



20th CENTURY ROOTS II

Seven more biographies of people
who were used by God

John Benton

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Introduction

As we progress into the 21st Century, it seems that our world is becoming increasingly secular.

The forces of materialism and political correctness have begun to dominate in a way, perhaps we have never seen before. The church is under pressure in so many ways. Churches are closing. Many congregations are dwindling. It is incumbent upon faithful Christians and faithful churches to remain faithful and inspiring stories of what God did in people's lives not so long ago can be a great help to us in doing this. That is the main rationale behind the stories recorded in this booklet.

These stories are mere snapshots to whet the spiritual appetite and I hope that they will lead readers to maybe finding more substantial biographies of the godly men and women who are mentioned here. Their stories stand as wonderful testimonies to the fact that God is not dead but very much alive and we can rely on him as we walk with him.

We live in a 'risk averse' society. There are so many instructions, perhaps kindly meant, to encourage people to keep safe. But many of the people you will read about here did not have keeping safe as a priority. They took risks for God. They stayed faithful even under persecution. God has used such people in the past and he will use such people again.

The last mini biography in this booklet is of Brother Andrew. He went to Bible College in Glasgow and over the entrance to that establishment was written the text, 'Have faith in God', Mark 11.22. May the Lord enable us to do just that as we face the future.

1: Duncan Campbell (1898 – 1972)

Acts 2.37

The Hebrides is a group of islands around 40 miles west of the north of Scotland. Lewis is the most northerly island and Harris is its southern peninsula. And something wonderful happened there between 1949 and 1952.¹

Spiritual crisis

The main preacher God used in this revival was Duncan Campbell. He was born at Blackcrofts in the parish of Ardoch in the Scottish Highlands in 1898 and was converted to Christ at the age of fifteen. He spent some time working for Faith Mission but resigned from that organization in 1925 to go into other ministry. However, some 20 years later he went through a spiritual crisis which would challenge him to retrace his steps and ask if he could rejoin Faith Mission.

The crisis came at a conference in Edinburgh. He said, 'As I sat listening to Dr Fitch giving his last message, I suddenly became conscious of my unfitness to be on the platform. I saw the barrenness of my life and ministry. I saw the pride of my own heart. How very humiliating it was to discover that I was proud of the fact that I was booked to speak at five conventions that year! That night in desperation on the floor of my study, I cast myself afresh on the mercy of God. He heard my cry for pardon and cleansing, and, as I lay prostrate before Him, wave after wave of divine consciousness came over me, and the love of the Saviour flooded my being; and in that hour I knew that my life and ministry could never be the same again.'

Nights of prayer

Campbell described the beginning of the revival like this: 'In November 1949, this gracious movement began on the island of Lewis. Two old women, one of them 84 years of age and the other 82 – one of them stone blind – were greatly burdened because of the appalling state of their own parish. It was true that not a single young person attended public worship. Isaiah 44.3 gripped them: 'I will pour water on him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground.' They were so burdened that both of them decided to spend time in prayer twice a week. On Tuesday they got on their knees at 10 o'clock in the evening and remained on their knees until 3 or 4 am; two old women in a very humble cottage.

¹ This chapter is based on the book *Sounds from Heaven, The Revival on the Island of Lewis, 1949-1952*, by Colin and Mary Peckham, published by Christian Focus, and on an address given by Duncan Campbell in 1968 which can be found on the Silohouse Ministries website.

‘One night, one of the sisters had a vision. Now remember, in revival, God works in wonderful ways. In the vision she saw the church of her fathers crowded with young people, packed to the doors, and a strange minister standing in the pulpit. And she was so impressed by the vision that she sent for the parish minister.

‘Are my hands clean?’

‘In response, the minister called his church office bearers together and seven of them met in a barn to pray on Tuesday and on Friday. And the two old women got on their knees and prayed with them.

‘That continued for some weeks until one night one young man, a deacon, got up and read Psalm 24. ‘Who shall ascend the hill of God? Who shall stand in His holy place? He that has clean hands and a pure heart’. He closed his Bible. And looking down at the minister and the other office bearers, he said, ‘It seems to me to be so much humbug to be praying as we are praying, to be waiting as we are waiting, if we ourselves are not rightly related to God.’ And then he lifted his two hands and prayed, ‘God, are my hands clean? Is my heart pure?’ But he got no further. That young man fell to his knees and then fell into a trance. Now don't ask me to explain this because I can't. When that happened in the barn, the power of God swept into the parish. And an awareness of God gripped the community such as hadn't been known for over 100 years. An awareness of God – that's revival. And on the following day, the looms were silent, little work was done on the farms as men and women gave themselves to thinking on eternal things gripped by eternal realities.’

