

CHALCEDON *Report*

**Christianity
Persecuted,
Christianity
Victorious**

No. 395, June 1998

*A Voice of the Martyrs
Special Report:
Persecution of
Christians Around
the World*

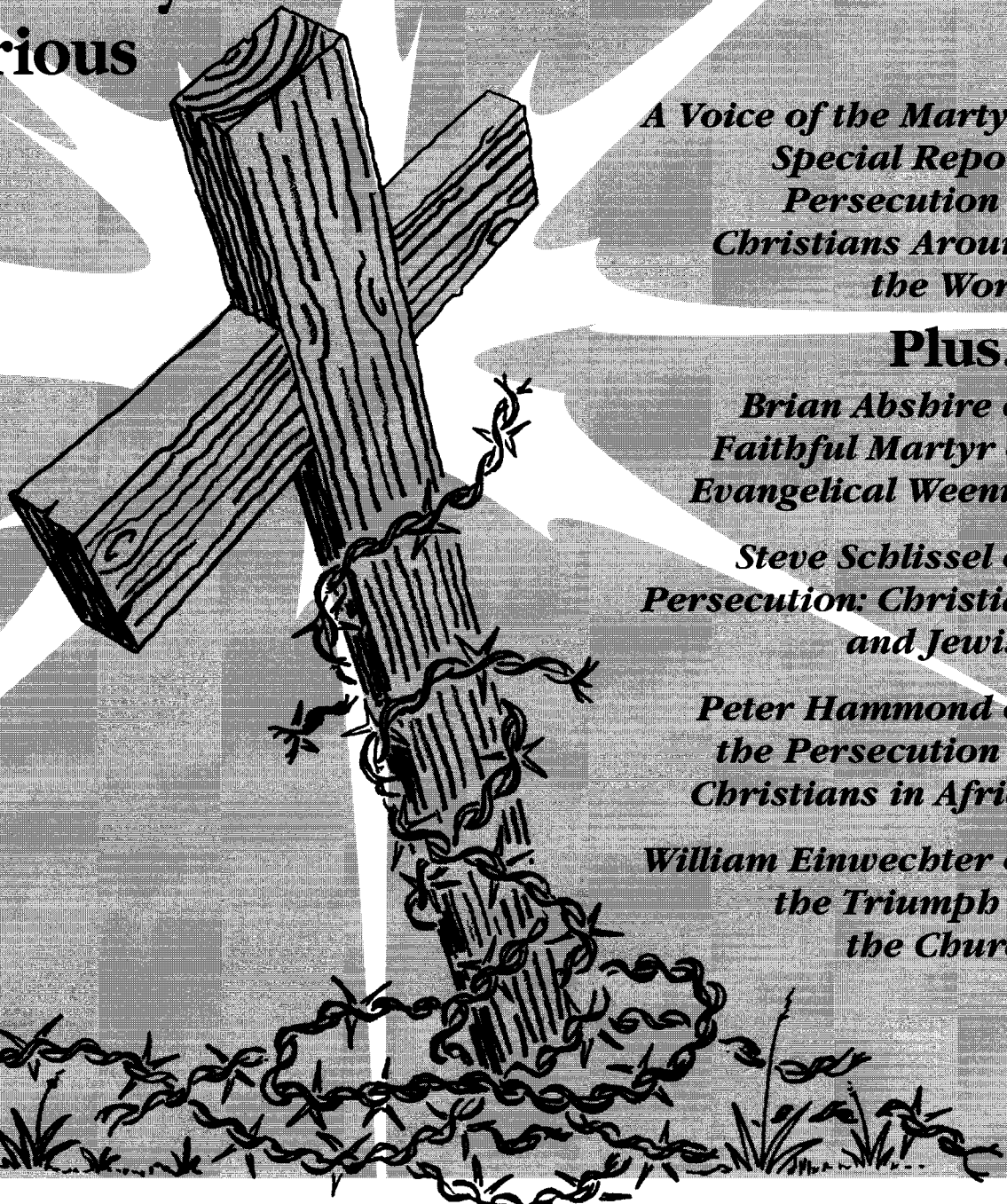
Plus...

*Brian Abshire on
Faithful Martyr or
Evangelical Weenie?*

*Steve Schlissel on
Persecution: Christian
and Jewish*

*Peter Hammond on
the Persecution of
Christians in Africa*

*William Einwechter on
the Triumph of
the Church*



Man is a creature that in the long run has got to believe in order to know, and to know in order to do.

-Allen Tate

The Creed of Christian Reconstruction

Rev. Andrew Sandlin
[May be Freely Reproduced]

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Calvinist**. He holds to historic, orthodox, catholic Christianity and the great Reformed confessions. He believes God, not man, is the center of the universe—and beyond; God, not man, controls whatever comes to pass; God, not man, must be pleased and obeyed. He believes God saves sinners—He does not help them save themselves. A Christian Reconstructionist believes the Faith should apply to all of life, not just the “spiritual” side. It applies to art, education, technology, and politics no less than to church, prayer, evangelism, and Bible study.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Theonomist**. Theonomy means “God’s law.” A Christian Reconstructionist believes God’s law is found in the Bible. It has not been abolished as a standard of righteousness. It no longer accuses the Christian, since Christ bore its penalty on the cross for him. But the law is a statement of God’s righteous character. It cannot change any more than God can change. God’s law is used for three main purposes: First, to drive the sinner to trust in Christ alone, the only perfect law-keeper. Second, to provide a standard of obedience for the Christian, by which he may judge his progress in sanctification. And third, to maintain order in society, restraining and arresting civil evil.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Presuppositionalist**. He does not try to “prove” that God exists or that the Bible is true. He holds to the Faith because the Bible says so, not because he can “prove” it. He does not try to convince the unconverted that the gospel is true. They already know it is true when they hear it. They need repentance, not evidence. Of course, the Christian Reconstructionist believes there is evidence for the Faith—in fact there is nothing *but* evidence for the Faith. The problem for the unconverted, though, is not a lack of evidence, but a lack of submission. The Christian Reconstructionist begins and ends with the Bible. He does not defend “natural theology,” and other inventions designed to find some agreement with covenant-breaking, apostate mankind.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Postmillennialist**. He believes Christ will return to earth only after the Holy Spirit has empowered the church to advance Christ’s kingdom in time and history. He has faith that God’s purposes to bring all nations—though not every individual—in subjection to Christ cannot fail. The Christian Reconstructionist is not utopian. He does not believe the kingdom will advance quickly or painlessly. He knows that we enter the kingdom through much tribulation. He knows Christians are in the fight for the “long haul.” He believes the church may yet be in her infancy. But he believes the Faith will triumph. Under the power of the Spirit of God, it cannot *but* triumph.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Dominionist**. He takes seriously the Bible’s commands to the godly to take dominion in the earth. This is the goal of the gospel and the Great Commission. The Christian Reconstructionist believes the earth and all its fulness is the Lord’s—that every area dominated by sin must be “reconstructed” in terms of the Bible. This includes, first, the individual; second, the family; third, the church; and fourth, the wider society, including the state. The Christian Reconstructionist therefore believes fervently in Christian civilization. He firmly believes in the separation of church and state, but not the separation of the state—or anything else—from God. He is not a revolutionary; he does not believe in the militant, forced overthrow of human government. He has infinitely more powerful weapons than guns and bombs—he has the invincible Spirit of God, the infallible word of God, and the incomparable gospel of God, none of which can fail.

He presses the crown rights of the Lord Jesus Christ in every sphere, expecting eventual triumph.

CHALCEDON Report

A Monthly Report Dealing With the Relationship of Christian Faith to the World

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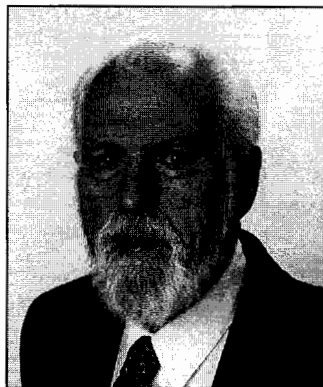
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On Spontaneity

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony



One of the highly prized characteristics of the modern era, especially since the rise of Romanticism, has been spontaneity. The idea has ancient roots; as it developed, it saw the writer, artist, or poet as a man governed by spontaneity and therefore a superior person, to some

degree above the law and especially "middle-class virtues." Shelley, Byron, Blake, and others were intense romantics dedicated to spontaneity.

For a Christian, this form of the concept is wrong, dangerous, and evil. The Bible defines unregenerate man as fallen and evil, and his spontaneous self-expression will be the same. The infant urinates and defecates at will; he requires feeding at his demand, and he expects the world to revolve around him. The process of civilization requires the inhibition of spontaneity. Mario Praz, in *The Romantic Agony*, showed clearly that the Romantic quest led into a world of perversity and evil. To stress spontaneity, as our modern culture does, is thus to undermine civilization. Not surprisingly, the student rebels of the 1960s urinated and defecated on public premises in their protests against civilization. Spontaneity is a modern fetish of a dangerous kind. We have seen too much spontaneity and too little civilization.

There is, however, a spontaneity of another kind. Unlike fallen man, Christian man develops another kind of spontaneity as he grows in faith. Psalm 119 gives us an account of this. The psalmist does not see God's law as a restraint but as a delight. He loves God's law, and his delight is in knowing and obeying it. It is a light and a lamp to him, and his joy. The spontaneity of the Psalmist is not that of the natural man but is of a God-governed one.

At present, modern culture is dying because of the evil infection of its fallen spontaneity, which makes it the "culture" of sin and death. Henry Van Til very aptly defined culture as religion externalized. Fallen man exalts his spontaneity because he glorifies his fall, his rebellion against God. In so doing, he exalts both sin and its consequence, death. Modern child-rearing stresses spontaneity to the destruction of the young. Legislation exists to punish parents who discipline a child. To do so is seen as harming the child's spontaneity in development. Some sixty years ago, I read one educator's then "advanced" belief that if a child decided to throw an inkwell at the teacher, he should not be frustrated. Since then, I have heard adults and even elderly people justify misconduct because it represented freedom and spontaneity. "Christian" colleges stress courses in "creative writing" that glorify spontaneity. One English professor in a Christian college denounced a fine sonnet by an established writer because its form was "traditional" and not "spontaneous." Too many of our "Christian" colleges are really versions of humanistic and anti-Christian ones.

The question of spontaneity is a very obvious and simple one. The prevailing lack of comprehension as to its meaning gives clear evidence of the extent of our apostasy.

Now Available

The special Chalcedon audiocassette "The Y2K Problem" in which Walter Lindsay is interviewed by Andrew Sandlin, Mark Rushdoony, Douglas Murray, and R. J. Rushdoony is now available for \$5.00, postage paid.

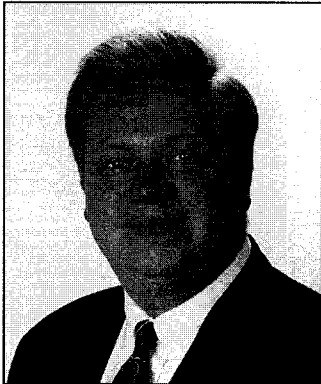
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Present Persecution, Christian Obligation, and Future Triumph

By Rev. Andrew Sandlin

Humanist Hypocrisy



Few individuals are more hypocritical than modern secular historians and other secular humanists. They delight to parade in print and media the bloody reputation of the Christianity of the Middle Ages, implying or arguing that Christianity today is an intolerant, persecuting Faith that must be barred

from modern public life at all costs. They depict Christians as hateful, undereducated, uncouth fascists who salivate to erode constitutional liberties of religious freedom and conspire to persecute all who disagree with them. That this canard is scandalously libelous is no more evident than that it conveniently overlooks the fact that the record of cruelty of *secular* empires in the modern century—Nazi Germany; Fascist Italy; and Communist Soviet Union, China, Cuba, Eastern Europe, North Korea, and Vietnam—makes Torquemada look like a mischievous teenager by comparison.

There is an obvious rationale for this convenient omission: many of the modern, bloodthirsty regimes constitute the apex of *consistent* secular humanism. For the longest time American (liberal) intellectuals endorsed the Soviet Union, despite the abundant evidence of its totalitarianism. Why? Because Lenin and Stalin were simply epistemologically self-conscious, “enlightened” secular humanists. Secular liberals in the West could not *consistently* criticize the horrors of Stalinism as the logical conclusion of their own sordid worldview (they finally did anyway), but the abundant evidence of totalitarian evil for some reason did not lead American liberals to repudiate their own secularism.

Our Persecuted Brethren

Today Christians the world over languish in prison cells, suffer indescribable torture, and give their lives in martyrdom for their Lord. The Western media, laced in hypocrisy, somehow can locate every last example of “oppression” in the world—oppressed women; oppressed homosexuals; oppressed freedom-fighters (as in, Chinese

liberals or African Marxists); oppressed Muslims, Jews or Blacks; even oppressed spotted owls and lions. Rarely do they expose the intense persecution of Christians. When they do, as *U. S. News and World Report* did last spring, they tend to obscure it in some inconspicuous place befitting the revelation of the latest statistics on male hair loss. The March 31, 1997 issue of *U. S. News* buried a slight account on page 15 (just next to the IBM ad, and just below the story about displaced nineteenth-century Greek sculptures). For modern liberals (and even most conservatives), all persecutions are equal, but some persecutions are more equal than others.

Moreover, few Christians and ministries in the West publicize the plight of their persecuted brothers and sisters. They are much more interested in seeker-sensitive church-growth schemes, Sunday morning self-help lectures, divorce-recovery seminars, mule-braying laughing revivals, stadium-glutting male-bonding Tupperware parties, hot-gospel evangelistic crusades, and the latest rap release on the Contemporary Christian Music circuit. The mention of Christians’ suffering defamation, torture, and murder around the globe is, well, inappropriate at best and tactless at worst. It is simply not a suitable subject for polite dinner conversation. Moreover it is frankly *inconvenient*. It impedes all the narcissistic fun operating under the guise of modern existential Christianity. Why worry much about a Christian pastor’s wife halfway around the world losing her husband to an atheistic regime and children to molestation when we can get hot-gospel flashes over the latest wave of loony but lucrative “high-voltage Holy-Ghost revival” in northwest Florida?

In stark contrast, when St. Paul stated succinctly, “Remember my bonds” (*Col. 4:18*), he could scarcely have uttered words more pregnant with meaning. Pathos is restrained, explanation avoided. The connotation is: “To describe the suffering would be superfluous; its mere mention will suffice to remind you of my plight and of your obligation.” Where one member of Christ’s body suffers, St. Paul elsewhere notes (*1 Cor. 12:26*), all members suffer. The very notion of an atomized or individualistic ecclesiology is a contradiction of terms—we are *obligated* to our brothers and sisters suffering for their faith, wherever they may be.

Our Obligation

Reminders of Westerners’ relative ease in the face of our brothers’ torment are not designed to induce guilt.

God has placed us here in the relatively free and affluent West for his sovereign purposes, and we can thank him for that blessing (1 Tim. 6:17b). Knowledge of our brethren's suffering, therefore, should not induce guilt, but *action*. St. James rhetorically inquires (2:14-16): "What doth it profit, my brethren, though if a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body; what doth it profit?"

*The record of cruelty of
secular empires in the
modern century makes
Torquemada look like a
mischievous teenager by
comparison.*

Chalcedon has chosen to focus its recent attention on Africa, where the most massive suffering by Christians is presently occurring. Peter Hammond is courageously taking the gospel right to the front lines of conflict—to Communists, Muslims, Animists, and even "ordinary" sinners. At great personal risk, he and his team relentlessly traverse sub-Saharan Africa with the world-conquering Faith. Peter goes places other Christians refuse to go—and therefore is poised to preach the word where others refuse to preach it and comfort the saints where others refuse to comfort them. He is doing what he can—and more.

None of us can do everything, but each of us can do something: supporting Peter Hammond and Frontline Fellowship, or other organizations assisting our persecuted brethren, like the Voice of the Martyrs (see page 16); contacting our political representatives to remind them to confront totalitarian nations about of the plight of those Christians they vex; sending e-mail and snail-mail messages to the churches and families of Christian prisoners; praying imprecatory prayer against those wicked regimes that torment our Christian brothers (Rev. 6:9-11; 19:1-4); and even, in some cases,

traveling to totalitarian nations to protest their cruel policies.

Each of us may be able to do only a little, but if we say we can do nothing, are we not belying our profession of faith, acknowledging by our actions (or inactions) that our religion is spurious?

Christian Victory in History

But this is not the whole story. The Bible does not predict that the godly will forever suffer at the hands of godless regimes. Indeed, the pledge of earthly victory for Christ's church is a theme not only of the Old Testament (Num. 14:21; Ps. 47:2, 3, 7, 8; 72; 86:9; Is. 2:2-4; 49:22-23), but of the book of Revelation as well (chapters 17-20). The Bible presents a *postmillennial* vision—Christ's church will be victorious *before* the second Advent. To assert that the church will forever suffer from an adversarial role with godless states is to deny Scripture. The gates of Hell will not prevail against Christ's church (Mt. 16:18). This means that when the church assaults the very gates of Hell, dragging away precious souls from Satan's depraved clutches (Jude 22-23), subordinating all nations to Christ's authority (Mt. 28:18-20), Satan and his hosts will be impotent to resist. Today, regimes murder Christians; one day, they will honor them.

Christianity is no dualistic religion. Contrary to medieval depictions, eternity and Heaven and Hell do not constitute ethereal modes of existence. They are not dimensions of blissful tranquillity, in contrast to an earthly life characterized by nothing more than sin, defeat, suffering, and persecution. On the contrary, Revelation depicts heaven as a place of vigorous activity, and the Bible elsewhere predicts that the earth—and a majority of mankind—will be progressively redeemed in time and history. Since the Fall was a historical fact, occurring while man was on probation, so the *reversal* of the Fall will be a historical fact, occurring while man is on "probation." Just as Satan used man to assault God's earthly kingdom, so God will use man to thwart Satan's earthly kingdom. To assert that earthly existence is inherently one of defeat and suffering is to deny the power of God in history. For further instruction on this theme, see Loraine Boettner's *The Millennium*, Ken Gentry's *He Shall Have Dominion*, Marcellus Kik's *An Eschatology of Victory*, R. J. Rushdoony's *God's Plan for Victory*, and the editor's *A Postmillennial Primer*.

