

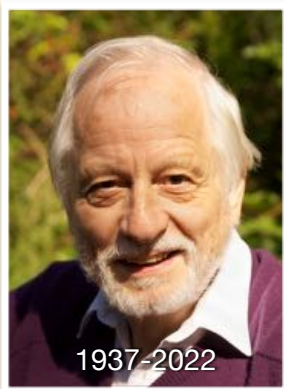


CANOPY OF PRAYER

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It is with great sadness that we bring you news of the passing of our founder, Ortwin Schweitzer, on Wednesday last week. He is now at home rejoicing with the Lord!

Ortwin's infectious enthusiasm for prayer and for our continent inspired me and became the driving force behind the birth of the European Union of Prayer in Strasbourg in 2006. As we progressed in our journey of gathering friends to pray in the EU presidency capitals across Europe, he saw the need to inspire an army of prayer warriors to be raised up. This led to the launch of the prayer letter 'Canopy of Prayer' in 2016.

He has guided us as an editorial team with his wisdom and counsel, which we will undoubtedly miss. Our hope is that we can continue to use all that we have learned under his leadership and friendship to continue to bring you high quality articles and fuel for your prayers for our continent.

Thank you Ortwin, an Apostle and spiritual father for many of us individually and for Europe.

Let us pray for the Lord's comfort for Susanne, his wife, and Ortwin's children, grandchildren and family.

Dear Praying Friends in Europe,

In His high-priestly prayer in the Gospel of John, Jesus prayed: "That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me, and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21, NIV). In today's world, where societies are being torn apart by wealth inequality, geopolitical competition, and "culture wars", this call for unity of believers bonded together in the name of Christ is arguably more important than ever. Whether Asian or European, let us remember that as professing believers we are all members of the body of Christ, called to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3, NIV). May we strive to do this to the glory of His name!

An Asian Perspective on Europe

When I was asked to share some thoughts about the relationship between Christians in Europe and Asia, I immediately thought of the English poet, Rudyard Kipling, who once famously wrote: "East is East and West is West, and never the [two] shall meet." As Christians, we know, of course, that such distinctions have no place in Christ's kingdom. If the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, as the early Christian father Tertullian said, then it is through the work of the missionaries that the Holy Spirit has brought about the church's growth over the centuries.

At the same time, we need to recognise the reality that historically, the spread of Christianity has been controversial. For large parts of modern history, the work of missions coincided with the age of European colonialism. Missionaries accompanied traders and soldiers to make the treacherous trip across the oceans from Western Europe to Asia. Because of this however, the Gospel which they brought often became mixed up with the harshness of colonial political, economic, and military power. The results of this are still felt in many parts of Asia today, where people still view Christianity as

"Western" culture that is alien to their lands and contaminating the beliefs passed down from their forefathers. Scripture however, offers us a different view of this separation between East and West. Let me share three thoughts on this.



First, we must remember that cultural and linguistic differences take nothing away from the truth of the Gospel

message. From the tower of Babel (Genesis 11) to Pentecost (Acts 2), Scripture has explained to us how and why God set different nations and cultures to subsequently spread across the earth. Simply put, it has been done at God's sovereign pleasure and for His glory.

Second, while we think in terms of West (Europe) and East (Asia), in fact the geographical birth of Christianity is in Israel and the Middle East, where East meets West! From there, God made His covenant with Abram that his descendants would multiply and bless all nations, in all directions!

Third, while Europe later played a big part in the great doctrines of Christianity and the spread of the Gospel, we should remember that Asia features prominently in Scripture. For example, wise men from the East were among the first to worship the Lord Jesus Christ at His birth. Also, Asians received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:9) and in the book of Revelation, Jesus wrote to the seven churches in Asia.

Finally, while the church is wonderfully growing in Asia, we should not concentrate on differences between East and West. Rather, we should remember that when Jesus told us to spread the Gospel message, He told us to "make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

Pray that

- all believers across the world are perfectly united in mind and thought (1 Corinthians 1:10).
- the gospel is no longer seen as 'Western', but becomes rooted deep in every culture.
- Christian organisations and churches in Europe and Asia can partner together for the work of the Gospel globally!

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