

The Presbyterian Banner

September 2019



Replica of the *Mayflower* which took the Pilgrims from Plymouth, England to America in 1620

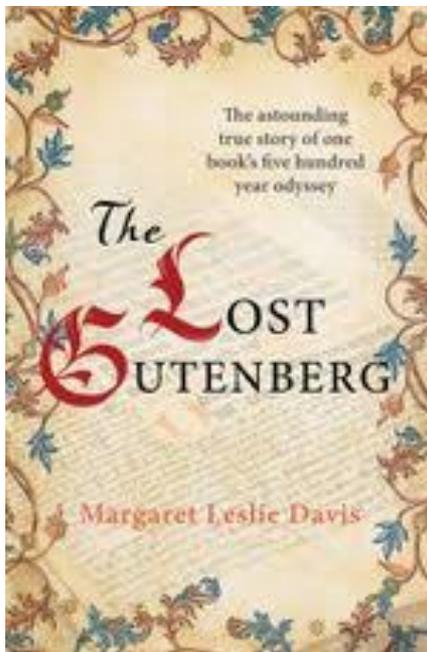
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FROM THE EDITOR

The book I was reading.....

THE LOST GUTENBERG by Margaret Leslie Davis (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2019) 297pp, pbk. RRP \$29.99



About the year 1455, Johannes Gutenberg (c. 1400-1468), the inventor of moveable type in Europe, with his associate, Johann Fust (c. 1400-1466) printed about 150 Bibles in Mainz, Germany. The Latin text on 1200 pages

was beautifully printed in a black with an ink whose composition was remarkable and unique with decorations in colour added later. Less than fifty of these books survive in substantial form. This book is the story of Number 45, and a surprisingly interesting story it is. The cover blurb reads: 'In this brilliantly researched narrative, Margaret Leslie Davis recounts five centuries in the life of one copy, from its creation by Johannes Gutenberg, through the hands of monks, an earl, the heir to the Worcestershire Sauce empire and a nuclear physicist, to its ultimate resting place, a steel vault in Tokyo.'

Gutenberg was bankrupt within a few months, and disappears from the historical record, but he pioneered the first efficient means of printing by moveable type and launched a revolution. By 1500 some ten million books had been printed and impacted every area of life, not least the reform of the church. Luther in the 1520s was responsible for the larger body of printed matter in Germany, many of his writings being pirated by printers other than those engaged by Luther himself. Exploration of ideas, furtherance of scholarship, a popular literature were all furthered, and historic memory created.

This absorbing book was a gift for Father's Day, and I read most of it in one sitting. If you'd like to see a Gutenberg Bible there are none in Australia but Number 45 has been digitised and each page can be viewed on line in full colour at

< <http://dcollections.lib.keio.ac.jp/en/gutenberg>>

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The Song of the Slandered Saint

Psalm 7

George Ball, PCEA Taree

THIS psalm is a plea for justice. The key verses are 6, 8, 9, 11 and 17. The conviction underlying this psalm is that God is a righteous judge (11). The precise background is unknown. But there may be a clue in the title: **‘A Shiggaion of David which he sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite.’** We don’t know what a *‘shiggaion’* is. It only occurs here and in Habakkuk 3:1. It may be a musical term. It may mean a poem or lamentation to be read or sung with intense feeling. We know nothing about Cush except that he was a Benjamite. We know that Saul and Shemei (2 Sam. 16:5) and Sheba (20:1) were all Benjamites. We know there was no love lost between David and the tribe of Benjamin. It seems reasonable therefore to assume that this psalm belongs to the period of Saul’s persecution of David - when David was becoming increasingly popular, and Saul was becoming increasingly angry, jealous and dangerous (cf. 1 Sam. 21-26).

David uses several vivid metaphors and images which we shall explore.

1. An Attacking Lion (1-2).

David describes his situation in these opening verses. He felt he was facing – metaphorically speaking - a lion. His life was threatened. What would you do if you faced a lion? A stray dog is enough to cause us panic. But a lion! His enemies were clearly very strong and dangerous. There was none to deliver him. Yet amazingly in the face of violent terrorists he personally affirmed his faith. He says, **‘O LORD my God, in you do I take refuge’**. The verb is in the perfect tense, expressing a fixed state of affairs. It would be something of a paraphrase to say, but it conveys the picture; ‘I have taken you as my refuge, I still trust in you as my refuge, and I shall continue to trust in you as my refuge’. He trusted the Lord at all times. No one else could help him. He states elsewhere, **‘If the Lord had not been on our side when people rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us up alive . . . Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made the heaven and the earth’** (Ps. 124: 1-3, 8).