We are enjoined today to assist our suffering brethren; and we enjoy the hope that one day *on earth* the intense suffering of God's saints will come to an end, when the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth as the waters cover the sea.

On Choosing Elders

By Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony

Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partakers of other men's sins: Keep thyself pure.

(1 Timothy 5:22)



The church is often judged, fairly or unfairly, by its leaders. Ministers and elders, by whatever title, are most visible to the world and the church. Fingers tend to point at them from every side. Paul had thus warned the church to compensate their elders generously ("double honor," v. 17) to protect

them from unfounded accusations (v. 19), and yet to rebuke elders' sin if real (v. 20). But if the position of elder was so important that it must be protected from miserliness and slander, so too must it be protected from unqualified applicants.

To "lay hands" on a man was to ordain him to the ministry. Paul here addresses the need for judicious caution. In some areas of life, such as business, quick decisions can be critical. The short-term consequences of an arrangement may outweigh all others. In business, however, such decisions can be reversed as necessity dictates. This is not the case with ministers. They are the caretakers of God's flock and must be carefully selected.

Anyone who has cared for sheep understands the nature of Christ's description of himself as the Good Shepherd and us as his sheep. Sheep are helpless and stupid creatures which have an amazing ability to do themselves harm. I well remember one of my first direct encounters with sheep. My wife's grandfather had a small flock. One Easter vacation we visited his Indiana farm. A mature ewe walked up a leaning board fence and stepped off into the next pasture. The fence sprang back up and the lamb could not re-cross. Separated from the rest of the flock for one mild spring night, this lamb lay down and died. Panic, without any injury, had killed it. My own children's experience with lambs has taught us that any small injury or change in their routine can set them "off their feed" for days. It is always a great relief when the last of them goes safely to auction at the county fair.

When Christ told Peter to feed his sheep, he asked him to assume a difficult role. Being a shepherd was a difficult responsibility. It involved the need constantly to monitor, guard, and doctor the flock. The shepherd was often alone in remote areas for long periods as the helpless

flock's only protection. Any laziness, negligence, or carelessness may have meant the loss of the flock. Many men could not handle what seemed like a simple job. It was a job one needed to be trained for in youth because it involved disciplined patience that had to be part of a man's character, not merely his habit. Cowboys in the American West were notorious for blowing a month's pay on one night of riotous living. Shepherders were famous for their character and thrift and often bought up large ranches with years of accumulated wages.

Paul urged Timothy to avoid any impetuous decision regarding ordination. Those who do not consider the helplessness of the flock may not see the danger in ordaining a man who is not up to the task. We must acknowledge men to be sinners and therefore recognize self-promoters and boasters as flawed in character and unsuitable for ordination. Ministers must be men characterized by sound faith, strength of character, personal faithfulness, and humility. Charismatic self-promoters tend to care too little about the commands of the Good Shepherd or the needs of the flock to be entrusted with its care.

Paul reminds Timothy not to be "partaker of other men's sins." Of course, this refers to sins in general; but it also applied to church leaders who fail to properly examine men before ordination. To assent to the wishes of others in ordaining a man to the ministry does not absolve one of responsibility. Reservations are never a substitute for a firm stand. A shepherd has grave responsibilities; a hireling does not. To ordain an unworthy man is to place an undependable man in charge of the sheep.

Timothy was warned that to ordain a man was an awesome responsibility. To be carried away by the folly of others was still to be carried away; he should not take part in their sin.

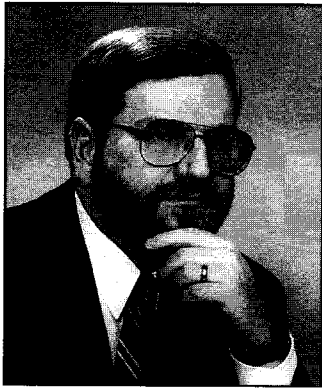
"Keep thyself pure," Paul warned. Again, this can be taken as a general admonition; but it is here associated with going along with the folly of others in choosing leaders for the church. But Paul is not urging us to avoid guilt by abandoning our roles every time we see folly in our church leadership. If we did this, we would be in a constant mode of retreat, because folly is in every heart. It does mean that we are to take a stand for what is right. There comes a time when a fight is lost no matter how well fought. To struggle past that point is useless. But if we abandon the field of conflict because a battle is looming, we abandon the cause. The counsel of a man who leaves the field of conflict will be dismissed; but a man who takes a stand is a man who must be reckoned with now and, if he is proven right, down the road. It takes wisdom to see if the battle you are fighting in your church is lost or yet raging.

Faithful Martyr or Evangelical Weenie?

A Practical Guide to Handling Persecution, Suffering and Adversity

By Rev. Brian M. Abshire

Introduction



Adversity is a tool in God's hand to train us for dominion in a sin-cursed world. And while it is a great blessing to live in a land where the blessings of the covenant are evident, with that great blessing also comes a greater responsibility. Affluence often makes us soft, not only around the

waistline, but in the head as well. American evangelicals have had it so easy for so long, that they have lost their edge. They fear affliction, persecution and suffering and therefore often do not have the moral fiber to take a stand. Can anyone deny that the psychological reason behind the almost fanatical devotion some Christians have to the "pre-trib rapture" is that they fear persecution and suffering? Again and again, pre-trib Christians have stated to me that God loves them too much to let them go through "The Great Tribulation." Their fear of suffering leads them to a defeatist theology and an abandonment of the cultural mandate. They are willing to give up because they fear the pain from standing up to a hostile world. It is interesting that in nations where the church has suffered the most horrendous persecution, almost no Christians look to the rapture for relief. They know what suffering is by experience; and while they are not romantic about it, at least they are schooled to handle adversity.

Modern American Christians need to re-discover a theology of suffering. The bill is now coming due for a hundred years of cultural retreat. The God-haters control our nation and may continue to control it for the foreseeable future. Like the martyrs in the early church, Christians today face a hostile culture and a state all too willing to persecute those who will not burn incense to Caesar. Think I am paranoid? Well, a lot of people died at Waco because the Federal government didn't like their theology. But they were just a bunch of heretics and cranks, weren't they? Surely it couldn't happen to us? (But

are you so sure YOUR church is BATF approved?)

Therefore, with the idea that evangelical weenies will never advance the kingdom, and that we need men who can persevere despite adversity, the following truths from 1 Peter 3 are offered for consideration. This is not intended to be the last word on how to handle difficult times, just some practical suggestions on how to develop the right mindset.

"And who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?" (1 Peter 3:13)

Let's put the issue of persecution into perspective. Essentially Peter is saying that if we are zealous for doing good, people will not harm us. The best way to deal with persecution is that insofar as it depends on us, never give them an excuse. To the contrary, we need to be as "wise as serpents" and as "gentle as doves." Let us develop a reputation for charity and good deeds. Even wicked men can recognize and approve good things, despite their moral bankruptcy. For example, even unregenerate men will throw themselves on hand grenades to save the lives of their friends (a stupid and foolish practice: if you have enough time to throw yourself on a grenade, you have enough time to pick it up and throw it back at the enemy). Even unrighteous men, because they are created in the image of God, can respect, admire, and approve of deeds of mercy, grace, charity, etc.

Thus even when they hate us, they can still approve of our righteous acts. In fact, it disarms them, confuses them and undercuts their own persecution of us. Early Christians were marched into the arena to be eaten by voracious wild animals. Rather than cower in fear or plead for mercy or agree to sacrifice to the emperor and be freed, they met their fate singing psalms and hymns to the glory of God. The Romans were astounded, and to a certain degree, the people themselves demanded an end to the execution of Christians. In an age of cruelty beyond our imagination, the Romans saw the dignity, courage and faith of our fathers and were moved by it. Not all men are epistemologically self-consistent with their own rebellion. They want to live autonomously, but they cannot; consequently, they find themselves loving and approving our good deeds.

However, the key here is "good deeds." If Christians

DO what is right, good, and proper with a humble attitude and servant's heart, they will be approved. But that's the problem, isn't it? What is the most common concept of a Christian today? A self-righteous, pompous, money-grabbing hypocrite interested only in fleecing poor, unsuspecting yokels while sleeping with their daughters. And let's be honest: that's not all that unfair a caricature of some segments of the Christian community. Christians are hated and ridiculed today not just because the world hates Christ, but because most Christians do NOT serve, minister, etc. Why was "Mother" Theresa held in such high esteem though she has such deviant theology? She put her faith into action. Even God-haters saw her good deeds and approved of them.

Sometimes, Christians elicit persecution, not because of their stand for truth, but because of their actions and demeanor. More than a few Southern Presbyterians have told me that the cause of Christian Reconstruction was destroyed in the PCA by the intemperate words of just a few people back in the late seventies and eighties. Reconstructionists were perceived as arrogant, obnoxious, insensitive and unkind. Since we are in the first stages of a great reform movement, the present battle has largely been one of words. And by getting in people's faces, we lost the propaganda war. If instead of just pointing out the errors, we had instead quietly built several successful charitable ministries, who knows how things might have been different? If nothing else, our critics would have left us alone, because we would have been doing good things and not seemed a threat to the status quo. Meanwhile, as we followed Christ's example, he would have brought others to us. But it is a whole lot easier to write witty tracts humiliating others than it is to quietly serve them.

Hence, diaconal work is not just something nice we ought to do; it may well be a central survival strategy and the salvation of the church during times of persecution. Caring for the poor; adopting unwanted babies; ministering to bums, schizophrenics and drug addicts (excuse me; I meant "the homeless") are not glamorous and not nearly as exciting as spitting in Caesar's face. But it is God's desire for his people.

"But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled. . . ."

(1 Peter 3:14)

Doing what is right, because it is right, will generally in God's providence inhibit and even prevent persecution. Persecution in the Roman Empire was often intense, but of limited duration because, quite frankly, the Romans needed our forefathers. Roman Christians were the hardest workers, the most conscientious craftsmen, the most loyal slaves, the most honest businessmen and sometimes the only ones who paid their taxes. If they killed too many of us, the Empire would have collapsed

of its own weight. Like the Jews in medieval Europe, we were a despised minority, but also an indispensable one.

However, if in his divine providence, God chooses to say "suffer," there is still no reason to lose hope: we are blessed! We are special! God uses suffering as a tool in his hands to do deep-heart surgery on his elect, preparing, molding, and reshaping us for the kingdom and his glory (*cf. Rom. 8:28-29ff*). And as others witness this work of grace in our lives, it moves them, warms them, softens them in ways we cannot understand, and thus our reward is eternal (*cf. Rom. 8:18*).

Therefore, while persecution should never be encouraged, Christianity is not masochism, it is not to be unduly feared. If it comes, it comes. Let us just make sure that we are persecuted for Christ's sake and not for being obnoxious.

"[B]ut sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence. . . ." (1 Peter 3:15)

This is probably the most often used proof-text for apologetics, but seldom is it considered in its proper context—suffering. When we suffer for righteousness' sake (whether by persecution, sickness, or whatever) we are given a powerful moral platform on which to share our hope in Christ. Pagans see the adversity we suffer, but we do not whine, complain or break God's law through revolutionary acts. We are able to suffer with dignity and persevere, despite adversity, because we "sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts" *i. e.*, Christ is actually Lord of our lives; we are submitted to him, not just in words, but in reality. Persecution and affliction are often ways of testing our faith to demonstrate to ourselves and the world what we really believe.

Hence we have to be ready. We have not only to understand the hope, but to be able to explain it to others, to articulate the gospel. It has gone out of style among many Christians, but we are called here to be able to testify of our trust and dependence in the saving work of Christ and of his generous provision. When pagans ask, "How can you still believe, even when you suffer such horrible things," we must be able to tell them why.

The word "defense" here is the Greek word *apologia*, which means "a word for." This was a legal term referring to a formal speech given in a courtroom for the defense. We get our theological term "apologetics" from this word. But sadly, most Christians, if they know what apologetics is, think of it in purely academic and philosophical terms. This does us a great disservice. The great spiritual battles will not be won in the academic classroom; this is the Greek heresy of neutrality. Instead, it is the spiritual power of a faithful servant who will not deny his master even to the point of death that has the power to transform the world.

An "apology" is not an excuse, but a reason for why

we do whatever we do. In this sense it means being able to demonstrate from the Scriptures why we believe what we believe, and why non-Christians ought to believe it as well! It means that we trust in the providence of God and his great and precious promises and that the worst that men can do to us is simply inconsequential to the life herein to come.

"[A]nd keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame." (1 Peter 3:16)

God places the responsibility on us to do what is right regardless of what others may do. Yes, there is injustice, ungodliness and evil in the world. We have lived in a Christian culture for so long that we take certain things for granted and get grossly outraged when we find some new example of corruption and tyranny in Washington. Some Christians seem to act as if *their* perfidy justifies *our* rebellion. But, regardless of what other men may do, our responsibility is to obey God. He expects us to be a light on a hill and to live a life above the moral cesspool of contemporary culture.

To have a clear conscience does not mean perfection, but rather dealing with our sin in an open and Biblical manner. If Christians had disciplined the tele-evangelists 15 years ago, the media would not have had to. Instead, we turned a blind eye to their wickedness, continued sending money to their "ministries" and refused to hold these men to account for their immorality. Eventually God exposed their wickedness to the entire world, and the church suffered a black eye from which she has not yet recovered. Every Christian organization since the Eighties has suffered hard times financially, partially due to cynicism stemming from the exposé of the scam artists a decade ago.

Furthermore, not only are we to have a clear conscience; we are to "keep" it; *i.e.*, to treasure it, to maintain it. A clear conscience is a precious thing and must not be squandered for the sake of expediency.

The "thing in which we are slandered" could and does apply to whatever issues are current at the time. But in context, I would argue that it most likely refers to rebellion, either to king, master, parent, husband, etc. The entire book of 1 Peter keeps going over the same two themes, the reality of persecution and the necessity of submission to lawful authority. It is not unreasonable to think that Christians were already getting a reputation for being a danger to the social order. The freedom that comes from Christ is a mystery to the world; the world cannot understand how Christians transcend man's rules, and yet do it effectively and successfully.

Yet it was not autonomy on their part, but a regenerated heart, submission to God's Law, and a full-orbed Faith, that freed men from the darkness, superstition, fear and tyranny of the godless life. True

freedom comes through being freed from the penalties of the Law, so that we might then embrace the Law as an expression of love and service to God. Hence, the world was rightly concerned that the Christian commitment to freedom might lead to anarchy in the home and state. They feared those who were outside the established order. Christians needed to demonstrate to fathers, masters and yes, even those pointy-headed civil bureaucrats, that we were responsible citizens; that we lived sober, self-disciplined lives. Therefore, our forebears were not a danger to them (at least in the way they thought of danger).

Similarly, we need to keep a low profile while we disarm the enemy's fears. Our victory will not come about by rebellion, revolution or violence; and we must constantly stress this aspect to whoever is in power. Our victory will come over time, gradually, as Christians love and serve (*Mk. 10:45ff*). Submissive wives, obedient children, respectful workers, diligent citizens who render "honor to whom honor and custom to whom custom" lessens the likelihood of persecution. Why do you think Paul commands Christians to pay their taxes (illegal taxes, ungodly taxes!), to a pagan and idolatrous state (*Rom. 13:5ff*)? Because though Caesar is often destructive, he is not stupid. He wants people who pay their taxes and will often turn a blind eye to a great many things as long as those revenues keep rolling in.

"[I]t is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong." (1 Peter 3:17)

Let's get something straight: suffering will happen; bad things do happen to good people and sometimes for no reason that we can see. God is sovereign; he knows what he is doing and why he is doing it. If he allows us some pain in this life, he will remember us in the life to come. Therefore, we need to make sure we are suffering for doing what is right, rather than suffering for being obnoxious, rebellious, sinful, etc. This is something that some well-intentioned brothers do not seem to understand. If the FBI is outside your house threatening to burn out your family, it is too late. Granted, there may be times when that will happen and there is nothing we can do (right now) except trust in the sovereignty of God. But sadly, sometimes, perhaps even often, the FBI is there because we did something stupid. We aroused their fears when we could have just laid low. We got involved in some sort of shady monetary deal, hid money from the tax man, wrote newsletters advocating violent overthrow of the government, and so forth. In short, we made ourselves a target (that's not always the case, but it has happened too many times to be ignored).

Look, sometimes you have to have an Alamo to give a General Houston time to gather and train the troops. But the men at the Alamo sacrificed themselves for a greater good. Sometimes, we get sacrificed because we are too stubborn and too stupid to shut our mouths. This is

no longer the land of the free and the home of the brave. We are living in a post-Christian nation that is already under God's judgment. Our goal ought to be to live our lives in submission to King Jesus despite the circumstances we find around us (2 Thes. 3:12, Rom. 12:18, etc.). We don't run in fear of the bad guys; we just bide our time until God gives us the victory. We don't have to launch suicidal frontal assaults against the citadels of the enemies; we can just work quietly and steadily, knowing that, eventually, God will destroy his enemies and we will inherit the earth.

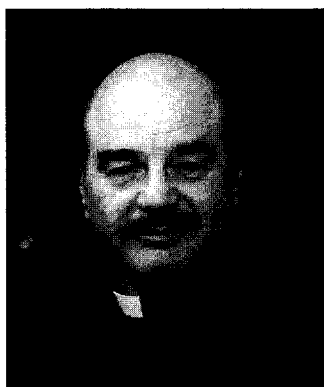
Conclusions and Applications

Suffering is an opportunity to glorify God, witness to men, and demonstrate that our faith is more than empty sentiment and pious platitudes. Suffering sharpens our focus and helps us keep our priorities straight. To get through it, we must constantly remember the sovereignty of God. There is always a reason, even if it is beyond human understanding. Our God is not vicious, arbitrary, etc. If we only trust him when things go the way we want them to, how are we any different from pagans in the world? Let's just make sure we are suffering for the right things, in the right way.

