportions when the Marxist Khmer Rouge claimed power in 1975. According to *Operation World* (1993) between two and three million people lost their lives. Marshall (1997) puts the most conservative estimate at one million; still a huge proportion from a population of seven million. Among them were former military personnel, civil servants, the educated, the wealthy and about 90% of the Cambodian church.

As well as being disastrous for the nation, this unbelievable slaughter was devastating for the young Church. However Cambodian believers were not unfamiliar with suffering for their faith. Don Cormack, in his book *Killing Fields, Living Fields* (1997) traces the history of the evangelical church in Cambodia. Using the image of a field and various aspects of seed planting Cormack paints an 'unfinished portrait'. This portrait brings together the lives and testimonies of many believers against a backdrop of political

turbulence. They were just ordinary people who became extraordinary through living their faith in the most anti-christian of circumstances.

About seventy-five years ago evangelical missionaries were finally permitted to enter Cambodia; a country whose national religion has been Buddhism for five-hundred years. Some of the first seeds were planted in Battambang and a church grew amongst the rice farmers of this area. These people were quickly marked out as having changed. All superstitious activity ceased when they came to faith in a living God; gossip and cruel jokes spread. They were accused of adopting a foreign religion and even being traitors to Cambodia. The implanted seed was already exposed to cruel elements.

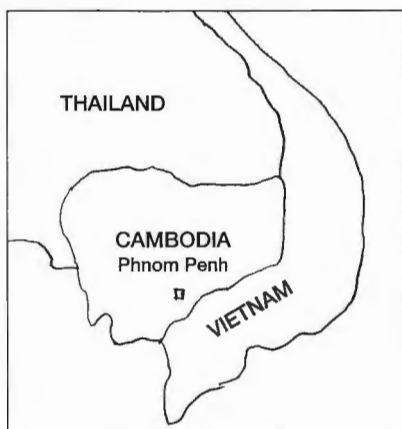
Despite all this the church grew and a Bible school was set up in Battambang. However, in 1932, the King published a royal edict which forbade proselytising. This resulted in some itinerant evangelists being jailed. Ten years later, during the second world war, Thailand seized control of the region. The Bible school closed and students returned to their villages where the church carried on quietly in homes. Following the war the church found itself caught in the crossfire between King Sihanouk's army and rebel 'Issarak's'. The latter held out in the area around Battambang. They persecuted the believers accusing them of being

spies for the hated French. (At that time Cambodia was a French colony). Cormack describes this as 'pestilence, drought and destroyer'. The seedlings weathered these harsh conditions.

A relative calm following these turbulent years allowed the young church to grow. King Sihanouk led Cambodia to independence from the French in 1953 and commenced a development programme in many spheres of public life. A copy of the recently published Cambodian Bible was presented to him and, by 1954, freedom of religion was declared. However the Protestant church was not officially recognised. Missionary activity was able to flourish for about ten years leaving 'little pools of fresh clear water.'

But even during this time Cormack says that the Church continued to be thinned, pruned and sifted. With the economy in poor shape, those who worked for the church had to live frugally with no secure income. They faced apathy towards the gospel from those outside the church and many discouragements from those within who lacked genuine commitment. Mature workers fell away, fewer young people entered Bible School. It was a time when only those plants who were firmly rooted in genuine faith were able to survive.

1965 brought yet another trial to the Church. King Sihanouk expelled all Americans and other foreigners left as visas expired; soon, no foreign missionaries remained. The protestant church was declared a national enemy, this time denounced as an arm of the C I A (Central Intelligence Agency), church



buildings were closed; some Christians leaders jailed. Once more believers met in each others' homes.

Cormack states that there were seven hundred baptised believers and two thousand adherents in 1965; by 1970 the Church had been so pruned that only three hundred remained. The following five years saw freedom for the Church to grow yet the country itself endured terrible civil war. Cambodia saw much suffering and death even before the now infamous 'killing fields'.

Towards the end of this five year period, in 1974, a small team of missionaries went to Phnom Penh. They participated in a harvest that saw church growth far outstrip anything previously experienced in Cambodia. By this time the church in the capital numbered at least three thousand. In the midst of civil war people turned to Christ in unprecedented numbers.

