



# REFORMATION TODAY



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**Websites** [www.reformation-today.org](http://www.reformation-today.org)

The editor's personal website is <http://www.errollhulse.com>

<http://africanpastorsconference.com>



Kees van Kralingen has kindly agreed to coordinate the editing of *Reformation Today* whilst Erroll is unable to do so.

Kees is 61, and married to Lydia with 3 grown-up children. He has an MA in theology and is a teaching elder in the Free Baptist Church of Papendrecht (The Netherlands). He is a director of Evangelical Press, an associate editor of *Reformation Today* and chairman of the Sola 5 Baptist Conference in The Netherlands.

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Front cover picture. Group photograph taken at the end of the Empangeni conference. Next to Erroll Hulse seated at the front is Pastor Shadrack and to the right of him is Pastor Raphael Banda, the main speaker from Zambia. Erroll was taken ill at the end of this conference.

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## Editorial

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IN THE LAST ISSUE OF RT SHARON JAMES PAID tribute to Lyn Hulse, her mother and the wife of our editor Erroll Hulse. Some weeks after the funeral service Erroll went to South Africa to minister to the African Pastors' Conferences which is a work so close to his heart. It was after having spoken at the Empangeni conference that our brother was taken to hospital after having suffered a severe stroke. As I write this, the plan is that he will move back to the UK for further treatment. I am sure that our readers will join in prayer for Erroll and his family that they may all know the deep reality of the Lord's presence and care.

### *The position and ministry of the church*

At this time it is possible to hear and read a bewildering array of views about the church and what it means to be the church of the Lord Jesus Christ in this age. How important it is to pay attention first and foremost to Scripture as the living Word of God and to think long and hard about its message for us today. I am therefore profoundly grateful

to introduce the expositional paper by Mostyn Roberts on Deuteronomy 3. At first sight this may not be the most obvious part of Scripture to turn to for such teaching. Our brother does show, however, that this chapter provides several vitally important lessons about the church of Christ. Believers making up the church have both the need and the wonderful privilege of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit as Tom Nettles explains in his paper. These biblical principles should all become apparent in the ministry of the church proclaiming the gospel to this world. Several other items in this issue of RT serve to demonstrate this. We are reminded about the Lord's wonderful providence in guiding his people and his church in fulfilling her calling (see articles on China, Cyprus, and the life of the late Richard Denham).

As Mostyn also points out, leaders in the church are not central; this position is only reserved for our Lord Jesus Christ. Leaders are servants and we should remember them in the spirit of Hebrews 13:7-8. In this way we are grateful

for the tribute to Richard Denham by Karl Peterson and the book review by Pastor-emeritus Joseph Hewitt about the fascinating story of missionaries Steve and Evelyn Metcalf. Our brother Frederick Hodgson continues to investigate the life of the Reformer William Farel.

Last but certainly not least we are reminded about the importance of prayer and action when we read the report about the devastating

effects of the typhoon in the Philippines and the action that our brethren from Cubao Reformed Baptist Church are taking to assist in the relief of the great need.

All of this means that the contents of this issue are somewhat different from what was announced in RT 256. We value your prayers for the editors as we are planning the contents for the next issues of *Reformation Today*.

*Kees van Kralingen*

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## God Loves the Church: Deuteronomy 3

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by Mostyn Roberts

### God loves the church

**I**N THE OLD TESTAMENT GOD CALLS ISRAEL 'MY SON', 'MY BRIDE', 'MY WIFE', 'MY TREASURED POSSESSION', 'MY PEOPLE' and 'the apple of my eye'. In the New the church is called Christ's bride, body and his brothers. All are expressions of intimacy and affection and an expression of the value that the church, God's people of every age and generation, has in his eyes.

We see something of how much God loves his people in Deuteronomy 3. We see that God's love for the church is such that he subordinates all things to the interests of the church. They serve the church; as Paul says in Ephesians 1:22, Christ is 'head over all things to the church'. In this passage in Deuteronomy we see that

1. The *world* is subordinate to the church
2. Any *particular part* of the church is subordinate to the church
3. *Particular leaders* are subordinate to the church

#### **1. The world is subordinate to the church**

Verses 1-11 recount the defeat of Og king of Bashan, as the end of chapter 2 tells of the defeat of Sihon king of the Amorites.

Remember that the Israelites are now gathered in the plains of Moab to the east of Canaan, the Promised Land. Moses is preaching to them before they begin the campaign of driving out the tribes of Canaan and possessing the land. Already the Lord has given into their hands these two kings, Sihon and Og, on the eastern border of Canaan.

In verse 6 Moses says that, in accordance with God's commands, 'we devoted them to destruction, as we did to Sihon king of Heshbon, devoting to destruction every city, men, women, and children'. This language sounds harsh and has been used as part of a campaign of criticism of the 'Old Testament God' or the 'Christian God' by many today. We should not be too sensitive, far less should we be apologetic about these passages. We need to understand though what is happening here.

**1.1 The phrase 'devotion to destruction'** translates a Hebrew word that means something offered to the Lord, almost always for destruction. Apart from the destruction of the Amalekites many centuries later (1 Sam 15) and (perhaps) the earlier destruction of the Midianites (Num 31:1-18, which

is not quite absolute) the only occurrence of this ‘ban’ is in relation to the possession of Canaan. It is to clear the land that the Lord is giving to his people. Otherwise warfare is strictly regulated; once they were in the land, Israel was to engage in warfare on principles of limited destruction – see Deut 20:10-18. Military campaigns have no place in the church’s mission today!

**1.2 The character of God** requires this act on his part in relation to Canaan, and in particular three of his attributes:

**(a) His justice**

The Canaanites were a wicked people (Deut 9:4,5). They are being removed because of their wickedness, not because of Israel’s righteousness. Accounts of the culture and religion of Canaan reveal an idolatrous, immoral and cruel people.

‘But’, you might say, with some justification, ‘other nations were wicked too.’ Yes; and God hates idolatry and immorality wherever he sees them. If the ban on Canaan seems severe, remember the Flood on all the earth (Gen 6-8). Remember that he had just condemned a generation of his own people to death in the wilderness over 40 years for rebellion against him and had meted out judgement when they grumbled or complained (Num 11:1-4; 31-35; 25:1-9). An Israelite city would itself be devoted to destruction if its inhabitants sinned (Deut 13:12-17). As someone has said, what happened in Canaan was ‘ethical’ cleansing, not ‘ethnic’ cleansing, as it has sometimes been alleged to be.

God is a God of justice. One day the whole earth will stand before him and those who refuse to repent will face a conflagration much worse than anything seen in Canaan (which was not even very thoroughly carried out, as the future history of the Israelites makes sadly clear). See Mk 9:45-48; 2 Thess 1:6-10; Rev 14:17-20. The ‘devotion to destruction’ is in fact a small scale and imperfectly executed foretaste of the final judgement. It is a picture of the just God in action against what destroys his creation and is the spiritual danger to every soul – sin.

Where do you stand in relation to the justice of God? We must all give account to him one day.

**(b) His holiness**

It is unthinkable that a land where God’s worship is to be established can be polluted with idols and false worship.

It is unthinkable that his people whom he has called to holiness, to be a kingdom of priests to reveal him to the world, should indulge in idolatry or be partners with those who do. Indeed it is clear from Deuteronomy and

elsewhere that the primary purpose of the 'ban' was to cleanse the land of idolatry with the immorality and cruelty that attended it. See e.g 7:1-5, 22-26; 12:2-5, 29-31; 20:16-18; Exod 34:11-16.

The Lord is a holy God and we are called to be holy as he is holy. Any failure in holiness will incur his wrath. His people are called to it and will by no means be exempt from judgement – as the Israelites themselves would find out. How much we need the righteousness of Christ – the only perfect righteousness that satisfies God.

God is determined to purify a people for himself and he is preparing a new creation in which righteousness will dwell.

### **(c) His faithfulness**

God had promised to give his people the land (Deut 4:37-39). To give his people Canaan is the fulfilment of his promises.

In Christ God is preparing

- (i) a people for himself in whom there will be no flaw, and
- (ii) a new heavens and new earth in which there will be no sin.

Are you heading there? Are you longing for his appearing?

### **1.3 There are also spiritual principles here for Christian living today.**

(1) The life of God's people is a spiritual battle, as taking Canaan would be a battle for the Israelites.

(2) Be killing sin or it will be killing you. It is a matter of life and death.

The cleansing of Canaan is a foretaste of the spiritual battle which his people have to fight. It is not a picture of God's hatred for a particular group of people about 1400 years BC. It is rather a picture of his abiding hatred of sin in all people at all times and in all its forms.

In his justice, holiness and faithfulness therefore God provided Canaan for his people. But Canaan was to prove a very imperfect reward, populated by a very imperfect people.

One day evil will be destroyed; the earth will be purged of wickedness; a new creation will be brought in. The real spiritual battles are far more serious; the judgement far more severe; the hope infinitely greater, than those Moses spoke of. God does this for his people.

## **2. Any particular part of the church is subordinate to the church**

God loves the whole church; a whole particular church; the whole universal church. The whole church takes priority over a part of it. What do I mean by this?



Look at vv 12-22. The land east of the Jordan (*not* in Canaan) is allocated to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh. This allocation however is on conditions, set out in Numbers 32:5-7,16-22 and repeated here (vv 18-20). The two and a half tribes are to go into Canaan to fight with their brethren; they cannot be selfish and settle down in the land already won east of the Jordan. Only when the land has been completely conquered can they return and settle in their allotted lands.

