



Swift *and* Beautiful

The Amazing Stories of
Faithful Missionaries

David B. Calhoun

SWIFT AND BEAUTIFUL

The Amazing Stories of Faithful Missionaries

*“Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for thee.”*

—Frances Ridley Havergal

David B. Calhoun



THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST

THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST

<i>Head Office</i>	<i>North America Office</i>
3 Murrayfield Road	PO Box 621
Edinburgh, EH12 6EL	Carlisle, PA 17013
UK	USA

banneroftruth.org

First published 2020
© David B. Calhoun 2020

*

ISBN

Print: 978 1 84871 938 5
EPUB: 978 1 84871 941 5
Kindle: 978 1 84871 964 4

*

Typeset in 10/13 Minion Pro at
The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh

Printed in the USA by
Versa Press Inc.,
East Peoria, IL.

Dedicated with gratitude

to

Wayne Sparkman

Director of the Historical Center

of

The Presbyterian Church in America.

A faithful Christian

A loyal churchman

A devoted husband and father

A competent historian

A skillful archivist

A friend and brother in Christ

CONTENTS

Foreword	ix
1. John Eliot (1604–1690): <i>It is good that such a man has lived.</i>	1
2. David Brainerd (1718–1747): A life of one plan.	19
3. John Leighton Wilson (1809–1886): <i>Shall we not go for the love of Christ?</i>	37
4. David Livingstone (1813–1873): <i>He was one of those who brought slavery to an end.</i>	55
5. Mary Slessor (1848–1915): <i>Mother of all the peoples.</i>	73
6. Samuel Norvell Lapsley (1866–1892): <i>A little while to sow the seed with weep- ing.</i>	91
7. William Henry Sheppard (1865–1927) and Lucy Gantt Sheppard (1867–1940): <i>Shepherd and shepherdess of his sheep.</i>	109
8. James A. Bryan (1863–1941): <i>He went about doing good.</i>	129

SWIFT AND BEAUTIFUL

9. Bob Childress (1890–1956):
 The man who moved a mountain. 147
10. Mary Beam (1911–2002) and Betty
 Cridland (1907–2003):
 In the heart of the tall grass. 163
- A Prayer 184
- Endnotes 185

FOREWORD

*“How beautiful are the feet of those who
bring good news” (Romans 10:15).*

ISAIAH the prophet wrote about good news that had come to Israel. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isaiah 52:7).¹ The good news that the prophet celebrated was that the people of Israel would return from exile. No doubt Isaiah was also looking ahead to the far greater good news that was coming for all people.

In Romans 10:13 the apostle Paul, quoting Joel 2:32, writes that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Paul asks some questions. “But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?” Paul adds, quoting

¹ The scripture quotations in this section are from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved..

SWIFT AND BEAUTIFUL

the words of Isaiah 52:7, “As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.’” The gospel, God’s good news, is for “all nations” and must be taken to them by the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (Matthew 28:19; John 20:21). In one of her hymns Frances Ridley Havergal prays,

*Take my feet, and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee ...*

*Take my lips, and let them be
filled with messages from thee.*

The African-American spiritual urges us to

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere;
Go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.*

Christ could not provide salvation for us without great cost; and we cannot take it to the world without paying a price. In a sermon entitled “The Sacrifice of Christ, the Type and Model of Missionary Effort,” James Henley Thornwell said, “As Jesus by His sacrifice purchased redemption, we by ours must make it known” (*Collected Works* 2:411-449).

J. Oswald Sanders, Bible teacher and missionary leader from New Zealand, told about an Indian Christian who walked barefoot from village to village preaching the gospel. After a long day and many miles, he came to a village where he tried to preach but was rudely spurned. He went out of the village, lay down under a tree, and fell asleep from sheer exhaustion. He suddenly awoke and saw people looking at

him. He thought that they had come to hurt or even kill him. The head man of the village explained that when they saw his blistered and bleeding feet they knew that he must be a holy man. They had been wrong to reject him. They wanted to hear the message that he had walked so far to bring them.

*How beauteous are their feet
Who stand on Zion's hill!
Who bring salvation on their tongues,
And words of peace reveal!*

(Isaac Watts)

JOHN ELIOT
(1604–1690)

It is good that such a man has lived.

