

# No Ordinary *Life*



*The story of Napier Malcom*

*Many British readers will equate the name Napier Malcolm with the British Church Newspaper (he is the paper's editor) and with the fledgling Free Presbyterian congregation in the city of Bristol, England, where Rev. Wesley Graham currently ministers. However, these are but the most recent chapters in a long and interesting life as the LTBS editor discovered on a recent visit to the Malcolm home in Somerset.*

Some of our readers have more than a passing interest in genealogy. Few will be able to trace their ancestors back over four hundred years, but that is exactly what Napier Malcolm is able to do. The Malcolms were of Border-Scots origin, and Napier can trace his ancestors back to one William Malcolm, who lived just a few decades after the fiery reformer John Knox. William Malcolm was a Reformation worthy whose grave stone bore the words, "I know that my redeemer liveth" (Job 19:25). There were evidently many sound Presbyterian Christians among the Malcolms.

But it was a world away from the rolling hills of southern Scotland where life began for Napier. He was born of missionary parents in Toronto, Canada, though, as he recounts, "I remained in Canada for only six weeks, and I have never returned." The Malcolms found themselves in North America on furlough after a period of service in Persia (modern Iran) for five years. They served for a further five years in India, and so Hindi was virtually the young Napier's first language, every opportunity being taken to cultivate fluency in the speech of their adopted country. While they were on furlough from India, the family's intention to return to that work was frustrated by the outbreak of the

Second World War. Their focus necessarily shifted to England.

Napier's father was ordained in the Church of England (Anglican/Episcopalian), and he first worked as a curate in Reading. The church and the rector (formerly one of Bishop J. C. Ryle's curates in Liverpool) with whom Mr. Malcolm first served, were very much in the historic Protestant tradition, something by no means guaranteed in a church that had, even then, strong liberal and Anglo-Catholic factions.

"I still remember the text written in bold letters above the communion table," Napier recalls. "It was 'Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen' (Luke 24:5-6). [It was] an obvious rejoinder to the sacramentalists!"

The years that followed were spent in rectories. After Reading, Mr. Malcolm moved to Mountsorrel in Leicestershire and then to Wetheringsett in Suffolk. Napier reflects that it was not easy for a gospel-preaching rector in those days: "My father was a godly man who did not seek popularity or prominence, but who faithfully preached Christ. God helped him immensely in those years, and his ministry was used to bring men and women to salvation. I am so thankful, personally, for being raised in such a home, and for all that I learned from my father's preaching and example."

Napier had come to a saving knowledge of Christ when he was very young. He was now challenged by what he saw around him, and it was that same philosophy of Christian precept and practice that he sought to follow when, much later, he was a parent himself. There are now four grown children in the Malcolm family, and all are soundly converted.

At the age of thirteen, having obtained a scholarship, Napier was sent to

boarding school at Monkton Combe near Bath. The four years spent in this Christian school were happy ones and represented a period of evident spiritual growth.

Napier speaks of "cutting his teeth" as a Christian during those days: "I benefited significantly from fellowship with Christian teachers and fellow pupils, many of whom were the children of missionaries then serving throughout the world," he remembers. "I got involved with Christian Union, serving on the organizing committee and speaking at various meetings. I also used to travel out to a little church nearby and take the Sunday evening services for the small congregation gathered there. It was all valuable experience, and I would encourage every young Christian to take opportunities for service as and when they are given."

Cambridge University soon beckoned, and Napier went up to study medicine. Despite the intense study involved, he found time for continued involvement in Christian witness. The 1950s were memorable times at Cambridge, times of revival almost. A regular Sunday evening service was held in the church frequented by students, and it was rare for the evening to end without some evidence of conversions. Noted evangelical preachers from near and far gladly consented to come and preach to the overflowing congregations at Holy Trinity, and a thriving Christian Union followed up the good work begun in those thrilling services.

Napier's next move brought him to the celebrated Guy's Hospital in London

to continue training in medicine. Once again, there was involvement in the Christian Union and in a local evangelical church during the two years spent in the metropolis. The required year of "house jobs" found him in Sidcup Hospital, Kent, and it was there that Napier met his future wife, Ruth.

"Ruth's conversion is a story in its own right," Napier remarks. "She was a Turk working as a nurse in Sidcup. Her presence in England was due to the benevolence of a certain Colonel Underwood, who had fought the Turks in World War I. The good colonel, disturbed by the ignorance he witnessed among many in the land, particularly women, later returned to teach in a Turkish school. As a result of his interest, Ruth was sent to England, and our paths first crossed at Sidcup. She had been raised a Muslim, but she was wonderfully converted in the Nurses' Christian Union. It was 1957, and that means that Ruth



Aden (now South Yemen)

was one of the very first true Turks to openly confess Christ."

With training completed, National Service loomed. However, hardly excited by the prospect of a posting to a home base, Napier offered himself to Her Majesty's Civil Service Overseas and was sent to Aden (now South Yemen). There