We learn that

### **2.1 God gives rest to *all* his people.**

The unity or oneness of his people is of paramount concern to God. It is for his bride that Christ died (Eph 2:11-22; 4:4-6; 5:25-27). In God's purpose, and Christ's work and the Spirit's indwelling, there is one church, one people of God.

### **2.2 Christians and churches cannot simply look out for themselves.**

The 'eastern' tribes might have been (though they were not) inclined to say, 'This looks good; good pastures; fertile land; we'll just settle down and enjoy God's blessing. Isn't God good to us?'

Christians must not do this. Are you looking out for your weaker neighbour? If God has blessed you (materially, spiritually) do you see your privileges as a responsibility?

Moreover, will you help your brother and neighbour to enter his inheritance? Maybe you can help another Christian in their spiritual struggles, in prayer, fellowship, sharing the good things of the Word. Read Ephesians 4:4:25-5:21; Colossians 3:5-4:6. Never ever think it is acceptable for a believer to 'sit back' and let his brothers or sisters struggle on alone. When we are all completely 'there', then we can rest!

**2.3 Churches too cannot rest on their laurels.** Are you, stronger, richer church, looking out for how you may help your weaker neighbour? This doubtless must be done with tact and gentleness, but the attitude must be there. Remember the Macedonian churches (2 Cor 8:1,2). We are to grow up together into Christ (Eph 4:15,16).

## **3. Particular leaders are subordinate to the church (vv23-29)**

We are living in days of celebrities, and this inevitably creeps into the church. No-one had more right to be regarded as a celebrity than Moses. Yet here we see that God humbles even the great Moses, and subordinates him to the greater good of the people of God. No leader is bigger than the church.

In three ways we see this, and also how Moses points us in imperfect ways to our greater leader, Jesus Christ.



### **3.1 He saved others, himself he could not save.**

(a) He prayed for others – see Exod 33:12-23 – after the ‘golden calf’ incident, Moses prayed that God would not take his presence from them. God answered his prayers. But now he prays for himself, and God says ‘No’. He has brought the people to the border of the Promised Land. But he will not go in himself. He is the servant of the people. The Lord’s servant – however great – must be prepared to be sacrificed for the sake of the people.

(b) There is a hint of Gethsemane. The Lord prayed for others, interceding for his disciples the night before he died. He prayed for himself later that evening, ‘Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.’ But he was met with a ‘No’. Yet he was willing to accept God’s response: ‘Not my will but yours be done’ (Matt 26:39).

Moses too had to accept the Lord’s will. The Lord’s people for whom he had given his life would go in; he would not. The Lord Jesus was cut off from the Father’s presence and bore his wrath, so that his people might not have to, and that they might enter God’s rest.

### **3.2 He suffered because of their sin.**

We cannot say that Moses was actually a substitute for the people (v 26); and the same incident of his striking the rock in anger and failing to honour the Lord in front of the people is described in Numbers 20:10-13; 27:12-14, as Moses’ own sin. But here he has to take responsibility for the sins of the people.

Is that what Paul felt when he said, ‘Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to fall and I am not indignant?’ (2 Cor 11:28,29). Again, ‘I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned earlier and not repented of their impurity, sexual immorality and sensuality they have practised’ (2 Cor 12:21). Is Paul guilty of these things? Of course not, but the Christian leader must expect to be identified with the people and not only mourn for their sins, but also be humbled and in some way take his share in the responsibility for their sins. Remember the prayers of confession of Ezra and Daniel (Ezra 9:6; Dan 9:4,5).

What no Christian leader of course can do is provide atonement for those sins. Only Jesus Christ, the great prophet, priest and king of his people, the great and only atoning sacrifice, the Lamb of God, provides satisfaction for their sins.

### **3.3 A new leader takes over from the old.**

Do the people of God grind to a halt because their great leader is taken from them? Not at all. The congregation is always greater than any individual. The church is always more important than any one leader, however significant or historically important.

Moses had prayed for his successor (Num 27:16-21) – a man filled with the Spirit. God provides Joshua. The man of the Law could take them only so far; they need a ‘saviour’ (for that is what ‘Joshua’ means) to take them into the Promised Land.

Things will be different under Joshua. He will need instruction from a priest; Moses met the Lord face to face. Israel is going to become the people of the Book (Josh 1:8). God is going to be with his people in a different way – manna from heaven will stop; no more ‘fiery, cloudy pillar’; they will have to produce their food; they must learn to live by God’s written Word. But God is as much with them as ever, but now it is more by faith, less by sight.

Moses is reminded too that God, not the land or any part of it, will be his portion. He will see it, but not enter. He must learn that far greater is the inheritance God promises all of his people today as always: ‘Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you’ (Ps 73:25). God is far greater an inheritance than the land of Canaan.

#### 4. Conclusion

So God shows his immense love for his people. For their sake he dispossesses nations mightier and greater than they are; for his people he causes a subgroup of those same people to serve their brothers; for his people he provides a new leader and their great old leader is taken to his reward. In the magnifying of the glory of God, all things serve and are subordinate to the church of Christ.

But are these the greatest signs of the love of God for his people? Surely not. God not only gives up nations and tribes and his servants for his people, *he has given us his Son*. We could say that he subordinates the interests of his Son to the interests of his church. Yes, this is all ultimately for the glory of God and of Christ, but the Bible makes it clear that it was at the most profound cost that Jesus Christ came and suffered here: ‘In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins’ (1 John 4:10).

It is the gift of his Son that is the measure of the Father’s love for his church. If you would see how much God loves his church, look at the cross. And if we see that God has indeed given us his Son, we should rejoice but not be amazed that together with him he has given, and will graciously give, us all things. Oh that he may grant us the power ‘to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God’ (Eph 3:19).

Sermons by Mostyn Roberts including an ongoing series in Deuteronomy can be found at [www.welwyn-evangelical.org.uk](http://www.welwyn-evangelical.org.uk).

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## It is the Spirit who Gives Life

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*by Tom J Nettles*

**I**N JOHN 7: 37-39, JESUS CLAIMED THAT THROUGH COMING TO HIM ONE WOULD RECEIVE THE 'LIVING WATER' SYNONYMOUS with the presence of the Holy Spirit. In John 4, Jesus said that the water he could give the morally destitute woman standing before him would become in her 'a spring of water welling up to eternal life'. This is a fulfilment of Isaiah 44:1-5 and we find the image reiterated in Revelation 22:17. This ever-flowing stream of living water brings both the present reality and the sure future inheritance of eternal life. To the woman of Samaria Jesus indicated that the 'living water' could be obtained from him immediately, and the narrative of the story leads us to believe that such was the case. 'Now this he said about the Spirit,' John commented in chapter 7, 'whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.' In what sense had the Spirit not been given? He certainly had been given in such a way as to lead people to eternal life. The woman of Samaria received the water welling up to eternal life during her conversation with Jesus. Some operations of the Spirit are common to believers under both the Old and New Covenants and they are essential for the presence of eternal life. Then there are some operations of the Spirit that clearly mark out the New Covenant people and era from the Old. This work of the Spirit fulfils the type of the divine presence in the Tabernacle and the Temple by making the New Covenant people of God corporately 'a holy temple in the Lord, . . . a dwelling place for God by the Spirit' (Ephesians 2:21, 22). By the work of Jesus in his passion, resurrection and ascension, the Spirit's anticipatory work among the remnant was fulfilled. That essential work continues, and added to it is a fullness and power to mark out and give corporate unity to the people of God. The citizens of the holy nation are now to be gathered with all of them being identified by evidence of true belief and particular gifts not present in the Old Covenant community of Israel.

Clearly operative in an effectual manner, however, among the Old Covenant elect was the Spirit in the ministry of regeneration and indwelling. Jesus made no exceptions to the necessity of regeneration for salvation when he told Nicodemus that 'unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'. Depravity was just as thorough and the necessity of the new birth was just as vital for belief in the promise to arise in the days before Christ as in the days since his resurrection and glorification. We might well put the question,

‘Has anyone ever received eternal life without this living water?’ No, none at all. In John 7 Jesus speaks of the Spirit’s coming in the fulfilment of the New Covenant, creating a people as a community, not by circumcision, but by the new birth, creating a fellowship whose common trait is forgiveness of sins and the sanctifying operations of the Spirit. Israel as a nation was not that community, for they were marked off by ceremonies, particularly the ceremony of circumcision of males, not by the moral and spiritual perceptions peculiarly the mark of those called and sanctified by the Spirit. This gift of the new birth and the subsequent indwelling and sanctifying operations of the Spirit were not new, but were now to be seen as the common characteristic of the people for whom Christ died, to redeem for himself a people zealous of good works. Further operations of the Spirit under the New Covenant also were to be received by which, unlike Israel, every member of the community would grow to be ‘mature in Christ’ (Colossians 1:28).

