

REFORMATION TODAY



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Contributors to this issue:

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CAREY 2000 – January 11th-14th

Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

Conrad Mbewe	Conference Preacher
Geoff Thomas	The Day of Salvation and C.H. Spurgeon
David Kingdon	John the Baptist – the silence that breaks the silence
John Campbell	Moses, Jahweh and 2000
Michael Haykin	The G lory of Christ in the English Particular Baptist S tory
Baruch Maoz	Pastors and Elders
Thomas Nettles	The Gospel Grit of John Gano
Earl Blackburn	Recovering the Vision
Jim Renihan	The Holy Spirit and 2000

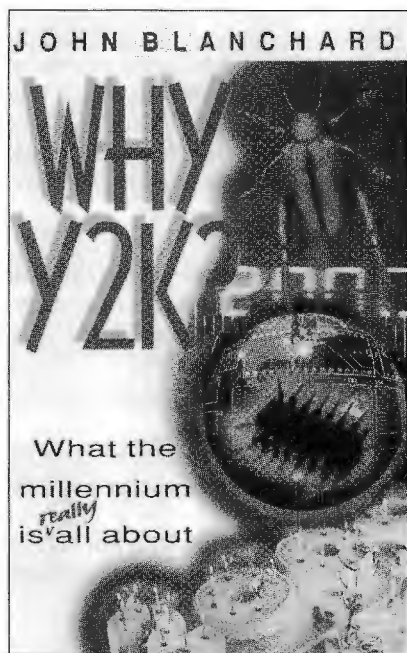
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Front cover: *Reuben Danladi was inducted as pastor of Westham Baptist Tabernacle on 31st July, 1999. Pictured with him are his wife Lynn, daughter Jemima and son Jamin. Formerly from Nigeria, Dr Danladi earned his doctorate in geophysics at Bristol University. He was in membership at Melbourne Hall Baptist Church, Leicester when called to the ministry and trained at London Theological Seminary. Reuben follows Bill Charlton who retired this year. Bill was formerly a pastor in South Africa before becoming a missionary in Ethiopia from 1962-1972 when he came to serve as a minister in England. He was pastor at Westham Tabernacle from 1987 to his retirement. Westham Tabernacle began in 1840. Before the 1939-1945 War the membership was 400 with 600 in the Sunday School. When the bombing began the children were evacuated and in one week the Sunday School shrank from 600 to 4.*

Editorial

AD 2000 offers an excellent opportunity to draw attention to the Lord of our calendar. The calendar is a minor issue but it points to the major issue of his unique person. AD 2000 - The Uniqueness of 'our Lord' sets out ten ways in which Jesus is unique.



WHY Y2K? – *What the millennium is really all about* is a paperback of 124 pages written by John Blanchard (Evangelical Press, £2.95). The gospel is well presented in this publication and it is not surprising that three editions have already been sold out. John Blanchard is a son of the island of Guernsey. A project is currently under way to place a copy of *WHY Y2K?* into all the 22,000 homes of Guernsey.

The most attractive feature of *WHY Y2K?* is the portrayal of Jesus and the personal appeal made to respond to him as Saviour and Lord. In a chapter titled *Ten out of Ten* Jesus is set apart from every other human being in history. He is defended in three instances where he is sometimes misrepresented, namely, the cleansing of the Temple, the withering of the fig tree and the conversation with the rich young ruler.

Another chapter is *Mission Accomplished*. Here it is shown that the main purpose of his mission in this world was to lay down his life as a ransom for many.

One chapter is devoted to the resurrection of our Lord. This chapter in particular is compelling.

Only nine pages are devoted to *WHY Y2K?* These describe something of the scare-mongering about AD 2000 that is current in America. For instance one American writer foresees thousands of people dying from cold, hunger, crime and disease! However most computer systems in America have already been adjusted to meet the change of AD 2000. Large sums of cash have been invested round the world to deal with the millennium bug. There may be a slight bump on January 1, 2000. Our concern should not be about our creature comforts or shortages in this coming

January. Rather we must eye eternity and always be prepared the for the great and final judgment day.

AD – Day One Publications have produced an attractive 32 page booklet with illustrations in colour. The title is simply, *AD*. Adrian Sargent reviews this booklet and describes how one church is using it to the fullest extent.

