高雅倫 (R. Alan Cole)

7 October, 2003

1923 – 2003

Alan Cole, who died in Sydney on 7 August following a stroke, aged 80, was a classical and biblical scholar, a teacher at Oakhill Theological College London, Moore College Sydney, St Peter’s Hall and Trinity College Singapore, a missionary with both the China Inland Mission and Church Missionary Society in South-East Asia, Founding Master of Robert Menzies College at Macquarie University, and Federal Secretary of CMS (Australia). He was an Honorary Canon of St Andrew’s Cathedral Sydney from 1979, and during his last nine years living in the parish of St Clement’s, Mosman, in addition to numerous speaking engagements both in Australia and overseas, he was devoted to ministry in Chinese congregations in Sydney.

Born and bred in Ireland, Alan pursued classical studies at Trinity College Dublin to doctoral level before proceeding to England where he prepared for the ministry at Oakhill, at the same time acquiring a BD and MTh of London University.

One might wish that Alan had written more: his three early commentaries in the Tyndale Series (Exodus, Mark, and Galatians), and his Tyndale NT Lecture on the church in the NT (‘The New Temple’, 1950), are of continuing value. But Alan had more on his plate than scholarly writing. From student days he felt the call to missionary service, and although he never lost, but rather enhanced, his linguistic skills in particular, he was essentially a prophet and teacher (Eph 4.11), whether among the Chinese people (where he also had the gift of tongues – both Cantonese and Mandarin!) or in colleges and congregations at home.

Alan was ordained in 1950 in the Diocese of Southwark where he served his curacy in the parish of St Luke’s, Deptford. His hope had been to go as a missionary to China, but the Communist revolution there modified the plan. CIM moved its head-quarters to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. Meanwhile Alan became engaged to Shirley Powys of Sydney, whom he met on her first Sunday in London. So Sydney became a detour. Alan and Shirley were married in September 1951.

From then on, Sydney became Alan’s and Shirley’s base. They went to Malaysia with CIM late in 1952, the year in Sydney being occupied by Alan in teaching at Moore College, and by the birth of their firstborn, Andrew. Their service with CIM involved both village ministry, in primitive conditions, in Malaysia, and a period in Taiwan where Alan was able to acquire effective use of Mandarin. In 1962 they transferred to CMS so as to be available to teach at Trinity College in Singapore.

In addition to his several periods at Moore College over the years, Alan made a significant impact as an administrator in his two posts in Sydney, first at Robert Menzies College, and then as Federal Secretary of CMS. Both commissions called for vision and pastoral guidance as well as administration, and, in the case of CMS, ‘journeyings off’. But Alan’s influence rose above the contours of any position he may have held.

Archbishop Loane aptly described him, at the Cathedral Thanksgiving Service, as ‘a burning and shining light’. His total dedication and ministry of God’s Word were a challenge to very many. He was without guile, and was not self-seeking. He was immovable where truth and conscience were concerned. We thank God for his faith and his faithfulness, his integrity and humility, his merry humour and joyfulness, and for his hope and vision.

Bishop Donald Robinson

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