

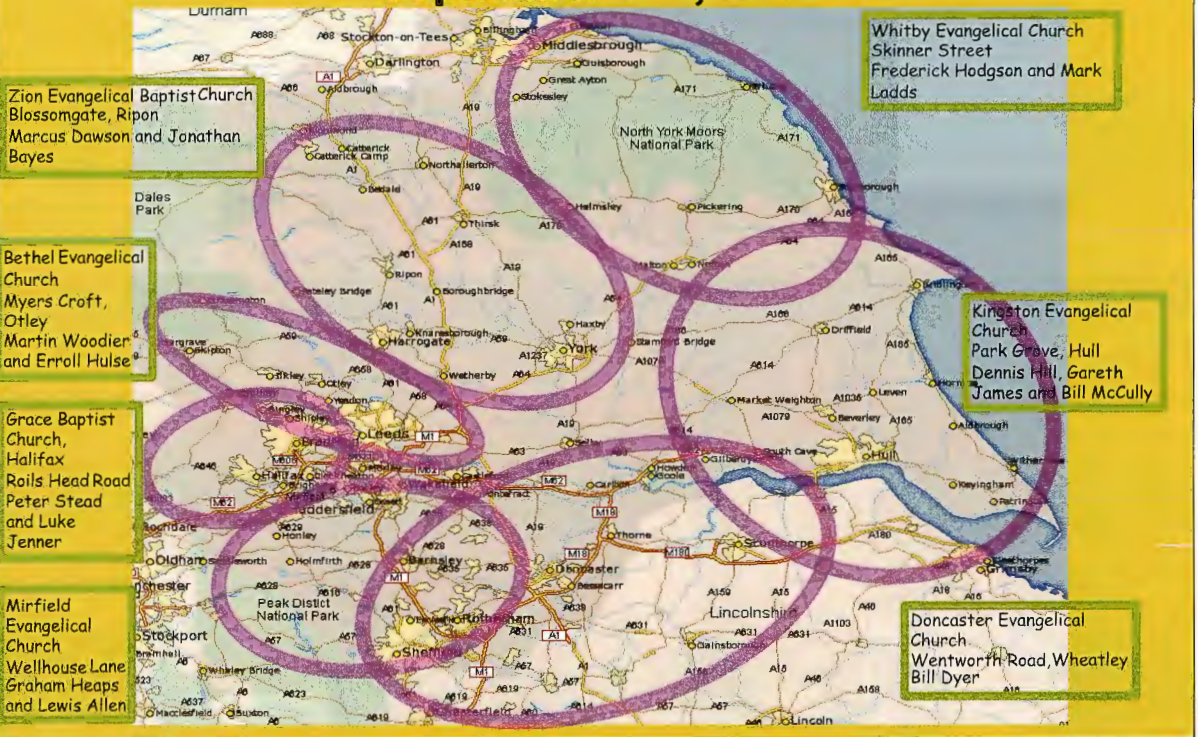
# REFORMATION TODAY



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# **Concert of Prayer for the Outpouring of God's Spirit September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011**



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## Editorial

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### *A Call for a Concert of Prayer*

The front inside cover opposite shows a map outlining the seven satellites of united prayer which gathered on 17<sup>th</sup> September last. This map serves as a token and remembrance of intercession offered on that day that we might be favoured with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The next united gathering for prayer is scheduled for November 5<sup>th</sup> at City Evangelical Church, Leeds, 11.00 am to 1.00 pm. The Concert of Prayer began when the Yorkshire Reformed Ministers' Fraternal unanimously called for such a move.

The historical precedent for this movement of prayer is found in the publication in 1747 of a small book by Jonathan Edwards in which he called for united extraordinary prayer for revival. This treatise is included in the two volume set of Jonathan Edwards' Works published by the Banner of Truth. Two recent editions have been published by Christian Focus in Scotland. This is an attractive 164 page small paperback with a 20-page introduction by David

Bryant. The original work was posted from New England to John Erskine in Scotland. Erskine in turn posted it to John Ryland in England who shared it with John Sutcliffe. Sutcliffe published an edition which led to the organisation of a Concert of Prayer. The outcome was an extensive revival which is documented in Paul Cook's book *Fire From Heaven* (EP). This Concert of Prayer also inspired the great missionary movement we associate with William Carey.

Jonathan Edwards' call or appeal for a Concert of Prayer was based on Zechariah 8:20-23.

Here is the text:

This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, 'Let us go at once to entreat the LORD and seek the LORD Almighty. I myself am going.' And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him."

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Front cover picture – *A member of the Han Chinese, Min Nan, one of the many unreached people groups of China.*

*Photo by permission of Paul Hathaway editor of OPERATION CHINA, first edition 2000.*

This is what the LORD Almighty says: "In those days ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'" (Zech 8:20-23).

This prophecy describes a great movement of united prayer in the Messianic era, that is in these last times between the first and second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. T V Moore declares in his commentary on Zechariah: 'When this prediction was uttered nothing seemed more hopelessly improbable than its fulfillment.' Jonathan Edwards is correct when he points out that nothing of this kind is recorded in pre-Messianic history.

I now make five observations on the text:

**Observation one.** The numbers involved in this prayer movement are very large. Many peoples refer to diversity of race. Note that it is 'many cities', not towns or villages but cities where multitudes live. The emphasis is on many people: 'many peoples and powerful nations will come.' This cannot refer to Pentecost when a mere 120 filled an upper room to engage in prayer. It is true that a large diversity of people from fifteen different nations came to Jerusalem but that was not for prayer meetings but to celebrate the Passover.

The reference to powerful nations fits a similar prophecy in Isaiah, namely 19:23-25.

'In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance"'. Today Iran and Egypt represent bastions of Islam. A spiritual revival of stupendous proportions is needed for this prophecy to be fulfilled. In Iran a Christian pastor is on death row for converting to Christ from Islam.

**Observation two.** There is zeal in this movement. 'Let us go at once to entreat the LORD and seek the LORD Almighty. I myself am going.' The Hebrew employs what we term ingemination, *In going let us go for it*. An example is God's promise to Abraham, 'In multiplying I will multiply you,' which means he will exceedingly multiply. Zeal is also to be noted in the urgency expressed, 'Let us go at once.' Let no time be wasted. This is urgent. Let us go at once!

**Observation three.** In our dispensation Jews have been persecuted horribly and no more so than during the 20<sup>th</sup> century which is stained appallingly with the holocaust. But in this prophecy Zechariah tells us that 'in those days ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew



by the hem of his robe and say, "Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you!" ' Far from being devalued Jews will be highly esteemed and the reason is that they are reconciled to their Messiah. Romans chapter eleven is explicit in declaring that the restoration of the Jews will be like life from the dead for the Church universal.

The conclusion is obvious. We must pray for a revival of extraordinary proportions which will embrace God's ancient people.

**Observation four.** Two expressions are repeated in this prophecy. They seek the LORD and they entreat the LORD. 'To seek' means to look for. If a person is not present at an important meeting, you go and look for him so that he might be present. What is a worship service if the Lord is not there? What is a prayer meeting if the Lord is not there? It is the felt presence of the Lord that makes Christian worship services and prayer meetings distinct from all other gatherings. And when the Lord is present we remember that he is sovereign and omnipotent.

The second word is 'entreat'. What does entreat mean? It conveys the meaning of reasoning with and imploring. We entreat by bringing and presenting sound reasons and showing that they are vital and urgent. If God's promises are to be fulfilled, then we entreat him to employ his power and work for their success. That is what it means to

entreat. Say you have an urgent need and you have a relative who can meet that need, you go and entreat him or her. O to become saturated with the spirit of prayer and supplication! There is too little travailing in prayer.

**Observation five.** This prophecy is expressed as certain future blessing. Several times in Zechariah chapter eight there is the emphatic statement, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says.' The chapter begins with, 'Again the word of the LORD Almighty came to me. This is what the LORD Almighty says: "I am very jealous for Zion; I am burning with jealousy for her."' The bringing together of believers in a Concert of Prayer is expressed as a means of grace for the churches. There is no better word than Concert because that word conveys the meaning of unity and harmony. In a musical concert every member contributes in unity and harmony. In a Concert of Prayer all participants contribute in unity and harmony. When the churches become aware that their need is desperate they have a means of grace to which they can resort and that is united prayer. The reason why this means is employed is that when the answer to their prayers is given it will be to the glory of God. When the apostle Peter was sentenced to death and imprisoned to await execution the church prayed. The deliverance given was remarkable and gave glory to God (Acts 12). In those early days the Church corporate was the prayer meeting. In many churches today you

see the church gathered on the Lord's Day and then separately during the week a much smaller percentage of the membership gather for prayer.

Having made these five observations I will now comment on Jonathan Edwards' book

### **A Call to United Extraordinary Prayer.**

The original title consisted of 37 words describing the contents and thrust of his message. The blurb reads as follows:

*An humble attempt to promote explicit agreement and visible union of God's people, in extraordinary prayer, for the revival of religion and the advancement of Christ's kingdom on earth, pursuant to Scripture promises concerning the last time.*

I comment now as follows:

**Comment one.** Note that this is titled *An humble attempt*. We must be humble in our attempts to promote a Concert of Prayer. Not all Christians believe this is necessary. Some think that the church is doing fine and that time spent on united prayer is a distraction from the work of evangelism. In response to that we affirm that attendance at this united prayer meeting is entirely voluntary. We cannot and do not impose this on others. There is an open invitation to all who are concerned about the issues at stake. We have to earn and win the co-operation of those who do not share this burden. When revival

was given in the period 1735 to 1741 and beyond, not all supported that revival. Those dubbed Old Lights opposed it as they regarded it as fanaticism. And those nicknamed New Lights who formed the majority promoted it.