2. A Courtroom (3-5).

David is in the dock. We don’t know the precise charges. But it appears he was the victim of a smear campaign. Spurgeon called this psalm, ‘the song of the slandered saint’.

He was blamed for having **‘guilt (or wrong) on his hands’** (3b). **‘Guilt’** could be rendered **‘deviant’**. We might say that David was accused of crooked, crafty and deviant behaviour. In addition, he was accused of being a Judas, of **‘repaying a friend with evil’** (4a).

How does the defendant plead? ‘Not Guilty’! Like Job he can protest his innocence. Indeed, the truth of the matter is, he actually repaid good for evil. On at least two occasions he spared Saul’s life – once when he was in the cave, and once when he was sleeping in the camp (1 Sam. 24: 17 and 1 Sam. 26). So confident was he of his innocence that he was willing to lose his life and reputation if the charges could be proven (4-5).

3. A Sleeping Warrior (6-7).

What is the Lord like? He’s pictured as a sleeping warrior. David calls upon Him to, **‘Arise!’ ‘Lift Yourself!’ ‘Wake Up!’** Of course, we know that the Lord neither slumbers nor sleeps. But it’s a striking way to urge the Lord to act. He knows that all the Lord has to do is to awake, arise and demonstrate His righteous anger and the unrighteous rage of His enemies will be defeated. David was buoyed by the fact that the Lord has appointed a judgement (6).

The Bible consistently declares there will be, **‘the day of judgement’** and, **‘the day of wrath’**. Paul declares that God, **‘has fixed a day when He will judge the world in righteousness by the man He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Jesus from the dead’** (Acts 17: 31). And, **‘God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ’** (Rom. 2: 16).

The Day of Judgement brought hope to David. It should also bring hope and comfort to the believer. Can you imagine a world where there is no final justice? Where liars have the last word? Where murderers and rapists and terrorists are never charged? Where the thief is never caught and punished. When police officers and judges are bribed? When governments are utterly corrupt? That would be a nightmare. But, God has appointed a judgement. For a good summary of the Bible’s teaching on the Day of Judgment see, The Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 33.

4. An X-Ray (8-10).

He requests, **‘Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me’**. Statements like this (as Alex Motyer reminds us) should always be kept in context. This is not a claim to sinless perfection, but simply a claim that he was

innocent of the things the Benjamites accused him of. The Lord is described as the Righteous God who tests our minds and hearts (9). He's like a radiographer. He sees and knows our X-ray results. He knows us thoroughly. He knows our hearts and thoughts, our words and motives, our past, our present and our future. He knows our every nook and cranny. He knows us when we are just doodling. He knows us when we sit in church. We may look respectable and pious, but He knows that we're not the saints that others think we are. It's as if David already knew of Hebrews 4: 13, **'And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account'**. Because no other judge has such infinite insight, His judgements are just and righteous.

5. An Angry Archer (11-13).

What is God like? **'God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day. If a man does not repent, God will whet His sword; He has bent and readied His bow: He has prepared for him His deadly weapons, making His arrows fiery shafts'**. There are many who find these verses offensive. What is God doing with sword and bow and pointed arrow? He's not like that! But if we remove this image of God, we are attempting to redefine God – seeking to make God in our own image. Further, as Dale Ralph Davis writes, 'if you say that God is not like that, you take away any hope His wronged and suffering people have'.

Paul also speaks about the wrath of God in Romans 1. He tells us that God reveals Himself to men and women every day through the things He has made and through conscience, but they will not listen. **'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their own unrighteousness suppress the truth . . . For although they knew God they did not honour Him as God or give thanks to Him . . . Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves'** (Romans 1: 18-24).

The picture is clear: God is like an angry archer with His bow poised ready to shoot His flaming arrows. Is there any way to avoid the ambush? Yes. If a person repents He will not sharpen His arrow. Repentance toward God therefore becomes an urgent matter. It's a matter of life or death. Spurgeon stated the choice boldly: **'Turn or burn is the sinner's only alternative'**.