The Spirit had not yet been given *in that way*, as the creator of the community, but he had been given to individuals among the remnant of Israel and even to those elect among other peoples. All of those that had the persevering faith leading to eternal life could not have been void of the Spirit of God both in regeneration and indwelling. Both faith and faithfulness are the fruit of the Spirit’s operations and both of these existed in those people of faith in Hebrews 11. Just as true for David, Joseph, and Daniel as for John, Peter, and Polycarp are the words of Paul, ‘Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do according to his good pleasure’ (Philippians 2:12b-13). The affections of Old Testament believers described in Hebrews 11 could not have existed without the operation of the Spirit of God, that is, without God’s working in them ‘both to will and to do’. Noah’s ‘reverent fear’ was a manifestation of the presence of the Spirit in his life; Abraham’s ‘looking forward to the city that has foundations’ was evidence of the abiding presence of the Spirit; Moses’ ‘choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin’ and his consideration of ‘the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt’ show the secret but continual presence of the Spirit’s gracious work.

None of these affections or loyalties can exist on the one hand or be maintained on the other apart from their being the constant production of the Holy Spirit. If these in the roll-call of faith did not have the Spirit, they would have no principle in them that opposed the desires of the flesh, would be thus overwhelmed by those desires of indwelling sin as are the reprobate, and would thus ‘not inherit the kingdom of God’ (Galatians 5:17-21). Paul wrote, ‘Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to

him' (Romans 8:9.) This does not refer to a superfluity of blessing, or the possession of a gift irrelevant to eternal life; it instead establishes a condition of moral necessity true of any believer in any age. If Abel did not have the Spirit of Christ, did he belong to him? If Joseph did not have the Spirit of Christ, did he belong to him? If those 'wandering about in deserts and mountains and in dens and caves of the earth' did not have the Spirit of Christ, did they belong to him? But they did belong to him, and that belonging was effected by regeneration and prolonged into perseverance by the consequent abiding presence of the Spirit.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, 'The natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned' (1 Corinthians 2:14). Is one that has no indwelling of the Spirit a spiritual man? If not, then he considers the things of the Spirit of God as folly. Did Moses consider the exodus folly or the Passover folly? These were spiritual things, and Moses saw their significance as types of the redemptive work of Christ, the 'reproach of Christ'. After Jesus had said, 'It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life,' Peter said, 'We have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God' (John 6:63, 69). Did he believe this and confess this without an initiating *and* continuing effectual work of the Holy Spirit? Regeneration and indwelling are operations of the Spirit morally necessary for faith and perseverance in that faith. If any sinner is to have the faith of God's elect which endures to the hope of eternal life then not only must the 'washing of regeneration' be his, but also the 'renewal of the Holy Spirit' (Titus 1:1,2; 3:5, 6) These blessings are not the distinctive [S]piritual blessings of the New Covenant, but are operations of the Spirit in every age wherever spiritual life is begun and continues.

Under the New Covenant some operations of the Spirit common to both ages are more thorough. Since the Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth, his operations in sanctification in the New Covenant are more powerful and far-reaching than before the coming of Christ, for the shadows and types now are fulfilled and made clear by his appearing. The explanation of the person and work of Christ by the inspiration of the Spirit may now have full effect in securing for Christ a people of his own possession zealous of good works (Titus 2:11-14). As distinct from that remnant of true believers in Israel, these believers have the example of Christ, the teaching of Christ, the dying grace of Christ, the fullness of the revelation in Scripture, the community of saints to exhort, reprove, and encourage, and the variety of gifts granted to the church by the Spirit in Christ's ascension (Ephesians 4:1-8).

After Christ's ascension this gift of the Spirit marked the new community and people that believed in him with corporate holiness, personal holiness, and gifts for teaching and order (1 Corinthians 12:3-13). Under the New Covenant, the special gifting of the Spirit for the Apostles was promised by Christ (John 14:25, 26; John 16:12-15). This gifting was recognised by the Apostles as a peculiar blessing to create the New Covenant community (1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 1 John 4:2, 6). By their preaching and instruction this people would be a 'chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession' even 'living stones ... built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (1 Peter 2: 9, 5). Instead of an ostensible people of God about whom the prophet would complain, 'Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me, strife and contention arise' (Habakkuk 1:3), God would secure for himself a people that would 'consider how to stir up one another to love and good works' (Hebrews 10:24).

An analogy to the connection between regeneration and perseverance may be seen in creation and the necessity that it be upheld by a commensurate power. In the eternal generation of the Son of God, the Father, in so generating him, grants that he have 'life-in-himself' (John 5:26), that is, he has the divine attribute of self-existence because he is the Son of God by generation. The creation, however, does not have life-in-itself, self-existence, but the universe is upheld by the 'word of his power' (Hebrews 1:3). Through Christ all has been created and presently in him 'all things hold together' (Colossians 1:17). Even so, the regeneration of the sinner gives him life from the dead, but it is not a life that, as it were, has 'life-in-itself,' but must be maintained by the constant, never failing, operations of the Spirit of God, a continual infusion of divine power for its continual existence.

We thank God for regenerating grace and persevering grace given to believers in all ages by the Spirit; we thank him for the special gifts given when Christ was glorified putting us into a fellowship of believers and granting each member of that believing body a gift of the Spirit so that we will 'grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.' (Ephesians 4:15, 16).

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## Pray for China

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by Peter Howell

ALL CHRISTIANS HAVE A GOD-GIVEN LOVE FOR OTHER CHRISTIANS. ONE OF THE EARLIEST SIGNS THAT A PERSON has experienced the new birth is that they display a very strong love for other believers, even people of different age groups and people of very different cultural backgrounds. If they are believers they experience an amazing bonding with all who share the Holy Spirit's work. 'We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren' (1 John 3:14).

But when believers hear about other Christians going through times of great trouble and persecution it touches a place of unique sensitivity and the deepest affection within them.

I remember reading when a very young Christian about Richard Wurmbrand in Romania in his book *Tortured for Christ* and one about the story of the persecuted missionaries in Tibet.

These were the men I felt were my 'fathers in Christ'. They were the ones whose example I should seek to follow. They made me question my own shallow westernised form of Christianity. How would I shape up to real persecution – losing my job, facing imprisonment? What did I know of Holy Spirit empowering?

Then came the stories of the dear believers passing through the ordeal of the Cultural Revolution in China under Mao Zedong – pastors like Wang Ming Dao, in the *A Stone made Smooth* and the harrowing accounts of unspeakable cruelty and oppression. Through this I learned about the Lord's power to protect his people, that truly *nothing* can separate us from the love of Christ. I also learned about Satan's insatiable malice toward Christ and his people.

Quite possibly the story of China is the most spiritually stirring and challenging of all time. Who can read about the tribulations of our beloved brethren and sisters without shedding tears and asking, 'Where does that leave me?' But it also proves on a massive scale that, come what may, the Lord Jesus Christ is victorious over all his enemies, going forth conquering and to conquer, which no power of Satan is able to withstand.



I used to think it would be the greatest possible privilege to get to know a Chinese Christian. To have come through persecution and continue to be willing to go through it is one thing, but to experience a mighty revival at the same time would be another! Here is New Testament Christianity.

But how can I engage with this on-going demonstration of the power of the Spirit? Today it is not unusual for a Chinese student to show up in your church in the UK or USA. Every year 100,000 Chinese students travel out of China to extend their education. Perhaps they will give you a flavour of what China is like. But to get the overall picture we need to turn to *Operation World*.

What must it be like to live in a country where it is estimated that 35,000 people come to know the Lord **every day**? How can anyone know this is a realistic estimate when the majority of those new believers will be forced to meet in secret house churches? The author of *Operation World* explains that he depends on a range of China-watching researchers, Christian agencies and recently published official state statistics, all of which seem to roughly concur, though government figures are lower and Christian agencies higher.

So as to make China's vast nation comprehensible to us for our prayers, *Operation World* presents the data separately for each of the 29 provinces of China, most of which are the size of an average western country with populations of up to 100 million people.

Now think of a country that size where about 18% of the population are conservative born again Christians! Indeed some 'counties' in that province are reported to have a large majority of Christians. And this is in a province declared an atheistic zone in the 1960s. (If anyone required proof that God is able to save an atheistic nation such as the United Kingdom, here it is!)

This is Henan Province in Central China on the Yellow River. With its population of 96 million it is now a sending nation, supporting church planting teams – often young women – all over China where opposition is often severe, languages have to be learned and false religions grip the populace.

Here also in Henan amidst all that wonderful blessing there is relentless persecution. What if I arrive at church on Sunday morning to be told that the pastor has disappeared overnight and no one knows where he is? Who will step into his place? Who will look after his family? Will the young believers be frightened away? Will the hard working members be discouraged? What if the church calls ME to be their new pastor?



*Fortifications on the Great Wall of China*

Such a scenario is not unusual among the house churches of Henan and many other provinces. It is for this reason that many Christians join the government-registered Three-Self Patriotic Movement churches, where, because they submit to some extent to government control, there is more stability and less persecution. There are about 57,000 TSPM churches in China. Some are mega churches with memberships of several thousand brought about by the government refusal to allow more pastors to be trained.

Here in Henan, in the middle of China, in what could be called the *Bible Belt* of China there is also false Christianity. One well-known sect is Eastern Lightning with its one million members who believe that God has returned to earth as a woman born to an ordinary family in North China to guide mankind for the third and last time. She claims to be the second Christ and speaks and writes as the Word of God. Her prediction that the Last Day was to be on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2012 was not fulfilled, but never mind. EL stops at nothing to get new members including kidnapping, brainwashing and flirty fishing in which female members offer sexual inducements.

Adjacent to Henan is Anhui Province where in 1949 there were about 50,000 believers in a population of 60 million. Today there are maybe

9 million believers. Counting is too difficult because of the speed of growth. Here too problems abound – internal politics among church leaders, disunity over small theological differences and the tendency to isolate from non-Christians.