**Comment two.** We observe the words *to promote explicit agreement and visible union of God's people*. Here Edwards' concern is for agreement and visible unity. Agreement has to be won and visible unity must be maintained. In fact one of the major blessings in a Concert of Prayer is heightened unity. It is a visible unity because we actually see each other, pray together and spend some time in fellowship with each other. This is a coming together of believers from Bible-believing churches. It is an act of visible unity.

'How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life for evermore' (Ps 133).

**Comment three.** A Concert of Prayer is described as *extraordinary prayer*. This is more than the weekly prayer meetings of the churches. This call is for extra united prayer. That is extra in contrast to ordinary or regular. The call is for extra prayer with regard to downward trends in

the UK and across Western Europe. The call is to pray that this will be stopped and turned round. Only an outpouring of the Holy Spirit can reverse our present decline.

**Comment four.** Edwards called for intercession for *the advancement of Christ's kingdom on earth*. As never before in this dispensation we possess a knowledge of the extent of the unfinished work of the great commission.

"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" ' (Matt 28:18-20).

Several factors have to be considered. The first is the number and size of the Unreached People Groups (UPGs) of the world. The second is to measure the rate of progress that is being made. The third is to measure the missionary force at present attempting to complete the task. The fourth and final point is to face the reality that the worldwide Church is going backwards rather than forwards with regard to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. These points can be enlarged to fill a book of 1,000 pages. The employment of the recent

edition of OPERATION WORLD is enough to establish the fact that the number of unevangelised peoples of the world is out-stripping evangelisation.

A few facts will suffice. There are 20 Islamic nations that have successfully fortified themselves against the gospel. There are at least five major Buddhist strongholds that are almost entirely impervious to church planting. According to OPERATION CHINA there are 574 UPGs in China. The growth of the Church in China is most encouraging but under the Communist government the barriers are intact against reaching the UPGs in China. India has the second largest population after China. With 2,223 UPGs India represents the most unreached part of the world. Revivals in Indian provinces such as Nagaland and Mizoram have helped to increase the Indian missionaries to 83,000. Yet those who actually go and live with the UPGs are too few to make completion of the task a reality.

Visas to work in India are increasingly difficult to procure which means that the Indians will have to complete the work themselves. The work to be done compared to the resources shows that nothing but a mighty impetus from heaven is going to make the completion of the Great Commission possible.

Other major areas of UPGs in the world are, Pakistan 374, Bangladesh 353, Nepal 325, Indonesia 200, Sudan 138, Laos 134, Iran 93, Russia 77 and Thailand 75.

Extraordinary prayer for the UPGs of the world is an abiding ever-present urgent matter. Our Lord's prayer reminds us of this, 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'

**Comment five.** The description concludes with these words, *pursuant to Scripture promises concerning the last time*. Scripture promises provide fuel for intercession for worldwide revival. The promises are many. I will refer to the promises which centre on Christ as King.

Firstly we remember that Christ is unique because he is perfectly just. The second factor is to note the nature of his kingdom. It is not of this world in the sense that it advances not by the sword but by occupying the hearts of his people. His kingdom is within us. The next factor to remember is that his kingdom never ceases to grow and extend. The first hint we have in Scripture of this is in Genesis 49:10: 'The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.' Isaiah tells us that 'of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end'. This increase is expressed vividly by Daniel: 'In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will

set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure for ever' and 'the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth' (Dan 2:44 and 35).

The Father's answer to the rebellious nations is the enthronement of his Son. 'I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill. Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.' (Ps 2:6&8). This enthronement of the King is affirmed in Psalm 110:1: 'The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."' That all his opponents and all false religions are included is expressed in 1 Corinthians 15:24-26, 'Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.'

The fact is that at present 'darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples' (Isa 60:2). But then we read that a time is coming when 'he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations' (Isa 25:7).

Psalm 72 describes the nature of Christ's rule and also its ultimate extent.



Psalm 89 is important. Jonathan Bayes comments as follows: 'This Psalm begins with praise to the LORD for his sovereign rule over creation. Then from verse 15 it begins to describe the blessedness of those who experience the joyful reality of living under God's sovereign reign. It then continues by showing how that sovereign reign of God has been brought down to earth in the person of the King descended from David. In him God's hand, God's sovereign power, will be established. His foes will collapse before his advance. The power of Christ will be seen across the seas. He will be the highest of the kings of the earth, not just theoretically, but in the actual conditions of life in this world, with all its political structures.

'Verses 30-45 admit that, at the time when this Psalm was written, the covenant with David appeared to have stalled. The kings of Judah, descended from David, had not lived in obedience to the law of the LORD. Consequently, God's people had been overpowered by their enemies, and the Davidic line of descent lost its royal power. However, the Psalm ends with prayer. The Psalmist cries out to the LORD for a reversal of the present distress.

'Perhaps it is true to say that, in the circumstances of those days, we see a paradigm of days like our own, when gospel progress is not uniform in all nations, because our sin has resulted in David's honourable Son not getting the glory he deserves in our

nation, and from our leaders. This Psalm is therefore our mandate to pray for the revival of the kingdom, for the quickening of the preaching of the gospel, here, now, in our time and place, so that our nation may again know the blessedness of the joyful sound of God's sovereign rule in his Son through the message of grace; that our leaders may again understand that Jesus Christ is the highest of the kings of the earth, and may submit to his rule in obedience to the law of God, and so set the example which will lead the people to follow Jesus and live in the joy of the gospel.'

We hope this material will stir our friends in other parts of the U K to catch the vision and join with us. We live in momentous times and we should be thankful that we are alive today because we may be granted that great mercy of seeing the Lord arise and scatter his enemies. The idea of a Concert for Prayer is biblical and brings together two vital truths:

First prayer is the forerunner of mercy. When God means to bless his people he first stirs them to pray for that very blessing he has fore-ordained. Second it is the Lord who sets the solitary in families. He may have set you in a small fellowship where no-one else seems captivated by this concept but you could still join with us by praying at the same time and on the same day, even if you have to pray alone. However, you may find that sooner or later others will wish to join with you.

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## A Father and a Pastor

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*1 Timothy 3:4,5; Titus 1:6*

*John Benton*

It is interesting that in both these passages concerning church leadership Paul makes much of the church leader's relation to his family. The reason is that Paul sees the church and the family as closely intertwined. Indeed the church can be seen as God's family. As the church is a spiritual family, the way a man brings up his own family is a test-bed for how he will get on leading and nurturing a church. Paul spells that out in 1 Timothy 3:5: 'If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?'

Before we go any further I had better clarify the subject of parent and pastor, with three assumptions:

- I'm coming from a complementarian position with respect to gender issues. The husband is the head of the family just as Christ is the head of the Church (Eph 5:22f). That headship carries authority (Eph 1:22). But that authority is to be used in a Christ-like way for the good of others, not for himself (Eph 5:25). He is a servant-leader.
- Though there is a lot of flexibility in the NT with respect to male and female roles, in the church leadership is male. Family and church are to have the same gender structure so that they fit together and do not clash. So we find male apostles, and in 1 Timothy 3:2 male leaders are assumed.
- I also come from a position which sees the children of Christian homes to be in need of being converted. The NT knows nothing of salvation inherited from parents (Luke 3:8) but rather insists on new birth (John 3:3,6). This will affect your approach to being a father.

Do I think that a man's children have to be believers before he can be a church leader? I know the NIV translates Titus 1:6 that way, but that requirement is not specified in 1 Timothy 3:4, and the word in Titus can just as well be translated 'faithful', which can be understood in the sense of not being rebels but respectful and 'obedient' to Dad. Obviously to have believing children is wonderful. But I don't think Paul is insisting on that.

The main point to get across in these initial remarks is the importance of this subject. Family life is the foundation for ministerial life. ‘If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?’ (1 Tim 3:5). We neglect this matter of being good fathers to our children at our peril.

We will look at two basic texts about fatherhood and apply them to ourselves in the ministerial context.

## **The description of fathers in 1 Thessalonians 2**

What are we meant to be as fathers? As Paul describes his ministry to the church in Thessalonica in ‘fatherly’ terms he gives us a framework in which to think about ourselves as fathers in the family. Let’s briefly pick up 5 things concerning fatherhood.

### *The fundamental attitude is love*

In v 6b through to 12 Paul describes his ministry both in motherly and fatherly terms, but ‘love’ surely applies to both aspects. ‘We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us’ (v8). Notice that love is in terms of ‘sharing ourselves’. Your affection for your children, building a relationship with your children and ‘getting to know Dad’ is fundamental. This does take time and it also involves change as they grow. Some fathers are good with children when little but lose them as teenagers. A shared interest, perhaps supporting a football team, can be a great help. Shared interests which last through childhood and through the teenage years are important.

### *The overall perspective is responsibility*

This is implied in ‘For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children’ (v11). The father has a responsibility for ‘his own children’ which he does not have for other children. It means that he provides for his family materially (Eph 5:29). He never walks out on his family and is always there for them.

### *The modelled behaviour is consistency*

Paul set them an example to follow: ‘You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed’ (v10). There

is an extra edge to this as a minister in your own home. Our children listen to our preaching as we tell other people how to live, but then, because they live in the same house as we do, they see that often we don't live up to our own words. We are not to foster silent pretence as if all is well. What are we to do? Well, there are two things. First and foremost of course we are to do our utmost to practise what we preach. But second, when we fail we are to apologise and say sorry to our children. And in doing that our children will see us as real people, sinners who need the gospel as much as anyone else, and if that relationship with them is good they will not despise us but love us for being honest. The last thing our children need is a father who never admits his faults.

*The practical input is encouragement*

To encourage (v12) means to 'give them heart'. It also means to correct them when needed. Discipline in the family lies particularly with the father (Heb 12:9). And it also means to console them when things have gone awry. Generally it is about putting them right and building their confidence. That accentuating of the positives is crucial; praise needs to outweigh correction by about 3 to 1 for children. Thus you need to be able not only focus on yourself and church problems. Otherwise you will never think deeply of your children. We find our strength to do that in God. It is an area of practical faith. Do I trust God enough to forget myself and give myself to the family?