6. A Pregnant Man! (14).

What are the wicked like? **'Behold the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies.'** Have you ever seen a pregnant

man? Yes, you have. Lots of times! He's pregnant with evil. He conceived evil and trouble. It began with just a little thing - a thought – a desire. It's hidden and secret. No one else knows about it. It's nurtured and developed in the heart. In time it produces multiple births of ugly children called, 'Lies' and 'Death'! Evil spawns. James also describes the growth cycle of sin. **'Desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death'** (1:15).

7. A Hunter's Trap (15-16).

What are the wicked like? Like a man who lays a trap for the righteous, but who falls into it himself. He's like a terrorist planning to plant a bomb to destroy others – but it explodes in his face – blowing him to smithereens. That's what wickedness is like. It has a built-in boomerang factor. It is self-defeating. It carries within it the seeds of its own self-destruction. It can therefore never succeed. The book of Esther contains a classic example: Haman was hanged 'on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai' (Esther 7: 10).

8. A Promise (17).

David concludes on the same note as Habakkuk (the other *shiggaion*) with the promise of thanks and praise to God. This psalm (like Habakkuk) could also be entitled, 'from fear to faith'. Though his circumstances haven't changed - the lion is still roaring and the accusations are still flying thick and fast – but he has been given a new perspective on the problem by taking it to the Lord in prayer. As a result, he promises, **'I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most-High'**. All of life (yes all!) is to be included within the brackets of praise to the Lord Most High. David's happiness was not in his circumstances. If our happiness depends on our circumstances, then our lives will be like a roller-coaster - happy one moment and sad the next – as our circumstances change. But if our happiness is in the Lord we will always be happy, because He never changes.

Not only did Jesus sing this psalm – He is in it. He too was surrounded by strong lions. He was the victim of a smear campaign. He was falsely accused. He was accused of being a sinner, 'He eats and drinks with sinners'. He was accused of being in league with Satan, 'He casts out demons by Beelzebub'. He was accused of blasphemy, 'Who can forgive sins but God alone'. When He was arrested and tried the Jewish leaders brought many false witnesses against Him (Matt. 26: 59-61).

He is the only man who could ever pray with confidence and a clear conscience, **'Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness'** (8). Because, **'He committed no sin nor was deceit found in His mouth'** (1 Peter 2:22). It is only by faith in Christ that we can claim innocence.

Paul writes, **‘He (i.e. God) is just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus’** (Rom. 3: 26).

Jesus told His followers, **‘Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account’** (Matt. 5: 11). As Christians we shouldn’t be surprised when this happens. How should we respond? Like Jesus, when he was reviled, did not revile in return; when he suffered He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously’ (1 Peter 2: 23). We are not to hate our enemies but to love them and pray for their conversion. We should feel sorrow for them because we know that if they don’t repent they will incur the eternal punishment that sin deserves.

No matter how dire our circumstances may be, God is always worthy of our praise and thanks. He is the righteous Judge. #

CHINA NEWS

Chinese Christians imprisoned for their faith are memorising Scripture passages smuggled to them on small pieces of paper because prison guards ‘can’t take what’s hidden in your heart,’ as one former prisoner revealed. In a recent sermon, Wayne Cordeiro, pastor of New Hope Christian Fellowship in Honolulu, shared an experience he had on a trip to China, where the church went to train leaders. The pastor shared how 22 Christians from the Hunan Province took a 13-hour train ride to attend the leadership training. Of the 22 Christians present, 18 had been imprisoned for their faith, the pastor revealed. **After beginning his lesson, the pastor realized he only had 15 Bibles to pass around,** so seven people went without. ‘I said, ‘Turn to 2 Peter 1, we are going to read it.’ Just then one lady handed hers to the person next to her, and I thought “hmm interesting”,’ he recalled. ‘As the Christians began reading, he quickly realized why she had given her Bible away: she had memorized the whole book. ‘When it was done, I went over to her at a break and said, “You recited the whole chapter”. She replied, “In prison, you have much time on your hands”.’

‘Don’t they confiscate the Bible?’ he asked. She said that while any Christian material is indeed confiscated, people smuggle in Scripture written on paper and hide it from the prison guards. ‘That’s why we memorize it as fast as we can because even though they can take the paper away, they can’t take what’s hidden in your heart.’ Following the three-day training session, one Chinese Christian man asked Cordeiro, ‘Could you pray that one day we could just be like you?’