METHODS ARE PRIMARY

Thou Shalt Make Alive!

By Rev. Ellsworth McIntyre



Ask any normal adult, "Who was your favorite teacher and describe why that teacher was your favorite." You will hear a description of a teacher whose lessons brought some life-changing insight into the life of their student. "I found myself able for the first time. . ." or, "I discovered I had a talent. . ." or, "I

suddenly found a belief in my ability to change or to accomplish or to cope. . ." and other variations of self-discovery. In other words, the favorite teacher inspires the student to overcome.

When asked to describe this favorite teacher, you may be surprised to learn that the teacher is described as "stern," "a taskmaster" or "pleasant but not likely to accept excuses." A favorite teacher is someone who said over and over, "You can do it if you try harder. Don't make excuses. Try again." In other words, the difference between the poor teacher and the favorite is that a godly teacher placed the responsibility to learn on you. The poor teacher accepted your excuses and permitted you to blame your environment. The favorite teacher would not allow you to give up on yourself, but pressed you to heights of achievement that you previously thought out of reach. That's the method, but what is the source of this approach?

Blame Others and Give Up

First, we must grasp that the poor teacher is a humanist. Humanistic teachers constantly seek to "understand" the student. Once they observe a plausible excuse such as poor family background, poor self-esteem, bullying by other students, or even too much competition, the humanist, overflowing with sympathy, rushes to explain to the student why he is experiencing difficulty. The humanist theory is that once the student understands the reason for his difficulty, he can forgive himself and be happy in his failure. This psycho-babble enables the student to grow fond of his teacher and allows the humanist to turn sympathetically to bring "happiness" to the next troubled student.

Blame Yourself and Succeed

The godly teacher, on the other hand, says, "The trouble is with you." Perhaps not in those words, but that is in essence the thrust of his method. For example, generations of old-fashioned teachers used to tell people that they could overcome a bad habit or summon the strength to try again by saying, "Don't you have will power?"

Today's humanists say, "Oh, you're addicted to smoking, drinking, laziness, or sex. You're a victim. It's not your fault!" One method springs from the Bible; the other from the pit of hell. Our society too often accepts palliatives such as, "I feel your pain." Well-meaning do-gooders condemn the godly as "harsh," "stern," "cruel," or, most often, "unloving."

My Favorite Teacher

My favorite teacher was a 6'4" black sergeant named

Cheek. I met him as a 19-year-old recruit at the crack of a cold and rainy dawn at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. I can still smell his terrible cigarette, coffee, and rotten-teeth breath. He leaned down and shouted, "McIntyre, don't give me any of your lame-brained excuses. You failed! You didn't make your objective. Hear me, boy! NO EXCUSE, SIR!" The last "no excuse, sir" was delivered with a roaring shout straight in my face, bad breath mixed together with a mist of putrid spittle. (Please understand that this recollection is accurate in content, but that the actual expletives have been deleted.) Although Sgt. Cheek would be surprised to learn it, his instruction was actually Biblical. He would be even more surprised to learn that Christ influenced my life through his screaming criticism. Military tradition has more in common with historical Christianity than a humanist preacher can know. I thank the Lord Jesus Christ for that foul-mouthed teacher. He was guided by the Holy Spirit on that cold South Carolina morning. I have often prayed that the Lord would save Sgt. Cheek's soul. It would be grand to shake his hand in heaven. I have faith that his breath and speech will be cleaner in heaven. His pedagogy, I suspect, however guided by military tradition, cannot be more true in heaven than on that day on earth.

Is the Lord a Prisoner?

Who's your favorite teacher, and why? Beware, think,

or better yet, pray. Your answer may indicate whether you are at war with the God of the Bible. Rich folks have instinctively grasped this truth for years and sent their spoiled sons to military schools all over the world. In Florida, where I live, the local sheriffs have formed "boot camps" for juvenile delinquents. Their methods are straight out of covenant theology. Would to God they could add R. J. Rushdoony's robust Calvinism! It would lift their programs like an afterburner does a jet.

Good theology can boost the value of any parent's or teacher's ministry, but we must first recognize that our work may bring life or death to those under our authority. The word Christian was at first a term of derision. Our enemies spit the word Christian from clenched jaws as a curse. It means "little Christ." May God grant that all of us become little life-givers; it is our calling and our duty. "Thou shalt make alive."

Ellsworth McIntyre, one of America's leading Christian educators, is pastor of Nicene Covenant Church and founder of Grace Community Schools, and author of How to Become a Millionaire in Christian Education. He is available for speaking engagements, often without charge. For further information, contact him at 4405 Outer Drive, Naples, Florida 34112. E-mail EMcin2415@aol.com.

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The Triumph of the Church: A Biblical Defense of Postmillennialism

By Rev. William Einwechter

Editor's Introduction:

Forty years ago postmillennialism was barely a wave on the sea of conservative Christianity; apart from Boettner, Kik and, of course, Rushdoony, the waters of the Christian West were serenely premillennial and amillennial. Today, postmillennialism crests as a tsunami and threatens to crash and erode the entire shoreline of a bankrupt Western culture.

I suspect I have either read or am acquainted with every major postmillennial work written in the last five decades—as well as many written in the last four centuries. I can say without fear of reasonable contradiction that the article below by William Einwechter is the most compelling Biblical summary of the evidence for postmillennialism ever written. It hits all the main points convincingly and succinctly. Copy this article and pass it around to friends and inquirers.



From its earliest days and throughout its history, the church has faced a hostile world intent on its destruction. Today, the church is confronted with enemies on every side and the persecution of believers is severe in many nations. In the West, the church is no longer a respected

or dominant factor in society; instead, it is scorned and ridiculed. Evil is on the rise and a pagan worldview has captured the minds of both young and old as the influence of the Christian worldview recedes. Statism has gripped the nations of the world, and men have rejected the true Messiah for a messianic state; salvation is seen in terms of civil government power and legislation, and not in terms of the power of Christ's atoning blood. The laws of God have been set aside for the laws of men. The gospel is preached in many lands and there are many "professions" of faith, but the gospel that is preached is often devoid of a call to repentance and submission to the lordship of Christ. In the majority of churches, the

discipleship model is one of pietism, the theology is Arminian and man-centered, and the perspective on the future is pessimistic. As the church approaches the 21st century it is in retreat, plagued by false doctrine, division, and worldliness. The places where the church is exerting a culture-wide influence are few, if any. The enemies of God are gloating over the fall of the church into irrelevancy and impotence.

Given this sorry state of affairs, there seems to be little room for optimism for the followers of Jesus Christ. The dispensationalists tell us that we are witnessing the inevitable "failure of Christianity" and that the "church age" will end in apostasy in the church and the triumph of evil in the world.¹

John Walvoord states that in this "age of grace. . . things are going to get worse and worse. There will be more oppression, more injustice, more persecution, more immorality as the age wears on."² In terms of the future prospects of the church before the end of the age, dispensationalists say that things will actually get worse than they are now. Dispensationalists teach that in history and before the Second Coming, "kingdom power" is withheld from the church, and therefore, the church is "at the mercy of the powers of this world."³ Hence, the church will not overcome its enemies; rather its enemies will persecute and nearly crush the church⁴ (only a tattered remnant will be rescued by Jesus at the rapture).

But the dispensationalists (and any others who hold pessimistic views on the prospects of the church in this age) are seriously mistaken. Yes, the church is in a general state of weakness and decline in our day. However, this condition will not last; according to the Scriptures in both Old and New Testaments, *the church of Jesus Christ will triumph in history and before the Second Coming*. A brief survey of a few selected texts confirms the glorious future prospects of the church before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of the age.⁵

Old Testament Predictions of Triumph

The significance of the Old Testament for understanding the earthly triumph of the church is based on the New Testament teaching that the church is the new Israel, or "the Israel of God" (*Gal. 6:16*). The Apostle Paul affirms that believers in Jesus Christ are the true seed of Abraham (*Gal. 3:16-17, 26-29*), that elect Jews and Gentiles are one body in Christ (*Eph. 2:11-3:7*), that the Old Testament covenantal distinctions between them have

been removed in the church (*Eph. 2:11-3:7*), and that the New Testament church is the heir of the promises given to Israel (*Eph. 2:12, 19-22; 3:7*). Hence, the new covenant promises given to Israel are fulfilled in the church (*cf. Jer. 31:31-34 with Mt. 26:18; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:7-13; 10:12-18*). Jesus Christ himself declared that the kingdom of God would be taken from Israel and given to the church (*Mt. 8:10-12; 21:19, 43; Lk. 20:9-16*). Furthermore, as the new Israel of God, the church is designated by the same terminology that was used of Israel in the Old Testament (*cf. 1 Pet. 2:9; Gal. 3:29*). Hoekema states:

Is it not abundantly clear ... that the New Testament church is now the true Israel, in whom and through whom the promises made to Old Testament Israel are being fulfilled?⁶

Therefore, the Old Testament texts that predict the triumph of Israel, Zion, or Judah must be applied to the church, *i.e.*, they predict the triumph of the New Testament church.

Genesis 22:17. “. . . and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.”

This prediction appears in the Lord’s word of promise to Abraham in response to his faith and obedience in being willing to follow the Lord’s command to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. In context, this prophecy is a part of the comprehensive plan of God for the seed of Abraham: Abraham’s seed shall multiply and be as the stars of heaven in number; Abraham’s seed will possess the gate of his enemies; Abraham’s seed will be the means of blessing to all the nations of the earth (*Gen. 22:17-18*). Thus, three distinct aspects of the plan of God for Abraham’s seed are stated: fantastic growth, triumph over their enemies, and blessing to the nations through them. Carefully note the prediction of triumph. It is as important and distinct as the other two predictions.

The Hebrew word for “possess” (*yarash*) means to take, to take possession of, to inherit, dispossess, or to occupy. The word was commonly used in reference to Israel’s possession of the land of Canaan by conquering the inhabitants and occupying their land (*Dt. 31:3*). The specific object to be possessed in this prediction is the gate of their enemies. The word “gate” is filled with significance in the Old Testament. The gate was important for war, commerce, and civil government. In war, if one could penetrate the gates of a city, his victory was virtually assured; control of the gates determined the outcome of the conflict. In commerce, those who controlled the gates determined who could and who could not enter the city to do business. In civil government, the gate was the place where the elders and rulers of the people would sit to hold court and carry out the other aspects of civil ruling.

Therefore, to “possess the gate” of your enemy is to conquer him and take control of his city, commerce, and civil government. Genesis 22:17 is thus a powerful

prediction of the complete triumph of Christ and his church (the seed of Abraham) over all its enemies. In New Testament perspective, it promises the church complete dominion over the heathen and possession of all the nations of the earth, *i.e.*, all nations will be conquered by the gospel of Christ and be disciplined in the Christian Faith. Believers in Jesus Christ will dispossess the enemies of God and control the “gate” in all nations.

Psalm 110. This Messianic psalm is a declaration of the victorious reign of Christ. This psalm of David predicts the complete triumph of the exalted Christ and his people over the enemies of God. The psalm contains 3 sections: the Messiah’s exaltation and promised victorious reign (v. 1); the Messiah’s dominion, people, and priesthood (vv. 2-4); the Messiah’s victorious warfare (vv. 5-7). Each section emphasizes Christ’s power and his conquest of all who oppose his reign from the Father’s right hand.

This psalm is crucial for understanding the fact that the kingdom of Jesus Christ will triumph in history *before* the return of Christ. The text establishes that Christ will not leave his place at the Father’s right hand in heaven until *after* all his enemies have become his footstool (v. 1). Christ was exalted to the Father’s right hand at the time of his ascension (*Ac. 2:34-35; Heb. 1:13*), and he will not return until the time of the resurrection

at the last day when the last enemy, death, will be destroyed (*1 Cor. 15:20-28*). Therefore, the “day of thy [Christ’s] power” (v. 2) when Jesus Christ goes forth to rule and conquer in the midst of his enemies (v. 3) is the inter-advent period. The kingdom of Jesus Christ will triumph and all nations will submit to his reign during this age. The return of Christ marks the end of his mediatory reign (*1 Cor. 15:24-25*), and the promises of dominion given to Christ in the prophetic Scriptures are fulfilled *before* his Second Coming.

The church is specifically identified with Christ and his victory in verse 3.

The text says, “Thy people will be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauty of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of youth.” Here we learn that Christ will not be alone in the conflict, but that he has an army of loyal followers. This army of the Lord is described as being clothed in holy garments and as possessing the strength of youth. During the day of his power (this present age) Christ will be served by a host of willing followers who go with him into battle. The victorious warfare of the Messiah and his people is described in graphic terminology in verses 5-7. In Revelation 19:11-21 the fulfillment of Psalm 110 is presented to John in a vision of Jesus Christ, going forth to conquer his enemies. In that vision, as in Psalm 110:3, Christ is followed by an army clothed in holy garments (*Rev. 19:14, 19*). This army is the church. The church goes forth under Christ the King and shall one day share in his victory over all the enemies of God.

Isaiah 2:2-4. This prophecy of Isaiah also contains a glorious prediction of the triumph of the church.⁷ The

passage begins, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it" (v. 2). The "mountain of the Lord's house" is a reference to Zion. In the Old Testament, Zion was often used in a figurative way to refer to God's throne, kingdom, or people. Isaiah uses Zion in a non-literal sense to refer to Yahweh's throne and kingdom (8:18; 33:5, 20; 52:1-2; 24:23; 31:9). He also uses Zion to denote the people of Judah (10:24) and of those who are partakers of the Lord's salvation (12:6; 60:14) and are thus God's covenant people (51:16). In addition, Hebrews 12:22 identifies "mount Sion" as the church of Jesus Christ. Hence, we can conclude that the prophecy of Isaiah concerns the kingdom of God in general, and the church of Jesus Christ in particular. The statement that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be exalted over the mountains and hills indicates the establishment of the sovereign dominion of God's kingdom over all the nations and the triumph of Christ and his church over all false religions and idolatry.

Furthermore, the text says that "all nations shall flow" unto Zion to be taught the law of God so that they will be able to walk in God's "ways." This is a glorious picture of the nations coming to the church to be taught the word of God! It foretells the conversion of the nations to the Christian Faith. In that day the church will be the center for the faithful propagation of God's truth; for "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (v. 3). Because of the conversion of the nations to the worship and service of Jesus Christ, wars shall cease from the earth (v. 4).

That this prophecy looks forward to the triumph of the church is confirmed by the opening declaration that the exaltation of Zion and the conversion of the nations takes place "in the last days." This phrase is often used in the Old Testament as a technical term to designate the days of the Messiah and his kingdom (Gen. 49:1; Num. 24:14; Dan. 2:28; Hos 3:5; Mic. 4:1-3). The New Testament confirms this usage and explicitly identifies the age between the First and Second Comings of Christ as the "last days" (cf. Heb. 1:1-2; Acts 2:16-17; 2 Tim. 3:1; Jas. 5:3; 1 Jn. 2:17; 2 Pet. 3:3-4). In the New Testament, the "last days" does not refer to the days directly preceding Christ's coming or to a future millennial kingdom after Christ returns but to the entire inter-advent period. Therefore, all the details of Isaiah 2:2-4 must be fulfilled in and through the New Testament church in this present age.

New Testament Predictions of Triumph

The New Testament not only establishes that the church is the Israel of God and the heir of the Old Testament promises concerning the ascendancy of the covenant people of God over all their enemies. The New Testament also directly predicts the triumph of the church. Besides the texts that set forth in general terms

the invincible nature of the church,⁸ there is also explicit teaching concerning the victory of Christ's kingdom and people.

Matthew 28:18-20. The Great Commission is not normally understood as a prediction of the success of the church in converting the nations, but it should be. The plan of the Great Commission is for the church to disciple all nations. It is Christ's will that all peoples and lands be brought to believe in him and submit to his authority through the Spirit-empowered ministry of the church. The church is to preach the gospel and disciple the converts so that the law of God becomes the law of men and nations. Will Christ's will be fulfilled? Most certainly, for all authority is given to him in heaven and earth so that he might conquer his enemies and bring all nations under his rule (cf. Ps. 2:8; 110:1-3)! Since Christ has all authority in heaven and earth and the church goes forth in his name and with his power, who or what can stop the church from fulfilling its task? Christ specifically promises the church his presence to the end of the age so that the church can be assured that it can and will fulfill its divine mission. The Great Commission gives the New Testament perspective on how the Old Testament promises of the conversion of the nations will be fulfilled: it will be fulfilled as the church goes forth in the power of Jesus Christ to preach the gospel and disciple the nations in the law-word of God!

*Christ is at work in his
church at this very hour,
laying the foundation for
a great resurgence of the
Faith. We know this, not
by sight, but by faith in
the word of God.*

The Great Commission to the church is not the Great Disappointment to the Lord Jesus Christ (which it must be if the church fails to disciple the nations). Rather, the Great Commission is the declaration of the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth as to what he intends to accomplish through his church in this age. The Great Commission is a great prediction of the triumph of the church through the power of the risen Christ.

Matthew 13:31-43. The parables of the kingdom taught by Jesus during the days of his earthly ministry predict the triumph of the kingdom of Christ in this age. The parables of the leaven and the mustard seed both indicate that the kingdom of Christ will have a small

beginning, but that it shall grow to encompass all the earth and all nations. Note that the growth is a continuous process, beginning in the days of Christ and the apostles and continuing until that point in history when all nations shall come under Christ's reign. After Christ ascended to heaven, he sent his word and Spirit to the church so that it could continue the work that he had begun and be his agent for the fulfillment of the parables of the kingdom. The church, through Christ's power, operates unceasingly through history to leaven the world with the truth of God's word. The ultimate outcome of the church's ministry is plainly revealed here—all the nations will be converted and enter the kingdom of God in Christ. This is the church's triumph!