*The ultimate purpose is to lead them to a worthwhile life*

Your life is for God, your marriage is for God, and your family is for God. We read, 'and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory' (v12b). Your purpose is to lead your children to God. I know that we don't want to be thought of as brainwashing our children, but do not take the attitude which says, 'I'll let them decide for themselves, I won't force my ideas on my children.' I have to say that such an attitude is as good a way as any of telling them, 'This Christianity is not important.' Would you leave it to your children to 'decide for themselves' concerning learning to cross the road?

At odds with this 'job description' of a father from Scripture is a tendency in the rising generation to require a father to be a second mother and share

equally in all the work of the children. The reason for this appears to have two roots:

- The effects of feminism. Feminism has portrayed motherhood as at worst a kind of slavery and at best a 'career break'. The idea is that, unless the husband is sharing all the tasks in this tremendous burden of bringing up children, he is letting his wife down.
- An over-reaction to a previous generation of fathers who absented themselves from the home and from looking after the family.

A wife can feel she needs her husband there all the time and 'guilt' about being away from the children can manipulate him. This 'needing to be with the family' means that the first concern for many young ministers is how much time they get off. It means also that many of them just find it impossible to produce two sermons a week. 'We don't know how your generation did it!'

The answer to this is not abandoning our families but balance. Scripture teaches complementarianism. Husband and wife should do their assigned jobs. Your job as a husband is to love, to provide, to encourage, to be a good model of service, and to lead the family. Yes, you need to help practically and be involved with the family, but you do not need to be a second mother. Mum is the nurturer. You must not be made to feel guilty. Your children do not need you both there all the time. Generally speaking, it really does not take two parents to put two children to bed. Without abandoning the family you do need to do a good and thorough job for the church.

## **The description of fathers in Ephesians 6**

'Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord' (Eph 6:4). The instruction to fathers in Ephesians 6:4 is divided into two parts, positive and negative.

### **The negative command for father**

In verse 4 the apostle says, 'Fathers, do not exasperate your children.' Is Paul saying that you must never do anything which might anger or upset your child? Is he saying that if at any time your children respond badly to your correction then you know you have gone wrong? No, he is not saying that. There is indwelling sin in all of us, including children, so even the best and



most loving correction can produce a bad response. But what the apostle is saying is that parents – fathers in particular – must avoid dealing with their children in any way which will be unnecessarily irritating or discouraging to the child. There can be an off-handedness or unfairness or unkindness which provokes a just and understandable irritation and it is that which damages the child. ‘Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged’ (Col 3:21).

Let me flag up four sources of exasperation for ministers’ children.

*Immediate exasperation through setting unreasonably high standards*

This might be in school by comparing your child with some very gifted child who lives down the road. It is unreasonable but your parental pride demands it, specially the pride of being the minister’s family! It may be to do with behaviour or dress code. You come down on your children because you are aware ‘others are watching’. Set standards which are appropriate, and which are not to do with your ego. Youngsters are made in God’s image and do have a God-given sense of fairness. Do not violate that.

*Immediate exasperation through partiality*

Jacob showed favouritism to Joseph. In doing so he exasperated his other sons so that they turned on Joseph (Gen 37:4). Do we show partiality among our children? In particular if one of our children has become a Christian and is showing signs of going on with Christ and another one has not, do we treat the Christian more leniently? Do we show more affection for that child? Exasperate a child once too often and it is not easy to get him or her back.

*Long-term exasperation through failure to exercise appropriate discipline*

You are so focussed on the church you haven’t got time to discipline your family or you don’t want to get involved. Here is a home where there is no authority or correction to speak of; to stop the baby crying – give in; to stop the youngster moaning – give in; to stop the teenager sulking – give in; if they don’t want to go to church – give in, anything for peace. The children grow up with no boundaries in their lives. They never learnt that they must control themselves. They did not learn that you can’t always get what you want by throwing a tantrum. They are unprepared for living in the real world and they sometimes turn on their parents with ‘You let me down.’ At the time you had

‘peace’ in the home but 20 years down the line your parental sloppiness meets you in the eyes of an unconverted, disillusioned and embittered youngster.

### *Long-term exasperation through promises not kept*

‘Yes, son, I’ll spend some time with you, we’ll go to the match.’ ‘Yes, princess, we’ll be there at your school performance.’ But somehow we never come through on our promises. You always have a bit more to do on your sermon. You always have just one more pastoral visit to make. And eventually the child gets the message that nearly everything else in life is more important to Dad than he or she is – and they become exasperated, embittered and discouraged. What you need is balance, order and routine. Set the routine which balances family and church and stick to it. Some ministers are perfectionists, never satisfied, working right up to the final minute on yet another possible nuance of the Greek text through which they can display their amazing ability and preaching talent – that’s a way to neglect the family. Seek to finish your sermon prep by Friday so that you are free to be with the children on Saturday – the day they are not at school and you are free. Do it and stick to it!

Paul is telling parents, especially fathers, to wake up. Even if you are tired, even if you do have a lot on, avoid those things which crush the child and eventually you lose them. ‘Fathers, do not exasperate your children.’

### **The positive command for father**

The second part of verse 4 gives the command to positively teach our children, ‘Instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.’ The emphasis is on teaching them about Christ and spiritual things. We may be only too happy to teach them how to play chess, but we are in a spiritual battle and must not neglect spiritual things.

*Why is this teaching about God my responsibility rather than the Sunday School’s?*

Yes, of course use church and Sunday School, but realise God wants you to do this work – especially as a father. Your children need to know that you are serious about this Christian gospel, it is not just something you do to earn a living. Parents have much more familiarity with their own children and so know better how to help them. Children love their own parents more than

anyone, so the gospel is likely to get the best hearing from you. I have to say that we have been helped by other families and people in the church too. Once children become teenagers, someone else in the church talking one-to-one with them can be very helpful. It underlines that this Christianity is real and not just ‘taught in our home because we are the minister’s kids’. Here are ordinary people, with ordinary jobs who are taking time with me to teach me what is really important to them.

*How is this teaching to be done?*

Training and instruction must be grounded in the Scriptures. Just as you give your children good food for their bodies, you must give them good, sound, wholesome food for their souls – God’s Word. As a church minister, you must mix that teaching of the Word of God with your own experiences of God’s goodness. They need to know Christianity is not just a theory that Dad preaches on Sundays. It is something that works in real life. In Israel Joshua instructed the people to set up monuments. ‘What are these great stones doing here by the shore of the Jordan river?’ (Josh 4:6). Then tell them what happened when God stopped the river so that we could pass over into the Promised Land. Tell them he is no God imprisoned in a book, but the living God whom we know in our lives. ‘Hear what the Lord did for me!’ And bring the things of God into your everyday life – pray together about your troubles and let the children see God answering. Discuss together how God’s Word applies to this situation we face, or why following God’s laws is the best way to live, and how and why other ways of living lead to trouble and disappointment, ‘Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up’ (Deut 6:7). Teach them to think biblically and to see the lies in things like adverts and materialism etc. And above all else do all this prayerfully, with understanding bringing each child daily to the throne of grace for God’s blessing (Job 1:5).

## **Conclusion**

How can you fit all this in? You need to be disciplined. You need to make friends with your alarm clock. You need to be the first one up every morning as the servant-leader of the home – praying, reading the Scriptures, meeting with your Father in heaven, knowing that those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength and rise on eagles’ wings to serve God, the church and the family.

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## The Church most Glorious

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### *Psalms 48*

*John J Murray*

This psalm is occasioned by a great deliverance to Israel, which is recorded in verses 4 to 7. The deliverance calls forth praise to the God who reigns on Mount Zion. This is the place chosen by God for dwelling among his people. The earthly Jerusalem is a model of the heavenly one. The psalm portrays the literal Zion in terms of the Church of God.

### **What characterises the Church of God?**

#### *1. The Presence of the King*

It is 'the city of the great King'. What things are highlighted? (1) The greatness of the King. He is high and exalted in transcendent majesty. This calls forth reverence and adoration. (2) The holiness of the King. He is on the mountain of his holiness. He has total and unique moral majesty. (3) The reality of the great King. The Canaanites believed that their gods lived in the mountains. Mt Zaphon in the north of Palestine was the seat of a god. What was a fable to the Canaanites was a reality in Zion. (4) The fruitfulness of the King. Zion is the joy of the whole earth. Her advantage will be shared with the whole world. Isaiah 2:2-4 reveals Zion as the centre of worldwide attraction, revelation and peace.

#### *2. The Protection of the King*

'God is known in her palaces for a refuge.' The events in verses 4 to 7 are recorded with dramatic skill. The assembled kings 'saw it, were astounded, were in panic, took to flight'. Did a theophany appear? The psalm suggests a wider context and we can think of the

picture in psalm 2 where the kings of the earth assemble against the Lord and against his anointed. The Church has enemies that seek her destruction. The Church is under threat (1) when the powers of Satan and the world are at work in persecution, (2) when a nation becomes so wicked that God threatens to destroy all in it, and (3) when the apostasy and the decay is within the professing Church and God threatens to remove the candlestick.

### 3. *The Praises of the King*

‘We have thought of thy lovingkindness.’ The Church meditates and reflects on God’s steadfast love to her. ‘According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise.’ His renown is known throughout the whole world and according to this so is his praise. He is known for his ‘righteousness’ and ‘judgements’ and the children of God in all generations can identify themselves with his work. ‘They went through the flood on foot; there did *we* rejoice in him’ (Ps 66:6).