After four months under siege, Phnom Penh fell to the extreme Marxist Khmer

Rouge army on 17th April 1975. Missionaries fled the country, religion was banned and once more the Cambodian Church had to fend for itself. The following years of death and destruction seems too dreadful to be true. After the great harvest of the early seventies, as much as ninety percent of that yield was thrown into the furnace. Cormack describes the seed as falling to the ground and dying; yet not without hope because when seed dies more is produced.

Cormack recounts many testimonies of those who survived and those who perished in the 'killing fields'. The accounts are graphic, yet through this horror the tenacious faith of God's chosen people shines through. Some managed to survive whilst remaining in Cambodia; others fled to neighbouring Thailand and became faithful witnesses in refugee camps. In these camps many more Cambodians came to faith in Jesus Christ. A number of refugees were able to make new lives for themselves in America, Europe and Australasia. These included believers resulting in a worldwide Cambodian church. Remaining refugees were repatriated in 1993.

Christianity, both Protestant and Roman Catholic remained illegal until 1990 (Marshall, 1997). Believers numbered about one thousand and the Church operated underground. From 1990 many Christian agencies and missionaries entered Cambodia once more. In 1993 King Sihanouk, newly recrowned, consented the setting up of the Anglican church in response to a letter by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Cormack was ordained and made priest-in-charge of the Church of Christ our Peace in Phnom Penh. The fragmented indigenous church was strengthened by the repatriation of leaders and newly disciplined believers; in 1994 it numbered five thousand.

Today Cambodia still experiences turmoil. The Khmer Rouge remains active on the Thai border; millions of land mines lie in rural areas causing daily casualties. Corruption is rife within the Government and life for many Cambodians continues at subsistence level. Even in the last four months there was once again fear for the safety of missionaries.

Cambodia needs prayer. Prayer for stability, both economic and political, prayer for a peace that would last longer than ten years, prayer for the Cambodian church which lacks experienced leadership and suffers many divisions.

Yet the seed that God has planted continues to multiply and grow. Where it is the Lord who makes the seed grow, he will enable those plants to endure the fire of persecutions and sufferings.

Mark Pennington, assisted by his wife Deborah, edits the monthly missionary report at Leeds Reformed Baptist Church.

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The Life of Bernard J Honeysett (1912 - 1997)

Editor

The name of Bernard Honeysett is well known in Reformed circles in Britain and especially so among the gregarious who enjoy conferences. Bernard is the record holder for consistent year by year attendance at three annual Reformed conferences, the Banner of Truth Conference at Leicester, the Carey Conference and the Westminster Conference held for two days each December at Westminster Chapel, London.



These three conferences represent, not exclusively but mostly, the theological renewal which began in England with the publication of Reformed and Puritan books by the Banner of Truth in 1958. This theological renewal in England is by far the most profound and extensive since the Puritan period of the 17th century. A historical review of this epoch of theological renewal will appear in RT 162.

Bernard Honeysett was born into the Gospel Standard Strict and Particular Baptist denomination. This is a grouping strictly isolated from the main evangelical body. The GS maintains hyper-Calvinist articles which outline the danger of exhorting unconverted persons to repent, believe and receive Christ as this might imply 'creature power' (GS articles 32-34, see RT 2). There is a strong emphasis on experience and a disparagement of human learning. For instance, using

notes in the pulpit is regarded as a sign that the preacher is not relying on the Holy Spirit. Among the few full-time pastors that remain in this shrinking denomination it is difficult to find one that is seminary trained. Yet some in this grouping have been influenced by the Reformed renewal and would readily concede that we are to love the Lord with all our minds as well as our hearts.

Bernard's brief autobiography *The Sound of His Name* (135 pages) was published by the Banner of Truth in 1995. He describes affectionately his upbringing and experience. This autobiography provides valuable descriptions of the rustic simplicity of the Gospel Standard people who, in spite of all their separatism and sectarianism, are still the Lord's people beloved and as much part of the precious Body of Christ as any other part. The ruggedness of the GS folk is illustrated

typically by an anecdote describing an itinerant preacher who found great difficulty in reading the verse describing the musical instruments in Daniel 3. The names of the instruments are repeated several times and after verse 5, rather than struggle through again, the preacher got round his embarrassment with the comment, 'the same band, friends!' and so passed on.