Cordeiro looked at him and said, ‘I will not do that.’ You guys travel by train 13 hours to get here. In my country, if you have to drive more than an hour, people won’t come. You sat listening to me for three days. In my country, if people have to sit for more than 40 minutes they leave. You sat here on a hard wooden floor; in my country if it’s not padded pews and air conditioning, people will not come back. In my country, we have an average of two Bibles per family. We don’t read any of them. You hardly have any Bibles and you memorize them from pieces of paper. I will not pray that you become like us, but I will pray that we become like you,’ Cordeiro concluded.

China has seen explosive growth in the number of believers over the last several decades. Estimates have even suggested that China is on track to have the largest Christian population in the world by 2030. About 30 million Christians in China are estimated to attend state-sanctioned churches while many others attend illegal underground house churches that are not registered with the government. In efforts to stunt the rapid growth of Christianity, authorities throughout China have shut a number of prominent house churches and arrested Christians for worshipping without the approval of the government.

– *The Christian Post* via *Australian Prayer Network*

Tabernacle Studies \$5

The Holy Place



Rev. S. N. Ramsay

Read Exodus 37

Continuing the study of the Tabernacle, we have seen the Holy of Holies with the way outward; the Gate; the Brazen Altar of Sacrifice and the Laver of Brass for cleansing. Enter now into the Holy Place where the sons of Aaron 'accomplished daily the service of God'. This was the place of priestly privilege and service. In the typical significance of the Tabernacle, what does it portray?

It stands for Witness, Work & Worship

represented to us by

the Lampstands, the Table & the Altar of Incense.

But to go back a little: Note that the whole congregation had access to the outer court: to this place, the sons of Aaron only... 'The typical teaching here points to the place of vast and unique blessing pertaining to believers of the present age as 'priests unto God'...'

In most instances the Tabernacle is typical of Christ and the Christian way. Here we have a contrast, showing the grand distinction between law and grace, Old and New Testament. The Priestly title was hereditary – sons of Aaron. Under the gospel, the opposite. Natural man by birth is shut out from God; but by grace, through faith, made 'an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's possession that we may show forth the excellencies of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.' (1Pet 2:9.) **This is the doctrine of the Priesthood of believers.**

There is no distinction under the gospel between priesthood and the common man...only between believer and unbeliever, between converted and unregenerate. Thus 'the priesthood with the whole range of blessing and privilege attached...is the birthright of all who truly repent and unfeignedly believe His holy gospel.'

What again are the conditions?

Acceptance through the sacrifice of the brazen altar;
Cleansing in the laver's flood;
Anointing with the oil of the Holy Spirit.
Thus, we are fitted for the service.

Or in New Testament terms -

The blood of Jesus Christ God's Son, shed for us for the remission of sins.

Cleansing with water by the Word.

The enabling power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Thus, do we come to the place of privilege and service.

The Table of Showbread

Work

The Table of showbread...where were 12 loaves, a loaf for every tribe. Unleavened bread – moral purity...representing the putting away of sin. Bread – the fruit of labour – we plough, sow, reap, gather, grind, bake. The bread is the symbol of work completed. It is suggested, therefore that God works in us to the end of completed holy living. Or again – 'man's chief end is to glorify God'.... Thus – suggestive of 'consecrated toil' – we, working for God and God working for us.

The Lampstands

Witness

'He and He only is the giver of life and light unto His saints and He has communicated both to His saints'. A **central shaft** with six branches – we cannot witness effectively unless united to Christ. **Once united so as to be part of the whole we can never fall away.** Light may flicker and give a fitful gleam, but never be separated. If light poor - if witness ineffective, it will be lack of oil - failing to draw from source of supply; **or** a dirty (sooty) wick, - when we are sinful, or neglectful of spiritual exercises. 'Let your light so shine before men...glorify your Father in heaven.'

Note: the **lampstand**, not the light: ours not the glory, so we ought to learn the lesson of humility.

Incense

Prayers and Worship

Incense to be offered on the Altar. The Brazen altar represents Christ crucified. The Golden Altar represents Christ risen and ascended.

By His sacrifice we are redeemed, accepted and forgiven. By His intercession we are maintained in communion with God the Father.

Conclusion

Christ the Alpha and Omega, beginning and ending, First and Last.

Christ in work, witness, worship,

Christ here and Christ hereafter, now and evermore, Christ in life and Christ in death.