It has been said there will be more Chinese in heaven than any other nation. There are two further provinces in the Chinese Bible Belt, Zhejiang and Fujian on the coast of the East China Sea with similar or greater levels of blessing, especially Zhejiang with an estimated 19.5% of believers. That's nearly one in five!

‘Jesus shall reign where’er the sun does his successive journeys run.’

But here also hundreds of unregistered meeting places are being demolished by government action **each year**.

In the north of China two provinces, Jilin and Liaoning lie on the borders of North Korea, the birthplace of the Korean Revival, when Pyongyang became known as the ‘Jerusalem of the East’. Today, under unparalleled depths of persecution maybe as many as 100,000 Christians are locked up for their faith. Each year about 30,000 North Koreans make the decision to risk everything and escape to China. Christians working in these parts tell appalling stories of desperate parents casting their children into the river which forms the border between the two countries in the hope that the tide will carry them across to China.

But escapees are not safe when they arrive in China where the police impose harsh sentences and unscrupulous dealers trafficking in slavery and prostitution pounce on new arrivals.

Despite all this the churches have grown in this area. Courageous Chinese hosts offer shelter and hospitality to North Koreans at the risk of their own safety so now 20% of church members here are Koreans and the number of house churches has doubled in the last 10 years.

Still further north the Province of Inner Mongolia brings news of more blessing and accompanying problems. This vast province 3000 miles wide is experiencing a boom in economic development with the discovery of huge mineral and energy deposits. So millions of Han Chinese have resettled here to secure jobs and enjoy new-found wealth. Among them are Christians bearing the gospel message.

Now the Mongolians are in the minority in their own region and whilst the incoming workers have brought the gospel with them, in many cases it has

been a short-lived experience and the Eastern Lightning Sect has swallowed up the seed sown on the shallow soil in up to 80% of cases.

This highlights the greatest need in China, which is good teaching and thorough expository ministry that new pastors can benefit from and take back to their own flocks.

It also highlights another of China's greatest dangers – materialism. The desire for wealth and comfort is increasingly monopolising the student population who are being westernised through the internet as well as the working population who flock into the big cities believing their Saviour is money.

This is certainly the case in the southerly provinces like Guangdong which encloses Hong Kong and Macau. With its 96 million enjoying an unthought-of prosperity the scene is set for a western lifestyle complete with powerful organised crime groups, corruption, sexual immorality and drug abuse.

Each year another 30 million people pour into Guangdong looking for seasonal work and desperate to escape the poverty and drudgery of peasant life in the countryside. Many will stumble across a Christian house church and hear the gospel. Maybe there will be one Bible among ten people – or even one among a hundred. Some house churches will attempt to print the Bible but the demand by far exceeds their ability to print. You could go to a TSPM church and try to buy a Bible there. But if you don't attend that church you may have to explain who you are and why you want a Bible. And in any case the government monitors and limits the number of Bibles going to TSPM churches.

The furthest southerly provinces include Hainan Island, facing Vietnam, subtropical, rapidly developing into a holiday resort and Guangxi Zhuang. This is the home of the Zhuang people where probably 90% of the nearly 50 million souls are completely unevangelised, where there are no translations of the Bible into the many languages spoken and where even gaining access is difficult because of the mountainous terrain.

*Operation World* has performed a great ministry in opening up the subject of the Chinese Church to our western understanding, stimulating great depths of love for our dearly loved suffering Chinese brethren and sisters. One day soon we shall meet them all and hear their stories.

In the meantime let us pray for them.

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## Farel – Hard Lessons for an Evangelist

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*by Frederick Hodgson*

THE LAST ISSUE OF *REFORMATION TODAY* DESCRIBED THE CONVERSION EXPERIENCE OF TWO MEN THAT HAD A HUGE impact upon the spread of the gospel in France. The respected, renowned, brilliant but somewhat timid academic Lefèvre was a very different man from the brave, energetic Farel, the subject of this study. These two men joined others who worked under the guidance and protection of the evangelically minded Bishop Briçonnet of Meaux as he sought to transform his bishopric and make the church conformable to standards taught in the New Testament. Sadly the bishop was unable to stand against the pressures placed upon him by the powerful priestly party in Paris and he deserted his faith even to the point of becoming a persecutor himself. Some of the believers were even imprisoned in the dungeons belonging to Briçonnet. The party of Reformers in Meaux scattered and the believers there were left alone. The word sown in the area, about twenty-five miles north-east of Paris, continued to bear fruit for decades and believers stood bravely for the faith that they had received. Farel was one of the first to leave Meaux. He left in 1523 before the fierce persecution broke out there in 1525. The priestly party, associated with the Sorbonne in Paris, became very powerful in France in 1525 as King Francis I, who had given some protection to the Evangelicals, had been captured in battle by the Spanish army in the February of that year. The king's sister Marguerite d'Angoulême was a believer and she had been able to influence her brother to encourage tolerance of the Evangelicals.

### *Farel strikes out alone*

Somewhat surprisingly in view of the obvious danger, Farel returned to Paris briefly and preached there for one last time and found the university deaf to the gospel. Amazingly he was neither executed nor imprisoned nor even arrested as a heretic. He then set off to his home at Les Farelles, just outside Gap in the mountainous south-eastern province of Dauphiné.

When Farel first arrived back in Dauphiné, he was stirred by the spiritual darkness of his home area and he proclaimed Christ widely and boldly to anyone who would listen. His loud voice was heard in the streets, fields,

farms, riverside and on the mountainsides of the deep, green Alpine valleys. The bold Farel stirred up opposition and had to make use of his local knowledge of caverns and rocks in escaping those who would have silenced his powerful preaching. He had the great joy of seeing three of his own brothers converted among many other people who listened to him. The priests were furious at the gospel preaching and were spurred on to oppose the work by messages transmitted to them by powerful clergy in Paris.

The Bishop of Gap protested that Farel was neither a priest nor a monk and the unordained Farel was forced to flee from the area, but not before many had turned to the Lord. One of the believers from Dauphiné was Anemond. This zealous Christian was the son of a nobleman. He had gone to Switzerland and he urged Farel to join him, as it was much safer there. Farel undertook the dangerous journey by hiding in woods and mountain clefts until he arrived safely in Basle in December 1523. He was shortly afterwards joined by his friend.

### *Friends and foes at Basle*

It was not only the presence of Anemond that gladdened the heart of Farel. There were other believing Frenchmen present in the city including refugees like Pierre Toussaint and the Chevalier Esch who had recently escaped from Metz. Pierre Toussaint had been brought up by a godly mother. His uncle was a canon attached to the cathedral there and he recognised that Toussaint was in danger. The canon had loyalties divided between the monks of the Roman Catholic Church and his family. He could not live with the dishonour of having his nephew being a Lutheran and encouraged his flight. Another Frenchman of note who had fled to Basle was Du Blet, a merchant from Lyon. The group of Frenchmen formed a French church in Basle, where German was the main language spoken.

Farel quickly came across the curate of St Martin's Church in Basle. Hausschein (generally known by the Greek version of his name Ecolampadius). He was a German who had been a monk. He earnestly and courageously preached the gospel as he understood it and vast crowds flocked to hear him. Farel was welcomed into Ecolampadius' little spare room and was enabled to encourage Ecolampadius by his bright faith. Their friendship was mutual and benefited both men. Farel was bold and he strengthened the resolve of his more timid friend. Ecolampadius recognised that Farel was impetuous and on occasions acted with excessive

zeal. He exhorted his French friend to be gentler and cultivate meekness. However, he acknowledged that without the ardour of men like Farel 'the world would not be moved nor the church aroused from sleep'. He wrote to Luther commending the work of Farel. Écolampadius expressed his appreciation of his friendship with Farel, using the words, 'Oh, my dear Farel, I hope that the Lord will make our friendship immortal, and if we cannot live together here below, our joy will only be the greater when we shall be united at Christ's right hand in heaven.'

At the time the famous scholar Erasmus was living in Basle and Écolampadius encouraged Farel to go and pay his respects. Farel refused to do this as he considered Erasmus unfaithful to the gospel. The renowned humanist Erasmus who had published the first Greek New Testament in Basle in 1516 was a bitter critic of Lefèvre who had published the New Testament in French, the language of ordinary people, in 1523. The French exiles did not respect Erasmus in his occupation of a detached scholar criticising both Protestants and Roman Catholics alike. Du Blet had assigned the nickname Balaam to Erasmus and accused him of receiving presents from the pope in order to 'curse the people of God'. Erasmus himself did not shrink from verbally attacking Farel and his fellow French Reformers with the telling words, 'These Frenchmen had five phrases continually put into their mouths by Satan: Gospel, Word of God, Faith, Christ, Holy Ghost.' His attack on Farel was very personal, 'I have never met with anything more false, more violent, more mischievous than this man... His heart is full of vanity, his tongue of malice.'

Farel had only been in Basle for a short time when he boldly requested that its university debate the proposal, 'The Word of God is enough.' This request was refused, but the undaunted evangelist then approached the town council with the same request. Amazingly the council agreed and even went so far as to insist that all pastors, preachers, priests, students and others connected to the university should attend this debate upon pain of loss of benefices or right to use municipal services. After Farel had spoken, no priest got up to put up an argument against him, despite being challenged to do so by Écolampadius. The effect of Farel's speech was that his reputation was enhanced in Basle but the university and its teachers and the Roman Catholic Church lost much of their credibility. The French refugees were jubilant with the success of Farel and one of them expressed his conviction that 'he is strong enough to destroy the whole Sorbonne single-handed'.