Their Blood Cries Out

Reviewed on page 31, *Their Blood Cries Out* is a book of outstanding relevance. Descriptions of persecution are heart-rending and illustrate powerfully the desperate and complex suffering that is being endured in our day. The examples of persecution are printed in italics in the volume. In that way they are easy to locate. The following example of suffering in Egypt is taken from the chapter, 'The Advancing Jihad':

When Shireen Mikhail's father received the phone call from his daughter's Muslim kidnappers, he was stunned. 'Your responsibilities as a father are over,' a tough-sounding male voice informed him. 'Your daughter has converted to Islam.'

Shireen was only twelve years old. And her devastated father could well imagine what had happened to her.

The Egyptian police were unwilling to step into the situation and help the distressed father, so he hired an attorney and went to court. In a Manfalut magistrates' court, a heavily veiled female was brought forward. Not a trace of her face or body could be seen; her identity was impossible to determine. Shireen's father, who is a Copt, was ordered to leave the room.

The lawyer representing Shireen's father requested proof that the veiled figure was, in fact, Shireen. The judge dismissed his request and ordered the local authorities to register Shireen as a Muslim.

The London Observer (June 5, 1994), referring to Shireen's case, reported, 'A British human-rights group investigating complaints of conversion under duress says there is disturbing evidence that some Islamic extremists are using rape to force Christian girls to convert. "Conversion offers marriage to a member of the Islamic group and security for the victim," a spokesman for the Jubilee Campaign says. "Returning to the family after the rape would result in potentially fatal consequences, as the victim is no longer a virgin. Alarming, there are reports that this practice is becoming more widespread."'

What one church is doing

Adrian Sargent

Should the Millennium arouse a sense of occasion within Christians? Could it provide additional opportunities for witness and evangelism to those in our communities? Is there some way for us to point out that faith in Christ, belief in the Bible, and Christian values and virtues have left a positive and lasting mark on our society? At West Park Church, Wolverhampton, we have answered 'yes' to all three questions, and have adopted a booklet called *AD* as our Millennium Project.

Produced by Day One Publications, 3, Epsom Business Park, Kiln Lane, Epsom, Surrey KT17 1JF, *AD* comprises 32 pages of clear, well-written and attractively illustrated text. It points out that during these two millennia it has often been Christian men and women who have campaigned for the reforms, pioneered the social care, and developed the institutions which today we take for granted as integral to a civilised society. *AD* mentions, among other things, the educational revolution, care for the terminally and mentally ill, the abolition of the slave trade, the improvement of working conditions in factories, the care of orphans, and the introduction of clean water and sanitary facilities in domestic dwelling-houses. Mention is made of our legal system, literary heritage, and hospice movement. It names many men and women, including John Howard, Elizabeth Fry, Michael Faraday, William Wilberforce and Thomas Barnardo, and outlines their work for the good of others. All of this is presented factually, without giving offence and without embarrassment. For all Christians this should give rise to thanksgiving, for it is a reminder of God's goodness to our nation. For the thoughtful non-Christian, there should be plenty here to give rise to questions, perhaps leading to further enquiry.

The *AD* booklet is actually a pointer to Christ. It comes with a short evangelistic insert which offers a simple challenge to the reader. The fact is that all of the men and women described in the booklet were radically changed by Jesus Christ. After conversion, they were so fired up with love for God and, in consequence, love for other people, that they worked and prayed for improvement in society (and for the salvation of the lost). The good news is not just that God worked through transformed people in the past. It is, rather, that he is still calling men and women to repent, believe and serve. He still

transforms individuals and (through them) can change society too. That is excellent news for lost individuals and for a seriously disordered society like ours. *AD* is intended to educate and remind Christians of their history, and to cause non-Christians to pause, think and turn to God.

With all of the above in mind, each member of our congregation has been given a copy of *AD* and invited to read it and to pray about it. We do not intend to distribute *AD* indiscriminately and anonymously through letterboxes. We do wish to give copies to people we know. Therefore each member has been asked to consider the potential benefit of distributing *AD*, and to pray about which of our neighbours, friends, work colleagues and relatives might receive a copy at the end of 1999. Could we send one, with or without the traditional Christmas card, to every unsaved relative? Could copies be given to acquaintances such as the milkman or the Avon lady? If we each use some imagination, and take a real responsibility before God for using these booklets, then we hope that much seed may be sown, and some valuable contacts made, for follow-up in the new year.