The parable of the wheat and tares (*Mt. 13:24, 36-43*) is also a prediction of the worldwide success of the kingdom of Christ. Note, first, that the field is the world and the field belongs to Christ. Second, consider that the "good seed" (believers) is in every part of the field, indicating converts to Christ in every land. Third, understand that at the end of the age the world is not a tare field with a few wheat stalks in it, but a wheat field with some tares present! True, the parable teaches that not every individual will be converted to Christ; but it also teaches that every nation will be part of the wheat field, *i.e.*, part of Christ's kingdom.

Romans 11:11-36. This text outlines the great purpose of God concerning ethnic Israel and the nations during the New Testament era. First, Israel will remain "blinded in part . . . until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (v. 25). Israel will be hardened in unbelief (except for a remnant according to election [*Rom. 11:1-7*]), until the fulness of Gentiles is accomplished. The phrase "fulness of the Gentiles" speaks of the time when the Gospel will have converted the nations to faith in Christ (as predicted in the Old Testament and by Christ). Second, Israel will be provoked to jealousy by the conversion of the nations, and then there will be mass conversions among the Jews and "all Israel will be saved" (vv. 26-27). The Jews will be converted and incorporated into the church. Third, the result of Israel's conversion will be "the reconciling of the world" and "life from the dead" (v. 15). Both of these phrases speak of the glorious future for the world as all the nations of the world (including Israel) come to faith in Jesus Christ. At that time in history, the world will truly experience "life from the dead" and the great Old Testament prophecies of world-wide blessing through Christ and his church (*e.g.*, *Isa. 2:2-4*) will come to pass!

Conclusion

The testimony of the word of God is clear concerning the future triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ and his church. It is hard sometimes to believe that such a glorious future awaits the church. In our day, the church is beset by problems on all sides and is in a state of decline and retreat. Many teach that the best days of the church are behind us that and all that we can expect is the increase of evil and the triumph of wickedness as the age progresses. But don't

believe one word of it. The Scripture declares that the best days for the church lie in the future; in fact, a most glorious future awaits the followers of Christ! Some have given up, and look only for Christ to rescue them from the present mess (and failure of the church) by the rapture. But don't be like them. Faithfully serve the Lord Jesus Christ, because the victory is ours through him who loved us. The church will triumph in his name over all the enemies of truth and righteousness. Christ is at work in his church at this very hour, laying the foundation for a great resurgence of the Faith.⁹ We know this, not by sight, but by faith in the word of God that proclaims the triumph of the church in the world and in history.

¹ For a discussion of the dispensational view of the "church age" and its pessimism, see William O. Einwechter, "The Failure of Christianity: The Dispensational View of the Church Age and Its Effect on Christian Political and Social Action," *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, vol. xiv, no. 1 (Fall 1996), 223-252.

² John F. Walvoord, "Why Must Christ Return?," in *Prophecy in the Seventies*, ed. Charles L. Feinberg (Chicago, 1971), 43.

³ Robert L. Saucy, "The Presence of the Kingdom and the Life of the Church," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145 (January - March 1988), 45.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ For a more in-depth study of the Scriptural teaching on the triumph of the church in this age see, Kenneth L. Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion* (Tyler, 1992); *idem.*, *The Greatness of the Great Commission* (Tyler, 1990); Rousas John Rushdoony, *God's Plan for Victory* (Vallecito, [1977] 1997); Andrew Sandlin, *A Postmillennial Primer* (Vallecito, 1997).

⁶ Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, 1979), 198.

⁷ For a detailed discussion of *Isa. 2:2-4*, see William O. Einwechter, "The Latter-Day Triumph of Christ and His Kingdom," *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, forthcoming.

⁸ cf. *Luke 11:20-22; Col. 2:15; 1 Cor. 15:20-28; Rev. 19:11-16; Mt. 16:18-19; Rom. 8:37; 16:20; 2 Cor. 2:14; 10:3-5; 1 Jn. 5:4.*

⁹ One indication of this is the Christian Reconstruction Movement. Christian Reconstruction is breathing new life into churches, individuals, and Christian organizations throughout the world. Because Christian Reconstruction is committed to the absolute authority of Christ and the word of God, to the application of the Faith to every sphere of life, and provides the church with a vision of victory, it is revitalizing the church in this hour of need. No wonder the enemies of Christ hate Christian Reconstruction with such a vehemence!

William O. Einwechter (Th.M.) is an ordained minister and the Pastor of Covenant Christian Church. He currently serves as the Vice-Moderator of the Association of Free Reformed Churches and Vice-President of the National Reform Association. He is also the author of the books Ethics and God's Law: An Introduction to Theonomy, and English Bible Translations: By What Standard? and editor of the newly released Explicitly Christian Politics. He can be contacted at 9385 Royer Rd., Mercersburg, PA 17236, or by e-mail at WEinwechte@aol.com.

Introducing The Voice of the Martyrs

By Tom White

The Background



It began with a prayer. The old Romanian carpenter who prayed could not have known all that would come as a result of that prayer. Yet he prayed day after day that before he died he would win one Jew for Christ. There were no Jews in his village; he was old and sick—too sick to travel in search of a Jew

to whom he could testify. So he prayed.

Then, one day, a young Jewish couple arrived in his village. The old carpenter immediately befriended them and lavished love and kindness on them. He continued to pray for them. He ministered to their every need and sought by every means he knew to lead them to Christ. He gave them a New Testament. In a short time, the young couple were converted and dedicated their lives to serving their risen, living Savior, Jesus Christ.

The young husband, Richard Wurmbrand, became a pastor. He ministered to his Romanian congregation and evangelized the Germans during their occupation of Romania during World War II, even though it meant that he and his bride were repeatedly beaten and arrested by the Nazis. When the Russians invaded Romania, the Wurmbrands evangelized them. In 1945, the Wurmbrands attended the infamous “Congress of the Cults” arranged by the Communist government of Romania. It provided an opportunity for the religious leaders of Romania to swear their allegiance to the godless government. Delegate after delegate stepped forward and swore loyalty to the Communist regime; when it was his turn, Wurmbrand reminded them that their duty is to glorify God and Christ alone.

The true church moved underground. Pastor Wurmbrand continued to minister to the Romanian Christians and evangelize the Russian occupiers. Eventually in 1948, he was arrested by the secret police; his wife Sabina was arrested in 1950. Both spent years in prison. Eventually they were ransomed from Romania for \$10,000. The Wurmbrands fled Romania and ended up in the United States in 1965.

It did not take long for Pastor Wurmbrand to make an impact on the American people. While in Berkeley, California in 1965, he saw an anti-war demonstration. He

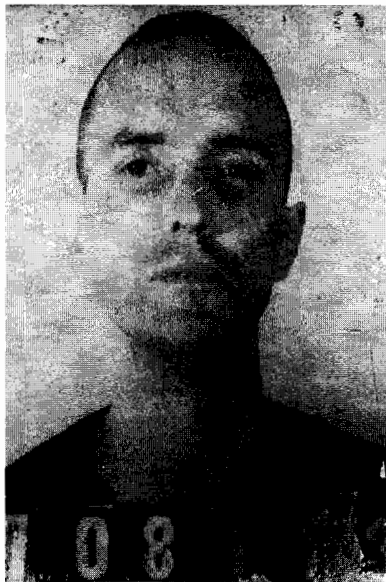
could not bear to hear the Communist government of Viet Nam praised. He forced the microphone from the moderator's hands and told the audience how he was brutalized by the Communists of Romania. He was arrested for this action. In May of 1966, he spoke before the Senate's Internal Security Subcommittee, showing them first hand the 18 deep torture wounds on his body. In 1966, Richard and Sabina began an international speaking tour revealing the atrocities committed against Christians in Communist countries. Richard became known as “The Voice of the Underground Church” and “The Iron Curtain Paul.”

The Ministry

Desiring to serve the persecuted church in a greater way, the Wurmbrands officially began a ministry dedicated to this goal in April, 1967. The ministry began as “Jesus to the Communist World” and was later renamed “The Voice of the Martyrs.” The ministry has five purposes: “1) To provide Christians with Bibles, literature and broadcasts in their own language in restricted areas of the world where Christians are persecuted; 2) To give relief to the families of Christian martyrs; 3) To undertake projects of encouragement to help believers rebuild their lives and witness in countries that have suffered oppression; 4) To win to Christ those who are opposed to the gospel; and 5) To inform the world about atrocities committed against Christians and about the courage and faith of the persecuted” (*The Voice of the Martyrs*, 1997 Special Issue). This work is conducted in more than 80 nations.

VOM provides Bibles and Christian literature to Christians around the world. The collapse of the Iron Curtain made it possible for shipments of literature and aid to be sent openly into countries—such as Romania and the Communist states—that had once been denied free access to literature. However, VOM's primary focus is taking Bibles into restricted nations. Innovative means have to be used in “restricted” countries. One such innovation is the Scripture balloons which have been launched over North Korea for more than 20 years. About 100,000 balloons containing 49 pages of Scripture are launched at night.

VOM ministers relief to persecuted Christians and to the families of martyrs through shipments of aid. One special shipment consists of “LifePaks” which include hoes, mosquito nets, soap, cooking pots, a water filter, Bible and other necessary items. LifePaks (costing \$45.00 each) are routinely sponsored by VOM readers and sent to areas where Christians have lost their earthly



Tom White, in Cuban prison for
his faith

possessions. VOM sponsors a seasonal program called Christmas Care in which individuals can sponsor a Christmas box filled with toys and a New Testament for needy children. VOM has also taken food, medical help and nutritional goods into refugee camps to minister to those fleeing persecution.

In addition to the physical aid, VOM seeks to encourage the

persecuted by routinely providing names and addresses of those held in prison or under house arrest so that they may receive letters from other Christians. One Vietnamese Pastor received over 3,000 letters. Often the VOM magazine has a Scripture verse written in a foreign language that can be hand copied and sent to the prisoners. VOM also provides addresses of government officials and gives helpful pointers to be used in writing

to them to protest the imprisonment and treatment of Christians in prison or under house arrest. Letters from VOM readers have often helped win the release of believers in prison.

VOM provides at its website up-to-the-date information about the persecuted church: www.persecution.com. VOM also has a program called "LINK INTERNATIONAL Homeschooler" which helps Christian home school families in the United States minister to Christian families in the world who are suffering for their faith. It contains a newsletter which contains features, stories and instructional unit studies about the featured country. LINK INTERNATIONAL Classroom Edition is available for Christian schools.

Tom White has worked with The Voice of the Martyrs since 1971. While teaching English in the Cayman Islands in the 1970s, he made repeated trips to Cuba dropping thousands of gospels and Bible portions into the ocean currents and through the air corridors. In May 1979 his plane crashed on a Cuban highway; he was arrested by Cuban officials. Eventually he was released in 1980 after many appeals from Mother Teresa and U. S. Congressmen. He is the author of "God's Missiles Over Cuba," "The Spiritual Battle for Cuba," "A Window in Time," and "Between Two Tigers." Tom is the director of The Voice of the Martyrs, Inc. You can reach VOM at P. O. Box 443, Bartlesville, OK 74005-0443, (918) 337-8015, fax (918) 338-0189, email vomusa@aol.com, website: www.persecution.com.

Persecution of Christians Around the World: A Voice of the Martyrs Special Report By Tom White

In its 1998 Special Issue, *The Voice of the Martyrs* listed 42 countries where Christians are facing persecution in its various forms: arrest, imprisonment, physical torture and death. The following is a summary of what is happening to the church in the world. It is compiled from reports published in various issues of *The Voice of the Martyrs* magazine.

Afghanistan

Muslim rule is very oppressive. Women are no longer allowed to attend school or hold jobs. Men must adhere to a very strict Islamic code and are required to have beards. Non-Muslims are denied freedom of assembly; open profession of faith often leads to death.

Algeria

Christians suffer from a reign of violence from the Islamic Salvation Front. These rebels have been known to march through towns and slit the throats of anyone who has not lived up to his call to Islamic fundamentalism. Bitter memories of atrocities committed by "Christian" colonialists have destroyed the credibility of anything associated with Christianity. Often, Christian girls are forced to marry Muslims. Intimidation from family, friends and Muslim extremists frequently causes believers to withdraw from Christian fellowship.

Azerbaijan

Although Azerbaijan officially guarantees religious

freedom, the nationalists are becoming more Islamic and anti-Christian. Many Armenian and Russian Christians have fled the country since the 1989 massacre. Armenian churches have been closed and very few Christians would feel secure attending them if they were open.

Bangladesh

Although officially a democracy, *coup* attempts and corruption threaten its stability. The government and constitution allow religious freedom and do not condone persecution. However, at the village level, persecution is a common occurrence in this Muslim nation. The rise of a more radical interpretation of Islam threatens Christian work and witness. Believers are often denied access to public water wells. Muslim extremists have also destroyed rickshaws owned by believers.

When Abdul and Mjura M. became Christians, their neighbors would not let them drink from the well. Mjura and her children have to walk 1 mile to the river 3 times a day with clay pots to get water. Sometimes the river water makes them sick. The Muslim court in the village has initiated a court case against them. Abdul's uncle took their inheritance of land away. While they worship with other believers, neighbors shout in the window and throw dirt at the house. Mjura had to go to the hospital after her relatives beat her with a stick. They hit her in the ear, grabbed her hair, and jerked her around.

Milon G. sells clothing. After his conversion, he began placing Christian books in his shop. Muslim men came in and took clothing from his shop, refusing to pay for it. If Milon asked for money, they threatened to beat him. By bicycle, he carries Christian literature to other villages even though groups of Muslims threaten to cut off his feet so he can no longer travel.

For the last year, neighbors have not allowed visitors to cross their land to come and visit Abdul and Joina R. They cannot get agricultural loans for their rice field. Abdul was in bed for a month as a result of beatings.

Bhutan

All public worship and evangelism by non-Buddhists is illegal. Pastor Norbu who preached openly among the mountain tribal people was arrested, thrown into prison and tortured, suffering severe head injuries. He died of a heart attack 10 days after his release.

Brunei

Christian leaders were expelled in 1991; Christian literature is banned, as is the celebration of Christmas. Muslims control the school systems. Conversion to Christianity is restricted since it is illegal to evangelize Muslims.

China

"Re-education" through labor camps detains hundreds of thousands without a hearing each year. China's "strike-hard" policy has "struck" hardest on Christians. More

Christians are in prison or under detention than in any other country in the world. The confiscation of church property and Bibles continues—even Bibles officially printed by the government. It is estimated that 3,000 Chinese come to Christ each day. The house church movement comprises approximately 90 percent of China's Christians and endures unimaginable persecution.

Fu Xi Qui (Bob Fu) and his wife were arrested on May 9, 1996 for having a secret Christian training school where believers were equipped for Christian work and witness in the widespread house church movement. After being released, they fled to Hong Kong and then tried to get out of there before the Communist takeover. This was possible only because of intervention of many United States congressmen and senators.

Top Christian leaders were imprisoned and condemned as rebels. One leader, Peter Xu, leads several million Christians all over China. The government calls him a cult leader instead of a leader of unregistered home churches that number in the millions.

In 1996 the local Three-Self Patriotic Movement occupied a church building and appointed itself elders and a pastor from among 100 believers who agreed to register. The remaining 700 members were told that if they wanted to worship in their church they must accept TSPM leadership. Church leaders decided they would pull out and organize small groups and worship at home.

On March 15, 1996 a church near Beijing was raided by police taking Christian literature and all the chairs in the room. It was raided again 3 months later and then 7 days after that—each time the church property being confiscated. Police also conducted body searches of believers and threatened to throw excrement over them and their houses if they were caught worshipping together again.

Police raided a church in Zhaosu County. Members were severely beaten and had boiling water thrown in their faces when they refused to comply with police orders. Twelve of the 17 were released after 5 women took responsibility for the gathering.

Comoro Islands

A new constitution approved by 85% of the voters increased the influence of Islam in this country. All public witness by Christians is now forbidden and believers are not allowed to meet openly.

Cuba

Although Cuba's constitution was amended in 1992 to guarantee freedom of religion, Christians are still imprisoned and churches are destroyed. Bibles are confiscated from passengers entering Cuban airports. Alarmed at the growth of house churches (over 800 in the last five years) the Ministry of Justice in 1996 ordered the closure of all house churches. Believers refused to comply with this order.

A regulation enacted in December, 1995 forbade the

sale of paper, ink, typewriters, computers and mechanical parts of photocopiers and printing presses to religious organizations.

The Minister of Religion, an atheist, refuses to allow new church buildings to be built. Seventy churches were closed in the months of October and November, 1996.

Mario Gomez began to show Christian videos in his home almost every day. According to the Communist government, this was a violation of religious freedom. Castro says Cubans are not allowed to learn about Christ in their own homes. Marco was sentenced to 18 months in prison for the crime of "violation of the home."

Pastor Bladimir Mato was living in a small house that was used for worship. The police threw out the family's furniture and belongings and moved another family into the house. Mato and family are now living in a filthy hut.

Since 1963, members of the church in Banes have made numerous requests that their church be reopened. Finally the church re-opened in 1992. But on June 23, 1997 police closed the church again and stole the lantern, pulpit, benches and a guitar. The government threatened to throw Pastor Samuel Ricardo, his wife and baby out of the humble church parsonage onto the street.

Pastor Andres Olivares, president of Baptist convention, organized a letter-writing campaign to protest closing of churches in Cuba. He was threatened with 6 years of prison.

The government also refuses legal status to five Christian denominations. A Salvation Army pastor was imprisoned 3 months for allowing one of the non-legal groups to worship in his church.

On September 11, 1996 authorities used a bulldozer to tear down the construction of an Assembly of God Church in Guayabo, Jimaguayu. This church was founded by Pastor Orson Vila who was recently released from prison. The current pastor was sent to jail for a day.