JOHN ELIOT preached two sermons to the Algonquian Indians in 1646. The first, in September, was a failure. The Indians ‘gave no heed to it, but rather were weary, and rather despised what I said,’ Eliot wrote.¹ He tried again, in October. A small group of Indians sat in the wigwam of Waban, one of their chiefs, and listened to this white man. Eliot presented the ten commandments and taught the first three questions of the catechism. Then he preached about Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones—a story that apparently pleased the Indians. From there he moved on to all the principal matters of Protestant theology. When he finished and asked for questions, the Indians responded eagerly, asking questions for three hours. The first question was, ‘How may we come to know Jesus Christ?’ Later an Indian asked John Eliot, ‘Why has no white man ever told us this before? Why did you wait to tell us?’ Eliot could only answer, ‘I am sorry.’

[1]

It was sixteen years after the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and fifteen years after John Eliot's arrival in Boston.

John Eliot was born in 1604 in Widford, a small English village on the river Lea, twenty-five miles from London.² That part of England had welcomed John Wycliffe's Lollards in the fifteenth century, French Huguenots in the sixteenth century, and by the time of Eliot's birth it had become a centre for Puritanism. John Eliot's parents brought him up 'with the fear of God, the word and prayer.' He entered Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1618, several months before his fourteenth birthday. Many years later, he sent a copy of his Indian Bible to the college, inscribed in Latin words that read in English, 'Accept, Mother, I pray, what a most humble alumnus offers, a son ever having thy prayers.'

John Eliot's mother died in 1620, and a year later his father died. After completing his studies in 1622, John briefly assisted the Puritan preacher Thomas Hooker in his academy at Little Baddow. Eliot lived with Hooker and his family. He wrote: 'To this place was I called through the infinite riches of God's mercy in Christ Jesus to my poor soul, for here the Lord said to my dead soul, live! live! and through the grace of God I do live and shall live forever! When I came to this blessed family I then saw as never before the power of godliness in its lovely vigour and efficacy.'³

With Archbishop Laud in power, it was a difficult time for Puritans. In 1630 Thomas Hooker fled to Holland, and the next year John Eliot sailed for the New World.⁴ He emigrated, he explained, in order to 'enjoy the holy worship

of God, not according to the fantasies of man, but according to the Word of God.⁵ In 1632 John married Hannah Mumford, who had followed him to Massachusetts. We know very little about Hannah, but tradition, writes Ola Winslow, describes her as ‘notably resourceful,’ given to hospitality, skilful in nursing, and a good manager of house and garden, all valuable assets for a colonial woman, especially one whose husband was often away. ‘In her many-faceted partnership in the Eliot home,’ writes Winslow, ‘she probably deserved the superlatives she inspired.’⁶ Hannah and John had six children, one girl and five boys, all of whom followed their parent’s example in Christian service.

After serving for six months as a pastor in Boston, mutually pleasant for both preacher and congregation, John Eliot was called to Roxbury, a town nearby that was being settled by some of Eliot’s family and friends from England. Winslow thinks that Eliot was ordained in England, although no record of it has been found. The members of the Roxbury church ordained him, making him possibly the first Massachusetts minister who had not been previously ordained by an Anglican bishop.

John Eliot’s long ministry of fifty-eight years at the Roxbury church was marked by simple, biblical sermons (so that, Cotton Mather said, ‘the lambs of the flock’ could understand). ‘His standards of Christian character were inflexible,’ Winslow writes, ‘but his approach to erring ones was unfailingly kind.’ His small salary was ‘little enough for his needs and never enough for his charities.’ Once, so the story goes, the Roxbury deacon presented Eliot with his monthly salary secured in a handkerchief tied with a

number of hard knots. On his way home, the pastor called upon a needy widow of his flock. Failing to extract a coin from the stubborn lump, he handed it to her, knots and all, saying, 'Sister, I think the Lord meant it all for you.'⁷

John Eliot was involved in the Anne Hutchinson trials. Nothing harsh is recorded about his part in this difficult and divisive event. His gentleness of manner and kindness of feeling were evident, but he was inflexible in his defence of orthodox doctrine.⁸ It was undoubtedly with relief that Eliot turned to a more pleasant task. With other 'good Hebricians,' he was asked to translate some of the Psalms to be included in *The Bay Psalm Book*, the first book printed in English in America.