### 4. *Preservation through the King*

How many cities and kingdoms have risen to great power and glory and where are they now? But this city, this kingdom, will never perish. The inhabitants are invited to inspect the walls, towers, bulwarks and palaces. The great truths that preserve the city are (1) *The kingship of Christ*. The answer to the rebellion of the nations is that ‘I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion’ (Ps 2:6). The rightful King is installed upon Zion’s hill. He must have subjects to rule. They will be made willing in the day of his power (Ps 110:3). He will defend his subjects. (2) *The promises of God*. The great promise of the old dispensation is in Genesis 3:15 and was gloriously fulfilled in Christ. The promise of the New Testament is in Matthew 16:18, ‘Upon this rock will I build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’ (3) *The eternal covenant*. God relates to man by covenant. There is the eternal Covenant of Redemption which, after man failed in the Covenant of Works, came to fruition in the Covenant of Grace. It is an ‘everlasting



covenant, ordered in all things and sure' (2 Sam 23:4). Therefore we are assured that God is our Guide and Protector 'unto dying'. This is the strongest expression that can be used for constancy.

## **Application**

### *1. The Church has continuity*

God's work is one. God's Church is one. There is continuity throughout the Old and New Testaments. One generation cannot do justice to all that God has done. 'One generation shall praise thy works to another.' Remembrance of God's works must not die out. 'Tell it to the generation following.' Evangelicalism did not begin in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as some claim. Evangelistic activity did not start with D L Moody. We are standing on the shoulders of giants.

### *2. The Church is God-centred*

God-centredness has been the hallmark of the Church in its best days. She was enamoured with God in his majesty, glory, holiness and grace. The Protestant Reformation consisted of replacing God as he has revealed himself in Christ back at the centre of Church life. The core of Calvinism is the vision of God. We need a return to God-consciousness in the Church today.

### *3. The Church's beauty depends on the presence of the King*

He is the glory in her midst. When he manifests his glorious presence in her then the Church advances and her enemies are scattered. Militancy is an essential feature of the true Church. 'Positively put, the Church's militancy is proof of its holiness. As the light of the world it cannot but strive to expel the darkness of sin... Thus militancy becomes synonymous with glory.' (R B Kuiper, *The Glorious Body of Christ*, page 34).

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## Biblical Shepherding of God's Sheep

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*Editor Steven Martin, Day One 2010, 235 pp.*

*A review article by David J Ellis, Mount Road Baptist Church, Hinckley, Leics.*

In an item of correspondence in Banner of Truth Magazine (January 1993), Stuart B Latimer wrote from Greenville, South Carolina, these words of caution: 'Because of my experiences during my later years in latter twentieth-century Fundamentalism, I have been concerned lately to see three of its problems appearing in Reformed circles. The three we need to be particularly on guard against are:

- *authoritarianism*, that is the taking of more authority by elders over people's lives than Scripture allows;
- *legalism*, equating the traditions of men with the Holy Scriptures;
- *isolationism*, the separation from those we differ from to a degree that goes beyond Scripture.

The movement towards isolationism is characterised by such claims as 'We are the only ones truly making a stand!' Let us be beware of what might be called the 'Elijah complex'.

Eighteen years on we are only too aware of the inroads that these aberrations, against which Latimer warns us, have made. Many are the victims. *Biblical Shepherding of God's Sheep* goes a long way in helping us discern the problems and dealing with them.

The sub-title of this book is '*The use and abuse of authority by church officers*'. It is set out in four unequal parts comprising thirteen chapters in all. Each part deals with an issue of church leadership, and each chapter is by a different author, the editor contributing an introduction and two chapters. Each of the authors is given a mini-biography with a cameo photo towards the end of the book which is helpful to set their particular article in a living context. There are well-known names here among those familiar with Reformed Baptists and some lesser-known ones, yet all give us important insights and instruction with regard to pastoral ministry and oversight of our churches. The four parts of the book deal with Leadership in the church in the New Testament (one chapter), Leadership and the spirit of the gospel (four chapters), Leadership and the application of pastoral authority (five chapters) and Leadership and the wider church context (three chapters) respectively. The book concludes with a select bibliography listing twenty-eight books.

In his introduction Steve Martin tells us that the aim of the book is 'an attempt to make Christian leaders better, Christian laymen better, and Christian churches more glorifying to Christ'. It remains to be seen if it will do what it sets out to accomplish. Not all the chapters are of equal value. Some are written with an obvious local setting in view, where abuse of authority has been evident. However, this reviewer has no hesitation in commending the book, not least because

it deals thoroughly with the handling of the problem of authoritarianism in the ministry among the churches. It is nowhere specifically stated what mandate was issued to the contributors, but repeatedly these each highlight the blight, effects and suggested remedies of the scourge of authoritarianism.

The writers offer us a balanced measure of sound exegetical study, good pastoral theology, and the acquired wisdom of years of experience, some obviously more marked than others by first-hand knowledge of the things they speak of. There is also a fair amount of repetition from one author to another, yet this in no way detracts from the overall impact. These issues affect the life and witness of the churches and if the abuses are left unchallenged they will only produce sectarian churches, stifled Christian lives or even severely unbalanced and neurotic Christians. One question that kept popping up in my mind as I read is: 'Will those who really need to heed the rebukes and instruction of this book actually read it?' It is a truism that prevention is better than cure, yet there is some hope that some (and one would hope many) might be arrested from following that path which is not only detrimental to the believer's life but disruptive of brotherly harmony in the local church and among the churches.

Christians who feel the pressure in a church where the leadership has gone beyond the limits established in God's Word, (and the grievous perversion of authoritarianism does this) are advised by James Renihan to get out as quickly as they can. However, the book is not at all an attempt to provoke rebellion against legitimate God-given rule and authority,

but, on the contrary, to help those unclear as to what needs to be done to see the issues more clearly and to act accordingly. In this sense the book, though seemingly reactionary at times, is much more pro-active, setting out what is most clearly taught in Scripture and what is equally clearly to be refuted in the practices of too many.

Walt Chantry opens the book with a rehearsal of what the ideal church should be. (He also has a chapter on 'Caution in Church Discipline'.) Chantry comments about some that though they 'love the *ideal* church (ideal in their own thinking), they have no time for the *real* church' (emphasis his). Some of the exegesis of his paper could be discussed more, e.g. is the parable of the wheat and the tares (p. 18) about believers and unbelievers in the church, or in the world? In evaluating local churches faithfulness to God's Word should concern us more than the role we might have in the assembly. The obvious needs to be stated when he says there is no infallible church, but his counsel needs to be heeded when he writes, 'A Christian must never turn his conscience over to a church... members must not allow officers to do all the thinking for them.' He challenges the mentality that 'prefer(s) the sense of security which comes from being told what to think; but that is not conducive to a healthy church'. He concludes his part by telling us 'we must both love the church as she is and desire that she become what she ought to be'.

Erroll Hulse deals with the right ordering of church government in a way that displays good exegesis of Scripture, wise counsel and many years of experience producing that wisdom which is required

to keep eldership functioning correctly. The idea that the eldership cannot err has more in common with an inquisition than sound biblical ministry. Unanimity amongst elders is of essential importance. That we should be of one mind 'we take to mean that we should be at peace with one another, not that we must agree exactly on every issue' (p. 36). There is much practical wisdom here.

Space does not permit me to summarise each chapter. There is consistent appeal to Scripture, to Reformed confessional standards, to the Puritans, especially John Owen (see Donald Lindblad on 'Elders should strive for balance' pp. 52ff and James Renihan on 'The limits of pastoral authority' pp. 215ff. [He quotes in full Owen's commentary on Hebrews 13:17, and from church history] ). There is an excellent chapter by Tom Nettles 'Training men for the gospel ministry' (p. 196ff). Lindblad's chapter is very suggestive for Bible study on preaching. His orderly presentation lends itself to such. Some gems are to be found here, e.g. 'Elders...are under the authority of Christ; they are not *monarchs* but *ministers*'; ecclesiastical authority is derived and not original; it is *ministerial* not *magisterial* (emphasis his).

Paul Clarke conducts us ably through the relevance of the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount and Romans 12, as does Henry Rast through the exhortation of 1 Peter, landing on 1 Peter 5:1-4. Steve Martin's contributions are masterly on 'The extent of elders' power' and 'Authoritarian shepherds and idol-worshipping sheep'. Here is a clear grasp of the meaning of authority and what it is to exercise it correctly. What kinds of questions ought we to be asking of our

elders, preachers and teachers? 'How is authority to be wielded? In a word, *carefully*' (p. 106). He even envisages occasions when the elders might have to apologise to the church, citing an example from his own ministry (p. 113). How usual is that?

There is a chapter on 'How should we preach?' (Leon Blosser), another on 'Cooperation and the autonomy of the local church' (John Thornbury), and 'The limits of pastoral authority' (James Renihan).

This book deserves to be read widely by all but will be especially useful for Christians suffering the abuse of authoritarianism, constantly found throughout the book. Pastors and elders who might be tempted to go down the road of more dictatorial ministry (after all, that can be a simpler route than battling with the principles of liberty without licence and the freedom of the godly conscience) will find good restraints and exhortation in these pages. Young men training for the ministry would do well to inculcate the teachings expounded here to their long-term benefit. Older ministers seeking to guide prospective candidates for pastoral ministry will find in this book very helpful and indeed indispensable instruction to keep them on the right tracks. Copies should be made available for all church officers to read. That would certainly add to ongoing in-house training as men serve in their home church.

There are other books that set out what this book says, but for accessibility to the issues this is a more than adequate resource.

### Iran

An Iranian has been sentenced to death by a court for allegedly leaving Islam to become a Christian. The judges have offered to let him go free if only he would recant his faith in Jesus Christ.

Youcef Nadarkhani is a 34-year old man with two young children. The prospect of his never spending another day in his life with his family has not stopped him from standing up for his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.



*Youcef and his son*

An Iranian panel of five judges in the northern city of Rasht has given him an ultimatum – renounce Christianity or face the death sentence. On Sept 28, Nadarkhani told them: ‘I am resolute in my faith and Christianity and have no wish to recant.’ It was the third time that he had refused to do so. Nadarkhani is a pastor with the Evangelical Church of Iran, a congregation of about 400 in the provincial town 240 kilometres northwest of the capital Tehran.