Coming to Lewis

A number of things happened resulting in Duncan Campbell being called to the island to preach. Again, he takes up the story. ‘We got to the church about quarter to nine to find about 300 people gathered and I gave an address. Nothing really happened. It was a good meeting. A sense of God, a consciousness of His Spirit moving but nothing beyond that. So I pronounced the benediction and we were leaving the church, I would say about a quarter to 11.

Just as I am walking down the aisle, along with this young deacon who read the Psalm in the barn, he suddenly stood in the aisle and looking up to the heavens he said, ‘God, You can't fail us. God, You promised to pour water on the thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. God, You can't fail us!’ Just then the door opened – it is now eleven o'clock. The door of the church opens and the local

blacksmith comes back into the church and says, 'Mr Campbell, something wonderful has happened. Oh, we were praying that God would pour water on the thirsty and listen, He's done it! He's done it!' When I went to the door of the church, I saw a congregation of approximately 600 people. Six hundred people-- where had they come from?

The dance hall

'What had happened? That very night God swept in in Pentecostal power - the power of the Holy Ghost. What happened in the early days of the apostles was happening now in the parish of Barvas. Over 100 young people were at the dance in the parish hall and they weren't thinking of God or eternity. They were there to have a good night, when suddenly the power of God fell upon the dance. The music ceased and in a matter of minutes, the hall was empty. They fled from the hall as a man fleeing from a plague. And they made for the church. They are now standing outside. They saw lights in the church. That was a house of God and they were going to it and they went. Men and women who had gone to bed rose, dressed, and made for the church. There was nothing in the way of publicity. But God took the situation in hand. A hunger and a thirst gripped the people. 600 of them now are at the church standing outside.

'This dear man, the blacksmith, turned to me and said, 'I think that we should sing a psalm.' And they sang and they sang and they sang verse after verse. Oh, what singing! What singing! And then the doors were opened and the congregation flocked back into the church. Now the church is crowded - a church to seat over 800 is now packed to capacity. It is now going on towards midnight. I managed to make my way through the crowd along the aisle toward the pulpit. I found a young woman, a teacher in the grammar school, lying prostrate on the floor of the pulpit praying, 'Oh, God, is there mercy for me? Oh, God, is there mercy for me?' She was one of those at the dance. But she is now lying on the floor of the pulpit crying to God for mercy.

'That meeting continued until 4 o'clock in the morning. I couldn't tell you how many were saved that night but of this I am sure and certain, that at least 5 young men who were saved in that church that night are today ministers in the church of Scotland having gone through university and college.'

Duncan Campbell later became the principal of the training school for Faith Mission. He died in 1972 while lecturing in Switzerland.

Lesson: God is still a God of power.

2: Andre Trocme (1901 – 1971)

Psalm 37.1-9

André Pascal Trocmé is not a Christian many of us will have heard of – but he was a most remarkable man of faith.

He was a Frenchman born on Easter Day 1901 in Saint-Quentin in Picardy in NE France. His middle name is French for Easter and it was in this region that John Calvin was born too. The family had Huguenot roots but were middle-class and quite worldly. His father was a successful manufacturer of lace. They were rich and rather separate from the other people of the town.

Christian Pacifist

André was to become a Pacifist and a Christian. I don't think I can defend Pacifism from the Scriptures, but it is part of André Trocmé's remarkable story.

At the age of 11, his mother died after a motor accident when his father was driving dangerously. His father was beside himself with grief and guilt. And it was this dilemma of André's, devastated by his mother's death but loving his heartbroken father, that began to shape his thinking about always standing against revenge.

This feeling was consolidated a few years later and led to him coming to personal faith. The town of Saint-Quentin was occupied by the Germans in WWI from September 1914 to February 1917 and was only about 20 miles from the Somme. Young André saw many terrible sights of casualties and mutilated, wounded men. One day he met a German soldier. 'Are you hungry?' asked the German and offered him some black potato bread. 'No!' said André, 'and even if I was I wouldn't accept anything from you! You're the enemy!' But the soldier said, 'No! I am not your enemy. I am a Christian. Do you believe in God?' 'At the town of Breslau,' said the soldier, 'we found Christ and I have given him my life.' This soldier was a Christian Pacifist who explained he had been given permission by his commanding officer to go into battle without weapons – to help the wounded. 'I am often in danger, but then I sing a hymn and pray to God,' said the German, 'If he has decided to keep me alive he will. If not...' It seems it was through this man – surnamed Kindler – that André came to faith.