He bids you come to the altar of sacrifice and through the gates into life eternal.

WILL YOU COME?

JOHN BUNYAN

(1628-1688)

Anna F. Ward

The 31st August 2019 was the 331st anniversary of the death of John Bunyan, who wrote the most popular book in the English language after the Bible – *Pilgrim's Progress*. His life, his writings and his sufferings all bear the marks of God's Word. Charles Spurgeon said of Bunyan two centuries later "Prick him anywhere, and you will find his blood is Bible".

Bunyan was born in an English village near Bedford, and became a tinker like his father. A tinker was an itinerant tinsmith who travelled around mending pots and doing other repair jobs. From 1644-1647 he served in the Parliamentary army in the English Civil War. He had little education and later attributed to God all that he had accomplished. He was penniless when he married at 21 and his wife, who was also destitute brought two Puritan books to the marriage as a dowry. Bunyan wrote, "We came together as poor as poor might be, not so much having a dish or a spoon betwixt us both".

Bunyan loved music, but with no money to buy instruments he hammered a violin out of iron and carved a flute from one of the legs of a four-legged stool.

Although John Bunyan had little education, he could read, and he read those Puritan books and they changed his life. Gradually he gave up recreations like sports and dancing and began attending church and was drawn to Christian fellowship when he saw 3 or 4 poor women sitting at a door talking of the things of God. He was strongly tempted to give up Christ, but fought this off and came to a clear faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ.

At some point John Bunyan met John Gifford, minister of the Baptist church in Bedford, and later moved there and was received into membership of this church by immersion in the River Ouse in 1653. He then began to preach, but his ministry coincided with the Stuart Restoration of 1660 which meant that unauthorised preaching was illegal, so he was arrested later that same year for holding a Conventicle (an unauthorised meeting) and sent to jail.

Bunyan's first wife (name unrecorded) had died leaving him 4 children including a blind daughter called Mary. His second wife was called Elizabeth and there were 2 children from this marriage. Elizabeth

was a brave woman who faced the hostility of the powerful and fought for the release of her husband. His continued refusal to refrain from preaching meant he stayed in prison until 1672. He made shoelaces to support his family, preached to prisoners and wrote.

His first book was *Profitable Meditations*, followed by *Christian Behaviour*, then *The Holy City* and the autobiographical *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. While still in prison he wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* though it was not published until 1678, after his release. In the great missionary surge of the 18th and 19th centuries, after the translation of the Bible into local languages, the first book to be translated was often *Pilgrim's Progress*.

In 1672, while still in prison, Bunyan was called as minister to the Bedford congregation. He was freed soon after and licensed to preach under Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence. He had a heavy schedule of preaching, pastoral care and writing - over 60 books in all.



After riding on horseback in heavy rain to attend to a pastoral matter, he developed a fever and died on 31st August 1688. He is buried in Bunhill Fields, London. Other famous people buried in Bunhill Fields include John Owen, Daniel Defoe, John Gill, George Fox, Isaac Watts and members of Oliver Cromwell's family. If you like walking around cemeteries it is a great place to visit if you are ever in London.

Several of John Bunyan's books are still in print either individually or as a set (eg. The Banner of Truth). They are well worth reading. *Pilgrim's Progress* is available in a number of editions, including in modern language and for children. If you have a copy on your bookshelf and haven't read it for a while – get it down and re-read it. It will warm your heart!

Compiled from various sources including Christian History magazine, issue 11, published 1986.

‘The Pilgrim Fathers’

IN 1620 – on the 6 September (Old Style) or 16 September (New Style) to be precise – 102 people set out for America to find a new life there. Their transport was a vessel of some 180 tons built about 1590 and called the Mayflower. It was owned and captained by Christopher Jones of Harwich who had perhaps 25 crew with him. The voyage took 66 days in very cramped conditions.

The settlers were of varying backgrounds. A significant number (35) were Separatists, that is, people who regarded the Church of England as no true church and had withdrawn from it and advocated a congregational form of church government. Although they might be called Puritans they differed from most of this name who were more patient in seeking further reforms.