According to *The Times* of London, he was arrested in October 2009 after challenging the Islamic government’s policy that all schools had to teach Islam. He has been in jail since. Nadarkhani was sentenced to death for apostasy by a court in Rasht last year. However, he denied ever having been a Muslim but the prosecutors argued successfully that he was of Islamic ancestry. The case was brought before

Iran’s Supreme Court which upheld the lower court’s sentence last month. Throughout all the hearings, Nadarkhani has refused to renounce his faith. Iran’s Constitution allows freedom of worship. Its penal code does not include apostasy as a crime. Furthermore, Iran is a signatory to international conventions which ban religious persecution. Nadarkhani’s conviction, it seems, is based on the fatwas or religious rulings of Ayatollah Khomeini and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the country’s past and present supreme leaders. There have been over 300 arrests of Christians in 35 cities across Iran since June 2010, according to Human Rights Watch. Detainees are typically held in unsanitary prisons, sometimes in solitary confinement, with evidence of torture and interrogation tactics being used against them.

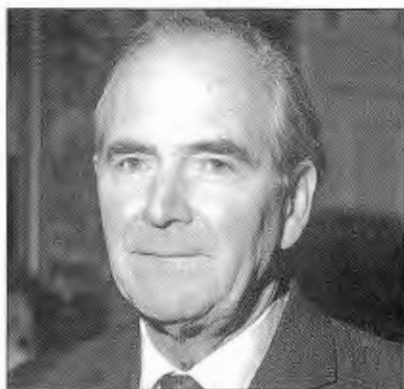


Over the past fifteen years a number of Christian leaders have been martyred in Iran. This has only served to increase the disaffection of many with the regime. Disillusionment with the Islamic Revolution is widespread. A legacy of bloodshed, cruelty, injustice, corruption, human rights abuses and economic deprivation has increased. *Operation World* rates Iran as the fastest growing evangelical population in the world (see page 916). Iran has a population of 75 million. To this we must add about four million who have fled. In this diaspora there are about 200,000 believers in about 900 Persian-speaking churches. A number of Persian speaking Jews who descend from the exiles in Babylon have become active Christians. There are 93 unreached people groups in the country.

## UK

Professor James Atkinson died on July 30 aged 97. He was one of the leading authorities in the English-speaking world on Martin Luther; it was said of him that 'he lived Luther, thought Luther, and breathed Luther' and, like Luther, he was a preacher and a pastor as well as a theologian.

*The Daily Telegraph* paid tribute to Professor Atkinson with these words: 'A meticulous scholar on the history and significance of the Reformation, Atkinson's work was informed by a deep religious faith and his patient research, expressed in many notable books, was, he believed, entirely



Professor James Atkinson

relevant to the mission of the Church today. He asserted that Luther, following St Paul, was an apostle of divine grace and that a renewed recognition of the centrality of grace in the Christian faith lay behind the 16th-century Reformation.

Furthermore the Church in every age should be tested, and if necessary reformed, by its openness to grace. He often quoted the Reformation maxim *ecclesia reformata, ecclesia semper reformanda* – the reformed Church must be a Church which is always reforming itself.

Professor Atkinson was awarded a research fellowship at Sheffield University in 1951. Thus began his academic career and the development of his reputation as an authority on Luther. He spent some time in Germany engaged on research and in 1955 was awarded a Doctorate in Theology by the University of Munster. Having submitted his thesis, he was grilled for five hours by a team of professors on

every aspect of theology, at the end of which the doctorate was awarded *magna cum laude*.

His principal book *Martin Luther and the birth of Protestantism* published by Marshall, Morgan and Scott in 1968 is a valuable work.

Patrick Collinson the well-know author of *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (1967) died in September this year aged 82. For him the central European figure was Luther, rather than Calvin. Luther, he argued, changed the course of history not by building political or theological systems but by projecting on to the world around him his impassioned discovery that only absolute faith – not the good works and outward worship hallowed by the Church – can bring salvation.

## Algeria

Whilst large parts of the Middle East and North Africa are undergoing change, there is unfortunately one group that does not benefit: Christians. It is especially true for Christians in Algeria.

On 22 May 2011, the president of the Protestant Church in Algeria (EPA), Mustapha Krim, was informed by police that all non-Muslim places of worship in the Béjaïa Province, including the seven EPA churches placed under his care, will be closed. Algerian authorities based their decision to close the churches on the discriminating Ordinance 06-03 that

regulates non-Muslim religious activities. For many years the EPA has attempted to be officially acknowledged by the government, and at long last succeeded in July 2011. There is however still a total of 25 individual EPA churches that could not acquire official registration, even though they applied through all the appropriate channels. The consequence is that these Christian congregations are still not protected by the government and face the risk of being closed.

Over and above this attack on the Christian community, the Algerian officials also targeted individual Christians. Karim Siaghi was arrested in April on accusations of evangelising and blasphemy. He was sentenced in May to 5-year imprisonment and fined 200 000 Dinar (approx. £15,000). His crime? He gave a CD containing Christian material to his neighbour. Karim was released after he appealed against the heavy sentence, but he can at any time be forced by the police to start serving his prison term.

Open Doors ask you to take a stand with them to defend Algerian Christians against the oppressive actions of the Algerian government. Letters can be written to the Algerian Ambassador to apply pressure on the Algerian authorities to recall Ordinance 06-03 and to nullify Karim Siaghi's sentence.

## Argentina

During August this year Trevor and Lucy Routley engaged in a tour of

Argentina, a very large country in which it is hard to find the doctrines of grace. They found encouragement in a city called Tucumán.

Their report reads as follows: Once checked into the hotel in Tucumán we found a place for our afternoon tea, and planned our next few days. Our plans were soon to be disrupted. Tucumán is a city of 1.2 million, and is where the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1816. So we wanted to see some of the historic sites. But our main desire was to get to know a pastor with whom we had recently had contact through a friend who knows his daughter. We had already learned something about his doctrine from his blog and videos on YouTube (for those who know Spanish look for “Jestucumán”). So the following day, while people in Tandil were enjoying the freezing temperatures, we were sitting in the sunshine having sandwiches outside the house where the Declaration of Independence was signed.

We made contact by phone with Raul Oliva, and he invited us to supper that evening. From that moment until we left Tucumán we never stopped being amazed and never stopped talking reformed doctrine, and sharing the Lord together. After an effusive greeting in the hotel lobby we began to get to know him. On being asked about his church he said the congregation was small, just four hundred people! Recently he baptised 37 people, and soon will baptise another group. Doctrinally and ecclesiastically he has

moved from being a Baptist pastor and an ‘apostle’, to being just a pastor of an independent, reforming congregation. He publicly admits his previous doctrinal errors. He says that all he wants to know are the Scriptures, and he has obviously been gripped by the glory of God. The Thursday night meeting includes at least an hour of solid teaching, and their main meeting is on a Saturday evening, with no Sunday service, though Sunday is dedicated to evangelism. He has no Sunday School, no youth group no women’s meeting, and is teaching his men how to pastor their own families. They meet in a rented hall in the city centre. He also visits other cities in Argentina where there is a growing number of people with interest in the doctrines of grace.

Until recently he has felt very much alone, and obviously has been the target of misunderstanding and criticism. Twice a week he has a radio programme, and the pastor whose church runs the radio (a bigger congregation than his) is beginning to understand what teaching biblical doctrine involves. We were invited to participate in the radio programme on Thursday, and we had two hours, together with his father who is one of the leaders in the church, talking round the theme of ‘What does it mean to be reformed?’ Trevor also spoke in the evening meeting, an hour and 40-minute session including questions, on Pelagius and Augustine, leading on to the fact that Charles Finney was Pelagian.

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## Baptists in France

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*Frederick Hodgson*

*French Baptists up to the time of the  
First World War*

*The title of this article could also read*

*Nineteenth-Century French Baptists  
and their Twelfth-Century Ancestors*

The modern Baptist movement in France has its origins in the nineteenth century, but there was a vigorous 'reformed Baptist' movement in France back in the twelfth century and the 'big guns' of the Catholic Church were called upon to oppose it.

At the time the two leading theologians in France were Peter the Venerable or Peter of Montboissier (1092-1156) and Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). Peter the Venerable was Abbot of the Benedictine Abbey of Cluny and was strongly condemned by Bernard for his support of the brilliant academic French theologian Abelard who was based in Paris. Abelard had serious moral failings and Bernard regarded his independent thinking as being dangerous but he held his intellectual abilities in great respect. At a Church Council held at Sens Abelard was condemned for his views on the Trinity. He died at Cluny under Peter's protection. Peter considered that Abelard died with a humble, repentant



*Ruben Saillens – the Spurgeon of France*

attitude. Within the Catholic Church Peter was known for his astute, conciliatory attitudes and skills.

Peter was a diligent student of Islam and was responsible for the translation of the Quran into Latin. His Islamic studies took him to Toledo in Spain and probably to La Rioja, where there was a Cluniac monastery. He worked in these centres with others and the translation was completed in 1143. He published books on Islam such as *The Summary of the Entire Heresy of the Saracens* and *The Refutation of the Sect or Heresy of the Saracens*. Interestingly, his view on Islam was that it is a 'Christian heresy' that approaches paganism. His efforts to understand Islam were not widely appreciated among European scholars in the Middle Ages.