Bernard was converted aged 12 but remained in the spiritual doldrums until the age of 44 when he was awakened by the text, 'He restores my soul.' He was then baptised as a believer. Up until this time he was a successful dairy farmer being one of the founders of the British Friesian Society which this year celebrated its 50th anniversary. Soon after his baptism Bernard began to preach. Invitations led him to churches all over England. In 1960 he was called to pastor the Gospel Standard church in Tenterden, Kent.

In the years that followed the above described theological renewal began to make its impact. Banner of Truth books and the powerful ministry of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones persuaded Bernard to review his theology which led to his repudiation of the hyper-Calvinist tenets of the Gospel Standard. Conflict was inevitable. In 1967 Bernard resigned from the church and began again in Tenterden with the support of those who had left hyperism and embraced the Reformed Faith. A suitable church building became available. The new church was called Trinity Baptist Church. Bernard retired in 1980 and was succeeded by Peter Sanderson. The church which grew

under Bernard's ministry has continued to grow steadily under the leadership of Pastor Sanderson.

Bernard married Gwen in 1945. During 1995 he described to me his great joy in the conversion of one of his two sons for whom he and Gwen had prayed for 46 years! Bernard possessed a remarkable ability as a horticulturist. Following his retirement he developed a garden layout which included 120 hybrids of clematis. Between 600 and 700 visitors from home and abroad came to view Bernard's garden. Money for charity was raised by this means. In his retirement he took to painting and attended art school.

Two outstanding features of Bernard's life call for special attention. The first is that he recognised the primacy of prayer. For instance it was his habit before leaving for Lord's Day morning service to pray for ministers by name in the UK and around the world. Such was his communion with God that he could be called on suddenly in a public meeting and with unction be able to lead us to the throne of grace. The second feature is the way he recognised and enjoyed the advantages of the above-mentioned Reformed conferences. By this means he never allowed himself to fall behind but kept up to date with doctrinal and practical issues. To the end he was contemporary in every way.

We are encouraged by the knowledge that Gwen and her two sons are strong in faith and comforted in their loss.

Mission in Moldavia

David J Ellis, Bethesda Baptist Church, Stowmarket

The BA flight left Gatwick airport on Wednesday 8th October in the morning and having arrived comfortably in Bucharest later that afternoon, we endured a hair-raising drive into the city of Bucharest. This visit had been set up by the Stream Project of the BEC (British Evangelical Council). Ken Morey of BEC who accompanied me to Bucharest took me to the station where I boarded a train for the five hour journey north eastwards to Suceava which is one of the principal towns of Moldavia with some 120,000 inhabitants. It is not very far from the Ukrainian border. Moldavia is a small independent country of about three million.

I was met by Pastor Daniel Boingeneau the key man amongst the churches of that area and pastor of Maranatha Baptist Church. Under God this church has been responsible for starting some seven new churches and other subsidiary fellowship groups since the revolution of 1989. In the light of this I was a little surprised when Daniel expressed his concern because of the spiritual barrenness of that area. After all his church



Daniel Boingeneau

only numbers some 450 in membership and these other new churches average between 25 and 50 members each! Not my concept of barrenness!

The purpose of this visit was to speak at the first Christian Workers' Conference to be held in Suceava for the men who are involved in the younger churches situated within a fifty mile radius of Suceava. Of all the pastors only two have had any formal kind of training. Not all of the churches have pastors and some of the men have to oversee as many as three churches at a time.