AD should be a good resource for our church-based activities. We have the opportunity to conduct services regularly in a hospital and in several residential homes for the elderly, where *AD* might be mentioned and handed out. We have various weekly meetings for children and young people. We hope to offer copies of *AD* to the many unconverted parents whose children attend these activities. In addition, Day One has produced three separate workbooks, based on *AD*, for the 7-8, 9-10, and 11-13 age groups, which could be used in the autumn term teaching programmes of our activities for children. These workbooks were written specifically for use in schools, and we hope that some local schools might be persuaded to use them. Perhaps we could offer to sponsor some copies for interested schools to use. As a church, we could consider sending a copy of *AD* to every borough councillor, and to leading local business people and community leaders. Copies could (with permission) be placed in the waiting rooms of doctors and dentists. The list of ideas is growing. And that is the beauty of *AD*. It is a flexible friend (for evangelism). All can be (must be) involved, in prayer, and in distribution to the people we know. We think that many members will be able to give away 50 copies, and some will double that. Again, as a church-based project, we can take advantage of Day One's generous discount for bulk purchase, thereby further helping our members to participate without any concerns as to cost.

Is *AD* a panacea? No, but under God's hand we think it could do much to edify the saints and challenge the lost. There remains much work to be done to make the project 'happen' and prayer is fundamental to its success.

AD 2000 – The Uniqueness of ‘our Lord’

Editor

Soon it will be AD 2000. Why do we use AD, *Anno Domini*, the year of our Lord?

Who is ‘our Lord’?

This reference of course is to Jesus Christ.¹ It is his birth that set our calendar. In that he is unique. In what other ways is he unique? About 60 billion people have been born into the world. Every one of these is unique or different in personality. I will set out and then explain ways in which this person called ‘our Lord’ is completely different from all others.

1. Jesus was predicted in detail by prophets
2. Jesus was born of a virgin
3. Jesus lived a sinless life
4. Jesus made unique ‘I AM’ claims
5. Jesus supported his claims with miracles
6. Jesus made a sacrifice of himself that ended all sacrifices
7. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit
8. Jesus has kept his promise to build his church
9. Jesus is the creator of the world
10. Jesus is the judge of all mankind

1. Jesus was predicted in detail by prophets

There is nobody else in world history whose life and work has been predicted in detail over an extensive period of time (about 1400 years). Behind these predictions is God himself. He created man and woman in his own image and set them apart from the animals. He called a man named Abraham and created the Jewish nation out of him. He called Moses in Sinai and brought him back to Egypt and brought Israel out of Egypt. He made a platform of Mount Sinai and there uttered and inscribed the ten

commandments. These commandments are known as God's moral law. They echo in the consciences of all who read or hear them.

God continued to write what we call the Bible story. He established Israel in the land of Canaan. To that nation he sent prophets who described the person and work of a Messiah which means a promised Saviour. There is progression in the revelation of detail about this person. Indeed there is almost as much detail about this Saviour in the 39 books of the Old Testament as we find in the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

From the prophet Isaiah we will focus on two details: the Saviour's birth and his humiliation.

His birth. Jahweh would give a sign. 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel.'² If this were just an ordinary birth it would be no sign at all. The child born was given names which would be totally inappropriate were he not God.

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.³*

His humiliation. In an extended description (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12), the prophet portrays the Messiah as one who will be despised, mutilated, pierced, crushed and finally killed. This is part of that description:

*He was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before her shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth,
In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.
Who can speak of his descendants?
for his life was taken from the earth.*

These details were uniquely fulfilled in Jesus.

2. Jesus was born of a virgin

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary. The facts of his birth are described in the Gospels, Matthew 1 and Luke 2. The virgin birth of Jesus shows us that his coming was not by human initiative. Mary was informed, not consulted. She was entirely passive. When the time was ripe *God sent his Son*. The virgin birth conveys the fact that Jesus is untouched by that original sin which pervades the whole human race. Jesus is sinless. He was born with a human disposition entirely obedient and loving toward his Father. Jesus was completely and perfectly human yet did not in his human nature share our fallenness or any taint of our sinfulness and corruption. His birth by God the Holy Spirit, through a virgin, is unique. He did not in any way inherit our sinful propensities to hate God and each other.