Awakening among the poor

After the war, the family moved to Paris and André studied theology at the University of Paris and here, for the first time, he met Édouard Theis – who turns up later in the story. He joined a Pacifist organization and got involved with ‘unions’. These were nothing to do with trade unions but were groups of poor people who prayed and worked together. Later he won a scholarship to Union Theological Seminary in New York. But once settled he found the ‘Social Gospel’ that was taught there too secular for his deeply devout mind – and he didn’t like America. But it was in New York that he met his wife-to-be, Magda. They got married and came back to France.

They first had a parish in Mauberge and then moved to Sin-le-Noble near the Belgium border, where they spent 6 years. It seems that during the time in Sin-le-Noble there was a spiritual awakening. In its full intensity it lasted about 3 months and it brought enormous love. People became as dear to each other as Jesus was to them – and treated each other as if they were Jesus. Trocmé wrote: ‘It was a spiritual springtime. All those things that had formerly been vague, colourless...became suddenly living. Each man became inestimably precious in my sight.’ But in 1934 André with his family (they now had 4 children) felt called to the town of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in south-central France. And it was here something else very wonderful was to happen.

Sheltering the Jews

In Le Chambon he met up again with Édouard Theis and they founded a college with the initial purpose of preparing local country youngsters for university. However, with the rise of Hitler there began a flow of Jewish refugees and the college took them in.

WWII began and, when France fell to the Nazis, initially the South was left in the hands of the collaborationist French Vichy Government. They conspired with the Nazis to round up the Jews and send them to death camps. But André Trocmé encouraged his Protestant Huguenot congregation in Le Chambon to shelter ‘the people of the Bible.’ These brave people began to do just that and a network of ‘safe-houses’ spread to surrounding farms and villages. And as they prayed and sought to obey God rather than men, a kind of miracle happened. The Vichy Police would come but the villagers somehow were always alerted and they never found any Jews – who went into the woods and mountainous countryside. After the war, one of the villagers recalled: ‘As soon as the soldiers left, we would go into the forest and sing a song. When they heard that song, the Jews

knew it was safe to come home.’ The situation became much more difficult when the Germans took over Vichy France. But Trocmé continued to preach to the people to stand firm and trust God. He preached particularly from Deuteronomy 19.1-10, which speaks about the ‘Cities of Refuge’ ordained by God in Israel ‘lest innocent blood be shed.’

‘Righteous Among the Nations’

And although Trocmé and Theis and another man were arrested in 1943, nevertheless they resisted becoming collaborators and somehow were set free. Not only did they shelter Jewish folk but also helped them to escape across the border into Switzerland. They helped between 2,000 and 3,000 Jews to get away.

And so later André and his wife were designated ‘Righteous Among the Nations’ by the Jewish community.

Lesson

Have faith in God and do what is right, whatever the opposition.

3: Richard Wurmbrand (1909 – 2001)

Hebrews 13.3

Richard Wurmbrand was a fiery Romanian pastor, who suffered for Christ under Communism and exposed to the Western world the true plight of Christians under Marxist regimes.

Richard, the youngest of four boys, was born into a Jewish family in Bucharest. He was tall and intellectually gifted. His father died when he was 9 and later Richard went to study Marxism in Moscow, where he became involved with the secret police.

But in 1936 he married Sabina Oster. They were both converted to Christ in 1938 through the witness of a German Christian carpenter who gave them a Bible and encouraged them to read one of the Gospels. They joined the Anglican Church's mission to Jewish people and later Richard was ordained as a Lutheran pastor.

Underground Church

Romania was on the side of the Nazis during WWII, providing equipment, oil and troops. Being Jewish, many of Richard and Sabina's relatives died in the Holocaust. In 1945, after the war, when the Russians took over the country, imposing Communist rule, the government attempted to take control of the churches in the name of atheism. In response, Pastor Wurmbrand denounced the government and began working to set up an underground church which embraced Christians across the denominations. The underground church tried to remain faithful to the gospel, care for believers and even reach out secretly to Russian soldiers.