Early in 1524 Farel left Basle temporally in order to confer with Zwingli elsewhere in German-speaking Switzerland. His friend Chevalier Esch accompanied him. In Farel's absence his enemies, headed by Erasmus, persuaded the council that Farel was a troublemaker and a dangerous heretic. Ecolampadius rose to his defence by writing to the Roman Catholic bishop accusing them of not taking the opportunity for defending their teaching. He added that if Farel attracted people to listen to him it was only because the Establishment was failing to feed the sheep.

On his return Farel was forbidden to preach and a magistrate representing the town council insisted that he leave Basle immediately and that he make no criticism of the city so as to bring the name of the city into disrepute. Farel was obliged to leave despite having no charge to answer. His friends were sorrowful and Ecolampadius was indignant. On leaving Basle, accompanied by Esch, Farel made his way to Strasburg where he received a warm welcome from refugees from France who sheltered in this city. He did not stay long in Strasburg on this occasion as he was called to work in Montbéliard. However, he returned to Strasburg in 1525. Here he rejoined his friends Lefèvre and Roussel who had fled to this free imperial city, outside the rule of France.

Although Farel could not engage in public ministry in Basle, he did return there secretly to visit Ecolampadius. His friend had called him back and in the privacy of his home he explained the reason for his invitation. It was in order to encourage him as a preacher of the gospel and in particular to preach it to the people of Montbéliard. Farel had become very discouraged after his expulsion from Basle. He confessed to Ecolampadius, 'I have not dared to preach, waiting for the Lord to send more suitable persons. If I could have a clear call, I would not hesitate.' His friend urged that God had providentially opened a door for him in Montbéliard. He argued that Farel was a French-speaking preacher and that so few French speakers knew the gospel. He went on to say that the people of Montbéliard had invited him and that the Duke Ulrich, who ruled over that town, had given his consent. Ulrich, the duke of Württemberg, had accepted the reformed faith in 1523. His faith transformed his character from being violent and cruel to one of gentleness and humility. He was strengthened in his Christian life by his court preacher John Gailing, a convert of Luther.

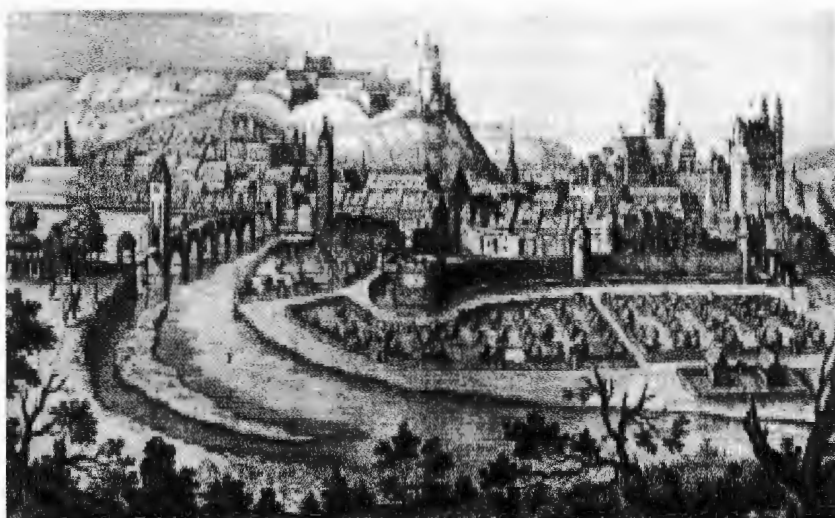
Farel confessed that he could not in all conscience disobey this call but explained that he had not been ordained and this would be a hindrance to

him. Ecolampadius replied, 'Extraordinary times demand extraordinary measures. You must here, in this house, be set apart to the ministry.' It is not apparent if any other ministers or witnesses were present at the time but Ecolampadius proceeded to solemnly set Farel apart for the ministry and called upon the Lord to give him all the help that he needed. He then urged him to feed the flock, but guard against his heart and in particular cultivate gentleness with the words, 'Temper your lion's courage with the meekness of the dove.' Farel received the exhortation. He needed to remember it when he visited Montbéliard.

### *Fighting for the faith in Montbéliard*

Farel entered Montbéliard in July 1524 accompanied by his friend Chevalier Esch, and soon after he was joined by the zealous Anemond who carried a letter to Farel from Pierre Toussaint, then living in Basle. Toussaint warned Farel to be watchful against opposition that was likely to occur. Meanwhile Farel was rejoicing in the door which was open to him. He quickly became very busy, not only preaching but also supervising the translation of German tracts into French. He wrote further tracts in French and the tracts were printed in Basle. He was eagerly assisted by his friend Anemond. A copy of Lefèvre's translation of the New Testament came into the possession of a merchant called Vaugris. Realising the importance of his find he had many copies of this printed in Basle. Extra funding for this project was provided by believers in Metz, Grenoble and Lyon. Anemond employed himself in going backwards and forwards between Basle and Montbéliard. Farel was supplied with abundant Christian literature which colporteurs then delivered to the towns and villages of France, selling their packs cheaply to those who eagerly received the gospel of Jesus Christ. Despite the fact that preachers were banished from France, the word of God was widely distributed. Significantly, some of these French New Testaments and tracts were carried into Geneva.

Meanwhile Farel continued to preach in Montbéliard to many who joyfully received his words. His friend Ecolampadius was delighted with the news but he was filled with apprehension lest Farel stir up too much anger in those devoted to images and the mass. He urged Farel to be gentle and patient, 'Remember they are often people who know no better. They are ignorant and superstitious, and really think they are doing right. Be kind to them, and try to win them over by persuasion. Do not speak against the mass till you have first preached Antichrist out of their hearts.' He taught Farel that 'mankind must be led, not driven'.



*Old Montbéliard*

Farel's ministry was joyfully accepted by the common people of Montbéliard but some of the upper classes of the city treated him with contempt and were concerned lest his preaching turn the world upside down at their expense. At the end of the year a friar came into the town and, assisted by a monk, he informed the citizens that he had some relics for sale. Jean Gailing, the court preacher, and Farel, suspecting that this was a device aimed at distracting the people from the gospel, appealed to the councillors to stop the sale of relics. They failed to act upon the pleas of Farel and Gailing, so the gospel preachers went directly to the duke. Their request that the relic salesmen should defend their practice by appealing to Scripture was upheld. Not surprisingly the sale of relics came to a halt. News of the activities of Farel was reported back to Erasmus in Basle. His response was to spread the view among his Roman Catholic friends that an exiled Frenchman was stirring up trouble in Montbéliard.

Inevitably, despite attempting to be meek and gentle, Farel boldly preached against the idolatry of the mass, with the result that there was a strong reaction. One of the monks and the dean of a priory in Montbéliard stood up during one of his sermons. They called him both a liar and a heretic. Duke Ulrich had them arrested and told them plainly that they should make no further disturbance. The dean submitted to the ruling of Ulrich but the monk failed to obey and later that day interrupted another sermon and attempted to raise a riot. The result of this was that the duke

arrested the monk and Farel. The monk was commanded either to prove from the Bible that Farel's doctrine was false or else confess that it was true. The monk decided that he should confess that he had spoken with anger and ignorance. At this the duke asked him to write out a confession so that it could be read out publicly. This brought the matter to a close. Farel was listened to even more intently than before.

Æcolampadius maintained his interest in what was happening but with mixed emotions. He was encouraged by the news of the success of the gospel but anxious as to whether Farel had managed to keep a gentle spirit. With these concerns in his heart he enquired of a visitor to Basle from Montbéliard, possibly Anemond, 'How fares it with Farel's meekness?' He was told of Farel's energy, faithfulness and success but also that he had used language that was too violent in attacking the priests and their doctrine of the mass. The anxiety of Æcolampadius about Farel's warlike attitude was justified in a particularly dramatic event that was to occur.

Round about March in 1525 the priests of Montbéliard were celebrating by making a procession in honour of St. Antony. Two priests carried an image of the saint and other priests followed dressed in gorgeous clothing, followed by choristers, girls and boys also dressed in colourful clothing and carrying banners, candles and flowers. As they crossed the bridge over the River Allan the red-bearded Farel met them. He stepped forwards and took the image off the shoulders of the priests and hurled it into the river. He then exhorted them to leave off their idolatry. The priests rushed forwards towards Farel but were stopped in their tracks by the cry that a whirlpool had appeared in the river and was about to consume the idol. They turned to look and by the time they redirected their attention to Farel he had disappeared from the scene and had hidden from the angry priests. The priests then became more violent and the Catholic Swiss cantons sent more requests to Ulrich to banish Farel. Ulrich himself left Montbéliard about this time as a fugitive and Farel withdrew from the city and returned secretly to his friend Æcolampadius in Basle.

Ulrich had protected Farel in Montbéliard but had been tempted to try and regain Württemberg with the support of Swiss soldiers. As a consequence of the Battle of Pavia in February 1525 this support was lost. He had also benefited from French financial support that had enabled him to live in Montbéliard. This too was lost when Francis I was captured.