Cyprus

In the Turkish north where almost everyone is Muslim, no active witness is tolerated, and the church is limited to a few small groups of believers.

Egypt

The country's constitution gives preference to Muslims. Christians are treated as second-class citizens, being denied political representation and discriminated against in employment. An 1856 Ottoman Empire law is used to keep churches from being built, repaired or repainted without the permission of the president. In February, 1997 Muslim militants murdered 15 Christians inside their place of worship.

Mohammed Wagdie Dorrah, a Muslim convert to Christianity, was arrested October 3, 1996 and accused of encouraging division between Christians and Muslims. He had previously been detained for two weeks and tortured in January, 1995 because of his conversion. He was tortured with electric burners, in addition to being

kicked, slapped and hanged by his hands. He was arrested a second time April 13, 1996 and dismissed on April 21. He refused to be a spy for the secret police and inform on the church and other Muslims who converted to Christianity.

Equatorial Guinea

Open witness is banned and no new church denominations are approved. There are few missionaries.

Indonesia

The Muslim government forces people to carry an identification card that identifies religious status. Although the government says all may choose to follow Christianity, Islam, Buddhism or Hinduism, Muslims have been receiving preferential treatment. Islam's political strength is used to limit evangelism and reduce Christian influence on public life. Since early 1996, mobs of Muslim extremists have burned or destroyed over 50 church buildings. Several Christians have died in the fires.

On May 23, 1997 a mob rioted in Banjarmasin. They set fire to the church called Katedral Keluarga Kudus. When the mob left, ten people hiding inside came out and extinguished the fire. The mob returned and set the church on fire again. People continued to put out the fire until the military arrived to assist them.

The mob targeted another church for a tribal people and set it on fire. The fire got out of control and burned several homes as well. Fourteen churches were destroyed in all. A large shopping center was also burned, killing hundreds of people trapped inside. The government issued no comment on the incident.

On May 28, 1997 a mob of Muslims destroyed three churches in Bangli. On the same day churches in other areas were destroyed. Immanuel Christian School in Situbondo was also burned.

Iran

Although there are constitutional guarantees of religious freedom, Shiite Muslims are set on crushing any faith but Islam. All open witness is banned and the government sends spies to monitor Christian groups. Believers are discriminated against in education, employment and property ownership. Several pastors have been murdered in the last 5 years.

Iraq

Religions are accepted by their level of loyalty to Saddam Hussein's regime. The import of Christian literature is restricted. After the Persian Gulf War, Iraq killed select ethnic groups, including Christians. Tens of thousands were gassed, shot, or forced to leave their homes.

Kuwait

Sunni Islam is the state religion. Only Muslims may become citizens. Christians have the freedom to live and work in Kuwait, but worship must be within the Christian

community (a physical location). Evangelism of Kuwaitis is forbidden. The government provides financial incentives for those who claim to be Muslim and has even purchased large quantities of Bibles in order to burn them.

Laos

The three or four Christian churches in the capital city of Vientiane are considered potentially subversive and are closely monitored by the government. Under the "New Mechanism" implemented in some districts, those who do not convert to Buddhism or animism can be forcibly removed from the district.

An evangelist concluded a 22-day evangelistic campaign at a Khmu village in the central region of Laos. He planted a church with 100 believers. Soon after the evangelist left, persecution began. A young leader of the new church was publicly bound in chains and placed in a pit for four days. As of August 15, he was under house arrest with freedom only to see his family and work in the field. Twenty-five of the 100 recanted their faith, 75 have not. The authorities have agreed to release the man if all the villagers recant their faith.

Libya

Qadhafi has attempted to appease the growing number of Muslims in his country by broadening Islamic law. Evangelism is difficult. Christian literature may enter only through secretive means. There are very few Libyan believers. Almost all Christians are foreign workers and their congregations are strictly monitored by the government.

Malaysia

Although the constitution guarantees religious freedom, fundamentalist Muslims are doing everything in their power politically to inhibit Christian evangelism. All Christian literature printed must be for non-Malays only. Ethnic Malays are not allowed to have a Christian place of worship. The Bible and many other Christian books containing certain phrases common to Indonesian have been banned by the government to prevent the unauthorized use of religious terms. Permits for building churches are rarely granted and house churches are strongly discouraged. Freedom of speech and public assembly are also restricted.

Mauritania

Mauritania is one of the most restricted nations in the world. Only one-fifth of one percent of the population is Christian. It is illegal for citizens to enter non-Muslim households. By law, anyone who confesses Christ faces the death penalty. People who have simply shown interest in the gospel have found themselves in prison facing torture. Christian literature and religious broadcasts are not allowed.

Morocco

King Hasson is committed to the preservation of Islam

as the religion of all Moroccans. Thus, Morocco is a hostile environment of Christians; anyone who comes to Christ can face charges of treachery and illegal contact with foreign missions. Many have endured ostracism from their families, loss of employment, and imprisonment. Missionary work is not permitted, but many foreign Christians are working in secular roles hoping quietly to win souls to Christ.

Nigeria

Nigeria's military government engages in arbitrary arrest, violence, torture, and executions to maintain power. Islam is given preferential treatment over Christianity. Northern Nigeria's predominately Muslim population often terrorizes Christians, destroying churches and occasionally killing believers. The government turns a blind eye to this injustice.

North Korea

Considered one of the most repressive and isolated Communist regimes in the world today, North Korea denies every kind of human right to its citizens. Christians must practice their faith in deep secrecy and constant danger.

Pakistan

Militant Islamic forces in Pakistan have initiated much violence against Christians. Many Christians have been falsely accused of breaking law 295c—blaspheming Mohammed, a crime punishable by death. Some have been killed by mobs after being acquitted of such charges.

In February, 1997 Pakistani police started a rumor that Christians had destroyed a Koran and littered its torn pages in a Muslim mosque. A mob of 30,000 Muslims descended on Christian villages burning churches, destroying shops and demolishing every home in sight. Vehicles were burned, water tanks destroyed, as well as the electric system. Nearly 15,000 Christians lost their homes and personal property.

Saleema, a 17-year-old Christian, witnessed to an 18-year-old Muslim, Raheela. Raheela made a profession of faith in Christ. When her parents found out, they became furious. Raheela refused to marry the Muslim man her parents had arranged. She ran to Saleema and her pastor for counsel. Raheela's parents had Saleema, her pastor and his family arrested. Both Saleema and the pastor were tortured severely. Raheela's parents killed her and charged Saleema with murder. An attorney was hired, and able to have charges reduced to "converting a Muslim." She was released on bail August 1, 1997 and is awaiting trial. She and her family remain in hiding as their lives have been threatened.

A judge who acquitted 2 Christian men of the charge of blaspheming Mohammed was found murdered on Oct. 10, 1997. More than 12 Pakistani Christians have recently been accused under the harsh blasphemy laws. Five were illegally murdered by Muslim extremists after they were

acquitted by the courts. Muslims protesting Manzoor Masih's acquittal gunned him down on the streets of Lahore in the spring of 1994. Others acquitted have fled the country for safety.

On October 14, 1997 in a village near Multan, Brothers Ayoob and Samsoon Masih, who had been arrested on charges of blasphemy, were attacked and heavily beaten. Their family was forced to flee their homes for safety, leaving their cattle behind. Samsoon was released from jail a few days later and once again beaten.

Philippines

A 10-year-old Filipino girl was beaten to death by her father after she professed Christ. Before she died, she held the bloody dress she was wearing when she was beaten and told the missionary, "I just want Jesus to know that I was willing to bleed for him."

In addition to serving as pastor of the Alliance Church in Ipil, Zamoanga Del Sur, Wenifredo Rio was actively supporting 10 church planters mostly working where Islam is dominant. He established a business to support the church planters in his area. He operated several passenger vehicles. He received extortion letters from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebels who threatened to kidnap him if he would not pay their demands for "revolutionary taxes." He was kidnapped in July, 1997. On the way to collect the ransom of approximately \$2,000 from Rio's wife, his captors asked a fisherman if there were any soldiers close by. The fisherman casually answered there was a military detachment nearby. Upon hearing this, the rebels shot Rio in the back of the head.

Four Christian families from Negros fled to Mendoro because of severe persecution by Communists. They abandoned their farmland, homes, animals and other possessions after their church was burned and a layman abducted—his whereabouts is still unknown.

VOM correspondent Pastor "Raul" was resting after carrying a projector and other equipment for 21 miles. He was attacked by a group of men who destroyed most of his equipment.

Qatar

The strict branch of Sunni Islam, Wahabbi, is the state religion. Criticism of the Muslim faith or the ruling family is a crime. Women are not allowed to drive or travel abroad without the permission of male relatives. Foreign believers may not worship publicly or celebrate Christmas.

Russia

In 1997, Boris Yeltsin signed a bill restricting religious freedom in Russia. This bill states that a church cannot exist if it was not registered fifteen years ago when Russia was the Soviet Union, ruling under communism. Thousands of believers—Baptists, Pentecostals, and others—who did not compromise under Communist Russia are now once again "illegal." Although VOM has

not officially considered Russia as a "restricted" nation, VOM is watching this nation closely since any piece of legislation could cause the table to turn.

Saudi Arabia

Anyone who does mission work or converts a Muslim faces jail, expulsion, or execution. Even foreign Christians visiting Saudi Arabia are not allowed to meet together and worship. Since 1992, 360 cases have been documented in which Christian expatriates were arrested for taking part in private worship. It has been reported that Christians have been arrested on false charges, imprisoned, and even beheaded because of their faith.

Somalia

For Christians, fellowship with other believers is dangerous since Muslim persecution is strong in many parts of the country. Many Christians have fled to neighboring countries.

Sri Lanka

Christians are persecuted by the Buddhist majority. Free choice of one's profession and access to schooling are restricted for Christians.

Syria

In this secular state, Muslims are still given preferential treatment in many areas of society. The Emergency Law of 1963 allows authorities to conduct "preventative" arrests and hold detainees without any legal safeguards. Christians find it difficult to spread the gospel freely under such conditions. Missionaries are not allowed visas, so Christians are able to exhibit their faith only in professional and informal friendship settings.

Tibet (China)

Today, Christians find themselves trapped between an oppressive religious system, and China's oppressive government. By one estimate, there may be only 300 believers in Tibet. Opposed by their government, their culture, and a false religion, Buddhists who convert to Christianity must overcome many obstacles to grow in Christ.

Turkey

For the few in Turkey who dare profess Christ, life can be dangerous. Many believers have been harassed, threatened, and imprisoned for their faith in Christ. Evangelizing is difficult because Turks tend to place Christians in the same category as Armenian terrorists and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Turkmenistan

One church in the capital city of Ashkebad, which had grown to over 100 members, was forced to close in late May, 1997 as a result of a new law passed restricting Christian worship. Christian students attending

universities have been threatened with expulsion from school.

United Arab Emirates

Sunni Islam is the official religion. Only foreign Christians have freedom to worship and witness. Christian education and witnessing to nationals are severely restricted.

Uzbekistan

Christians are being persecuted under the hand of Islam. Each church must have an official government registration in order to hold services. Police make unannounced visits to churches and demand to see their registration papers. Churches that cannot immediately produce their registration are closed and their doors sealed by police. Pastors have been arrested and imprisoned, and members threatened.

Vietnam

Police monitor attendance at church services in Hanoi. Only 9 church buildings are allowed to remain open in northern Vietnam where believers may legally worship. Thousands of other believers must worship "illegally." Christians are arrested if caught evangelizing outside all but a few large cities.

Police confiscate house church Christian's motorcycles, possessions and state registration to their houses (this means they can be evicted). They also take their identification cards and threaten them with jail. The police also fine house churches.

Believers are harassed, beaten and imprisoned for illegally preaching and organizing evangelistic activities.

Newspaper reports state that leaders caught preaching and evangelizing among the Hmong tribe have been executed. The Communist government forbids the Hmong to read anything in their own language.

Bui Van Se and Nguyen Huu Liem of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) were arrested for illegally organizing evangelistic activities. They were fined the equivalent of 2 months' salary in Saigon.

To Dinh Trung was imprisoned from April 5, 1995 to April 30, 1998 for sharing the gospel with K'Ho tribal villagers. He was taken off his bike, beaten by police in front of the village, videotaped and ridiculed. He was held

for 6 months until his trial on Oct. 4, 1995. When he asked the judge if the beating and the imprisonment without charges were legal, he was told to shut up and given an unlawful prison sentence of 3 years.

Three evangelists are being held in a northern Vietnam prison. Nguyen Van Vuong was imprisoned and his possessions confiscated on March 3, 1996. He is serving a three-year sentence for preaching, as are Lo Van Hoa and Lo Van Hen. When arrested, Hoa was forced to stand motionless in the hot sun all day. When Hen was taken to prison his legs were tightly chained, causing them to swell and cut off circulation. All three evangelists were charged with "preaching the gospel without permission, holding illegal meetings, causing rebellions and inciting a crowd to riot." They have been forced into hard labor; when the daily quota is not met, they are beaten and suffer a severe lack of food. For three months they were fed rice mixed with sand, but eventually began receiving clean rice. The authorities frequently terrorize their families and make it very difficult for the children to enroll in school.

Christians ride motorbikes up to 12 hours on crude dirt roads to share the gospel with tribes that have never heard the name Jesus. They have to travel at night to avoid run-ins with police.

Pastor Nguyen Lap Ma and his family have been under house arrest for over 15 years for refusing to give the Christian Missionary Alliance Church at Can Tho to the Communists.

Yemen

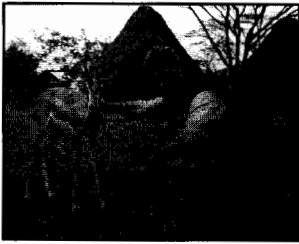
Yemen is one of the world's least evangelized countries. The government will not allow the few resident Christians to witness. Their walk is difficult due to discouragement and isolation from the body.

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The Persecution Of Christians In Africa

By Peter Hammond



Africa presents the greatest challenges and opportunities for missionary service in the world today. The most intensive human suffering, the largest number of wars, the worst famines and the most severe persecutions are all

concentrated in Africa. Yet Africa also demonstrates the greatest spiritual hunger and the greatest openness to the Gospel of Christ. I believe Africa also has the most promising potential for Biblical reformation and revival.

No other continent has suffered such a series of natural and man-made disasters over the last 40 years. Famines, droughts, locusts, pestilences, animism, Islam, communism, corruption, maladministration and civil wars have plagued Africa.

Africa has experienced over 110 violent changes of leadership since 1952. Every year (except 1988) since 1963 has seen at least one violent overthrow of a government in Africa. At present there are 13 wars raging in Africa.

Africa is a continent in conflict. The forces of Islam, communism and witchcraft are engaged in a life-and-death struggle against the church of Christ. At stake is the soul of a continent.

Communist Persecution

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, communist regimes in Ethiopia, Mozambique and Angola waged merciless campaigns of persecution against the Christians in their countries (and they sponsored Marxist terrorists to export their communist terror to neighboring countries). Literally thousands of churches were confiscated or destroyed in each of these three Marxist states. And hundreds of thousands of Christians died because of the persecution in Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia.

I saw with my own eyes over one hundred burned-out churches and walked amid the ashes of dozens of burned-down villages in Mozambique and Angola. During one Bible-smuggling mission (when I was escorting a team of doctors and nurses to provide emergency medical treatment to Christians suffering in Mozambique), I was captured by communist troops. We were then flown by Russian pilots to interrogation and incarceration in the notorious Machava security prison. When we asked, the Russian pilots in the helicopter gunships were quite open with us that they were burning down the crops and destroying the villages *"to starve out the resistance"*!

The walls of each of the solitary confinement cells in which our team was imprisoned bore eloquent testimony to the communist campaign of persecution. The walls of our cells were covered in Christian messages scratched on with finger nails and little pieces of stone: *"Please God, help me"*; *"Jesus is my Lord and Savior"*; *"I haven't eaten in 38 days"*; *"I haven't seen the sun in 134 days"*; *"God is my refuge"*; many verses, some crosses and fish symbols. We were clearly not the first Christians imprisoned in those cells. Nor were we the last.

The communist attempts to eradicate the Christian Faith in Africa have been an abject failure. In 1976 the first dictator of Angola, Agostino Neto, boasted that *"within 20 years there won't be a Bible or a church left in Angola. I will have eradicated Christianity!"*

The resultant church- and Bible-burning spree by the Cuban troops who had installed Neto came to an abrupt halt when Neto, suddenly and inexplicably, died. Many Angolan Christians saw his demise as God's judgment in answer to the imprecatory prayers prayed by the martyrs.

Today (22 years after Neto's boast) the church in Angola is stronger and more numerous than ever before. And Frontline Fellowship has smuggled in thousands of Bibles more than had ever existed in Angola.

The *"Red Terror"* in Ethiopia was dramatically curtailed in 1991 with the overthrow of Marxist dictator Mengistu. The huge statue of Lenin in the capital Addis Ababa was toppled and the thousands of Russian, East German and Cuban troops fled in disgrace. As Mengistu fled into exile under the protection of fellow Marxist Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, the churches in Ethiopia surveyed the devastating results of 18 years of Marxist persecution. Hundreds of thousands had been martyred. Yet the Protestants in Ethiopia had multiplied from 241,000 in 1960 to over 6 million today!

Animist Persecution

On April 6, 1994 one of the most dreadful campaigns of mass murder was unleashed upon the Tutsi Christians in Rwanda. In just 100 days, more people had been slaughtered with machetes and clubs than had died from atomic weapons in all of history. Over 500,000 people, mostly Christians, were murdered in the Rwandan holocaust. And more Rwandeze were killed in churches than anywhere else.

I walked inside the bloodied, bullet and shrapnel-scarred churches, knee-deep in corpses. Splattered with blood, blackened by fire, shattered by blasts of hand grenades—virtually every room in every church testified to the hatred of the witchcraft-dominated Hutu tribe for

their Tutsi neighbors. Hundreds of human skulls were piled high outside one church where over 1,200 believers had been decapitated by mobs of animists.