For such subversive activity, Wurmbrand was arrested on 29th February, 1948 while on his way to a church service. He was taken with other Christians and put into solitary confinement in cells 30 feet below ground. 'It was like dying' he said later. 'There was no sound – even the guards wore soft shoes. The only human contact was with brutal interrogators. The only thing we had to look at was the ceiling'. But though he forgot much of the Bible, he could remember parts of 1 John, and God drew near to sustain – despite the deprivation, brainwashing techniques and violence suffered. After 3 years of solitary confinement, he was transferred to a group cell before being released in 1956.

He immediately recommenced his work with the underground church which led to his re-arrest and a sentence of 25 years imprisonment. However, after 5 years of this second sentence, a Norwegian organization called Christian Alliance negotiated his release, for a 'ransom' of \$10,000 paid to the Romanian government. Immediately they got Wurmbrand and his wife Sabina out of the country – to Norway, England and then to the USA.

Telling the world

In 1966, he was called to give testimony to a United States Senate subcommittee in Washington. At one point he stripped to the waist to reveal 18 deep torture scars. 'If I showed you my body, I wonder if you could bear to look at it,' he told journalists.

These were years in the midst of the 'Cold War' and he launched fierce attacks on the Soviet and Chinese regimes and those he felt were soft on Communism, like the World Council of Churches. A prevalent myth was that the lot of Christians had improved under Communism, but Wurmbrand's testimony proved otherwise. He saw Communism as a crime against humanity.

In the West, he soon set up an organization which sought to help the suffering church behind the Iron Curtain. Bibles were smuggled in and financial support offered to the families of those imprisoned or killed for their faith.

In 1967, with just an old typewriter and a list of names and addresses, Wurmbrand sent out the first newsletter titled 'The Voice of the Martyrs'. It was dedicated to sharing the testimonies of those suffering for Christ and challenged the churches in the West to help. He wrote: 'The message I bring from the underground church is, 'Don't abandon us.' 'Don't forget us.' 'Don't write us off.' 'Give us the tools we need! We will pay the price for using them''.

Tortured for Christ

Published in 1967, his most well-known book, *Tortured for Christ* had an enormous impact. He told the story of his sufferings under Communism, yet maintained a hope and compassion even for those who tortured him. He did this he said by, 'looking at men...not as they are, but as they will be...I could see in our persecutors a future apostle Paul... and the jailor in Philippi who became a convert'.

The historian of the persecution of the church, Michael Bourdeaux, has written: 'Accepting a ransom of \$10,000 was one of the worst financial temptations to which a communist regime ever succumbed. A thousand times the price could not have compensated for explosion which Wurmbrand's arrival in the West ignited.'

Wurmbrand's work was a factor in the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe and the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime in Romania in December 1989. In the 1990s Richard and Sabina appeared on Romanian TV and were able to visit the prison where they had been kept in captivity. There they found a collection of Wurmbrand's books.

Sabina died in 2000 and Richard in 2001 in California.

Lesson

We must be prepared to suffer for our faith, Mark 8.34.

4: Festo Kivengere (1919 – 1988)

Romans 12.21

Festo Kivengere was a Ugandan Christian who stood up to the brutal regime of Idi Amin and spoke out for justice.

He was born in a rural area of Uganda into a semi-nomadic pagan tribe and spent the early part of his life as a herder of cattle. His family were part of the 'nobility' of his people. Books for children about Jesus had come into his hands and he would read these during the long days out with the animals finding pasture. About the age of 10, he joined a mission school. He learned well and from there he went on to higher education. Later he returned to his village as a teacher.

Military Coup

Festo was truly converted to Christ during a revival meeting and was set to serve the Lord. He became a pastor and eventually took up the position as the Anglican bishop of Kigeze District. Following study in Britain and also a trip to Australia, he was in contact with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Organization and was asked to take on translating Billy Graham's sermons into Swahili. Graham developed such confidence in Festo that he was told, 'Don't bother to translate literally. You know what I mean, get that across.' The two men became lifelong friends and Festo eventually formed his own organization – the African Evangelistic Enterprise.

But Uganda fell into political turmoil. In 1971, General Idi Amin overthrew President Milton Obote in a military coup and declared himself President of Uganda. In 1972, he announced the expulsion of all Asians, mostly Indian and Pakistani shopkeepers, from Uganda. Many fled to the UK. It was part of an 8-year reign of terror in which the economy was ruined through excessive military expenditure and, more seriously, an estimated 300,000 people were put to death.

Christians massacred

In particular there were mass executions of people from the Acholi and Lango tribes who were predominantly Christians and had been loyal to the previous president. Christians were killed for various supposed offences. Allied to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Amin even had one preacher shot

for reading a Psalm over the radio which mentioned Israel.