3. Jesus lived a sinless life

To live a sinless life is unique. But how do we know that Jesus lived for thirty-three years without any sin? In God's Word we read: *And in him is no sin.*⁴ This was the affirmation of John, one of his closest disciples. He, like Jesus' family and the other disciples, had ample opportunity to observe him. They agreed that he was holy, blameless and pure. These disciples would not have laid their lives on the line for Jesus if his claims were not matched by what they saw and heard.

It is easy to spot the faults and sins of famous leaders. Often their sins are so glaring that it is embarrassing. The true character of any person is laid bare under intense pressure. The apostle Peter described the way Jesus behaved under the most extreme suffering:

*'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats.'*⁵

There is no parallel to this. The sinlessness of Jesus is unique.

4. Jesus made unique 'I AM' claims

One day when the Pharisees opposed Jesus strongly and boasted of the fact that they were the children of Abraham he said to them, 'Before Abraham was born, I AM!'⁶ That is the same as saying, 'I always have been. I am eternal.' We should note too that the expression I AM is the same as the meaning of the Jewish name for God, Jahweh (Jehovah). It was the same Jesus who confronted Moses in the burning bush and commanded that he go and tell Pharaoh: I AM says, 'Let my people go!' Jesus' words to the Pharisees, 'Before Abraham was born, I AM!' reveal to us that he is God.

In another place he said, 'I am the resurrection and the life.'⁷ That is the same as saying that he can resurrect us out of our graves. That is unique. Only God has such limitless power.

When arrested and brought before the ruling body the high priest said to him, 'I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.' To this Jesus replied, 'Yes, it is as you say. ...In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.'⁸ This was a quotation from Daniel the prophet, the expression 'Son of Man' meaning the Messiah. The ruling council understood perfectly this claim, and in their hatred began to abuse Jesus physically.

We know that people who are mentally ill can imagine that they are God. But Jesus was not mentally ill as the following observation will show.

5. Jesus supported his claims with miracles

Just a few days before his arrest Jesus had raised a man named Lazarus to life. He had been buried for four days. There were many witnesses to this miracle. Jesus' enemies could not deny the facts. It was an event which, if it took place today, would be covered in detail by the mass media. Those opposed to Jesus could not deny this miracle any more than they could deny his other superlative acts of power. What he did only made them fear that he might use his influence by these supernatural acts to replace them and take leadership of the nation. The miracles performed by Jesus were in

a league of their own. They were unique. Where in the pages of history do you find a man multiplying a few loaves and fish to feed five thousand?

When John the Baptist sent messengers to ask, 'Are you the one who was to come?' Jesus replied, 'Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.'⁹

6. Jesus made a sacrifice of himself that ended all sacrifices

In the sacrifices made by the Jews according to the commands of God we see man's greatest and deepest spiritual need met. What can a man do if he has sinned against God? It is impossible to repay. The sentence is, 'The wicked man will die for his sin!'¹⁰ Atonement is the only solution. This was provided for by way of sacrifice which symbolised very graphically that God himself would provide a sacrifice for man's need. To be sure there were different kinds of offerings or sacrifices but the central kind was of an animal, often a perfect lamb.

First there was the presentation of the lamb on the altar. Second there was the laying on of the hands of the offerer to signify the transposition of his guilt. Third there was the killing of the lamb by shedding its blood. Fourth there was the burning up of the whole of the lamb by fire.

John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and proclaimed, 'Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'¹¹ Jesus affirmed, 'The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many,'¹² and the writer of the letter to the Hebrews states that by Jesus' sacrifice of himself on the cross he has made an effective sacrifice which guarantees the salvation of all his people to the end of time.

Within a few years of Jesus' ascension, Jerusalem and its Temple (according to the details he predicted)¹³ were destroyed by Roman armies. The elaborate system of daily, weekly and monthly sacrifices was brought to an end and has never been restored.