Readers of this article will probably be familiar with Bernard if for no other reason than that he is the author of the well-known hymns, 'Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts', 'Jesus, the very thought of Thee', 'O Jesus, King most wonderful' and 'O sacred head, sore wounded'. He was an amazingly complex person, venerating Mary. (He used the exhortation, 'If you are terrified by the thunders of the Father, go to Jesus. If you are afraid to go to Jesus, then run to Mary.') In the early Middle Age, use of Mary as a mediatrix was not so prominent as later on. Bernard was one of those responsible for increased veneration of Mary although he denied that Mary was conceived without sin. On the matter of the sovereignty of God in salvation, he was a follower of Augustine. He was one of the greatest preachers of the Middle Age and was called 'The Honey-flowing Teacher'. His aim in preaching was 'not so much to explain the words as to reach people's hearts'. Martin Luther said of Bernard's written sermons, 'Bernard is superior to all the teachers, even to Augustine himself, because he preaches Christ so excellently.' Bernard preached inside and outside Clairvaux Abbey. It is said that mothers hid their sons from him and wives hid their husbands from him in case they were converted by his preaching and ran away to become monks.

Bernard was known as a man of effectual prayer. He was respected by the great men and kings of his time and

yet rejected the idea that he should ever become greater in the world than simply Abbot of Clairvaux.

In 1144 a Turkish army captured the Latin kingdom of Edessa and this brought about a second crusade (1147-49). Pope Eugenius III, a former monk who was under Bernard's jurisdiction, asked Bernard to preach sermons with the aim of enlisting soldiers for this crusade. Bernard's passionate appeals were successful and the army of the second crusade led by Louis VII of France went to war against the Turks. They were defeated and demoralised by lack of support from the Byzantines, by disease and being overcome by the Turks. Bernard's response to the defeat was to blame the ungodly lives of the western Catholics and the judgement of God being poured out in response to this wickedness.

Bernard, Abbot of the Cistercian Abbey at Clairvaux and Peter the Venerable, Abbot of the Benedictine Abbey at Cluny, were at variance with each other on some matters, but both opposed a reformed movement that had its origins with the pious, learned, eloquent but timorous Berengarius of Tours (999-1088), who opposed the teaching of Radbertus regarding the eucharist and was placed under great pressure (including a period of imprisonment) to change his views. Foxe in his *Book of Martyrs*, claimed that by 1140 'the number of the reformed was very great, and the probability of its increasing alarmed the pope, who wrote to several



princes to banish them from their dominions, and employed many learned men to write against their doctrines’.

Peter the Venerable was one who wrote against the ‘errors’ of Peter de Bruys which were identified as 1) denying infant baptism and teaching that only believers should be baptised, 2) denying the holiness of buildings and altars, 3) refusing to venerate crosses, 4) denying the doctrine of ‘transubstantiation’ as it came to be called, 5) denying that good works and prayers performed for those who had died had any value. Foxe mentioned that Peter de Bruys was allowed to preach openly as he was under the protection of an earl named Hildephonosus. Peter de Bruys separated from the Catholic Church and the reasons for this separation were given in his book, *Antichrist*. Jarrel claimed that the Petrobrussians, located largely in Languedoc and Provence, could be numbered in hundreds of thousands and stated, ‘He rejected the outward or visible church, and only acknowledged the true, invisible church in the hearts of believers.’ It is claimed that he publicly burned wooden crucifixes and ended his days being burned at the stake round about 1126. After his death Henri of Lausanne, a Benedictine monk, actually born in Italy, took over the leadership of the movement. Henri, a pious, eloquent and popular preacher was imprisoned after being condemned at a council held at Rheims and nothing



*Jean-Baptiste Crétin – French Baptist pioneer*

seems to be known about him after his incarceration. Sadly Bernard, called in to silence the Petrobrussians, criticised Henri for emptying the churches, taking away the flocks of the priests and discouraging people from attending and respecting the communion services. He also complained that parents neglected to have their children baptised.

There is little evidence of Baptist activity in France at the time of the Reformation, which seemed to lack Baptist movements that sprang up elsewhere. It was not until the nineteenth century that Baptist churches appeared in France.

#### *Nineteenth-Century Baptists in France*

The first recorded Baptist in nineteenth-century France was a farmer called Caulier who lived in the village of Nomain in the north of France. In 1810 this farmer found a Bible covered in dust and hidden in the attic of his house. He gathered friends and

neighbours together and they started to study the Bible together. By 1811 they realised that the teachings and practice of the Catholic Church did not correspond to the Bible and as early as 1811 they bravely erected a building to meet in. After the battle of Waterloo in 1815 English soldiers were stationed in the north of France and housed in local homes. Some of these were French-speaking and Christian believers. These believing soldiers distributed Scriptures in the area and some Catholics were converted as a result.

In 1819 Pyt, who worked for the Continental Society, established and encouraged by Haldane and Drummond, came across the small church in Nomain and spent eighteen months in the area teaching and preaching. The Continental Society discouraged its preachers from teaching denominational distinctive matters such as believers' baptism. However, Pyt was pressed by the Nomain church to declare his views on baptism. The consequence of this was that in 1820 five people were baptised in a stream near to their building.

By 1821 the number of believers in the church in Nomain had grown to almost 200 and it had become necessary to build a larger church building. Their existence was reported to the local police, as they were strictly speaking an illegal organisation in France. It was illegal to proselytise Catholics and life must have been difficult for them.

Not all the congregation that gathered were of one mind on the question of baptism and there was a division over the matter. In 1821 Caulier led those who practised believers' baptism to form a distinctly Baptist church later in the neighbouring village of Aix. The 'temple' at Aix became the first Baptist church building in France. (Nonconformist church buildings were called 'temples' in France.)

Meanwhile colporteurs associated with the Continental Society continued their work of evangelisation. At least one of these brave colporteurs was a woman. Esther Carpentier was baptised by immersion by pastor Théophile Poulain of Reumont around 1825. Esther sold needles and thread and hid her Bibles and evangelistic leaflets among these in order to conceal them from the authorities. It is thought that she was responsible for a number of churches being started in the north of France. In 1830 for example she shared the gospel with a family near Chauny and the outcome was a small 'temple' being built in 1835. Jean-Baptiste Crétin (1813-1893) was involved with this church being established along with others elsewhere in France.

Crétin had heard Pyt frequently as a youth and was impressed by the simple 'other-worldliness' of Pyt's followers. He was baptised by Louis Caulier in Normain in 1829. Three days later he baptised his wife, mother-in-law and his sister-in-law. Crétin went to Paris and was one of the founder members of

the First Baptist Church in Paris established by the American, Isaac Willmarth in 1835. Willmarth had himself been converted in Paris. Crétin was a zealous, talented evangelist and planted churches in Lyon, St. Etienne, La Fère, Verberie, Denain and Montbéliard and was long-term president of the French Baptist Committee. The churches that he established were made up largely of Roman Catholic converts.

### **American help for French Baptists**

The few Baptist churches in the north of France remained small and fragile. Their leaders had little training and the churches were poor in terms of financial resources. The predominantly Catholic environment was hostile towards them. However, after 1830 they received succour from abroad. In the first instance this help came through Howard Malcolm, an American Baptist pastor who visited the north of France in 1831. His observations and burden were shared with fellow Baptists in America when he returned there in 1832. The result was that Rostan and Chase were called to go to France and support the Baptists later that year.

One American who played a really significant role in France was Erastus Willard who helped establish a Baptist pastors' school in Douai. This opened in 1836 and one of the early men trained here was Jean-Baptiste Crétin. The local people put pressure upon this Bible College and Willard moved the

college to Paris in 1853. The college continued to operate until Willard returned to America in 1856. Edward Mitchell established another Baptist theological seminary in Paris in 1879, which was later led by Henri Andru.

Although strengthened by American help at a critical time in the 1830s in particular, the Baptist movement was largely French-led. Baptist churches were mostly found in the north of the country including Brittany (where Welsh missionaries had operated from 1834) and were linked with French-speaking Baptist churches in Belgium as the Federation of Baptist Churches.

Another group of Baptists existed in the southern Cévennes, the Pays de Montbéliard and French-speaking Switzerland.

### **Continued struggles of French Baptists**

French Baptists continued to find life very difficult before 1870 owing to the hostility of the Roman Catholic Church. The clergy tried desperately hard to stop any initiatives of the Baptists. Four chapels (Tremel in Brittany, Genlis, Chauny and Servais-La Fère in Picardy) were closed by the authorities because of the complaints of Catholic bishops. It is reported that the Chauny and Servais churches were closed because their pastors presided over graveside funerals. Many Baptists lost their jobs because the priests asked their employers to dismiss them. Many

of the churches were small and lacked buildings with baptistries and baptisms often took place outside. The first member of the church in Denain was baptised by immersion in a ditch in the middle of a field. The baptism was in the middle of the winter and the ice had to be broken before the baptism could take place.

One of Crétin's Catholic converts was Victor Lepoids. He was born in 1817 in Lille where he was brought up. He was also baptised in Lille by Joseph Thieffrey on Christmas Day in 1837. Lepoids was then educated in the Protestant school in Lille followed by further training at the Baptist Seminary in Douai. He was ordained in 1842 and worked as an evangelist at Rûmes in Belgium before serving as pastor of the church in Chauny (near Aisne, Picardy) for 23 years. He was jailed on two brief occasions during the 'Second Empire'. His crime was that of being a 'non-recognised Protestant'. After his work in Chauny he served as a pastor in Paris for 21 years and then finally in Montbéliard for six years before his death in 1890.

François Vincent (1833-1906), a Catholic, was converted through the work of Crétin and a pedlar called Besin. Vincent was persecuted by his family and was forced to leave home. He was baptised by Crétin in Meux, educated in Paris and then helped Crétin as an evangelist in the north of the country. His enthusiastic zeal for evangelism carried him over the entire

coal mining area in the north during the last third of the nineteenth century. Not only did he preach in French towns but also his labours extended to Liège in Belgium.