Farel applied to the councillors of Basle for permission to stay in their city

but the authorities would not consent to his staying there. He was next heard of in Metz. It is hard to think of him as being anything other than depressed at this time with news of the fierce persecution that had broken out against Evangelicals in Meaux, Lyon and elsewhere in France under the hatred of Louise acting as Regent in the absence of Francis, and the powerful clerics Dûprat and Bédier. His own expulsion from Montbéliard and news of the death of Anemond were also discouraging to him.

### *Farel's friends at Metz and Strasburg*

Farel stayed a very short time in Metz. At that time it had the status of being a republic, before being absorbed into France in 1552. It was a dangerous city dominated by the cultured but dissolute Cardinal Jean de Lorraine, brother to Claude de Lorraine, Duke of Guise. (The cardinal was bishop of Metz in addition to holding many other posts but was disgraced in 1542 and retired to Rome.) At the beginning of 1525 a faithful gospel preacher, Châtelain, who had been a priest and a monk, but had not actually cast off his monk's habit, had been seized by the Cardinal. His monk's dress was removed from him, his fingers scraped with glass so that he would no longer be able to offer communion and was then burnt on one of the streets of Metz.

In June 1525 Farel made a second appearance in the city accompanied by Pierre Toussaint. The two Reformers asked a hearing from the dean of the cathedral, Toussaint's uncle, but who was also a friend of the Cardinal. Their request was refused. It looked as though they would be arrested so they fled from the city. Before they fled, they dined as guests with Nicholas d'Esch and the wool-carder, Jean Leclerc. The latter was a refugee from Meaux. The pleasant company were never to meet together again. Leclerc was to be arrested within a few weeks as a result of his destroying images of Mary and the chief saints of the country. The explanation that he gave to his judges was that 'Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh. God only is to be adored'. His sentence of being burnt to death was not carried out before his flesh was torn off with red-hot pincers and his right hand cut off. Farel heard this news in Strasburg where he had fled for refuge.

The terrible news about Leclerc was soon followed by a joyful reunion with some of his old friends. These were Lefèvre and Roussel and others who had sought refuge from the persecution in France. His friends had come to Strasburg until the storm had passed. They were thrilled to see the gospel being preached openly in the city but at the same time they

were fearful lest news of their presence in the city filter back into France and assassins follow them into Strasburg. The aged Lefèvre assumed the name Antony Pilgrim and Roussel took the name Tolnin Le-Roux as a precaution. Their disguise was useless and the renowned Lefèvre was soon recognised by the many French refugees in the city. They formed a French church and Farel was their preacher, which gave Lefèvre great joy. The learned Lefèvre, the energetic Farel and the spiritually minded Roussel benefited from each other's qualities. Roussel became more courageous and Farel became more gentle.

On the release of King Francis I from his Spanish prison in 1526, Marguerite d'Angoulême prevailed upon her brother to stop the persecution of Evangelicals in France. The result of this was that Farel's friends in Strasburg were allowed to return to France. Only Farel was left in exile because he refused to compromise with the Roman Catholic Church in France. The others were content to preach the gospel within the Catholic churches as far as they were allowed without drawing a storm upon their heads. Farel was assured that he could have returned to preach to multitudes under Marguerite's protection and approval, but he believed he would not be able to 'preach the whole counsel of God'.

This was a really difficult position for Farel to hold as it left him without his close former French colleagues in Strasburg. Even worse, he was unable to preach in Strasburg, as he didn't know the language of the common people who lived there. He received some encouragement that he had made the right decision in that Roussel wrote a letter to him admitting that he was 'obliged to keep back half the truths of the gospel to avoid giving offence'.

At this time a dispute arose in Strasburg about the nature of the Lord's Supper. Luther maintained that although the bread and the wine remained bread and wine, they were literally the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Farel wrote to Luther insisting that they were only consumed in remembrance of the body and blood of Christ. Luther ignored him and this increased Farel's sense of isolation. He desperately wanted to return to his native France but he was not prepared to do it at any cost to his conscience. Toussaint, Lefèvre and Roussel wanted him to join them in France and take the part of a fearless evangelist but it was clear that he was not cut out to be a court preacher. Toussaint was distressed at the double-minded standards in the French court. The courtiers almost acted as Reformers

in the presence of Marguerite, but in the company of ungodly men they behaved like them.

An opportunity then arose to invite Farel to return to France. Two sons of Robert de la Marche visited Marguerite and she asked her chaplain, Roussel, to talk to them about spiritual matters. It became apparent that the two noblemen were genuine believers and Roussel urged them to share their faith with their subjects.

They confessed that they were not strong enough Christians to do this. The chaplain suddenly realised that there was now an opportunity to invite Farel to do the work of evangelism on the lands belonging to Robert de la Marche. Roussel seized the hour and addressed the young men, 'I know of but one man fitted for such a great work: he is William Farel.

'Christ has given him an extraordinary talent for making known the riches of his glory. Invite him.' The young brothers asked that there should be no delay in summoning Farel to help them. Their estates were situated in the middle of France and would offer a great base to evangelise the whole country.

Plans were made to establish a printing centre from which literature produced by Farel could be circulated throughout France. Both Roussel and Toussaint wrote to Farel requesting that he return to his native land. They felt that Farel would be the Reformer of France just as Luther was to the German people and Zwingli was to the German-speaking Swiss. Providence had determined another course for Farel as he waited in Strasburg.

Back in Strasburg Farel was hugely disappointed that there seemed no way back into France for him. The court of France didn't want a forceful preacher that would overturn the life of the nation although it was prepared to tolerate Evangelicals like Roussel who were prepared to work within the Roman Catholic system. There were Evangelicals within France, however, who believed that the French Church needed a complete overhaul.

Farel was unaware of the attempt to have him return to France. Before any letters could reach him in Strasburg, a different invitation came to him that would turn his life in an entirely different direction and also give the French Reformation an entirely different base that would ultimately reach out across the world. He was invited to evangelise the French-speaking people of Switzerland.



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## Richard Denham (1927-2013)

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*by Karl Peterson*

IT IS NOT EASY TO THINK OF MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE had such a large influence over an entire region of the world as J Richard Denham Jr. Those who enjoy such a privilege probably do so because they did the *right thing* in the *right place* at the *right time*.

### *The right place*

Sparked by his father's vision of reaching the lost along the Amazon River, Richard and Pearl sold all their belongings, bade farewell to the Baptist church he was pastoring in Oregon, USA and in 1952 embarked on a 61-year fruitful missionary career in Brazil. In many respects Brazil has overtaken the prominence of its European mother country – Portugal – and has formidable influence over the entire Portuguese-speaking world comprising nine countries and more than 250 million people. Whether or not they could have anticipated it, Richard and Pearl were in the right place – a country just on the verge of great influence.

### *The right time*

The Denhams providentially 'rode two waves' which thrust their

work into great influence. First, Brazil was soon to become one of the great 'hot spots' of world missions. Though Protestants had been operating in Brazil since 1862 when a student of Charles Hodge established the Presbyterian Church in the country, the nation has a long history of Roman Catholic control mixed with the darkness of spiritist religion. But in recent decades Brazil has seen an explosion of gospel work and is fast becoming one of the world's significant missionary-sending nations. The Denhams began their work at the beginning of this important era.

Not only this, but Rich and Pearl also began their publishing work toward the beginning of an age in which Reformed literature was being newly appreciated and published in the UK and the USA. The Banner of Truth Trust generously provided the means so that Rich could begin translating and publishing sound literature in the Portuguese language. The Lord of the Harvest not only placed this couple in the right place but did so at the right time.

### *The right thing*

Looking for areas where there was

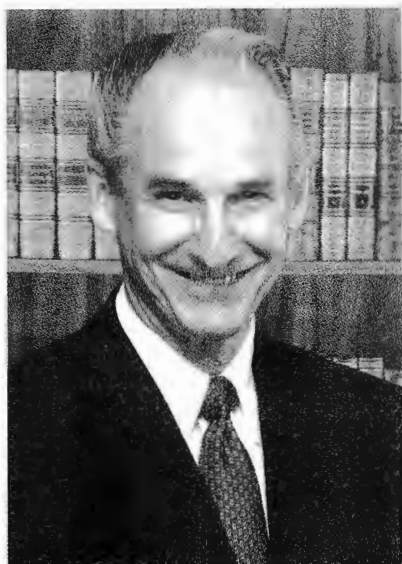
no gospel presence, the Denhams sailed up the Amazon and Maderia Rivers, eventually settling in the town of Manicoré and, through much persistence, established a local church there. Becoming convinced that believers needed sound literature, Rich and Pearl moved down river to the provincial capital of Manaus, where they established its first Christian bookstore. It would soon be apparent that Christian literature was scarce in the Portuguese language.

When Pearl's health weakened in the harsh tropical climate, it became clear that the family had to move south to the healthier surroundings of São Paulo, and pursue a publishing ministry. The hand of the Lord of the Harvest was clearly in this move as this massive city provided them with a wonderful launching board for expanding the publication of Reformed literature in Portuguese. In the 1980s, seeing the need for pastoral training, they moved two hours north to the city of São José dos Campos, planted a church and founded the Fiel Conference for Pastors and Leaders which is now in its 30<sup>th</sup> year.

Hundreds of Reformed titles have been published by Editora Fiel, some books being translated from English but more and more being written by local authors. *The Faith*

*for Today* magazine is sent out regularly in printed form and read without charge by over 100,000 readers who receive it electronically. This year more than 1800 gathered for four days of rich ministry at the São Paulo Conference. In addition to the national conference, Fiel has also been promoting a college conference for ten years. Recently, the Fiel Conference has been expanding to other cities in Brazil. This conference has not only been reproduced in Portugal and Mozambique (Maputo and Nampula) but it has spawned a number of other like-minded conference ministries throughout Brazil.