Jesus offered up himself and brought an end to all the Jewish sacrifices. This achievement is unique. The apostle Paul explains it like this, 'Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.'¹⁴

7. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit

Before leaving this world Jesus had promised his disciples that they would not be left like orphans to fend for themselves. The third person of the Trinity would come and live in them forever. He would come to assure them, teach them and guide them.

Jesus was crucified on the Jewish day of Passover which was the first day in the annual celebration known as the feast of weeks. Three days later Jesus rose from the dead and on day forty he ascended into heaven. Ten days later, on the last day of the feast of weeks, called Pentecost, he sent the Holy Spirit who was seen as tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit came as a mighty rushing wind. He gave the gift of languages to the disciples.

Facts about the most important fifty days of human history

1. God pre-planned (predestined) the fifty day time grid in the Jewish calendar.
2. The Passover evening was the time when the lambs were slain. That was the time when our Lord instituted the Last Supper which we know as the communion of bread and wine.
3. The next day, Day 1, he became our Passover lamb as Paul says, 'For Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed' (1 Cor 5:7). Jesus' crucifixion, words and expiry are described in Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23 and John 19.
4. Three days later he rose from the dead. This testimony is described by Matthew (28:1-20), Mark (16:1-8), Luke (24:1-53) and John (20:21:25). The evidence and significance of the resurrection is explained by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15.
5. Day 40. The ascension of Jesus is described by Luke in the first chapter of Acts.
6. Day 50. Acts chapter two describes the Day of Pentecost.

The apostle Peter explained the nature of this extraordinary event: 'Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.'¹⁵

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit. Only God can send God. Jesus is unique.

8. Jesus has kept his promise to build his church

On one occasion Jesus declared, 'I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'¹⁶ 'The gates of hell' is a phrase describing opposition. In ancient times if an army attacked a city the defenders would hurl missiles on that army and beat them off by giving them a hellish time.

The church of Jesus is the people who trust in him and seek to obey his teaching. His church is not just one more good institution along with benevolent clubs and friendly societies or organisations set up for the relief of the poor or the sick. The church like its builder is unique. It is recognised by its worship of the Trinity, by faithful biblical preaching, by holy living combined with love and compassion. In true churches you will find some weak, some handicapped, some broken-hearted and some reclaimed from a life of despair. She is called the Body of Christ. She is created by God the Holy Spirit and she confesses spiritual union with her head. She entertains the hope of the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness will reign. No other body is like that.

The cynic has much to criticise. There are instances of division as the hymn writer puts it, 'by schisms rent asunder'. The charge that there are hypocrites will not be too hard to substantiate. Examples can be found of Judas Iscariot all over again. There are examples of the most appalling moral lapses. There is the scandal of the tele-evangelists who we now know were in it for money. There is the shame of church leaders who are mealy-mouthed and hopelessly compromised. When the Church of England bishops met for the great Lambeth Conference it was African

bishops who stood up for basic morality. There is the constant embarrassment of leaders who are neck-high in compromising what the Bible says. Then there are scenarios of the superficial, shallow and silly. A recent example is the claim by some to have had their amalgam tooth fillings turned to gold. One girl questioned on a TV programme confessed that she had been to the dentist and he reported that the fillings were *not* gold. To the question, 'So what do you have to say about that now?' she replied that it had been a good experience anyway! The media hardly lacks scope for ridicule.

Where the gospel message has been abandoned or watered down, church congregations shrink and their buildings eventually become offices, flats or warehouses. In view of all this, is not the church of Christ dead? No! Christ is alive. He is building his church in the face of difficulty.

Has Jesus kept that promise to build his church? This twentieth century has seen a massive advance of Christ's church in many countries. For instance it was estimated that in 1900 there were only 200,000 Bible-believing Christians in Latin America. Today the number is about 46 million.¹⁷ In China in 1900 the Christian church was struggling to exist. Opposition by the Communist regime is extreme but has not been able to stop the growth of the church estimated between 50 and 75 million.¹⁸

The world-wide church continues to grow in the most hostile places. In Siberia as in other parts of Russia the economic situation is chaotic yet the church continues to grow. In Sudan persecution is extreme. Churches have been burned down and believers have been crucified. Christians have been captured, abused and sold into slavery.¹⁹ A determined effort is made to exterminate the church in Sudan but still it grows as it does in Ethiopia where membership has increased from a few hundred in 1937 to about 3 million today.²⁰

The church is growing in the jungles of Papua New Guinea and in the slums of Karachi, Pakistan. From Pakistan comes an appeal for help, 'They bulldoze our buildings, they beat us, they rape our daughters, they throw us into prison on false charges, they try to make our children Muslims.'²¹

Paul Marshall in his book *Their Blood Cries Out*²² documents today's anti-Christian persecutions. In more than 60 countries world-wide Christians

are harassed, abused, arrested, tortured and executed. It is said that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. That certainly is the story of the 20th century church.