The leader of the Separatists from 1581 was Robert Browne ultimately reconciled with the Church of England and other leaders like Henry Barrow and John Greenwood came to the fore although they were both executed in 1593. For a time the Separatists found respite from persecution in the Netherlands. About 1609, the leader of one of the three Brownist churches in Amsterdam rejected infant baptism, baptised himself, and formed a Baptist movement. John Robinson, pastor of another Amsterdam congregation, later relocated to Leiden, encouraged migration to America and so 35 of his congregation sailed in the Mayflower with others. They had all undertaken to work for seven years for the company that funded the trip.

Australia was largely a convict settlement. America, at least in the popular narrative, was much more a religious settlement. But perceived beginnings have their influence. There was more to European settlement in Australia than a dumping ground for convicts, while there was a lasting American colony (Virginia) well before 1620, but popular views often gain precedence over the facts.

In the 18th century waves of migration, including Scots-Irish, boosted American population. Escape from the confines of rigid class structures of Europe, the opportunities available to make a new life, the rise of individualism, and the War of Independence contributed to creating a United States that in its attitudes often puzzles us, not least in its attitude to gun control. But Australia has its oddities too. We make criminals like Ned Kelly our heroes, and while we share the ‘can-do’ attitude of American pioneers, we also have the ‘she’ll be right mate’ attitude, a dislike of authority and a love of gambling.

Confronted by many challenges, the West needs to sort itself out. It’s not that the past was perfect – very far from it. Rather, drinking deeply from the Word of God and imploring the aid of God’s Spirit, we need to be living much more Christ-like lives that contribute to the forming of a better narrative of life’s meaning and significance in the community at large. - RSW

J.I. Packer: *Finishing our Course with Joy: Guidance from God for Engaging with Our Aging* (Crossway, 2014) 112pages, pbk

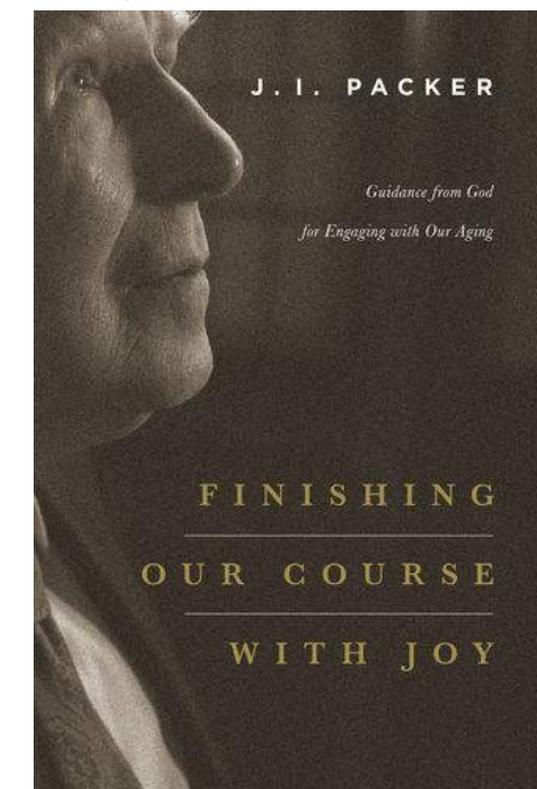
J.I. Packer on FINISHING OUR COURSE WITH JOY

Review article by Sally Davey

There’s nothing particularly surprising about suggesting there ought to be a great difference between the way the followers of Christ age and the way those who reject him grow old. The word “hope” has a great deal to do with it, of course. But sadly, even those of us who claim to love the Lord Jesus need reminding that our older selves should be every bit as

useful to him as our younger, more energetic versions were. The very fact that an older person working hard into her 80s and 90s amazes us all just proves my point.

One such



person, Queen Elizabeth II, born in 1926, still works almost full time. The recent Diamond Jubilee of her accession to the throne was what set British-Canadian writer J.I. Packer thinking about the whole business of aging. Packer, a mere three months younger than Her Majesty, had this to say:

“The Queen is a very remarkable person. Tirelessly, it seems, she goes on doing what she has been doing for six decades and more: waving in shy friendliness to the

crowds past whom she is transported, and greeting with a smile one and another, children particularly, whom she meets in her walkabouts. It is more than sixty years since she publicly committed herself before God to serve Commonwealth citizens all her life. She has done it devotedly up to now, and will undoubtedly continue doing it as long as she physically can She is a Christian lady resolved to live out her vow till she drops. She merits unbounded admiration from us all.”¹

Packer expands the point in the rest of his short book. In exploring the necessity of aging and, without denying the waning of strength and attendant physical troubles associated with aging, he explores the many possibilities Christians have for active service in their older years.

