

RENE MONOD TESTIMONY

"It was after the Korean war that I set foot on Korean soil for the first time. On arriving in Seoul, I got into contact with the Presbyterian church at the South Gate. I was invited to give a short address at the prayer meeting next morning. I was happy to agree, but a good deal surprised when I was told the time of the meeting – five a.m.

Five o'clock, and in that cold! The thought flashed through my mind, who on earth would turn up? I went to my hotel. My alarm rang at 4 a.m.

Rain was beating against my window. My first thought was, "The prayer meeting will be cancelled because of the rain." I pulled the blanket up to my chin and tried to go to sleep again. I was unsuccessful. "You must at least keep your word and put up an appearance, even if there's no one there but the minister," I told myself. So at last I got dressed, rather reluctantly, and set off. It was not exactly encouraging to find that the taxi driver was asking double fare – still, I supposed he was entitled to the rate for night journeys.

The Presbyterian church came into view, a severe, very plain building with unglazed windows. Snow and rain blew into the church through the gaping frames. Yet again I told myself. "You've come here for nothing. No one attends prayer meetings at five o'clock in the morning in the cold, wet weather like this. . ."

I braced myself against the wind and entered the church. What did I see? My eyes nearly popped out of my head – the whole place was crammed with people. There were no seats; the congregation was squatting or kneeling on straw mats. I was staggered. I went up to the platform, quite at a loss, and turned to the leading brethren. "What does this mean?" I asked. "The whole congregation can't have been summoned to welcome one missionary?"

"This is our regular prayer meeting," was the answer.

"What, in the middle of the week?" I asked incredulously. "Not on Sundays when the members of the congregation have more time?"

"We come together daily," they explained to me.

I felt dazed and asked no more questions.

One of the elders announced a hymn, and at once began to sing. There was no organ accompaniment, no hymn books; they had no musical instruments at all in this bleak building, which was more like a derelict factory than a church.

Then they prayed, all 3,000 members of the congregation at once. If I had been told of such an occurrence before, I would have dismissed it as fanatical zeal.

But I could feel the harmony of the Holy Spirit in this prayer. There was no disorder; it invited no comparism with the noisy praying of extremist sects. The people prayed for nearly an hour.

Then one of the elders asked me to give my address, adding, "A short one, please, not longer than an hour. These people have to get to work at seven o'clock." A short address lasting an hour! The words echoed in my mind. In what country of the Western world could the minister preach for an hour at a prayer meeting?

In any case, my sermon had quite gone out of my head while these people were praying. What had I to say to the brethren and sisters present?

It was they who had preached a sermon to me before I ever opened my mouth. In a spiritual situation of this kind I seemed to myself unutterable insignificant, tiny and pitiable.

This congregation needed no missionary from the Western world – unless it were for the missionaries to learn the true meaning of prayer.

Next day, when I was talking to a missionary, I put these thoughts into words. "What are we doing here?" I asked him. "We are quite superfluous!"

He understood, and agreed with me. "We are here to be shown what a community living in the spirit of the New Testament is really like."

PRAYER WITOUT CEASING! "Pray without ceasing!" The Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians {1Thess.5:17}. I have not seen these biblical admonition carried out so thoroughly anywhere as in Korea. Perhaps it may be the same today in the revivalist regions of Indonesia.

I had not yet recovered from the shock of that first prayer meeting before I found myself attending the next one. I was drawn into the wake of this throng of people praying. For the first time I really understood the words of Acts 2:46: **"And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple..."** Daily!

What have we come to in the Christian Communities of the west? We pray for an awakening, and nothing happens – do we wonder at it?

At the third prayer meeting of the morning I asked the brethren, "How often in the week does your group come together to pray?" They replied, "Everyday."

Three separate prayer groups meeting everymorning!

"How long has this custom been in force?" I asked.

"Five years," was the reply. I began doing sums: 365x5x3 comes to 5474 hours of prayers, each attended by 3,000 people. Should we not expect such prayer to reach the throne of God?

But I had not yet learnt everything; only in the course of a stay of several weeks did I gradually come to know all the wonderful secrets of this community of men and women of prayer.

There was a prayer service at night. Every evening a group of some 100 Christians met to pray. The groups alternated, of course, with different people coming together each evening – and every night for five years, a hundred members of this congregation had been in prayer until dawn. Once a week, from Saturday to Sunday, a thousand Christians pray all night long. For the first time, I was brought to understand the words of Acts 12:5: **"Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God."**

Many other passages of Scripture took on a new significance for me. Leviticus 24:2 runs: **"Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto you pure olive oil of beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually."** The Roman Catholic Church, indeed, keeps a light constantly burning before the altar, but it is not so much a matter of having beautiful symbols in our churches as of keeping the hearts of the faithful burning continually, and never letting the flame, the incense of prayer, go out. The Korean men and women of prayers showed me the true meaning of Revelation 5:8: **"Golden vials full of odours which are the prayers of saints."**

PRAYER FOR THE SICK: After the descent of the Holy Ghost, Peter and John went to the temple. At the gate they met a lame man. The poor cripple expected the apostles to give him a gift of silver and gold. {Acts 3:6} Peter looked at him and said, **"Silver and gold have I none: but such as I have give I unto you. In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."** So saying, he took the cripple's hand and lifted him up. The lame man was healed at once and went into the temple with them, **"Walking and leaping, and praising God."** The onlookers were amazed by this miracle, and the apostles took this opportunity to spread the Word of God. Refusing to take any credit themselves, they proclaimed, **"And his name through faith in his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know: yes, the faith which is by him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."** {Acts 3:16}

I would never have thought that I myself would one day be the witness of such event. I had always been of the opinion that these miracles were privileges reserved for the early Christian communities. Naturally, I had never been a modernist and rationalist in my following of Jesus, but always believed, child-like, in the Word of God. But I had no factual material to illustrate my belief. I was to find it in Korea.