Though many of the pastors and Christian workers were thankful for this opportunity to learn together it must be said that not all of the pastors could be considered teachable. The new freedoms found



Maranatha Baptist Church, Suceava

since the revolution have caused several to become hyper-independent. That means that they take the attitude that they don't need the wider church any more and can go their own way. This has led to rivalries and serious difficulties in leadership concerning the churches. The programme of the conference was essentially to teach pastors and Christian workers to preach and to teach. Not all who attended were in the pastoral ministry; some were involved in children's education in the church and in youth activities. Using the first epistle to Timothy as our basis we sought to deal with such matters as how to read the text; how to exegete the text; how to expound the text; and how to apply the text. Such training is so needful in the light of the paucity of solid teaching in these areas and also because of the various overseas voices that come into the situation

and perpetuate wrong methods and bad hermeneutics. Many such voices come from across the Atlantic and from churches where Arminianism predominates. All of my preaching and teaching was done through an interpreter, a young lady called Marcella who is one of the most efficient interpreters I have ever had the privilege of working with. In fact as I preached on several occasions I was not aware of her presence and so my train of thought was never interrupted.

In a teaching conference a three hour session on the Thursday afternoon followed by a public meeting at the Maranatha Church at which some 150 people were present. The two hour Friday afternoon session was held in the small church of Botosani about 40 kilometres from Suceava. The



Chapel at Bursuceni



Pastor Costel and his wife

pastor, Romulus Tut is a very godly man. In the evening he had organised an evangelistic meeting for the folk from his church and about 45 people gathered to hear the gospel preached. On Saturday morning the course continued for four hours. I had an opportunity of visiting part of the town and also speaking at one of the church's youth clubs on Saturday afternoon. I was deeply impressed with the spirituality and zeal of the older young people and the orderliness of the children as they enjoyed fun time together and then listened to the Word of God which was followed by a time of open prayer at which most of them prayed.

On the Lord's Day I set out with a young American couple Sam and Shannon Brown to preach at the church at Vladeni some 35 kilometres from Suceava. About 25

people sat on rough benches. The church was built 18 months ago. Pastor Costel, who is responsible for this church and two other churches in that area, led the service in which there were times of open prayer and participation. The people listened with intense interest. It is refreshing to observe spontaneity and afterwards find conversation is earnest and spiritual. During the afternoon we went to the little chapel at Bursuceni. Here there was a congregation of about fifty. I felt enabled by the Lord in the preaching of the Word. I was particularly moved by the singing of this congregation and the various people who took part in the service. The visible response to the preaching of God's Word has to be seen to be appreciated. The memory of that service will remain long in my mind.

We drove back to Suceava for the Sunday evening service of the Maranatha Church to a congregation of between 450-500. The church auditorium is palatial in style with a massive crystal chandelier. This appearance of affluence is deceptive. The building was erected with substantial financial help from America but the cost of upkeep seems to be beyond the reach of the present congregation. Finance will always be a problem in Romania. Sadly these churches have been misguided into unreality as far as budgeting is concerned. An unexpected surprise during that service was the appearance of another pastor. He preached from the text I had chosen! In Romanian churches, it is customary that any visiting minister be asked to speak. Pastor Dan who was leading the service read the passage from Luke 18 which I had given him. My interpreter informed me that the visitor was preaching on my text! Should I change my message? I decided to stick to my purpose. I suggested that if I repeated anything, they should accept that the Lord really wanted them to hear it. However at the conclusion of the service I discovered that the visitor had simply made reference to the text of Luke 18 but merely used it as a springboard for other things. He had not been following our seminars.

Sadly this is typical in Romania. As I opened up the text on the tax collector pleading to God for mercy I observed visible signs of response. Several were in tears. I have since learned from the pastor that five people professed faith in Christ after that evening service.

A 5.00 am train on Monday morning! It was a pleasure to spend some time with Ken Morey in Bucharest before my return flight to the UK.

It is very easy to be misled by the impressions of such a brief but fully packed visit. I had been with some wonderful people who have come through much for the cause of the gospel and who are full of evangelistic zeal. These people are not wealthy and sometimes engage in projects that are beyond their means hoping that somebody else will pick up the bill. Often church leaders lack teaching themselves. Happily many congregations are discerning enough to know when they are hearing true biblical preaching and when they are not.

The principle of training men for the future (2 Timothy 2:2) is so important in a country where the pastors and church leaders have had few opportunities or access to Christian literature or biblical training.

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