Meanwhile Kivengere had done his best to remonstrate with the Ugandan authorities and help Christians. Here he describes how he was allowed to be present when three men from his diocese were executed in 1973:

‘10th February began as a sad day for us in Kabale. People were commanded to come to the stadium and witness the execution by a firing squad of three young men of our area. Death permeated the atmosphere of the stadium. A silent crowd of about 3,000 was there. I had permission from the authorities to speak to the men before they died, and two of my fellow ministers were with me.

Going to be with Jesus

‘They brought the men in a truck. They were handcuffed and their feet were chained. The firing squad stood to attention. As we walked into the centre of the stadium, I was wondering what to say to these men...we approached them from behind, and as they turned around to look at us what a sight! Their faces were aglow with an unmistakable glow and radiance. Before we could say anything one of them burst out: “Bishop, thank you for coming...The day I was arrested, in my prison cell, I asked the Lord Jesus to come into my heart. He came in and forgave all my sins! Heaven is now open!... Please tell my wife and children that I am going to be with Jesus”. The second man told us a similar story...Then the youngest said: “I once knew the Lord, but I went away from him and got into political confusion. After I was arrested, I came back to the Lord. He has forgiven me and filled me with peace. Please tell my parents and warn my younger brothers never to go away from the Lord Jesus.”

‘I felt I needed to talk to the soldiers not the condemned. So, I translated what the men had said into a language the soldiers understood. Those in the stadium could see the radiance on the faces of the condemned...The soldiers were so dumbfounded at the faces and the words of the men they were about to execute that they even forgot to put the hoods over their faces. The three faced the firing squad standing close together. They looked toward the people and began to wave, handcuffs and all. The people waved back. Then shots were fired, and the three were with Jesus.

‘We stood in front of them, our hearts throbbing with joy, mingled with tears. It was a day never to be forgotten. Though dead, the men spoke loudly to all of Kigeze district and beyond, so that there was an upsurge of life in Christ, which

challenges death and defeats it.²

Kenyan refuge

After this Amin had all the bishops arrested including Kivengere. He later released all of them except Archbishop Janani Luwum who was executed.

Kivengere had to flee to neighbouring Kenya to escape Amin. But forgiveness, reconciliation and proclamation became the three cornerstones of Kivengere's ministry. He even wrote a book with the title *I love Idi Amin*. He continued to preach the gospel across Africa and around the world. He died in Nairobi in 1988.

In 1979, Amin's reign of terror came to an end. Ugandan exiles, with the help of the Tanzanian army, took control of the capital, Kampala. Amin got away. He was never brought to justice for his crimes but lived out the remainder of his life in Saudi Arabia where he died in 2003.

Lesson

The Lord Jesus told us to love our enemies and pray for them, Matthew 5.44.

² *The Case for Christianity*, by Colin Chapman, Lion Publishing 1981, pages 64-65

5: Helen Roseveare (1925 – 2016)

Philippians 1.29

‘I knew within 3 hours of being saved that there was nothing else I wanted to do except share Jesus with other people. For me that meant I should become a missionary.’ That was Helen Roseveare’s experience.

Helen was born in Hertfordshire, her father a mathematics teacher at Haileybury College. But while studying medicine at Cambridge, she was invited to a Christian Union house-party in the winter of 1945 and there she was converted and called to serve Christ. In February 1953, she left for what was then the Belgium Congo. It was in her first year there, working at a Christian medical centre, that she tasted God’s work in revival. This is the story in her own words.

God’s hurricane

‘At this time, our field leader’s wife, Jessie Scholes, and some lovely African women were praying. They had become concerned about the spiritual state of things. By this time they were taking a day a week for fasting and prayer, asking God that he would graciously visit his church in the Congo. Missionaries had been there since 1915. There had previously been a lively church, but like a lot of second-generation Christians, we had become cold, formal and respectable.

‘The first Friday in July 1953, we gathered in the Bible School hall at 7pm for the fellowship meeting. There were about 100 people. Actually most of the students weren’t there. Many were out preaching. The only students were an African girl called Elizabeth and myself. We were in charge of medical service. We were tired after a hard week. The hall had a cement floor, wooden benches, and there were no windows, just gaps with shutters.