These congregations of men and women in prayer made no great ado about healing and the 'gifts of tongues.' They hold a special prayer meeting for the sick only once a month. I was present at one of these prayer meetings. I am quite unable to find words to describe my experiences on this occasion. All I can say is that there was none of the hysterical, urgent mode of prayer practiced by the extremist sects, but instead a revelation of the glory of God.

A lame man was brought to the meeting; several Koreans had taken turns to carry him eighty kilometers on their backs. Now the cripple lay there before the congregation. The weak leg and arm were shorter than the sound limbs. Prayers were said for him, and blood and the power of movement came back into the wasted limbs. The lame man stretched, stood up and tried out his healed limbs. They were no longer short; the sick, wasted leg and arm had grown to the normal length of the sound ones.

The congregation did not make a great out-cry as they prayed, but instead raised a wonderful hymn of praise to God. I would never have believed reports of this miracle if I had not seen it for myself.

Another sick man was lying on a stretcher, in the last stages of tuberculosis of the lungs. He was nothing but a skeleton. Blood blisters stood out on his lips at every breath he drew; he was a miserable sight. It was almost unbearable to look at him. The congregation prayed over him, calling on the name of the Lord. As they prayed, the sick man grew visibly better. He could soon expand his chest strongly; we saw him exercising his lungs and breathing deeply. He was completely cured by the hand of the Lord.

Words from the Bible again took on new significance for me at this prayer meeting for the sick. How often have I had sermons preached on the text of St. Mark 2:10: **"The son of man has power on earth!"** But I had never seen such proof of the power of His hand as I did here, among these men and women of prayer.

A boy came into the midst of the congregation and asked them to intercede for him. His hand was withered, so that he could not move his fingers. He confessed his sins, putting his life into the hands of Jesus, and then the congregation prayed over him. As they did so, blood surged into his withered hand. We could see the boy's joy when he found that he could use it; he grasped objects standing near and played with the healthy fingers, an expression of indescribable delight on his face.

What a Lord is this, who can work such miracles in the twentieth century! And what a judgment on the lukewarm Christianity of the West that we have reached the point where we can no longer believe! I was in that state myself; I would have doubted all this if I had not been an eye witness.

On these occasions I was constantly repenting of my own sins; I was almost crushed to feel the Lord so close. For there is a considerable difference between reading of such miracles in the New Testament and being permitted to witness them oneself.

Language is inadequate to express the holiness and glory of the presence of the Lord in any fitting way.

After my return from Korea I told a Western congregation of my experiences, and a minister asked me, "Will you pray with the sick members of my congregation, and heal them in the name of the Lord?"

I replied, "How many people have you in the congregation?"

"Two thousand," he answered.

"How many of them attend your prayer meetings?"

"Twenty or thirty of them meet once a week."

I told him, "I am ready to pray with your sick – on condition all two thousand members of the congregation meet to pray at five a.m. every morning for five years." For that was what they did in Korea. We are giving ourselves unnecessary pains as long as the conditions of the New Testament do not prevail in our communities.

The outstanding feature of these prayer meetings for the sick was the peaceful manner in which they were conducted, with none of the usual whipping up of spiritual fervour. When extremist groups offer us 'healing', what do we find? If their claims are investigated either they turn out to be false, or the cures are only psychosomatic and temporary.

THE KOREAN GIVING SPIRIT: Before I attended this prayer meeting for the sick, it had been in my mind to tell the congregation assembled there that a man's salvation is more important than his cure. I intend to say to them 'Preach the word! Forgiveness of sins is greater than healing of the body.' I did not carry out my intention. What we in the West present as good theology, applying to biblical times, is actually carried out in practice today by these simple devout people.

As I have already mentioned, out of thirty prayer meetings there was only one for the sick, the rest being devoted to the worship of God and intercessions of every kind.

Another characteristic of Korean Christians is their readiness to make sacrifices. They give financial support to the preaching of the Word of God in a way I have never met anywhere else in the world.

Many of these devout people are rice farmers. In spite of the biblical rule that the labourer shall be first to enjoy the fruits of his toil, Korean Christians do not take advantage of the latitude allowed them; they sell their rice and buy millet, which is half the price.

They give their profits – that is to say fifty percent of their earnings – in aid of missionary work, to send missionaries to neighbouring countries and so spread the gospel. They give not a tenth, but a half of all they earn.

This example should be an eternal reproach before the throne of God to the satiated Christian of the West. In what superfluous plenty do we seem to live when we consider such sacrifices!

Moreover, in the face of such faith and devotion, can we still wonder that all the miracles of the New Testament were manifested again in the Korean Revival? I admit that I had always doubted whether the dead could be raised in the twentieth century. Since my first visit to Korea, which was later followed by others, I have doubted no longer.

In these devout communities, men physically dead have been restored to life, but more, many more, of the spiritually dead returned to life.”

Culled from “The Role of PRAYER in Church & National
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