One thing Packer notes, in particular, is that elderly Christians are “veterans of the war between the forces of Christ and those of Satan.” That is, they have learned a great deal about the long, drawn-out fight we all face with the world, the flesh and the Devil. They have much to teach younger Christians who may be more naïve about we’re up against in our walk with Christ.

Furthermore, older Christians have learned much about fellowship with the Lord in prayer and Bible-reading; about journaling with self-examination; about corporate worship and fellowship; and about the value of extended periods of silence and solitude. These lessons are a precious resource for God’s people in the church. If only older members were willing to share them, and younger members would ask to hear about them, we would all benefit.

However, Packer is also realistic and has some other wise words about this sharing. He knows that younger people can feel pushed around by the unwanted “advice” of their elders. Here’s how he put this when talking about family interactions:

“For seniors to invade family circles unmasked – dictatorial in-laws, for instance, who have not grasped that in life, as in Scripture, loyalty to one’s spouse should trump the claims of parents – is undoubtedly unhealthy. But it is also bad for families to ignore mature wisdom that is available to them in the persons of older relatives and friends. Christian seniors should make a point of being available to give as much help of this kind as families are willing to receive, and of showing themselves affectionate, equable, and (if I may coin a word) unsnubbable as they do so. And they should remember that, in any case, the larger need and the wider sphere of ministry to which they should be attending is in the church.” (pp. 97-8)

In fact, Packer makes the good of the church the strongest focus of his plea for older Christians to make the remainder of their lives useful to Christ. Addressing them directly, he suggests they ask God, and the leaders in our churches, as to how “you might

do the best you can with what you have got and model in your own person the mobilizing of over- sixty-fives to continue giving all they can for as long as they can to contribute to the mutual ministry that goes on within God’s flock.” (p. 98)

He is aware of the temptations in our culture to spend our older years winding down, caring for ourselves and generally enjoying ourselves. He notes that

“taking their cue from the world around, modern Western churches organize occupations, trips, parties, and so forth for their seniors and make pastoral provision for the shut-ins, but they no longer look to these folks as they do to the rest of the congregation to find, feed and use their spiritual gifts. In this they behave as though spiritual gifts and ministry skills wither with age. But they don’t; what happens, rather, is that they atrophy with disuse.” (pp. 64-5)

I found this observation very telling. How often do we expect – or even ask – a person in his or her seventies to lead a Bible study group, disciple a young person in need of help or speak at a youth camp? It is obvious that people in their seventies are often in quite good health and have sufficient energy and clarity of mind for such activities. Why are they not doing such things?



J.I.Packer

This is a most stimulating and interesting little book. It would make for useful discussion around the whole church. I’m persuaded we could all benefit from Packer’s wisdom. He’s thought about the subject a great deal, and has insights well worth considering. As an older man himself – he is 90 now – and one who has recently lost

his eyesight through macular degeneration, he has had to adjust his own service to Christ accordingly. I'm reminded of Milton's famous line in the "Sonnet on His Blindness" which reads, "They also serve who only stand and wait." I do pray that Packer finds joy as he runs the rest of his course in the Saviour's service.

I thought I would end this brief summary of Packer's book by noting a few real-life examples of the kinds of contributions that God's people have made in older age. One could start with Moses, who led the people of Israel until they reached the border of the Promised Land when he was 120 years old. Joshua was leading Israel in battle well beyond our contemporary retirement age. The apostle John was leading the church at Ephesus with sufficient vigour to earn himself imprisonment on the island of Patmos around the age of 90. Polycarp the early church martyr and leader of the church at Smyrna met his death at the age of 86. If God gives the strength, why not use it with zeal for his honour and glory?