‘There were pastors and people from the mission compound. Jack Scholes stood and had begun to read the word. I was sitting with two white folk in the front row and I heard an approaching hurricane storm. The men moved around the room to remove the shutters, otherwise they might have been blown in and hurt somebody. I was just sitting, looking out of the window expecting to see scudding dark clouds and the trees bent over in the wind. But that was not what I saw. It was quite still. And yet we all heard the approaching hurricane. Suddenly we were hit. The lamps hanging from the ceiling were swinging with the shaking of the building. Amid the noise, there was obviously something not normal. We had been struck by a power. Throughout the whole congregation there were

people shaking. I can't explain this. There was an overwhelming sense of awe, that God was present. There was a sense of fear that something was happening that we did not understand.

Discernment and conviction

'Jack Scholes stood and watched. We white people looked at each other. Was it the devil? But Jack had a wonderful gift of discernment. He knew this is what the women had been praying for. He came to us pale skins and said: "Don't move, this is of God. Just pray." Then he moved to the pastor, and to the evangelists, saying the same thing: "Just pray. This is of God."

'It began at 7pm on Friday night. If I tell you that many of us were still there at 9pm on Sunday, you will understand God was doing a marvellous thing. People came and went, looking after children and so on, but the meeting just went on. Over us all, there was this awful conviction of sin. We were just smitten. No one asked, "What do I have to do?" The Holy Spirit was dealing with us. There was confession of sin; not just big sins. Yes, there were some who confessed to adultery, stealing and the like. But God was working. People were confessing to sins of grumbling and criticism. Suddenly sin seemed horribly sinful. We did not water it down or think of it any more as 'weakness'. It was sin.

The blood of Jesus

'There was crying and pleading for mercy. No one was particularly conscious of anyone else. The pastor and Jack and Jessie Scholes moved around, kneeling down with people and pointing them to the cross. The same blood that brought us salvation was there to make us whole and make us like Jesus. They rebuked any excesses. Their discernment was amazing. As one and another came through to relief and liberty, there was an enormous sense of rejoicing. While some were still on their knees, others were standing and singing.

Lasting joy

'In the succeeding weeks after this amazing weekend the dominant theme in the church was repentance. But it was between the individual and God. The pastors steered people away from too much of a public show. It was very noisy, but it was Spirit-controlled.

'Then there was a tremendous note of joy. There was a team of workmen at that

time who were reroofing two of our buildings. It was the rainy season. Before the revival they were spinning out the work. At the first drop of rain, they downed tools and went home. But after the Lord blessed us, the change was remarkable. They were there from early morning working. They got their wives to bring them lunch so they could work on. There was a whole different spirit. And it was finished within a week. There was joy at work.

‘And now, unlike before, we were running to prayer meetings to get in before it started. And people were hungry for the word, sitting in the front row, not wanting the speakers to stop.’

Abducted by rebels

This experience of God became a much-needed source of strength in subsequent years. In 1960, the Congo gained independence. But this led to civil war in 1964. Ten missionaries, Helen among them, were seized by rebels and endured 5 months imprisonment and ill-treatment including beatings and rape. Eventually they were rescued.

She came to see this as part of the privilege of sharing in the sufferings of Christ, Philippians 1.29. In her book *Give Me This Mountain* she explained her view that the Christian life consists of times of joy and times of shadow, and the times of shadow should not lead to despair but are to be seen as going through the valley on the journey to the next mountain.

After 20 years in the Congo, she returned to the UK in 1973 for health reasons and settled in Northern Ireland. Up until her last few years, she travelled the world as a speaker inspiring Christians and encouraging the work of mission.

Lesson

The Christian life has both dark valleys and mountain tops of joy.

6: J. I. Packer (1926 – 2020)

2 Peter 1.20, 21

‘Knowing about God is crucially important. As it would be cruel to an Amazonian tribesman to fly him to London, put him down without explanation in Trafalgar Square and leave him, as one who knew nothing of English or England, to fend for himself, so we are cruel to ourselves if we try to live in this world without knowing about the God whose world it is...Disregard the study of God, and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfold.’

This quote from his most well-known book *Knowing God*, conveys something of the enthusiasm for the Christian faith and clarity of thought which made Jim Packer a very influential ‘statesman’ for Biblical Christianity. Packer was an Anglican theologian at the centre of the twentieth century rediscovery of the theological legacy of the Puritans, which so re-invigorated many churches and pastorally was so helpful to many people.

Working class boy

He was born into a working-class family in Gloucester. But at the age of seven he suffered a severe head injury. Being chased from the school playground into the street, he was hit by a passing bread van. His skull was fractured. It was near fatal. The accident left him with a permanent dent in his forehead and may have contributed to him becoming a reserved boy whose greatest love was reading.