### **Baptists in the late nineteenth century**

Vincent married Avéline Cadot and they had five children; the three sons became Baptist pastors and the two daughters became wives of pastors. One of the sons was Philémon Vincent (1860-1929). Philémon had a large influence on the Baptist movement in France at the beginning of the twentieth century. He was a good Hebrew scholar and helped with a translation of the Bible. He served as a pastor in St. Etienne and in Paris in the Rue de Lille before founding a church on the Avenue du Maine where a building was opened in 1899. He was the main Baptist leader in the north of the country at the turn of the century and helped form the Baptist Federation (FEEBF). Journalism was among his many talents and he contributed to *The Pick and the Trowel* and *Social Solidarity*. Another project that he was involved with was the creation of the company 'I Serve' (*Je Sers*). However, he was also a controversial figure and some of his opinions caused heated debate among French Baptists.

The cause of this passionate debate was his embracing ideas promoted by Auguste Sabatier. Sabatier, whom some hailed as 'the greatest theologian since

Calvin' was Dean of the Protestant Faculty of Theology in Paris. Believing that doctrine originates from subjective experience and not vice-versa, Sabatier would be highly acceptable to the *emerging church movement* of today. Sabatier equated theological studies to the history or sociology of religion, making its study acceptable to the French university system and secular academics. Philémon Vincent, an admirer of Sabatier, was typical of one caught in the cross-currents of promotion of the biblical reformation and its destruction. His trumpet was loud but gave an uncertain sound. Happily there were other Baptists who were sounder in doctrine.

Aimé Cadot (1832-1915) was baptised by Crétin in February 1853 at Saint-Sauveur. Cadot was also trained as a pastor in Paris before receiving a call to pastor the church at Chauny. Whilst he was in Paris he developed strong affections for a lady there. Suffering great disappointment he had to leave her behind in Paris in order to answer the call to Chauny. However, he was able to marry Mlle Jahiet who became a helpmeet for him for about thirty years of his ministry there. Upon her death he married Harriette Tilley, and continued as pastor in Chauny for a total of forty years. Cadot had wide responsibilities and was a prolific writer.

The prominent Ruben Saillens was the son-in-law of Jean-Baptiste Crétin. He was born in St.Jean-du-Gard

(Languedoc) in 1855 and converted in 1871. Six years later he married Jeanne Crétin in Versailles and within two years of this he was ordained. He proved to be a brilliant orator, prolific songwriter, author, poet and founder of churches. He dominated French Baptist history at the time and his influence spread beyond Baptist circles, particularly during the years 1880-1930. He was a strong supporter of the McCall missions and actually worked for these missions for a time. He worked hard during the years of Baptist expansion in Paris and eventually organised the second Baptist church in Paris, 'working tirelessly as a pastor and evangelist'.

He met Charles Spurgeon in 1891 and interestingly he was called back to preach at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London at a series of meetings in 1916, being introduced as the Spurgeon of France. It is unlikely that he heard Spurgeon as a preacher back in 1861 when the great English preacher visited Paris. Spurgeon had difficulty in finding the building as there were restrictions placed upon advertising Baptist meetings.

The Baptists in France were a small but powerful force in evangelising the Catholics. Since the 1801 Concordat the pastors of Reformed and Lutheran churches were paid by the state during the nineteenth century, but this was not true of the Baptist pastors. This meant that their evangelistic zeal was

unhindered by fear that their pastors would lose their state salary. Not only did they engage in evangelism themselves, but also the other non-Concordat churches followed their example. Although zealous for the gospel, and having persevered in reaching their Catholic neighbours through hard and difficult times, they were not entirely immune from the liberalism that was sweeping through many of the Reformed churches at the time. Nonetheless they continued to provide spiritual light to France into the twentieth century. By 1900 there were about thirty Baptist churches with a combined membership of about two and a half thousand members.

In their zeal for bringing the gospel to the Catholics of France they experienced serious opposition. It was not surprising that the Baptists were very critical of the Roman Catholic Church. Ruben Saillens considered that Catholicism was a totalitarian system that imprisoned people not only in a religious sense but also a political sense. He wrote, 'Catholicism is not merely a system of religion; it is mainly a system of political government; her aim, everywhere, is to enthrone herself in the very soul of the nations, to frame their ideals, their institutions, and their laws, so that the religious and civil organisms should be practically one.' Saillens, valuing freedom of conscience, wrote, 'There is one thing, in this world, of which Rome is afraid, and that is, the individual conscience.'

## **Baptists in the early twentieth century**

From 1905 Saillens was involved in mass evangelisation campaigns such as the Chexbres and Morges conventions in Switzerland. He founded the Biblical Institute of Nogent-sur-Marne in 1921 and continued to support this for the rest of his life. The college has continued up to today.

Two groups of Baptists joined together in 1919 to form the Federation Baptist Union. There were large losses of Baptists and a scattering of their congregations during the First World War. The devastation of buildings drew further support from other countries.

One criticism made against the French Baptists was that they were sometimes unwilling to join in evangelistic efforts with other Protestant groups. It is suggested that they were impatient and distrustful of other Evangelicals who suffered 'partial blindness' on the matter of baptism. This often bitter approach to others did not help the generally weak evangelical cause. The American Baptist James Franklin, reviewing the French scene in 1919, wrote the rebuke, 'The cause that unites us with the true spiritual descendants of John Calvin and the Huguenots is greater than the differences that separate us. And while remaining loyal to our convictions we can cooperate with those who stand for freedom of conscience, the Lordship of Jesus, and the open Bible.'



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## Matthew Henry

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### Prince of Expositors

*By Nigel T Faithfull*

The year 2012 marks the 350th anniversary of the birth of this pastor and prince among expositors.

*Matthew Henry's family background — royal connections*

To appreciate the life and comments of Matthew Henry (1662-1714), it is helpful to study his ancestry and religious and social background. His grandfather was John Henry (1590-1652), the son of Henry Williams of Briton Ferry, between Swansea and Neath in South Wales, who took his father's Christian name as his surname, according to an old Welsh tradition. He became a courtier under James I (who reigned in England from 1603-1625) and then Charles I (reigning 1625-1649). Matthew's father Philip (1631-1696) had as godparents the Earls of Pembroke and Carlisle, and the Countess of Salisbury. Philip, as a child, used to play at St James's Palace with the slightly younger Princes Charles and James, who later became Charles II and James II. It is little surprise that Philip's early lifestyle was also that of a courtier and that he would retain his royalist allegiance. The Civil War broke out when Philip was 11, and lasted on and off for the next nine years. He favoured the restoration of the monarchy with the return of his friend as Charles II, who would reign from 1660-1685.



### *Philip Henry – scholar and Christian*

At age 12 he attended Westminster School, becoming proficient in Greek and Latin. His mother took him to hear the Westminster Divines preach, including Stephen Marshal (1595/5-1655), under whom he was *begotten again unto a lively hope*, and Thomas Case (1598-1682). He was also stirred in his soul by the ministry of William Bridge of Great Yarmouth and later Norwich, the author of *A Lifting up for the Downcast*.

In 1647, age 16, he entered Christ Church, Oxford, graduating BA in 1651, the year Cromwell appointed John Owen as Dean of his college. He graduated with an MA in 1652. Owen's recommendation assisted him in gaining the position of tutor to Judge John Puleston's sons, who later appointed him to Worthenbury Chapel, Bangor Iscoed, in 1654, and following his induction in 1657 at Prees in Shropshire, formally gave him the living in 1659 and built him a new parsonage.

### *Nonconformity*

His views on church government were opposed to prelacy, or episcopacy, but he favoured the Presbyterian system that had ordained himself and John Owen; that is, not by a bishop, but by presbyters under a moderator. As for the Independents, Philip Henry in his diary commended them for their church discipline, love and their corresponding with one another. Although favouring the parish system, he had scruples about using the newly issued Book of Common Prayer (1660). He attended Anglican communion services, but refused to kneel at the altar rail, which was contrary to the biblical symbolism of a supper, and more in keeping with the idolatrous practices of the Catholics, who worshipped the transubstantiated bread and wine.

Although Charles II was personally tolerant of differing modes of worship, his government was not, and trying times lay ahead with the publishing of the Corporation Act (1661), which prevented Nonconformists from taking public office, and the Act of Uniformity (1662), when over 2000 clergymen were expelled from their churches in the Great Ejection of 1662 because they refused to take the oath not '*to endeavour any change, alteration of Government either in Church, or State*', and to declare their '*unfeigned assent, and consent to all, and every thing contained, and prescribed in ... The Book*

of *Common Prayer*', which also included the episcopal ordination of ministers. Philip Henry was one of the ejected ministers, necessarily losing both his living and the new parsonage, and so left Worthenbury to take residence at the estate of his wife Katherine (1629–1707), at Broad Oak and Bronington, Flintshire. Philip's son John (1661–1667) was born at Worthenbury, but Matthew (1662–1714) and his four sisters were born at Broad Oak. Matthew was baptised at Whitewell, but Philip refused to assist, because he would not make the sign of the cross. These were days when men of God stuck to their principles whatever the cost.

Hot on the heels of the above two Acts, there followed the Conventicle Act (1664), which outlawed the meeting together for worship of more than five non-family members, and the Five Mile Act, which prevented ejected ministers from living within five miles of their previous parish and from teaching in schools. The king, aware of the harshness of these Acts, known as the Clarendon Code, issued a Declaration of Indulgence in 1672. Philip Henry now exercised his preaching ministry based at Broad Oak, where Matthew had now reached 10 years of age. This short interval of peace came to an end when Parliament forced the king to withdraw the Declaration in 1679.

Following the death of Charles II on 6 February 1685, on 11 June his illegitimate son, the exiled Duke of Monmouth, landed at Lyme Regis in Dorset with a small force in an attempt to topple the new Catholic king James II. The authorities were very suspicious at this time of meetings and possible plots, and Philip Henry was arrested for defying the Conventicle Act and incarcerated in Chester Castle for three weeks.

By 1687 conditions for Nonconformists had somewhat improved, and Matthew Henry, now aged 24, was able to be ordained at Broad Oak on 9 May by his father with five other colleagues in attendance. During the following year all five remaining children were married at Whitewell Chapel. In 1689 the Act of Toleration was passed, allowing Nonconformists their own places of worship and their own teachers, providing they accepted certain oaths of allegiance. Philip died on 24 June 1696 and was buried at Whitchurch. Each daughter was bequeathed a copy of Matthew Poole's *Annotations*, with the rest of his library going to his wife and Matthew, who preached one of the funeral sermons.