One of the pillars of Richard's vision is the Adopt a Pastor Ministry. Sponsors from around the world (individuals, families, churches) send an amount to Editora Fiel monthly which allows Fiel to translate, publish and send books to pastors and church leaders around the Portuguese-speaking world. A sponsored pastor will receive a book every month for three years as well as an invitation to the annual Fiel Conference. Coordinating this Project and the Fiel Conference along with medical missionary Charles Woodrow on behalf of Fiel in Mozambique, I have clearly seen the power of sound literature as it has changed lives and churches.



*Richard Denham, by permission of Evangelical Times*

Editora Fiel is now in the good hands of Richard's son, Rick, and operates under a board of directors in Brazil and in the USA. Rick has taken the same books and faithful theology and advanced the Fiel ministry in exciting new directions, including the Fiel Leadership Course (FLC) for leaders in partnership with Nine Marks Ministries and other ministries. Rick has established partnerships with Nine Marks, Together for the Gospel, The Gospel Coalition, Ligonier and Desiring God Ministries. Today publishing books is one of five ministries. With over 170,000 people in its internet community, the Fiel internet ministry utilises social media, videos, and its website to share

free ebooks, Audio books, video messages and thousands of articles updated daily ([www.ministeriofiel.com.br](http://www.ministeriofiel.com.br)).

Like his son, Richard Denham was a careful and astute businessman. His timely investment in land and properties has significantly helped Fiel establish itself.

This year, at *the right time* (31 July), the Lord called Richard to *the right place*, having left Pearl, seven children and thousands of church leaders across the globe with *the right thing* - a wealthy inheritance of a faithful ("Fiel") ministry.

Fiel's English website:  
<http://editorafiel.org/>

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## News

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### **African Pastors' Conferences October and November 2013 (1)**

*A report by Irving Steggle*

In October we had a run of four conferences in which Pastor Grave Singogo and I spoke on the theme of 'Preaching Christ Crucified'.

We started in Louis Trichardt in the Afrikaans Baptist Church which is also the home of the Limpopo Bible Institute. LT is some 100km north of the Tropic of Capricorn and it was well into Spring when the weather is normally very hot. Instead it was just 10 degrees Celsius and wet! The lectures were warmly received, except by a rather militant Congolese pastor, and were clearly challenging to many of the delegates.

Soshanguve is a large sprawling township north of Pretoria and the venue was a hall in the middle of the township. This was the first time the team from Mukhanyo Theological College made DVDs of all the lectures to use for their distance learning programme. This APC is developing a close partnership for the training of pastors with Mukhanyo, who stand right alongside us theologically.



*Mseleni – one of the venues for the November APCs*

After a successful conference in Bloemfontein (for the second year) we moved on for the first time to the little mountain kingdom of Lesotho where we held the conference in a church near the royal palace in the capital city of Maseru. The pastors were spiritually hungry, the conference was well organised and several came a long way from neighbouring parts of South Africa. Some had no concept of what preaching Christ meant – and said they needed more of this ‘new teaching’! Most were from a Pentecostal stable but with a real desire to be biblical in their ministry. We will definitely go again if the Lord provides the financial means.

The November run was in Empangeni, Mseleni and Ermelo. The theme was the same as in October but the speakers were Pastor Raphael Banda and Erroll Hulse. Erroll spoke powerfully at Empangeni but then suffered a stroke on the morning the team was due to move on to Mseleni, which is the most rural conference of all in the steaming hot north of Kwa Zulu Natal. Raphael Banda nobly took on Erroll’s lectures as well as his own, preparing through the night in Mseleni (even though there was no power or water until about 3am). At Ermelo he courageously carried on in spite of being afflicted with flu. We are so grateful in APCs for the fortitude of our Zambian brethren. Many pastors were helpfully influenced by these two conference runs.

### **The aftermath of the typhoon in the Philippines**

The report below was written on 28<sup>th</sup> November by Brian Ellis, pastor of Cubao Reformed Baptist Church

(see: <http://www.ccmmanila.org/news/typhoon-yolanda/thu-28-nov>)

Thank you again for all your loving prayers and practical support for the relief work being undertaken by Cubao Reformed Baptist Church (CRBC) and our benevolent ministry Christian Compassion Ministries Foundation (CCM).

We had a team headed by Pastor Ismael which went to Basey in Samar. This is a town which also experienced the massive storm surge and there is much need for help.

Our relief team consisted of Pastor Ismael Montejo, Juvy Savares, Arnel Joy (from Naga City – GMA graduate) and Arnel Manata (CRBC regular attendee). The team met Erwin Cadalin (CRBC church worker) who had been surveying the areas to visit and making arrangements for the relief distribution.



*Philippines disaster  
– misery in Basey*



*Widespread devastation: the edge  
of the road can no longer be seen*

Pastor Ismael had opportunity to preach the gospel while people quietly lined up to await the giving of relief goods which most had not yet received from other sources. Many in that area that have lost their homes are living in makeshift tents at the side of the road. It has often been raining. There is so much need everywhere that the relief agencies, which are many, are still swamped by the need. There are still areas which have not yet been reached with any help.

Our American friends from Texas left CRBC last Saturday to also make their way to Samar and then to Tacloban and Leyte, with plans eventually to cross to the island of Cebu and meet with Sovereign Grace Bible Church of Cebu. They then plan to head for the north of Cebu Island where there has also been much destruction before heading back again through Leyte and Samar to Manila.

They have rented a van and that was loaded down with equipment when they left CRBC on Saturday (23rd Nov). They were carrying water purification equipment which can be operated by hand or by solar power so as to provide clean drinking water in the storm ravaged areas they will visit. In Cebu they will pick up further equipment which is being flown in especially from Australia. Arnel Parco (CRBC member) went along with them to act as translator for the first part of their journey.

We have another team with relief in Cebu City where they are loading up a truck to take across to the island of Leyte which was surveyed just at the end of last week. They will be visiting churches. Pastor Mon

Macapagal is leading this team. He is accompanied by his wife Bekha, Reddy Gonzales (CCM), Levi Ilhig (CRBC & GMA student), and Henry Cañas (CRBC). The truck with the relief goods will be taken by ferry to Leyte where they will be distributing relief goods in towns affected and heading north along the eastern coast up to the town of Palo and then Tacloban. They will be linking up with CRBC church members who are in the town of Palo just south of the city of Tacloban, the worst hit area.

Reah Medenilla (social worker and CRBC member) is involved in relief work in Palo working with another relief agency. She was joined on Wednesday by Cathy Gacutan (CCM EAP Director) and Joy Putal (CCM sponsorship coordinator) who is a qualified nurse. There is much need in the area and Joy's nursing skills will quickly be put to use in treating those injured during the typhoon.

What we are doing as a church seems to be just a drop in a bucket but we must seek to do what we can as the needs are so great. Thank you all once again for your loving prayers and practical concern.

Yours for Cubao Reformed Baptist Church and Christian Compassion Ministries.

*Brian Ellis, pastor*

## **Cyprus**

A few years ago I remember hearing my dad (Andrew Swanson) give an update on the Lord's work in North Cyprus and the underlying theme was God's ways are not our ways. Just about 30 years ago my dad set out for North Cyprus with a clear objective for the work that he was called to do. Time has proved that the calling is more important than the objectives set by us. Most if not all of those original aims and objectives have fallen by the wayside as God has shown again and again his plan is best.

The call is still the same to do the Lord's work in North Cyprus but whereas originally the aim was to seek one nation, namely the Turkish Cypriots, we now have a congregation with over 20 nationalities and on occasions every continent is represented (apart from Australia).

God's plan so often uses the weakness of his people so that he can use us but also reduce the risk of increasing our pride. The only one we can be proud of and give honour to is the Master Planner. Dad never managed to master Turkish which means that when the English-speaking students came to Cyprus they could worship and be taught alongside the Turkish





*Congregation meeting in their new accommodation*

speakers because all the church's activities then were in both languages via translation.

Now on the Lord's Day we have over 180 in attendance at the English-speaking service and a much smaller congregation of about 20 to 35 at the Turkish meeting; however, a large number of us are not locals. At the moment we have a growing membership of 40 plus with a dozen or so in the application process. The hard thing to understand is that we only have three Turkish speakers in membership and no Cypriots. We long for the Lord to work in the hearts and lives of the locals but we have to wait on the Lord for his perfect timing.

In the meantime can you please pray for this young multicultural Church that its members will be kept safe and faithful, that God's Word will be loved and lived by his people and in his time we will be made up of every tribe and tongue including many Cypriots.

*James Swanson*

## **Sola 5 Baptist Conference in The Netherlands**

On 8-9<sup>th</sup> November a good number of people gathered in the town of Veenendaal in The Netherlands for this annual conference. This was the third conference with one of the great 'sola' statements of the Reformation as its theme. This year we focused on 'Solus Christus', or 'Christ Alone'. A large part of the letter to the Colossians was expounded to bring this wonderful theme afresh to our minds and hearts.