Yet the diabolical attempt to wipe out the Christian church in Rwanda failed. In one of history's most dramatic reversals of fortune, the victims became the victors. The little David defeated Goliath. Today the Christians in Rwanda enjoy religious freedom and the animist perpetrators of the genocide are either in prison (awaiting trial or execution) or in exile in foreign lands.

Islamic Persecution

The greatest threat to the church today is presented by Islam. The largest block of unreached people (over 1 billion) are Muslims. In Africa, over 40% of the total population are Muslims (over 260 million people).

Through the ages, Islam has been the largest and most vicious opponent and persecutor of Christians. By the tenth century, the Muslim armies had annihilated half of all the Christians in the world at that time. Today the Islamic Jihad ("holy war") against Christians continues, and the sharpest confrontations between Christianity and Islam in the world are in Africa.

Islam claims the whole of North Africa (what were once the lands of great Christian leaders and famous writers such as Tertullian, Origin, Ignatius and Augustine). In 17 African countries, Muslims are the majority. In every one of those Islamic states, Christianity is restricted and Christians are persecuted to differing degrees.

In Morocco it is against the law to "proselytize" (evangelize) or to "shake the faith" of a Muslim. The Islamic government refuses to recognize any church that has Moroccan nationals as members. Christians have even been imprisoned for years merely for handing out Gospel literature.

In Algeria, Islamicist groups such as the National Salvation Front and the Armed Islamic Group have been waging a brutal war of terror to enforce an Islamic state on the nominally secular (formerly Marxist) National Liberation Front dictatorship. The NLF government's move to declare Algeria an Islamic state is unlikely to satisfy the aspirations of the Islamic extremists.

Most of the tens of thousands of victims of this Islamic campaign of terror have been Muslims. But many of the victims are Christians who have been bombed, shot or hacked to death. Many Algerian women have had acid thrown in their faces by Islamicists determined to force all women to wear a veil!

Christians accused of "apostasy" or "proselytizing" in Egypt face imprisonment and torture from the authorities, as well as kidnapping, forced conversions to Islam, rape and murder from Islamic militants.

In Nigeria, where Muslims are a large minority, Muslims have burnt down hundreds of churches and killed thousands of Christians in recent years. Christians in the area claim that they are facing a systematic

campaign to "wipe out any traces of Christianity in the northern states" of Nigeria.

In Mauritania not only is slavery practiced, but the death penalty for apostasy (converting from Islam) is part of the penal code and is enforced by the state.

In Somalia (just before the U. S. military went in under the UN banner), the last remaining church in the country was destroyed. And the last surviving minister was murdered by Muslim mobs.

The most relentlessly violent persecution of the church today, however, is in Sudan. The largest country in Africa is still in the grip of the longest war of this century. Since 1955 the Muslim Arab North has been attacking the Black South.

Sudan has the oldest community of Christians in Africa. The church in Sudan dates back to the first century, to Acts chapter 8, in fact. The treasurer of Queen Candace (who was converted and baptized by Philip) resided in Meroe, which is on the Nile in Northern Sudan. By the 6th century, Christianity was the official religion of Nubia. For about 1000 years, the majority of the population of Northern Sudan were (at least nominally) Christian. For 900 years these Christians successfully resisted the southward expansion of Islam. But, by the 16th Century, mainly due to internal weaknesses and dissension, the Christian kingdoms of Northern Sudan fell.

An Island of Christianity in a Sea of Islam

Some of the descendants of these early Christians continued in the Nuba Mountains of central Sudan. Today these tenacious believers are on the very frontline of the battle for the Faith. They are an island of Christianity in a sea of Islam. And the National Islamic Front (NIF) government of Sudan has declared Jihad against the Nuba people. This Jihad primarily takes the form of "tamsit" or "combing" (scorched earth and forced removals). Most of the churches and villages in the Nuba have been destroyed. Most of the crops have been burned. Most of the livestock have been stolen or destroyed. Hundreds of Christians have been crucified. Tens of thousands have been enslaved. Hundreds of thousands have been murdered.

Over one million Nubans have been forced into concentration camps. In these barbed-wire-enclosed, so-called "peace camps," the Nuban people are subjected to forced Arabization and Islamization. Those who refuse to convert to Islam are denied medical care, food and even access to water. Those who attempt to escape are shot.

One Nuba man had his knee cap shattered by a bullet from the government forces as they destroyed his village. The Arabs dragged this man to their nearby "peace camp" and demanded that he curse Christ before he received any medical care. He refused. They threatened him that he would not even receive water unless he recited the Islamic creed. Although in agony, he still refused. They smashed his other knee cap with a rifle butt. Still he refused either

to curse Christ or to embrace Islam. They left him writhing in agony in the blazing sun.

That night he escaped. Although crippled and in intense pain, the Nuba man pulled himself under the barbed wire and dragged his injured legs across the rocky, thorn-ridden ground. All night he crawled. By day he hid in the shade of some bushes and rested. The next night he crawled further. He kept this up until he reached the SPLA (Sudanese People's Liberation Army) lines. Today he has a crutch, a wooden leg and an AK47; and he's fighting for freedom in the Nuba Mountains.

Our Frontline Fellowship missionaries to the Nuba have seen the scorched-earth tactics of the NIF government. They've watched from mountain tops as the government forces stole herds of livestock and burned down villages, and they've walked past the burned-out villages and ministered to the survivors of massacres. Our missionaries have also come under rocket and machine cannon attack by government Hind helicopter gunships. Within minutes of landing far behind enemy lines with about 1000 Arabic Bibles for the beleaguered Nuban Christians, our mission team was repeatedly strafed and bombed. They saw civilians shredded by the machine cannon fire.

In the face of this cruel campaign of Jihad relentlessly forced upon them, the Christians in Sudan have shown remarkable resilience. Despite ongoing terror bombing of churches, the church services are overflowing.

Out of the Ashes

For example: The Episcopal Church in Kotobi invited me to speak at their church conference in March, 1996. They had been repeatedly bombed, so the conference was held in the forest a few miles out of town. The nearest enemy garrison was just 16 miles away. After the conference, I held a Discipleship Training Course for pastoral candidates in their church. On August 23, 1996 this church building was attacked by helicopter gunships, rocketed and burned to the ground. Another church in the village was also destroyed in this attack. Five civilians died in the hail of fire from these gunships.

The church continued to meet in the forest a few miles out of town and to rebuild their building. On November 23, 1997 I had the privilege of presenting the sermon at the first service in the newly restored Episcopal church in Kotobi. It was built on the very spot on which the previous building (which had been destroyed) had stood. Over 500 people packed out the rebuilt church building for a joyous three-and-a-half hour celebration that Jesus Christ is building his church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!

Another example: In 1920 pioneer missionaries, Dr. Kenneth and Eileen Fraser, of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) came from Scotland and brought the gospel to Moruland. The Frasers based their mission station at Lui. Twice this work has been destroyed. In 1965, the Muslim government forces swept into the

mission station, shooting and killing Christians. They burned down the hospital, schools and church building. Yet later all these buildings were rebuilt by the local Christians and the three-fold ministry of Dr. Fraser was restored.

Then again in the 1990s the Arab army swept over Lui and occupied the mission station, putting an end to all medical, educational and spiritual work for the second time. When I first saw Lui in May, 1997, it had just been liberated from the Muslim government forces by the SPLA resistance movement.

The signs of the Arab occupation were everywhere—trenches, gun emplacements, pill boxes, mine fields, the debris of war, a newly painted mosque and many vandalized graves. There were a shocking number of broken crosses in the graveyard by the Lui church. (However, I noticed that none of the Arabic signs on the graves of Muslim troops who had been buried in Lui had been disturbed at all.)

*We can strengthen the
Christians in Sudan not
only to survive the severe
persecution, but to win
their persecutors to Christ.
We are making disciples of
the emerging New
Christian Sudan. We can
have a part in helping to
make history in the
Middle East. We can roll
back the southward
expansion of Islam and
reclaim Sudan for Christ.*

Rev. Jeffrey pointed out the huge tree under which Dr. Fraser had first begun Bible studies and church services. "Dr. Fraser chose that tree to start the first Moru church because it was the same tree under which the Arab slave traders had bought and sold our people as slaves." I looked at the tree with renewed appreciation of God's work of creation which made such a magnificent tree and God's work of redemption (re-creation) which has rescued us from the slavery of sin and death.

I preached the word to the SPLA soldiers at Lui, and prayed with them that the great work begun at that town

would continue, that once again the hospital, schools, colleges and church would be fully operating to the glory of God and for the strengthening of his people in Moruland.

It was true, I said, that the Muslim government's bombing and occupation had forced the people to flee and had damaged many of the buildings—but Jesus Christ is the Resurrection and the Life. Christianity is the religion of the empty tomb. Out of death comes life, abundant life.

Little did I realize how soon that would be dramatically manifested in Lui. In September the hospital was re-opened. Shortly thereafter, the school and then the church were repaired. On November 15, 1997, I presented the sermon at a special memorial service at Lui, the birthplace of Christianity in Moruland. I paid tribute to pioneer missionary Kenneth Fraser who had laid such solid foundations for the Moru church. Dr. Fraser was a medical doctor, a teacher, a pastor and also a decorated soldier who had risen to Major General. Fraser implemented what has proven to be one of the most successful missionary campaigns ever. His strategy was to fulfill the Great Commission by ministering to body, mind and spirit. He started by opening up a hospital, then a school, then a church. Soon he had established nurses training courses, teacher training programs, and pastoral training. He also translated the Gospels and Acts into Moru.

Over 1500 people packed the Fraser Memorial Church in Lui for this service. Despite repeated destruction, the three-fold ministry started by Dr. Fraser has once again been restored. The Lui Hospital is fully operational again: almost 16,000 patients had been treated and 400 major operations done in the first four months since reopening. The resilience of the church founded by Dr. Fraser has defied all attempts to destroy it. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life!

Rolling Back the Islamic Offensive

The Islamic offensive against Christianity in Sudan cannot succeed. The number of Christians in Sudan has increased from 2% in 1955 to 20% today. In the South, Christians now form a majority. One Christian denomination grew from 2 congregations to 150 congregations in just 10 years. A pastor in Sudan can have multiple congregations to care for. I have come across pastors who had up to 60 congregations to oversee. One pastor reported baptizing over 9000 people in a 14-month period!

Muslims are coming to Christ in Sudan in unprecedented numbers. One commander, Thomas Cirillo, defected with his whole battalion of government troops to the SPLA. I have heard defectors tell me personally, "We want to become Christians. We want to fight for the South!"

The reasons for this massive turning to Christ in Sudan are threefold: First, the extreme harshness and cruelty of the NIF regime is repelling even Muslims. Second, the resilience and courage of the Christians are attracting Muslims. Third, in Sudan, converts from Islam

have a place where they can flee to—where they can enjoy religious freedom. As the SPLA resistance movement wins more territory, we can expect even more Muslims to take advantage of the protection this can offer them to come to Christ without the fear of being executed by the Muslim government of Sudan.

The desperate needs and challenging opportunities for ministry in Sudan are overwhelming. God is clearly doing an incredible work of grace in Sudan and it is our privilege to present ourselves as willing instruments to do whatever needs to be done to serve his suffering church.

What You Can Do

You may ask: "What can I do?"

1. **Be informed.** "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (*Hos. 4:6*). Obtain the book *Faith Under Fire in Sudan*, and other reports from Chalcedon and *Frontline Fellowship News* on Sudan. Pass on copies of this information to editors, pastors and congressmen.

2. **Be interceding.** "Remember the prisoners as if chained with them . . ." (*Heb. 13:3*). Pray for the persecuted. Encourage your pastor to pray for the persecuted from the pulpit.

3. **Be involved.** "In as much as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (*Mt. 25:40*). Speak up for the persecuted. Write letters to the editor of your local magazine or newspaper. Write to your elected representative, urging pressure on the persecutors and assistance to the persecuted. Organize donations of Bibles, medicines or other essentials. Last year alone, Frontline Fellowship made 13 missions into Sudan, delivering over 60,000 Bibles and Christian books in 17 languages; and we conducted over 550 church services and leadership training lectures inside Sudan. This year we hope to do even more. Your partnership could make the difference.

The Christian church in Southern Sudan is on the very frontline of the fight for faith and freedom. We can strengthen the Christians in Sudan not only to survive the severe persecution, but to win their persecutors to Christ. We are making disciples of the emerging New Christian Sudan. We can have a part in helping to make history in the Middle East. We can roll back the southward expansion of Islam and reclaim Sudan for Christ. "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. Those who dwell in the wilderness will bow before Him, and His enemies will lick the dust . . . Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him" (*Ps. 72: 8-11*). Send gifts to:

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The Puritan Storm: An Update from the Heartland

By Abby Oberst



This is an update on the activities of Shiloh Christian Church submitted here to encourage Chalcedon friends and its international readership. Why bother with an update on a 55-family church body meeting in a converted German Club (read: beer hall) on 31 acres of rural countryside in a densely populated

county near Cleveland, Ohio? The fact is, Shiloh continues to find itself in the position of prototype, as the American church moves from its present sad state into Reformed orthodoxy. Much like the classic industrial prototype, this little assembly is consciously yielding to the tweaking and refining of its design engineers, and voluntarily submitting to the draftsmen's pencils.

The result? Inordinate pound-for-pound impact in a multitude of arenas when compared with "typical" local churches of our day. Those outside the Shiloh family, but who continue to bump into its members, usually assume that our numbers are far more daunting than they are, given our presence (it seems, "everywhere"). In operation here is the important David-and-Goliath principle, and one that ought to hearten small churches everywhere. We have never despised our small beginnings and from the start have trusted in God's using little things for his grand purposes.

Ground-Taking Areas

Some of the ground-taking areas in which we have recently been involved are penetrating local, state and national politics; smoking out and neutralizing apostate clergy; tenaciously living our pro-life commitment through permanent adoption of society's "throw-aways"; indefatigably supporting fellow churches that are Reformed wannabees; cultivating a very deep bench of editorial writers; developing a canon of (original) creed-based worship music; and taking the lead in such community battles as anti-pornography.

History

Even with this apparently eclectic mix of endeavors, the feature that onlookers seem to find the most intriguing is this church's capacity to adapt to the leadership's doctrinal direction. In barely five years, Shiloh metamorphosed from quintessential non-denominationalism (sort-of charismatic,

sort-of evangelical . . .) into aggressive five-point Calvinism, Knoxian social activism and confessional orthodoxy—and proud of all. Having assiduously studied the various Biblical defenses regarding baptism, we honor *both* the Westminster Confession and the London Baptist Confession (1698), according to the conclusions and convictions of our member families, with no fatalities.

We must either begin or end with the courageous pastoral team of Philip L. Vollman and Jeffrey A. Ziegler. Rejecting the timidity plaguing so many pastors (who "subscribe" to the tenets of historic orthodoxy but who can't quite get off the theoretical dime), Vollman and Ziegler put their necks on the line daily (reminding their people, mantra-like, that *there is no neutrality*). Outwardly, cynics (or cowards) might (and do) call their MO "reckless," "self-righteous" and worse. Those of us who have had the privilege of sitting under their painstaking instruction, however, know that it is out of the overflow of their doctrine that their powerful activism comes. Or simply put: Faith without works is dead.

Yes, we have the gift of a whopping right-left punch from oft-jailed-ex-Rescue-leader-and-ex-Marine-who-can't-get-enough-Bible, Phil Vollman, and scholar-orator-impassioned-reformer, Jeff Ziegler. Yes, we have a covenant body with a high level of trust in its leadership. It is also true that there is hefty per-capita talent in this congregation. The important point, however, is that Shiloh Christian Church is no more, and no less, "distinctive" than the horde of churches across the American landscape today. We just happen to believe that the Puritan model of robust, community-involved, torch-bearing Calvinism of the average church in colonial America (our prototype) is the right way to "do" Christianity. The mettle of the leadership is no small part of the success of this work in progress.

Keeping the Gates of the City

Given the Titanic-like plummet that our nation's moral sanity seems to be suffering, to speak of a local fight against a pair of smut shops—and the extraordinary effort expended in this fight—might give new meaning to the word-picture of the little boy with his thumb in the dike. But that's what the humanists would say. That's what the pietists would say. The Bible says that righteous elders are to keep the gates of the city. God's covenant promises kingdom-advancement and blessings of peace and safety to those who obey him.

In November, 1996, Pastor Phil Vollman drove along the main commercial thoroughfare of our county seat, and noticed that a new "adult" book and video store had



Rev. Jeff Ziegler has trained the congregation in Reformed orthodoxy from the pulpit, and through Reformation Bible Institute and Christian Endeavors—the twin ministries he founded.

opened for business next door to an old smut-and-cigar store (both of which are situated directly across from the county fairgrounds). The older of the two sits back from the road, having enjoyed an almost-embarrassed anonymity for decades. (It's the "dirty book store" that has been in the shadows, much like the raunchy old uncle in *The Home* who's not mentioned in polite company.)

Suddenly, the families of Lake County, Ohio, were assaulted with new marquees, in-your-face curbside neon advertising and, now, *competition*. In tactical marketing self-preservation, the old shop beefed up its facade, and we had the makings of an avenue of sleaze that has been the blight of countless communities. In no time, there was a "bikini bar" proposed adjacent to the fairgrounds.

In what can only be described as typical leadership style, Phil Vollman organized a meeting of pastors that netted nearly twenty attendees; and, within 45 days, 58 pastors from 55 churches were "on board" (representing a spine-tingling mix of all "types" of Christian churches, it should be noted) to combat this virulent mess. The strategy was simple: Work within the confines of the legal system, craft a public statement to which all could attach their imprimaturs, and work with local civil magistrates.