'In North America, Protestant Christians for the first time lived side by side with a non-Christian people,' writes Andrew Walls. The seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony depicted an Indian and the words from Acts 16:9, 'Come over and help us.'⁹ The colony's charter stated that 'the principal end of this plantation' is 'to win and incite the natives to the knowledge and obedience of the only true God and Saviour of mankind.' 'The initial desire,' Walls writes, 'to bring these people into the Christian fold, while never abandoned, receded before temporal considerations.'¹⁰ The colonists faced the pressing concerns of surviving the rigours of a difficult climate and creating for themselves a pioneer life in New England. The Indians were their neighbours, but neighbours with whom relations were, to say the least, ambivalent. Those colonists who wanted to reach out to the Indians were deterred by the difficulty of learning the Indians' languages. Cotton Mather considered the Algonquian dialect so difficult that demons,

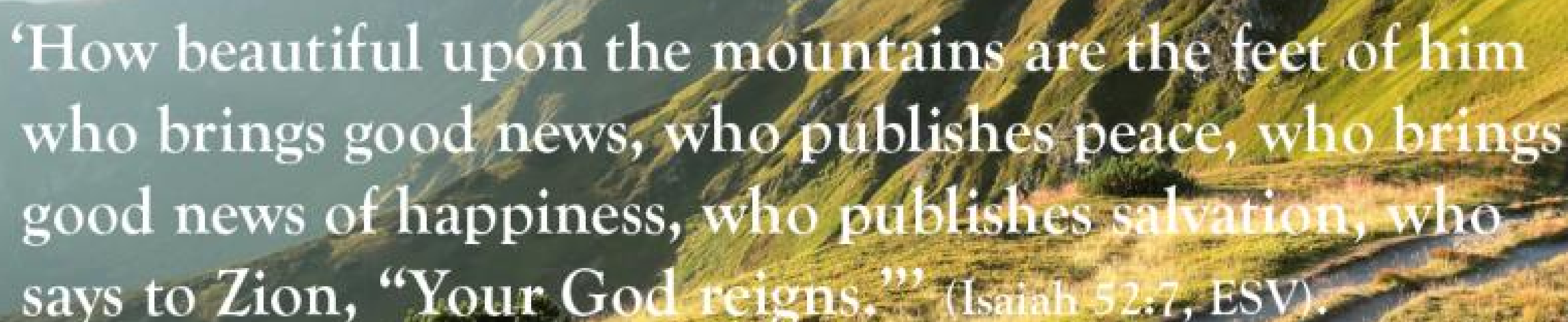
he said, who understood Hebrew, Greek, and Latin were unable to fathom it! Prevalent eschatological views (that the millennium would be ushered in by the conversion of the Jews) hindered some from undertaking an aggressive evangelization of the Indians. Furthermore, Congregational church polity did not provide for ordaining persons for full-time missionary service.

The missionary call does not seem to have been a factor in Eliot's emigration to America, but it gradually became important in the Puritan preacher's mind and heart. When asked years later what had moved him to begin work with the Indians, he replied that the 'public engagement' was the colony's seal, and, privately, his own 'pity for the poor Indian.' He never saw the Indians as the 'dregs of humanity' as many others did, but as human beings, created in God's image but lost without Christ. In 1646 the colony and some of the leaders of neighbouring Indian tribes signed an agreement to try to reduce the tensions between the Indians and the English and to bring the two communities closer together. Eliot decided it was time for him to reach out to the Indians.

After his momentous meeting with the Indians in Waban's wigwam in October 1646, John Eliot and three English friends who had come with him decided to continue their visits to the Indians, the winter frosts and snows notwithstanding, lest the 'fire go out of the Indians' hearts for want of a little fuel.'¹¹

For the next forty years, in all kinds of weather, the Puritan preacher journeyed by horseback between Sundays to the scattered Indian villages, preaching justification, faith,

In his *Spiritual Unfolding of Bishop H. C. G. Moule*, John Baird wrote, ‘No course of reading is more establishing than that of Christian biography – the battle story of those who in the conflict of earth have been great in the life of God.’ *Swift and Beautiful* tells the amazing stories of a dozen men and women who at great cost gave their lives to take the gospel of God’s grace to those who had not heard it. Some of these faithful missionaries are well-known, others almost forgotten, but all are ‘great in the life of God.’



‘How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”’ (Isaiah 52:7, ESV).

David B. Calhoun is Emeritus Professor of Church History at Covenant Theological Seminary, St Louis, Missouri. He has authored several books, including *In Their Own Words: The Testimonies of Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, and John Bunyan* and *Knowing God and Ourselves: Reading Calvin’s Institutes Devotionally*, also published by Banner of Truth.

ISBN 978-1-84871-938-5



9 781848 719385



BANNER
of **TRUTH**

banneroftruth.org

Cover image: Trail over the Tatra Mountains on the Polish-Slovak border.

© iStockphoto.com/ aniszewski