Our brother Matthias Lohmann from Germany was the main speaker. He started the conference with an exposition of the key passage in chapter 1:15-20. There are good reasons to think that this text was based on one of the hymns sung in the early church about our Lord Jesus Christ. The text shows the superiority of Christ both as the Creator of the whole universe and as the Head of the body that is the church. The Colossian church was threatened by false teaching implying that faith in Christ alone is not sufficient. But what a marvellous antidote does Paul provide in these profound statements about the glory of Christ!

These truths received even greater significance when we were introduced in the second address to chapter 2:8-15 and what it means that 'in Christ all the fulness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fulness in Christ' (NIV). What a privilege we have as believers in Christ through this glorious gospel. In the evening Oscar Lohuis gave us a fresh exposition of the righteousness of Christ imputed to us as the ground for our salvation using Colossians 1:21-23 and Romans 3:21-26.

The second day Pastor Gijs de Bree showed us how Paul uses these truths to show what it means for our life as Christians, based on Colossians 3. The final address was given again by Matthias Lohmann who challenged us to 'set our hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God' with the great encouragement that we will appear with him in glory.

The conference addresses were interspersed with a set of four workshops discussing other topics related to the theme, e.g. what this theme means for preaching, evangelism and church discipline.

Being able to concentrate for two days on these core truths of the gospel and the Reformed faith was a real blessing. We can become so engrossed in secondary matters that we take these essential truths for granted. But as Paul reminds us, we need to set our minds on things above. We hope that the conference has achieved this for all those who were there for the glory of the Lord's Name and for the benefit of the churches.

*Kees van Kralingen*

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# One in a Thousand: The Calling and Work of a Pastor

by Erroll Hulse

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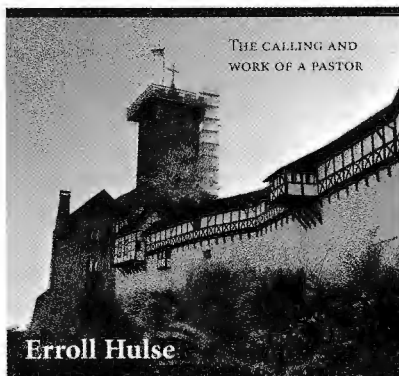
Reviewed by David Murray, professor of OT and Practical Theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids.

**D**O WE REALLY NEED ANOTHER BOOK ON THE calling and work of a pastor? That's my usual reaction when the latest books on the subject land regularly on my desk. And most of the time, my answer is 'No.' However, knowing the wide and long pastoral experience of Erroll Hulse induced me to give his book a second look, and a third, and soon I was saying, 'Yes, we need this book, it makes a valuable contribution, and it will help a lot of pastors and those who train them.'

It takes a unique approach in that it approaches the subject via the biographies of pastors from many different eras and denominations. And in each case, after a brief biography, the author focuses in on one particular quality in that pastor's life and ministry. He looks in turn at:

- Martin Luther's example as a reformer
- William Perkins' example in stressing application in preaching
- Richard Baxter's example in evangelism
- Jonathan Edwards' example as a student of theology
- Martyn Lloyd-Jones' example in preaching
- Martin Holdt's example in maintaining a strong prayer life

## ONE IN A THOUSAND



And all this is preceded by a few introductory chapters that start with our Lord Jesus Christ as an example of compassion and care, especially as seen in Isaiah's four servant songs, and then by lessons from the Apostle Paul's ministry, in particular:

- His insistence on the centrality of the cross
- His insistence on justification by faith alone
- His amazing prayer life
- His practical example as a team worker
- His ability to endure suffering

There were a number of features I liked about this book

First was its conversational tone. At times I felt like I was sitting at the feet of a wise older man, being patiently and lovingly mentored by the fireside on a cold winter's day. There were lots of fascinating asides, illustrations, and anecdotes garnered from many years in various ministries and missions.

Second, I appreciated the call to serious study both in preparation for the ministry and in the ongoing life of the pastor. Whatever training method chosen, seminary, or local church, Erroll emphasises the need for prolonged time and intense study to acquire the necessary knowledge and skill to teach and preach weekly. He leans towards a seminary model as long as the teachers have pastoral experience and the students are embedded in local churches as they are taught.

Third, it majors on the majors: study, preaching, prayer, evangelism, compassion, and suffering. You may think you've heard it all before on these subjects, but I really believe you'll find many fresh theological and practical gems in this book that will develop your skill and grace in these vital areas.

Fourth, you'll learn a lot of stirring and inspirational Church history. Erroll's brief biographies of each of his main characters are a delightful model of how to introduce historical figures to a modern audience. Apart from the basics of each man's life, there are also lots of great quotes,

stories, and illustrations. I've read biographies about most of these men, but I found myself learning lots of new and fascinating facts about them.

Fifth, I enjoyed the way Erroll moved from historical narratives to personal application. He marshals all the facts together in a powerfully persuasive argument to move us to think, feel, will, speak, and do differently. It really is that rare bird – a practical book on practical theology.

Last, I welcomed the unspoken challenge throughout to aspire to excellence in the basics of pastoral ministry. I didn't find Erroll's use of these mighty men of God as our models in any way discouraging; rather I found it uplifting and motivating. It's a high calling and therefore any who follow it must aspire to the highest of standards. This is not for the half-hearted, the faint-hearted, or the cold-hearted; it's for full hearts, strong hearts, and burning hearts.

*One in a Thousand* is the title and is taken from Job 33:22-24 where God's messenger of salvation is so valuable and so uncommon that he is described as 'one in a thousand.' Yes, that's how rare such pastors were then and remain so today. Rare in number. Rare in that kind of quality. But this book has the potential to swell their ranks so that, by God's grace, maybe the book can soon be re-titled, 'Two in a Thousand' or even 'Ten in a Thousand!'

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# **In Japan The Crickets Cry**

by Ronald Clements and Steve Metcalf

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Monarch Books    224pp ISBN: 978 1 85424970 8    Price: £8.99

Reviewed by Joseph Hewitt: pastor-emeritus, College Park Baptist Church, Lewisham.

**T**HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY BY STEVE METCALF, AIDED GREATLY BY DR. RONALD CLEMENTS, IS NOT ABOUT crickets (male grasshoppers which chirp and are prevalent in Japan), or so much about Japan as about his parents; about his own life and about the bigger matter of ‘loving your enemies’ – the Japanese!

Ruth, his sister, was three when Steve was born on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 1927, in the tribal village of Taku in south-west China. They were the children of Eddie and Bessie Metcalf, who were missionaries amongst the Eastern Lisu people in Yunnan Province. There were many difficulties and dangers but the Lord helped them through them all. Eddie went in 1906, aged 27, to China to preach the gospel and he also eventually translated the whole of the New Testament into the Lisu language.

Steve’s tribute to his parents and his own extraordinary life is told in this amazing book published in 2010. It was a Christmas present to me recently and once I began to read I did not want to put it down. He and his wife, Evelyn, were still working amongst the Japanese people in the UK and Europe, when his story ends in 2010; he was 83 years of age.

It is so thrilling to read afresh of Eric Liddell who refused in the 1924 Olympics to run the 100 metre race on a Sunday, but later won the 400 metre race to great acclaim. He gave all the glory to God. Later, having been born in China, he returned there as a missionary. There he met Steve Metcalf. Ruth was seven when she went to the famous Chefoo School and Steve was six when he followed her. They missed their parents terribly. The Japanese invaded China with shocking treatment of the nationals. Ruth and her mother escaped to Australia, but Steve was put into the prisoner of war camp where he met Eric Liddell. Steve was around 15 years of age and was taught and befriended by Eric.

Steve had a terrible time in the camp and was bare-foot in the wintry weather. He and Eric had raced together and did many other things, and shortly before Eric died on 21<sup>st</sup> February, 1945, he gave his racing shoes to Steve. Steve writes of how he helped carry the coffin and as it was lowered the Beatitudes were read - Matthew 5:1-12. Among Eric's last words were: 'Love your enemies,' and this became a driving concern to Steve.

Here is a book that shows deep devotion, thanks to many fellow Christians who supported the Metcalfs for nearly 60 years, and much love for the Lisu people, many of whom became Christians, and who endured terrible persecution later under the Communists. God is glorified for his blessings, providences and deliverances, and for helping the children who endured in those days such long absences from their parents. Steve had to wait seven years before he saw his parents again.

Steve went from Weifang Camp to Australia, aged 18. He was re-united with Ruth and a little later with his parents. They were able to live together for a short while which was a rare joy for them all. The parents returned to Taku and finished the translation work, and then retired to Melbourne, to the Home where Ruth was the Matron. His father Eddie died on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1956, and his mother Bessie died in August 1966.

Steve left Australia after some Bible training to sail to Japan on 17th November, 1952. There he learned Japanese and began to fulfil his calling to take the gospel to Japan. At Eric's grave in 1945 he had pledged to do so and with this call confirmed by God he worked until retirement to the UK in 1990. He married Evelyn in Japan in June 1957. She was a missionary from Ireland. They were excellent together and eventually had 5 children and 10 grandchildren. They then spent 15 years in ministry at the Japanese Christian Fellowship in London. What examples of faithful ministry did these missionaries give!

I may not meet Steve Metcalf until I get to heaven, though I do not live far from his house here in Essex. However, I praise God for what He has done in China and is still doing today, and especially also in Japan. Looking ahead what a wonderful reunion there will be when the Lord returns. As Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20, 'You are my joy and crown'. There is more that can be said, but I urge you all to read this book and pass it around. It will do you so much good.

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