

SOMETHING TO CHEW ON

The year was 1924. British athletes were in training for the 8th Olympiad in Paris, France. Some months before - not on the way to the games, as the movie *Chariots of Fire* tells it - Eric Liddell decided his conscience would not let him run qualifying heats on Sunday, his day of worship.

Liddell's specialities were the 100 metre and 200 metre events. To avoid running on Sunday, however, he decided to switch to the 400 metres, which was on another day. His decision shocked British Olympic planners.

For Liddell, it was a natural decision. His father and mother had served as missionaries to China for the London Missionary Society. He grew up a committed Christian.

In the movie, a fictionalised scene captures his fighting spirit. When asked just how far his arrogance extended, Liddell shot back: "My arrogance extends just as far as my conscience demands."

This exchange highlights Liddell's version of "muscular Christianity". In the end, Liddell not only won the 400 metre dash he set a new world record.

The lesser-known story of Eric Liddell begins several months later when he left Scotland for the mission fields of China. For a while, Liddell taught science at the Anglo-Chinese College in Tientsin, China. But he thirsted to do rural evangelism. By foot and on bicycle, Liddell traversed the rugged Chinese hill country, preaching the gospel.

On one occasion, as the Japanese-Chinese hostilities intensified in the late 1930s, Liddell heard of a wounded man who was dying in a derelict temple. The local people feared to help him because of possible reprisals by the Japanese. Liddell persuaded a workman with a cart to help him in a rescue mission.

After finding the dying man, they heard of another victim who had suffered a severe sword wound to the head. They found the victim, placed him on the cart and pushed both men 29 kilometres back to the mission hospital. The second man not only survived, he later gave his life to Christ.

As the shadows of World War two lengthened, Liddell sent his wife and two children back to her home in Canada. In Toronto, Florence Liddell gave birth to their third child, one Eric would never see.

In 1943, before he could get away, Liddell was interned by the Japanese army at Weihsen, in Shandong Province. There, a 10-year-old internee named David Michell - now a director of OMF International in Toronto, Ontario - met Liddell. Michell well remembers him. "He was an unusual person, gentle, quiet-spoken and went about doing

good. Jesus was his example as well as his Saviour." Michell confirms the surprising account mentioned in Sally Magnusson's biography of Liddell, The Flying Scotsman.

Liddell was in charge of the children's games. Some of them wanted to play on Sunday. Liddell, who had defied an empire for his beliefs, would have none of it.

The young people played anyway - field hockey, boys against girls. It ended in a fight. Some children were hurt. So the next Sunday there was Liddell on the field. Even though the games took place on Sunday, he refereed to keep the peace. Magnusson wrote, "It speaks volumes about the man."

To keep young people from getting hurt, Liddell yielded his own fervently held beliefs to Christ's higher law of love. He understood 2 Corinthians 3:6, "For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

Before he died of a brain tumour on February 21, 1945, Eric Liddell exemplified the love that fulfils the law.

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"I'd rather see a sermon, than hear one any day.

I'd rather one would walk with me,

than merely tell the way.

The eye's a better pupil, more willing than the ear.

Fine counsel is confusing

but example's always clear.

And the best of all the preachers

are the ones who live their creeds;

For to see God put in action

is what everybody needs".

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Stephen Hawking, the well-known British physicist (credited with ' proving ' that the earth originated through a big bang rather than God's creation), has said that he thinks that computer viruses are a form of life, man-made life. His observation followed a report that the 'creator' of certain computer viruses had been arrested, and was on bail awaiting a court hearing. This man, known as the Black Baron, is thought to be the originator of the viruses known as Queeg, Pathogen and Germ, which have caused havoc in some computer systems.

Professor Hawking, when speaking at Boston, USA, is reported to have said that a computer virus "should count as life" because it acts as a parasite on computers and eventually 'kills' them. "I think it says something about human nature", he said, "that the only form of life we have created so far is purely destructive". Then he made the comment: "We have created life in our own image". Two comments seem appropriate on this report. 1. The viruses had to be 'created' by an intelligence, and did not just happen by blind chance. 2. When man does create something, whether it is alive or not, it is evil. In fact, science shouts the evidence: "There must be God"! Especially with more recent discoveries made on the complexity of DNA - the building block and information pack of all things.

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