One last example, from nearer our own time. I have just begun reading a biography of Dwight L. Moody, the famous late-nineteenth-century evangelist. Moody's father died when he had only just started school. His mother was left with seven young children and she was about to give birth to twins. Creditors took many of the household possessions. It was a dire situation, and she only survived with the help of a kind brother. But encouragement also came from another quarter. Moody's biographer, Kevin Belmonte, tells the story well:

*"Betsy Moody might have despaired, but an unlooked-for mercy arrived in the person of the Reverend Oliver Everett, the aging minister of the First Congregational Church. His kindness was a sunshine of hope. Materially, he brought the Moody family food and other staples from his own home. He offered to help with the children's schooling and urged Betsy to keep the family together. Aging though he was, he wasn't daunted by the prospect of spending hours in a home filled with active, energetic children. Some clergymen, as they grow older, become more quiet and retiring. Everett had a rare gift for expressing genuine, if modestly expressed, affection. Betsy Moody's children warmed to him. Young Dwight never forgot Everett's habit of placing an affectionate hand on his head, or saying a kind word."*²

The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God. They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green. (Psalm 92:12-14)

Endnotes

1 J.I. Packer, *Finishing Our Course with Joy* (Crossway, Wheaton, 2014), p. 12

2 Kevin Belmonte, *D. L. Moody: A Life* (Moody Publishers, Chicago, 2014), p. 23

Mrs Sally Davey is a member of the Reformed Church in Dovedale, Christchurch. This article first appeared in the August 2019 issue of Faith in Focus, the magazine of our sister-denomination, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

AROUND THE NATION

The Pell Case

The Pell Appeal was rejected by the Court of Appeal 2-1 on 21 August. This was surprising in some ways since the conviction was based on the testimony of one unsubstantiated witness although this is allowable in Victorian law for child abuse cases which generally have no corroborating evidence. The Court of Appeal was divided only on whether the jury must have had reasonable grounds for their belief in Pell's guilt based on the evidence before them. The majority of the Court held that the evidence was "rightly characterised" by prosecutors "as compelling, both because of the clarity and cogency of what [the witness] said and because of the complete absence of any indication of contrivance in the emotion which he conveyed when giving his answers". The dissenting judge is highly regarded in criminal matters but an appeal to the High Court, even if allowed, does not look likely of success.

A disturbing matter is the reaction of many who, although they had not heard the evidence in the original trial, either condemned or exonerated Pell. Those condemning him so vociferously give the impression they are venting their hostility to the Roman Catholic Church or to other aspects of Pell's character that are shameful, but he was not on trial for these things. Those exonerating him have not heard the evidence either, which was also carefully considered by the Appeal judges who apparently even tried on the robes the Cardinal was wearing at the time.

The point to bear in mind is that justice in this world is committed to men who are fallible and sometimes careless or corrupt. We have appeal processes to try and limit miscarriages of justice. It's conceivable that Pell is innocent but the final tribunal is God's and he makes no mistakes. Pell is finished as a Christian leader even if he was to win an appeal to the High Court because he lacks the Scriptural marks which include a good reputation with those outside the church. The damage to the Roman Church is significant but impacts all professing Christians. We need indeed radical renewal and revival. Are we working to that end? That is the question. - RSW



All Nations Session members and their wives

Jonah and Mary, Elizabeth and Tut Yoa, Anna and Rowland Ward, Nyawal and Isaac John

On 1 September 2019 Jonah Kot was ordained and inducted as an elder of the All Nations Congregation following unanimous approval of the congregation. The church was filled with some 170 people, including many of Jonah's relatives who had come from a distance to be present.



Ulverstone Officebearers: Ian Hamilton (elder), Andres Miranda (Interim Moderator, Luke Keast, Cameron Hamilton and Robert Hingston (deacons)

ULVERSTONE NEWS

Rev Andres Miranda travelled over to officiate at the ordination and induction service on 25 August of Luke Keast and Cameron Hamilton to the office of Deacon. Luke and Cameron join Robert Hingston as the local Deacons and Ian Hamilton as local Elder. We also welcomed into communicant membership Martin and Emma Pilgrim, who have transferred into the congregation from the Southern Presbyterian Church. The service closed with the observance of the Lord's Supper which was also attended by a number of visitors from other churches. We give great thanks to God for the blessing of this day and the growth of Christ's kingdom. - IDH



A happy Ulverstone Congregation, 25 August 2019



KNOX, WANTIRNA

The Knox Knitters are back in business again. It's lovely to have Shirley and Vanu join us this year. Thanks to Victoria and Mandy our output has almost doubled! Big thank you to Victoria's 'grandma' and others for the many beautiful blankets and to Mandy's ninety year old friend for the colourful beanies (on display in the photo). Thanks also to Sandra for the new outlets and distribution.

Knit on Knox Knitters!
All welcome. Contact Chris
0467 211 356

To God be the glory. - CC