For his eleventh birthday, young Jim received a typewriter instead of the bicycle he was expecting – it became his prized possession! Also, at the age of 13, he fell in love with Dixieland jazz and learned the clarinet.

Oxford and conversion

From the Crypt School in Gloucester in 1944, he went up to Oxford to read classics at Corpus Christi College having earned a scholarship. He came in contact with OICCU (the Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union). It was at an OICCU service held at St. Aldate’s that he came to Christ.

OICCU had received a donation of old Christian books and Packer became a *de facto* librarian. It was while he was sorting through and categorizing these books that he first came across the works of the Puritan theologian, John Owen. While truly a Christian, Packer had found much of the teaching he had received since his conversion quite superficial. But in Owen and other Puritans, he found deep Biblical thought and he began to feel himself drawn to Christian ministry.

He received his BA in 1948, then spent a couple of years as a lecturer in Latin and Greek at Oak Hill College, in north London, which trained men for ministry. In 1949, he returned to Oxford to study theology at Wycliffe Hall. Graduating in theology in 1950, he went on to doctoral studies focused on the work of the Puritan pastor, Richard Baxter.

Along with Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, he established the Westminster Conference with its papers on the Puritans. He served for two years as a curate at St John's Harborne, on the outskirts of Birmingham and in 1954 married a nurse, 'Kit' Mullett, and they adopted three children.

The word of God

While serving as a lecturer at Tyndale Hall in Bristol, his first book *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* was published, defending an evangelical view of the inspiration and authority of the Bible. It was a forceful rebuff to theological liberalism and brought Packer to prominence.

At Latimer House, Oxford, between 1961 and 1970, he became warden before returning to Tyndale Hall as principal. In 1973, he published *Knowing God*, an extended popular study of the character of God which became a best seller.

Packer had been much involved with the National Evangelical Anglican Congress in 1967 at Keele University with its hope of evangelicalism making great strides within the Church of England. But by 1979 little or no progress had been made, and finding his ministry more warmly received in North America, he moved to Canada to become Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Regent College in Vancouver. From here he played a central role in the leadership of the US journal *Christianity Today*.

Charismatics and Catholics

His concern to defend the Bible against its detractors continued with the publication of *God has Spoken* in 1979, and his book *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (1984) guided a generation helpfully to see both the positives and the negatives of the charismatic movement.

Aware of the growing, aggressive secularism of the Western world, Packer became concerned to bring a greater unity between Biblical Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church. This issued in his collaboration during the 1990s in *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* and *The Gift of Salvation*. However, this was

a mistake. It did nothing to truly move Catholicism from its commitment to the teachings of the Council of Trent. A concern for the unity of the Church is understandable. But as the wise commentator Matthew Henry writes with regard to 1 Timothy 3.15, ‘When the church ceases to be the pillar and ground of the truth, we may and ought to forsake her; for our regard for truth should be greater than our regard for the church.’

Theology and the sexual revolution

With the turn of the Millennium, Packer was deeply concerned about the way the sexual revolution was being promoted and accepted by many parts of the church. Here are some of his thoughts:

‘People are urging the church to go all the way with the secular community and accept the rightness of gay ethics. That needs to be opposed theologically with a thoroughness that we haven’t yet seen. We have seen books of special pleading for the gay way trying to show that the Bible doesn’t in fact rule it out – as I think it most certainly does. But we haven’t seen equally weighty vindications of classic Biblical sexual ethics. What needs to be shouted from the roof-tops is that this is not a discretionary issue. This is a matter of doctrine on which we are not free to do anything other than obey the truth.

‘The truth starts with the doctrines of creation and sin. Are you going to say that homosexual inclinations were made by God from creation, or that they are one of the many forms of disorder that sin brought into the human system? When you get to the incarnation, are you going to allow for the possibility that Jesus’ sexual instincts may have been homosexual or bisexual on the grounds that homosexual instincts are just as good as heterosexual instincts? What are you going to say about the new birth whereby the Holy Spirit begins to renew us in the image of Jesus? And about the process of sanctification whereby a Christ-like moral character is being built in us? Does regeneration impart openness to homosexuality? Does sanctification include cultivating a gay side to one’s being? All these doctrines, creation, sin, Christology, regeneration and sanctification, are involved, and if the gay thesis is accepted then all of them have to be changed.’³

Jim Packer went to be with the Lord at the age of 93 in July 2020.

Lesson: The Bible must guide us amidst contemporary challenges of all kinds.

³ Interview given to *Evangelicals Now*, published October 2000

7: Brother Andrew (1928 – ...)