## *Matthew Henry*

In the preceding summary of the life of Philip Henry, we have necessarily jumped ahead with the story of his noted son. Matthew Henry was born prematurely on 18th October 1662 at Broad Oak, Flintshire. He was a sickly child, but intended for the ministry from an early age. He was home-schooled, and became proficient in the learned languages, having a particular aptitude for Hebrew. There is credible evidence that he could read portions of the Scriptures when he was only three years old. He recollected that his conversion took place before he turned eleven. It was one of his father's sermons that, in Henry's words, 'melted' him and caused him to 'enquire after Christ'. His father Philip had become a nationally well-known preacher, and as early as 1658 he took a month off to visit Oxford, preaching at St Mary the Virgin and Christ Church and Corpus Christi College, and London, where he preached at Westminster Abbey. Matthew would have learned from him many of his pithy sayings together with his Nonconformist principles.

### *A Puritan education*

In 1680, at the age of eighteen he attended for three years the important dissenting academy at Islington of the Puritan Thomas Doolittle (1630 - 1707), who was born at Kidderminster and converted at the age of 17 under the preaching of Richard Baxter. In 1683 the Dissenters faced a period of persecution, causing Doolittle to move his academy at Islington to Battersea. Henry now decided to return home before proceeding in 1685 to study law at Gray's Inn. This legal training is evident from the many forensic terms used throughout his exposition. He continued with his theological studies and attended the best preachers he could find.

### *Ordination and marriage*

As noted above, Henry was ordained privately in May 1687 by six ejected ministers and preached his first public sermon at Chester on 2 June in some converted stables. In 1700 the growing congregation erected a purpose-built meeting-house in Crook Lane. 'We know', recorded Henry in his diary, 'how to enlarge the straitness of the place. God by his grace enlarge the straitness of our hearts.' A gallery was added seven years later, because by now there were

350 in membership and 300 in regular attendance. It was demolished in the 1960s during construction of the Forum Shopping Centre.

He married Katherine in 1687, but she died of smallpox at age 25, leaving a daughter, also Katherine. He married Mary five months later, by whom he had eight daughters and a son, Philip, who became MP for Chester.

### *Preacher and expositor*

He preached in the country villages around Chester, and made annual tours to Lancashire and Staffordshire. He and his congregation were abused by high-churchmen, and an attempt was made to burn down their meeting-place in 1692. Matthew told his father in a letter that four pew doors, two on either side of the aisle, one being his wife's seat, were opened and the fire kindled under them. It being the middle of the night, it was a miracle it was discovered. 'The light and roaring of it was more terrible than one could imagine.' God also overruled in that Richard Lee, 'tho' an enemy to the Chapel', was very helpful in quenching the fire, because his hay-loft adjoined it.<sup>1</sup>

He began his *Exposition of the Old and New Testament* in 1704 with comments on the Pentateuch, published in folio three years later, completing the Old Testament in 1712. This was during the period of Queen Anne (1665-1702), daughter of James II. Although her parents were Roman Catholic, Anne was brought up a member of the Church of England, and was under a Protestant governess. The Bishop of London, Henry Compton (1631/2-1713) guided her in the Christian faith and exercised an anti-Catholic bias, so she could write to her sister in 1686 when she felt herself persecuted for her faith: 'God be thanked we were not bred up in that communion, but are of a Church that is pious and sincere, and conformable in all its principles to the Scriptures.' Several times in his *Exposition* Henry gives thanks to God for this period of national peace and freedom from persecution. Thus on Esther 10:3 he comments: 'Thanks be to God for such a government as this we are blessed with, which *seeks the welfare of our people, speaking peace to all their seed*. God continue it long, very long, and grant us, under the happy protection and influence of it, to *live quiet and peaceable lives, in godliness, honesty and charity!*'

## *A Method for Prayer*

Matthew Henry referred to prayer as a 'sweet and precious duty'. He said, 'I love prayer. It is that which buckles on all the Christian's armour.' Accordingly, he set about writing a manual on prayer entitled *A Method for Prayer* (1710).<sup>2</sup> In the preface he writes: 'When I had finished the third volume of Expositions of the Bible ... I was willing to take a little time from that work to this poor performance, in hopes it might be of some service to the generation of them that seek God.' Henry defines prayer thus: 'Prayer is the solemn and religious offering of devout acknowledgements and desires to God, or a sincere representation of holy affections, with a design to give unto God the glory due to his name thereby, and to obtain from him promised favours, and both thru' the Mediator.'

He sets out to explain the various divisions of prayer: Adoration, Confession, Petition, Thanksgiving and Intercession. Prayers for special occasions are given, but most interesting is chapter 8, *A Paraphrase on the Lord's Prayer, in Scripture Expressions*. He is aware that if he gives examples of prayers, people might simply formally recite them, and so he comments, 'A man may write straight, without having his paper ruled.'

The same year as he completed the Old Testament (1712) he was called to pastor the congregation at Hackney in London, and soon took his place among the leading ministers of his day. He published thirty other works, but only his *Exposition* and *A Method for Prayer* have endured.

## **Death**

He had just completed the Gospels and Acts when he died on 22 June 1714 at the home of the Revd. Joseph Mottershead, near Nantwich, as a result of a fall from his horse while on a visit to Cheshire. So much studying and lack of exercise had made him corpulent. The sorrow at his death was universal, 'There was hardly a Pulpit of the Dissenters in London but what gave Notice of the great Breach of the Church of God.'<sup>3</sup> He was buried on 25th June in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church, Chester, attended by eight of the city clergy. After his death thirteen Nonconformist ministers of varying abilities completed the New Testament exposition, referring to Henry's notes.



## Legacy

Undoubtedly his *Exposition* has been a treasure bequeathed to Christ's Church on earth. In 1736 George Whitefield, having returned to his small congregation at Oxford, recorded: 'Oh what a delightful life did I lead there! What communion did I daily enjoy with God! How sweetly did my hours in private glide away in reading and praying over Mr Henry's *Comment upon the Scriptures*.' The fourth time he read it all through was upon his knees! The Baptist preacher and educator John Ryland Sr. (1723-1792) testified, 'It is impossible for a person of piety and taste to read the *Exposition* of Mr Henry without wishing to be shut out from all the world to read it through without one moment's interruption.' Spurgeon stated, 'First among the mighty (commentaries) for general usefulness we are bound to mention the man whose name is a household word, Matthew Henry. He is the most pious and pithy, sound and sensible, suggestive and sober, terse and trustworthy . . . he is deeply spiritual, heavenly, profitable; finding good matter in every text, and from all deducing the most practical and judicious lessons . . . It is the Christian's companion, suitable to everybody, instructive to all. Every minister ought to read it entirely and carefully through once at least...'

Henry's *Exposition* was written about 100 years after Shakespeare's plays, so the English is not so obscure, and one is not aware of it being too dated in modes of expression. Baptists must make allowances for the occasions he underlines his paedobaptist views, but these are few and far between. Today there are many more modern commentaries to choose from, but Henry's has stood the test of time.

One of the most repeated quotations is from Genesis 2:21-23. 'Observe: That the woman was *made of a rib out of the side of Adam*; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.'

There are striking notes for every occasion. On the death of a young believer he writes: 'God often takes those soonest whom he loves best, and the time they lose on earth is gained in heaven, to their unspeakable advantage. Those whose conversation in the world is truly holy shall find their removal out of it truly happy' (Gen. 5:23-24).

A comment applicable to suicide or euthanasia is: 'Our lives are not so our own as that we may quit them at our own pleasure, but they are God's, and we must resign them at his pleasure; if we in any way hasten our own deaths, we are accountable to God for it' (Gen. 9:5).

Concerning old age he says: 'Old age is a blessing. It is promised in the fifth commandment; it is pleasing to nature; and it affords a great opportunity for usefulness' (Gen. 15:15). There are hundreds more gems, some rather quaint – he coined the expression 'creature-comforts'.

### *Current editions of Matthew Henry's Exposition of the Bible*

There is an unabridged single volume edition only published by Hendrickson which has over 2500 pages but the small print is difficult to read (£20-£30); the six-volume set is easier on the eyes (£50-£100). There is an NIV abridged edition from Zondervan.

Online editions:

<http://www.gregwolf.com/mhc-download.htm>

<http://www.e-sword.net/downloads.html>

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhc.i.html>

<http://handheld.softpedia.com/get/Educational/Bible/Matthew-Henrys-Commentary-on-the-Whole-Bible-MHC-CadreBible-Book-73778.shtml>  
(Android 2.2 free version)

One Kindle edition is less than £2, but may be difficult to navigate.

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1. Wykes, David L, '*So Bitterly Censur'd and Revil'd*': *Religious Dissent and Relations with the Church of England after the Toleration Act*, in Richard Bonney and D J B Trim, (eds), *Persecution and Pluralism, Calvinists and Religious Minorities in Early Modern Europe 1550-1700*, Peter Lang, Bern, 2006.
  2. Henry, Matthew, *A Method for Prayer* (1710) – an 1803 edition is available as a free PDF download from <http://books.google.co.uk>. An edition in more modern English edited by O Palmer Robertson, *A Way to Pray* (2010), is available from Banner of Truth.
  3. Tong, William, *An account of the life and death of Mr. Matthew Henry, minister of the gospel at Hackney, who dy'd June 22, 1714 in the 52d year of his age*, (London, W Baynes, 1716), p.282.

Note: This article is adapted from N T Faithfull, *Thoughts Fixed and Affections Flaming*, Pithy, interesting and uplifting comments gleaned from Matthew Henry's *Exposition of the Bible*, Day One (expected October 2012).

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