The official statement was drafted and read aloud at a meeting of the township trustees (within whose jurisdiction the porn shops are located). Openly pledging

that the churchmen were there to help, not hinder, the civil authorities, Vollman summed up their position with, "We're going to be very stubborn about this." A series of meetings followed with the county's sheriff and with County Prosecutor, Charles Coulson. Billboards and large newspaper ads were purchased with \$5,000 raised by partner churches. Letters to the editor cataloged the harms to families, to women, to children, to men (and to the economy, safety and soul of the community)—if these porn shops stayed.

On May 10, 1997, at least 300 church people showed up for the first of the planned weekly pickets. For many, including the pastors involved, this was by far the most "radical" step they had ever taken for their convictions. There was a palpable assent at this first picket that God had more in mind than closing a couple of porn shops in Painesville Township, Ohio. One could almost hear the stretching sounds of Christians who were putting feet to their faith. The mere example of the unblinking leadership coming from the Shiloh war-horses served to embolden several pulpit-potato pastors, some of whom would become permanent comrades in dominion-taking Christianity.

Vollman, a seasoned abortion-mill protest organizer, knew that the long haul would be the key. This was May. This was a cake walk. From this four-hour demonstration under daylight-savings-time skies, all through the winter-evening doldrums of '98, Shiloh's leadership team has motivated, inspired, cajoled, admonished the faithful not to faint, not to quit, until this wicked and insidious sin-pandering is banished from the community. Since the first of the "porno pickets" (as we call them), there has been a sizable group of sign-carrying protesters walking in circles (literally), in front of the neighboring smut shops every single week. Rotating leadership among partner churches, there has been a sidewalk march an average of four nights a week with added "minute-man" pickets to keep it interesting.

"... In my adversity they rejoiced"

What about the original group of clergymen who came out for the organizational meetings? Not coincidentally, the heat over this gate-keeping has come from local "ministers" openly lobbying that a) such public protest is unbiblical, or b) that it is unloving (and therefore unbiblical) to risk embarrassing the customers. The question, "What if one of my church members is a patron of these stores?" has been too difficult for the antinomians to handle.

Not surprisingly, there are barely seven churches left . . . led by "the best" brothers in Christ a man could hope to labor with, according to Vollman. Get this: The names of partner churches still standing strong (for most, in their first-ever social activism) are *Trinity Baptist Church*, *Lake Shore Assembly of God*, *Painesville Church of Christ*, *Mentor United Methodist Church*, *Living Waters Cathedral*, and *Painesville Church of The Nazarene*. The anecdotes of revolutionary

growth and of theological paradigm-shifting among these fine men are too plentiful and too exciting to see this core group as anything other than a great win.

It is hoped that those who expect societal reformation to occur in cataclysmic proportions, while individual clergy and their local churches remain unreformed, will take heart—and take heed of this little prototype: one or two solidly Calvinistic preachers living out the Faith in the messy marketplace, patiently convincing peers to be consistent in doctrine and practice. The long-term fruit of this joint, and very public, stand against evil (among this odd coalition of church families) is known only to God.

While the ongoing porno-drama is tempting to rehearse in detail, the synopsis is this: “video peep booths” are permanently closed (since it was discovered by public health officials, due to our stalwarts, that unspeakably disgusting conditions existed therein due to homosexual liaisons and other “private” practices). Zoning is now in place to prohibit the return of such viewing booths. Snatching defeat out of the jaws of victory, “moderate Republican” Prosecutor Coulson has thus far sabotaged the final coup—shut-downs—in ways too numerous to count, with cowardice and compromise. With the magnanimous support of Jerry Kirk of the Cincinnati-based Coalition Against Pornography, and Don Wildmon of the American Family Association, our leaders know that there is both precedent and help; and they intend to win.



Ohio House Representative Ron Young (left) and Congressional candidate Joe Slovenec (right) discuss campaign strategies after Sunday services at Shiloh.

As in all adversity, this protracted struggle has served to strengthen the saints. It has also been an instructive object lesson for newcomers and young people. “Nobody’s been more faithful than Shiloh,” say Vollman, “Forty percent of the church is out there every Saturday night. The bonding has been intense. Walking around in circles for two to four hours has produced sincere fellowship among our families and with denominational churches—all over dominion-taking and battle.”

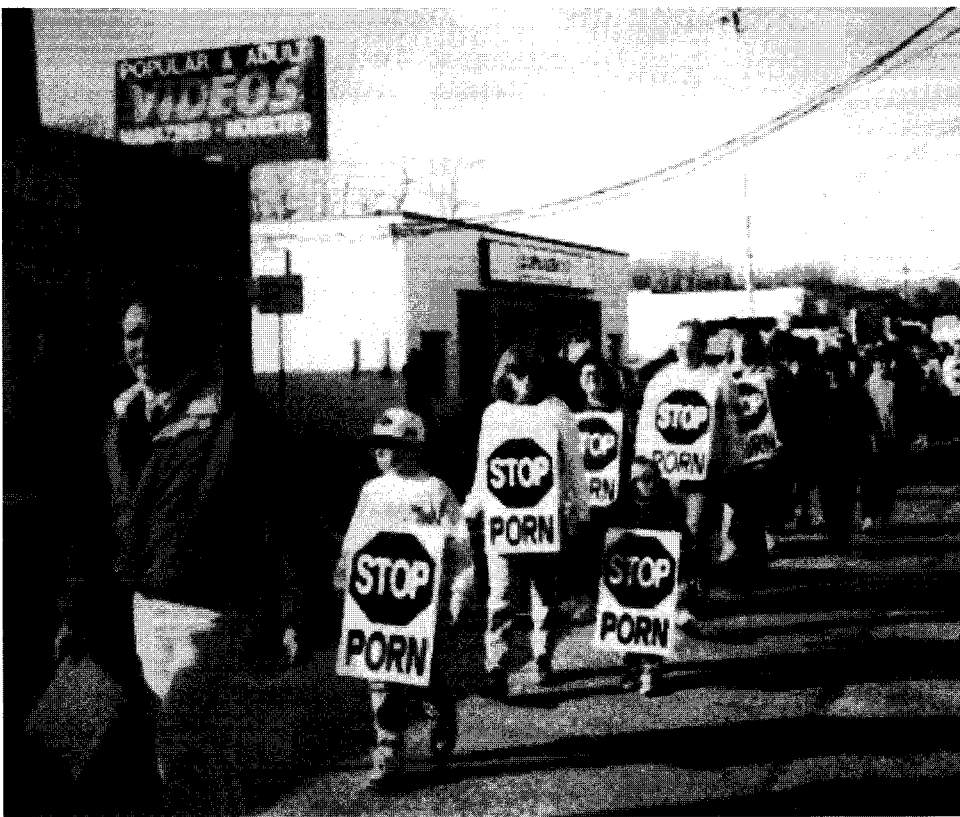
Passersby honk approval at the protest, and the porn sellers devise snares. One is to run sprinklers all day, creating puddles for drive-by splashing. Picketers have endured the splashing and sprinkling, snowballs, drunken cursings and taunting. Someone sicked a sheriff’s deputy on the group one cold night, threatening involvement of “social services” for (you guess it) child abuse, for having children on the picket line. Porno is okay; working to stop it might harm the little ones. Vollman dealt with this perversion with military dispatch.

Shiloh’s senior pastor sums it up this way: “Yes, we’re tired. Yes, we want our Saturday nights back. But we believe it’s a winner-take-all—the pornographers or God’s elect. I can’t conceive of God’s elect quitting. Because Calvinists are leading this, a covenantal world-view is being preached on the streets. The community has been forced to consider the effects of pornography. *We’re* going to stay in it to prove the nay-sayers wrong. We’re not going to win it. *God’s* going to win it.”

The Politics of Reformation

While magistrate Coulson and his ilk are hiding behind the skirts of the Supreme Court and allowing criminal venom to go unchecked, we are working on fielding a viable candidate for county prosecutor. While some pastors are still scratching their heads over political involvement, the folks at Shiloh are working the phone banks and polling places, giving money, and giving time to seat righteous candidates (by door-to-door lit drops, letter writing and more). We are driven by the fact *that when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn* (Pr. 29:2).

In November, 1996, member Ron Young was elected to the Ohio House of Representatives. He has done a stunning job of influencing fellow legislators for the good, has served the people of Ohio extremely well, and is running for re-election this year. Member Jim O’Leary made an impressive run for township trustee in ’97 against two entrenched incumbents (while keeping the zoning issues surrounding the porno fight alive). The overwhelming consensus is that Jim is destined for office. Joe Slovenec, U. S. Senate candidate in ’94, is also part of the Shiloh family, and is running to unseat ultra-liberal Dennis Kucinich in the House of Representatives this year. Perhaps most significant is that, in our small congregation (which until recently was holding at around 40 families), we have six precinct committeemen. Not only is this number growing, so too is the political acumen



*Shiloh Pastor Phil Vollman leads protest against porno shops in Painesville, Ohio.
(The older of the two smut shops is out of view)*

and assertiveness of the rank-and-file church membership.

"Shilohites," young and old and in the middle, are frequently published on the editorial pages of the regional daily. Husband-and-wife team, Bernie and Donna Kromer host a local radio program, "Taking America Back," aired twice weekly and simulcast on the local cable TV system, in addition to their lively e-mail newsletter. Associate pastor Jeff Ziegler has been making the media rounds with the publication of the National Reform Association's new book, *Explicitly Christian Politics*, co-authored by a number of Chalcedon friends and NRA board members. The fact is, with moral bankruptcy blanketing the entire political spectrum, there is an invisible "welcome mat" being set out for principled folks who simply have the nerve to step on the platform.

Returning to the prototype analogy, we know that (by example and by the willingness of our leaders to encourage others), these efforts are being replicated elsewhere. In Dayton, for example, Rev. Bruce Moore has recently announced his candidacy for the State House, and has brought his large AG church into the world of Christian Reconstruction with the help of our elders. Pastors converting pastors can indeed change our sociopolitical landscape.

We would be remiss not to celebrate here that Rev. Jeff Ziegler opened the Ohio House of Representatives in February of this year with an invocation that is still causing tremors in Columbus. Entered into the permanent record, this booming prayer (choked full with the Reformed approach to the Throne of Grace, to civil government and also what ails us), has been a shot heard

'round the state. Pity that such a prayer would be "remarkable," but praise God for the days ahead when it will be the norm!

At a loss whether to defer to the chicken or the egg (on the activism question), the fact is, Shiloh seems to attract men of political passions, and men who see our high esteem for the shoulders upon which we stand in the history of Christian liberty. In the past fifteen months, we have had the privilege of pulpit visits by such men as historian Marshall Foster (of The Mayflower Institute), former vice-presidential candidate Herb Titus, second-amendment advocate Larry Pratt (president of the Gun Owners of America) and others. The "others" have included such friends as Andrew Sandlin, William Einwechter and Steve Schlissel, when we have hosted conferences on Christian Reconstruction.

There is an unspoken "Why-Not?" consensus among the people, whether it is the caliber of visitors, or the next fight. Thanks, again, to the laborious instruction of our preaching elders, the people seem to be open to whatever God is going to bring us next!

Many Hands Make Light Work

Smitten by the historic ecumenical creeds, Shiloh worship leader, Franklin T. Uille, has composed a body of majestic music that prompts regular corporate confession of the tenets of the Faith. The creeds, along with imprecatory "war psalms," are included in his "New Songs for the Old Faith" (in tape and songbook form). Frank has also compiled a new tape of original music for young people, "ReconMan," that is guaranteed to turn up a smile

of approval on the mug of the grumpiest old CR around. Frank's prolific compositions continue to astonish us, given that he is a full-time U. S. Postal employee and also presides over a household with eight children.

College student and computer whiz James Pavlic took it on himself to launch an ambitious Shiloh home page. High-schooler Jessica Ferroni has been busy behind the scenes, using her considerable talent as a writer, and her servant's hands, to assist Jeff Ziegler and this writer in scores of tasks for Christian Endeavors, Reformation Bible Institute, and such Shiloh projects as the heavily-editorial weekly bulletin. In fact, Ziegler's many "hats"—as RBI and Christian Endeavors president, as moderator of the Association of Free Reformed Churches and The Ohio Reconstruction Society, and his National Reform Association boardsmanship (along with Vollman's involvements)—tend to draft assistants of all descriptions from the talent pool when the ubiquitous meetings and conferences come up.

Lest the impression be that Shiloh possesses some rare combination of seasoned professionals, one Sunday visit would quickly dispel it. Among our population is a very high percentage of ordinary working families with school-aged children and younger. The typical Shiloh couple is passionate about home schooling, and our families tend to be large. There is much help among members in such everyday areas as food co-ops, home-schooling tutorials and co-ops, and a club or two to pass on domestic and spiritual abilities to the next generation. Whether it is learning to crochet or learning Bible verses, the view here peers long into the future. In our commitment to the babies, mentioned at the start, we are corporately soft on special-needs children; and, through the ministry-agency of member Dona Setzer (NewStart Foundation), a half-dozen little ones have found permanent homes among us through adoption. Jim O'Leary sits on the board of the local crisis pregnancy center and women's clinic, Alternaterrm, where a number of our members volunteer. Much of the deep friendship, mutual discipling and aid (the "glue" of local church life) comes through weekly home groups, currently led by Paul Ferroni, Ed Lloyd, Bill Tuscano, Frank Ulle and Jeff Ziegler. We do not have a mid-week service.

How Firm a Foundation

Pastors Vollman and Ziegler have powerful reputations for being ornery, "unloving," confrontational, even dangerous. We have become accustomed to this. By speaking out, by being merciless on apostasy, and with a no-neutrality world view in a sea of compromisers, it is no wonder. James Watkins, a local UCC "minister" who is the definitive apostate—with visions of grandeur and a national platform (with "Americans United for Separation of Church and State") to boot—has been effectively neutered by our elders, as have a number of antinomian confederates who have tried (and failed) to build nice-sounding heretical syndicates under the radar

of gullible regional churches. It ought to go without saying that two hundred years ago, contending for the Faith by demolishing the credibility of rebel prelates or shaming the heretics would be *expected* of the men of God. Today, alas, our champions are "unloving."

With remarkably few casualties, the preaching at Shiloh Christian Church has foregone the warm fuzzies in favor of doctrine, doctrine and more doctrine. This may be "the" key to whatever distinctions we can claim. As Pastor Vollman quipped to his congregation recently, "You don't do what you do because we have [titillated] you. You do it because you know it's the *truth*." If ever the expression "line-upon-line-and-precept-upon-precept" applied to a preaching philosophy, it applies here. Thematic series tend to be long, focused, and exhaustive.

The point here is not to aggrandize, but to explain why this small-but-exploding church in the heartland finds itself a lightning rod for so much attention and a prototype for others. It is because foundations have been carefully laid on various aspects of dominion, liberty, ecclesiology, eschatology and so on. Inquiries about these series are certainly welcome.

Back to the beer hall, permit a conclusion that speaks of the future. In a few months, we expect to break ground on a new sanctuary and classroom building, utilizing the existing building (which has undergone a very pleasing transformation, by the way) for such purposes as an income-generating pre-school. On our luscious acreage, we aspire to "grow" a campus that will serve the Reformed community near and far with a centralized library of resources, a center for meetings and think-tanks, a workshop for publishing projects, and a resource/support center for Christian home educators. Based on God's faithfulness thus far, we fully expect these needed offerings to come about, and invite others to help make it happen.

While this Abraham Kuyper quotation might not fit over the door of our new sanctuary, it is clearly our pastors' motto, and one that we at Shiloh have come to live by: "When principles that run contrary to your deepest convictions begin to win the day, then battle is your calling and peace has become sin; you must at price of dearest peace, lay your convictions bare before friend and enemy, with all the fire of your faith."

Abby Oberst is currently serving on a free-lance basis for Cleveland-based Christian Endeavors and Reformation Bible Institute, and for writers and publishers in Christian Reconstruction, including Ross House Books. After extended terms in marketing communications, non-profit organizations and teaching, her role as bulletin editor for Shiloh Christian Church provides the medium for much of her writing. For more information about Shiloh Christian Church write to: P.O. Box 638, Painesville, Ohio 44077 or PVoll43774@aol.com. Shiloh's home page can be found at <http://www.shilohcc.com/index.html/>

Urban Nations Update: Wisdom of the World

By Steve M. Schlissel

One of the things which most impressed me when I first read the Bible as an unbeliever was that so much of it seemed familiar to me. "What an extraordinary thing," I thought to myself. "I've never read this book, yet so much of what I'm reading I seem already to have heard."

That is because the Bible, as even honest unbelievers sometimes admit, is the bedrock of Western civilization. For example, in *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, E. D. Hirsch, Joseph F. Kett and James Trefil have as chapter one, "The Bible." Any claim to cultural literacy is empty without a knowledge of Scripture. The pervasiveness of Scripture in our language, arts and sciences likely contributed to my having read the Book with a deeper respect than would otherwise have been the case.

Imagine my delight, then, in discovering that many of our Urban Nations students, when asked to tell us proverbs from their native lands, gave us (recast) Scripture! Consider these "proverbs," given to us by South American (indicated by "S") and Russian ("R") students:

If you get slapped on the cheek, turn the other (S- cf. *Mt. 5:39*).

Don't dig a hole for your neighbor; you may fall into it (R- cf. *Pr. 26:27*).

No one is a prophet in his own country (S- cf. *Mt. 13:57*).

If you live by the sword, you die by the sword (S- cf. *Mt. 26:52*).

The good you have in your heart is known by the words you speak (S- a spin on *Mt. 12:34* and *15:18*).

You cannot see a large beam in your own eye, yet you plainly see a speck in the eye of another (R- cf. *Mt. 7:3-4*).

They did offer some nuggets that are not found in Scripture. "Don't worry about your hair if your head is cut off" (R). "With seven baby-sitters, the baby loses an eye" (R- in other words, if it's everyone's job, it's no one's job). "Show me your friends and I'll show you who you

are" (R- certainly consistent with various Scripture proverbs). "If you try to catch two rabbits, you'll miss both" (R). "Measure seven times before you cut" (R). "Words aren't birds; once loosed, they cannot be retrieved" (R). "A drop of water can grind a stone" (R). And they told us some which surely lost something in translation: "Love is not a potato; you can't throw it out the window" (R). "Don't open your mouth for someone else's loaf" (R). "A wolf feeds himself with his legs" (R). And we're still trying to figure out if this student had us in mind when he said, "The more people I know, the better I like dogs."