Philippians 2.29-30

Andrew van der Bijl (known as ‘Brother Andrew’) was born in Saint Pancras, in the Netherlands. He became widely known among the Christian community for his exploits as ‘God’s Smuggler’.⁴

Difficult start

Andrew was the third of six children born to a deaf father and a semi-invalid mother. They lived in the smallest house in the village and when Andrew was 11 his oldest brother, ‘Bas’, died. This was just before the beginning of WWII.

Holland was invaded and taken over by the Nazis. But Andrew always had an adventurous streak and this showed itself by him playing pranks on the occupying troops. As a rather ‘wild child’, after the war, he joined the Dutch commandos and found friendship among a group whose motto was ‘get smart – lose your mind’.

At the age of 20, he was shot in the ankle in combat and this proved the end of his military career. In hospital among Franciscan nuns, confined to bed, conviction of sin drove him to start reading the Bible. He returned to his home village as a cripple. However, with his plans for his life shattered, he developed a thirst for the things of God. Reading the Bible and attending preaching meetings, at last he surrendered, praying, ‘Lord, if You will show me the way, I will follow You. Amen.’

Call to mission

At an evangelistic meeting, Andrew felt God’s call to be a missionary of some kind. He said ‘Yes’ to God, but it was a ‘Yes...but’. He had reservations. He was uneducated. He was lame.

He began working in Ringers’ chocolate factory amidst a very worldly and rough work force. However, through the witness of himself, another Christian and his future wife Corrie, the factory began to change. People were converted. Prayer groups began.

⁴ See *God’s Smuggler*, by Brother Andrew with John and Elizabeth Sherrill, Hodder & Stoughton, 1967

Giving up smoking, Andrew began to buy Christian books and to study them. He spent one Sunday afternoon seriously seeking God about his future. In the end it led to Andrew relinquishing all his reservations and telling God he was prepared to follow Him in mission whatever the obstacles. At this point something remarkable happened. His leg was healed.

He left for Scotland in 1952 and began to train at a Bible College in Glasgow run by WEC (Worldwide Evangelization Crusade). Here he saw God provide for him in remarkable ways and this increased his faith.

Behind the Iron Curtain

He left the college in 1955 and felt guided by God to take a journey to Warsaw in Poland sponsored by communists for people in the West. In those days the USSR and its anti-Christian Communist regime dominated Eastern Europe. He met Christians and visited churches. When he returned to Holland, the Communist Party invited him to join another trip, this time to Czechoslovakia. But while there he managed to break away from the official group. He visited churches for himself and began to understand how much the Christians were suffering under Communism. Prohibited from taking such trips again, nevertheless, on his return Andrew knew that he should make the countries behind the 'Iron Curtain' his mission field.

God provided a brand-new Volkswagen 'Beetle' car and, using this, he began to smuggle Bibles across the border check-points into Communist countries. Working on his own to begin with, after each trip he would report back to the churches in Holland and share stories of God's astonishing provision and guidance.

Andrew married Corrie, who had met in the chocolate factory, in June 1958 depending on God to supply their needs, as he continued his missionary work of smuggling Bibles into closed countries. He looked for others to help with the work and the group grew.

Elsewhere

In the 1960s, the doors into Communist Eastern Europe began to open up. But Andrew realized that there were many Christians elsewhere who lived under oppressive regimes. He began to try to serve and help the churches in the Middle East and Islamic countries.

An organization had grown up around Brother Andrew named 'Open Doors' and it now reaches across the world seeking to bring help to persecuted Christians and their families.

Perhaps one of the greatest ventures of the group was 'Project Pearl'. In China, despite persecution and the great purge of Chairman Mao's 'Cultural Revolution' of the 1960s, the church had begun to grow. In 1981, under the auspices of Open Doors, a million Bibles were delivered to a beach in China. Little boats organized by Christians met a large ship and took off boxes of Bibles. A few hours later, soldiers arrived at the beach and chased the Christians away – but they had already got many of the boxes away.

Some Bibles remained in crates floating in the sea. Through the hands of fishermen many of these were retrieved and found their way into the hands of Christians. Writing 40 years after the event, one Chinese Christian said of Project Pearl: 'It catalysed the great revival in China... Many churches rose up, thousands and thousands of people accepted Jesus and many leaders were born because they finally had their own Bibles.'⁵

Lesson: God can use us when we surrender all to him without reservation.

⁵ See *Open Doors Prayer Diary*, July / August 2021