We also collected proverbs from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Korea and Turkey. All in all, it was a fun time collating the wisdom of the world, especially when we saw that lots of it emanates from the word of God. But our goal is not to have people rest in their cultural wisdom, however much it may have been influenced by Scripture. Rather, we would have them rest in Christ, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption" (*1 Cor. 1:30*). What we want is to have them realize the full import of these words of Jesus, words which, for me, were the first which impressed on my heart the fact that the Bible is not just a collection of influential sayings: "Whoever hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and great was the fall thereof."

It is the fear of the LORD that is the beginning of true wisdom. Let the world learn that.

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Knowledge

By R. J. Rushdoony

The Stoics believed in the natural life; the natural was for them equivalent to the good. For them, the end of life was life in agreement with nature. Nature, instead of being fallen, was for them normative. This premise, nature as normative, marked in varying degrees ancient philosophy. Implicit, therefore, in ancient and modern philosophy was the premise of the Marquis de Sade, that whatever occurs in nature is normal and good, unless it is a contra-nature position such as Christianity. The homosexuality of men like Socrates and Plato therefore should not surprise us. In fact, the homosexual vein in modern philosophy, and much related scholarship, has been extensive, although barely mentioned by scholars. Few conservatives are aware of the fact that Adam Smith and David Hume were homosexual lovers (Jay I. Obneck: *The Invisible Hand*, Riverdale, New York: North Stonington Press, 1984).

Failure to recognize this fact has been very critical. The very real hatred of Christianity by such men as Smith and Hume has been avoided. The great war of the centuries is between God, Biblical Faith and morality on the one hand, and, on the other, the humanistic forces of the tempter, *i.e.*, man's will to be his own god. In Genesis 3:5 we see the creature's premise, his demand for equality with God. Credible scholarship, the humanists tell us, must begin on their premises, with their certification and accreditation, as it were. Those who agree to such a compromise, men like E. J. Carnell, still gain no place in the humanistic hall of fame. They quickly fall from view.

For the humanist, thinking which begins with God and his inscripturated revelation is untenable because for them in effect man is ultimate, not God. But is knowledge possible in independence from God? Is not

then all factuality simply meaningless or brute factuality? Without God, there can be nothing, and instead of knowledge, we have a surd. In a meaningless world of being, no fact has any meaning, and man's mind and reason are simply irrelevant because no meaning is tenable. Albert Camus faced this impasse honestly, writing, "The world itself, whose single meaning I do not understand, is but a vast irrational. If one could only say just once, 'This is clear,' all would be saved" (Albert Camus: *The Rebel*, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1956, 27).

What is the court of appeal with respect to knowledge? The opinions are these: *first*, God is the final court of appeal: he and his word establish the presuppositions of all knowledge. *Second*, man is the final court of appeal; in some manner by reason, or by his reason and his evaluation of his sense perceptions, man can attain valid knowledge. The fall of man, and the invalidity of his rationalism, are not considered. *Third*, all knowledge can be denied, because in a totally meaningless world, meaning and knowledge thereof cannot exist. Few hold to this view. For the Christian, the second and third views are both invalid. The God-ordaining meaning in all factuality negates man's efforts to deny it, or to deny the noetic effect of sin. By his sin, man denies his dependence upon God and asserts his independence. Man's sin does not end his moral dependence on God, nor his metaphysical dependence. Sin is man's attempt to sever his dependence on God, but it does not affect his metaphysical status; he remains a created being. His moral or ethical revolt against God has moral consequences because, as God's creature, he is forever under God's law. God is he in whom we live, and move, and have our being (*Ac. 17:28*), so that we can never step outside his law and government.

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Persecution: Jewish and Christian

By Steve M. Schlissel



Religious persecution must be distinguished from moral prosecution. It is important to make this distinction in an age like ours which greases squeaky wheels by conferring on them the coveted status of "victim." Deviants today routinely bypass the question of

the lawfulness of their perversions, and put the godly on the defensive, by claiming that they are being improperly persecuted when they are actually being properly prosecuted. Moral prosecution seeks to hold people accountable in the civil realm for certain behaviors; religious persecution seeks to punish people in the civil realm for certain beliefs.

Christian societies—and especially those which can claim filiation with the Reformed Faith—can be swift to punish evildoers and, at the same time, religiously tolerant. McFetridge has rightly observed that "as regards the sacred rights and privileges of men, Calvinism is one of the most tolerant and liberal of all systems of belief. Intolerance is no part of our creed." The sword in the hands of the magistrate is God's instrument to punish evil deeds, not evil or errant thoughts. It is the truth which has been appointed the governor of error, and it has been entrusted to the covenant people of God that they might first of all live it, and then bring it to bear in every realm of life through proclamation, example, and persuasion. "For not with swords loud clashing, or roll of stirring drums, with deeds of love and mercy the heavenly kingdom comes."

When I was a child in Hebrew school I was told a story about Abraham. A certain traveler was being entertained by Abraham when (so the legend goes) *aveenu Avraham* (our father Abraham) inquired of him as to his manner of worship. When the pagan freely admitted to being a worshiper of idols, Abraham unceremoniously tossed him out on his tuchas. The Lord asked Abraham how long he had been in the company of the pagan. Abraham replied, "Less than an hour." Then the Lord said, "I have borne with this man and his idolatries all these many years, yet you could not bear with him for an hour." We were told that Abraham was greatly ashamed and ran after the man, seeking his forgiveness. He then

patiently bore with and bore witness to the man, telling him of the one true God who made heaven and earth.

This rabbinic tale is reminiscent of an actual occurrence in the ministry of our Lord: When his disciples James and John saw that the Samaritans did not receive him, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" But he turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them" (*Lk. 9:51-56*).

Far from being given a license to persecute others, Scripture teaches covenant-keepers to pray for those who persecute them! Our Lord Jesus Christ plainly rebuked the persecutory spirit so common in man, for religious persecution is, in fact, a manifestation of unbelief.

After all, we confess that it is the Lord God *alone* who searches and rules the hearts of men, the Lord God *alone* who grants faith and salvation to men, the Lord God *alone* who is and will be the Judge of all men. How, in view of these indisputable facts, could those in covenant be so arrogant and presumptuous as to persecute others for their shades of unbelief?

Yet, it has happened, and it has always been and ever will be a manifestation of unbelief, no matter how pious the rhetoric which accompanies the persecution. For-it must be repeated—if God alone can touch the heart, and God alone saves, and God alone is Judge—who is man to persecute another for his lack of true faith?

In the first decades of the post-Pentecost church, covenant-keepers (believing Jews) were most sharply distinguished from covenant-breakers (unbelieving Jews) in this: the breakers persecuted the keepers. St. Paul explained it this way:

I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities (*Ac. 26:9-11*).

In fact, it was while recalling himself as once "a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor" that

Paul powerfully set forth the contrast between the forgiving grace of God and himself, the "chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:13-15).

The persecutorial spirit is a characteristic not of righteousness but of unbelief. Thus, while we might not be surprised at the persecution of first-century Jewish Christians at the hands of unbelievers, how do we explain the centuries of persecution of Jews by professing Christians? The first thing we must do, when considering this question, is refuse to yield: the persecutorial spirit is one always detached from the Spirit of the Living God.

That being said is hardly sufficient, however. The centuries-long oppression of the Jewish people by the institution known as the Christian church has causes deep and complex. It appears to this writer that the principal theological error which led to and sustained anti-Semitism was a failure to comprehend the shape of God's plan for the ages and the peculiar eschatological hope held out for the Jews, particularly in Romans 9-11.

In that passage Paul teaches that grace, prior to the first century, had largely been confined to the Jewish people. After Pentecost, the Jews' corporate unbelief was a pivot in having this grace encompass the Gentiles. But the question arises, since the grace of God has come to the Gentiles, what place is occupied by that mass of Jews remaining in unbelief? Paul answers this question in a two-fold manner in Romans 11. In verses 1-10 he argues that the elective principle, operating on individuals, finds that God is still very much faithful to the promises of the covenant. "Did God reject His people?," Paul asks rhetorically. "God forbid," says he; "I am a Jew and I believe. The promises are fulfilled in all believing Jews." But in verse 11 he asks a different question. Failure to detect this shift has resulted in unspeakable tragedies. Paul changes the subject from the individual Jews who believe to the body of Jews who disbelieve. He is asking if the elective principle, in respect to the nation of Israel, is terminated. Notice: "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall [beyond recovery]?" He is no longer proving that God is faithful to his promises by saving individuals out of Israel; he now asks if the stumbling (unbelief) of Israel is such as to put them out of reach of national recovery. This question is immediately answered in the emphatic negative: "God forbid!" He then goes on to show that Israel's corporate unbelief has become the occasion by which grace is to encompass the Gentiles. Strikingly, Paul then argues that if the unbelief of Israel has resulted in good for the Gentiles, will not their restoration yield even greater good?

Thus, there is set before the minds and hearts of Christians a hope and a burden for the physical seed of Abraham. "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" Recognizing this as the plan of God would keep the church from adopting the same arrogant

posture toward the Jews that the unbelieving Jews once had toward the Gentiles (11:17-22). (Righteous, covenant-keeping Jews always entertained an attitude of hope toward the Gentiles; witness Simeon in Luke 2:28-32.)

Paul's theology of the rejection of Israel, then, can be comprehended in two short phrases found in verse 25: The hardening which had come to Israel was partial (cf. 11:1-10), and temporary (cf. 11:11-32). It was in part, *until*.

Failing to see this contour of God's redemptive dealings, the post-apostolic church sought in vain to account for Israel's continued existence; for apart from what we are taught in Romans 11, their continuity was enigmatic. After all, the church was clearly now heir to the covenants and the promises (*Eph.* 2). If no hope of future ingrafting of the Jews was cherished, the church's posture toward them would inevitably become hostile. The church and the synagogue would be seen as rivals to the death, each claiming to be the proper heir of the covenant God made with the fathers. It is thus that prominent churchmen, in an effort to account for the mere existence of unbelieving Israel, suggested that it was only for the purpose of showing in history what misery must befall Christ-rejecters. And they often took it on themselves to heap that misery on the Jews, teaching that the Jews have been "condemned to perpetual servitude."

It is interesting to consider that "Old Testament" Israel, as the bride of Jehovah, might properly be regarded as "the mother" of Christ. This, after all, is just another way of saying what Paul wrote in Romans 9:5, that it was from Israel, "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is God over all." Mary is the particular of what Israel was (and was to be, in humble, Scripture-saturated, servant-faith) in general. But as physical Israel was being unduly denigrated and despised in the eyes of the church, Mary was simultaneously being unduly exalted and adored. It is interesting, I say, that the portion of the Jews in Christian lands was terrifying so long as the teaching of Romans 11 was ignored and the ancestry of Messiah was disproportionately particularized (and Gentile-ized) in Mary.

Where such ignorance and error reigned, the Jews were terrorized, consigned to ghettos, made to wear distinctive clothing, restricted in their choice of profession, subject to whimsical, evil edicts and the confiscation of goods and lands, forcibly baptized, blamed for virtually every misfortune (from the disappearance or death of a Christian child to the plague), banished from one nation after another and, too often, slaughtered.

But when, at the Reformation, the teaching of Romans 11 was recovered, and Mary brought back to her proper station, the portion of the Jews was radically altered. Ironically, this is sometimes perceived more clearly by Jews than Christians. An article in the *Encyclopaedia*

Judaica notes that “the role played by the Old Testament in Calvinism led the Puritan sects to identify themselves with the Jews of the Bible and reflected favorably on their attitude toward contemporary Jewry. The French Calvinists were a special case . . . their sympathies were traditionally pro-Jewish, an outlook retained to a considerable extent to the present day.”

What Ian Murray termed “The Puritan Hope” was, for the Jews in Protestant Christendom, a virtual emancipation. For example, the first general expulsion of Jews in the Middle Ages was from England in 1290; under the Puritan, Oliver Cromwell, they were readmitted (in 1656). No greater contrast could be drawn than that between the thousand-plus years of Christianity’s “Let us despise the Jews,” and the recovered, Biblical Christianity of the Reformation, out of which Thomas Collier wrote, “Oh, let us respect them. Our salvation has come from them! Our Jesus was of them! We are gotten into their promises and privileges! The natural branches were cut off, that we might be grafted in! Oh, let us not be high-minded, but fear. Let us not, for God’s sake, be unmerciful to them!” *The Directory for the Public Worship of God* (in Presbyterian churches) called for prayer before the sermon “for the conversion of the Jews.” And the first item on the Covenanters’ prayer list was “That the old off-caste Israel for unbelief would never be forgotten. That the promised day of their ingrafting again by faith may be hastened.”

Much water has passed under the bridge since the Reformation. While Calvinistic theology has resulted in unprecedented civil blessing for the Jews, Luther’s distorted Law/Grace antithesis paved the way for a virulent anti-Semitism in Germany which (along with other factors) culminated in the Holocaust.

But the Holocaust itself resulted, in God’s providence, in the rebirth of the political state of Israel, an event which just 100 years prior was regarded as unimaginable by virtually all, except postmillennial Protestants. And now with the Jews once again in a homeland, their unbelief is sadly beginning to manifest itself in various forms of anti-Christianity. I do not here refer to the suppression of Arabic Christians, though some unthinking Western Christians make this error. The suppression of Arabic Christians by Israel has everything to do with their being Arabs, and little or nothing to do with their being Christian.

Certain forces in Israel, however, are actively seeking to suppress evangelical Christianity. Knesset Bill “174C,” known as “The Prohibition of Persuasion to a Change of Religion,” seeks to suppress the Gospel by making the mailing of literature which, directly or indirectly, seeks to persuade the recipient to change religions, punishable by

imprisonment. How should we react to such measures?

May I suggest that we react thoughtfully? First, let us understand that the greater portion of church/synagogue history gives unbelieving Jews little reason to regard Christianity as friendly toward them, and not just in ancient times. This article is written the day after the Vatican repented to the Jews for their silence during World War II. Second, recognize that they are ever-conscious of having lost an amazing percentage of world-Jewry in the last war.

The success of the gospel among Jews worldwide (there are hundreds of thousands of Jewish Christians out of 18 million Jews), while a cause for rejoicing for those with the grace of faith, is understandably viewed as a threat by those without faith. Third, bear in mind that many Christian Reconstructionists have repeatedly suggested that, if they had their way in a Christian State, they’d follow the very procedure now being considered in Israel: they’d allow other religions to be privately held but not publicly propagated.

If I had my way, I’d deal with Israel’s new and disturbing posture very simply. One, declare America to be a Christian nation, and two, forbid even ten cents of this nation’s money to be given to any nation which restricts the free proclamation of the gospel.

Short of that, I’d caution Christians not to overreact, but to remember that religious persecution is always a fruit of unbelief. We must fully recognize a disturbing cycle: in the first century, Christians were persecuted by unbelieving Jews; for centuries afterward, Jews were persecuted by unbelieving and ignorant/arrogant “Christians”; now, Jews are making disturbing moves to once again oppress Christians in Israel.

But while we recognize this cycle, we must not forget the other “cycle,” that spoken of by Paul in Romans: that the gospel began among the Jews, would progress through all nations and, when “the fullness of the Gentiles be come in,” the gospel will then be victorious among this ancient people. And so, whatever intermediate strategies one may envision to deal with this or that contingency, true freedom from persecution will come about only as a result of conversion—of the nations, and of Israel, too. May God grant that the nations would be gathered to the feet of the Messiah, and that “Joseph’s brothers” would soon join them there, in repentance, praise and thanksgiving. Amen.

Steve Schlissel has been pastor of Messiah’s Congregation in Brooklyn, NY since 1979. He serves as the Overseer of Urban Nations (a mission to the world in a single city), and is the Director of Meantime Ministries (an outreach to women who were sexually abused as children). Steve lives with his wife of 24 years, Jeanne, and their five children.

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STEVE WILKINS is a pastor in Monroe, Louisiana. Author of the popular tape series, *America: The First 350 Years*, he has presented

historical studies in previous conferences. This year he will teach on church history.

GARY DEMAR is president of American Vision, whose purpose is to help Christians grow in their Biblical worldview. He has authored numerous books, including *God and Government* (3 volumes) and *Last Days Madness*. He is general editor of the *To Pledge Allegiance* textbook series. He will be speaking on "Roger Williams," "The Worldview of UFO's," and other topics.

GENE EDWARD VEITH, JR. is professor of humanities and Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Concordia University, Wisconsin. His books include *A Christian Guide to Literature* and *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*. His articles appear in *World* and other publications. He will be speaking on cultural issues from a Christian perspective.

The Christian Worldview Student Conference is conducted by Calvary Reformed Presbyterian Church, Hampton, Virginia. Facilities of Christopher Newport University, Newport News, Virginia, are used for meetings. A descriptive brochure and pre-registration form are available from Calvary Reformed Presbyterian Church, 403 Whealton Road, Hampton, VA 23666. Phone (757) 826-5942. Fax (757) 825-5843. E-mail crpc@visi.net. Information is also available on the internet at: www.clearlight.com/~crpc. Conference registration is \$300 (\$275 if paid in full by June 1st). The cost per chaperone is \$200 (\$175 if paid in full by June 1st).

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The Association of Free Reformed Churches consists of members of numerous orthodox Reformed denominations and independent churches; it is a haven as well for all who, because of their aggressive devotion to Reformed orthodoxy and Reconstruction, are not welcome in more mainline churches and groups.

For more information, contact:

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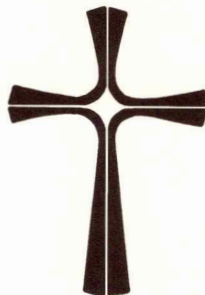
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