9. Jesus is the creator of the world

Introducing his Gospel John wrote, 'He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him.'²³ Paul describes Jesus as the creator of everything: 'things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers, rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him'.²⁴ The writer of the letter to the Hebrews spells it out like this: 'In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.'²⁵

Everything tangible and non-tangible, spiritual and material, angelic and human: everything owes its existence to the Son. This world and solar system with its planets and moons were created. They did not happen by chance. The amazing complexity of creation spells out design. He made it. As creator Jesus is unique.

10. Jesus is the judge of all mankind

The end of the world is described as coming like a flash of lightning from one end of the sky to the other. Every life will be examined before a great white throne. Every conscience will be searched. The records will be opened. Every person will be judged according to the records.²⁶ And who is the judge? It is the same Jesus who bears the messianic title, Son of Man. 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.'²⁷

This is unique. We have tribunals and judges but no one who is qualified to judge the thoughts and motives of all men and women. Who apart from the God-man will justly and infallibly separate the righteous from the wicked?

Conclusion

I have described ten ways in which Jesus is unique. This uniqueness explains why the apostles asserted, 'Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.'²⁸

We must be saved. What does that mean? In personal terms this means we must be saved from the hell which is promised to all who do not repent and believe. It means that we must be saved from a life in which we are held captive by sinful practices. It means that if we repent and trust in Christ we will inherit the new world.

Salvation always means salvation from the penalty of sin and the power of sin. But it means more than that. Salvation must include resurrection of the body. Can you really anticipate your body being raised in such a way that it will be rid of all the imperfections that it has carried in this life? Will your body be glorious, powerful and imperishable?

Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all those who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.'²⁹

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| 1 Jesus is his earthly name. Christ is the Greek for Messiah which means 'anointed one'. | 17 <i>Operation World</i> , Patrick Johnston, OM Publishing, 1993, p65 |
| 2 Isa 7:14 | 18 <i>Ibid</i> , p 164 |
| 3 Isa 9:6 | 19 <i>Ibid</i> , p 511 |
| 4 1 John 3:5 | 20 <i>Ibid</i> , p 213 ff |
| 5 1 Peter 2:23 | 21 <i>And the Gates of Hell</i> , An appeal by The Barnabas Fund, Pewsey, Wiltshire SN9 5SZ, UK |
| 6 John 8:58 | 22 <i>Their Blood Cries Out</i> , Paul Marshall, Word Publishing, Dallas, Texas, USA, 1997 |
| 7 John 11:25 | 23 John 1:10 |
| 8 Matt 26:63,64 | 24 Col 1:16 |
| 9 Luke 7:22 | 25 Heb 1:2 |
| 10 Ez 33:8 | 26 Rev 20:11-15 |
| 11 John 1:29 | 27 Matt 25:31 |
| 12 Matt 20:28 | 28 Acts 4:12 |
| 13 Matt 24:1-35, Luke 21:5-32 | 29 John 5:25-29 |
| 14 Eph 5:2 | |
| 15 Acts 2:33-36 | |
| 16 Matt 16:18 (KJV) | |

How to treat your pastor

Martin Holdt

The reason why I am writing this article is not because I lack the support and love of the congregation I now serve. I am being given more respect and honour than I deserve. Of all pastors I am blessed to serve the people whom I love, and who I sense love me and my family and care for us. This article is motivated by deep concern about the lack of appreciation shown for worthy hard-working godly pastors who are little esteemed by those who fail to support them in a biblical fashion.

The evidence of a call

I am aware of the fact that there are many men in the ministry who should not be there. They do not show signs of being caring shepherds and do not evidence that sacred anointing which Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones considered to be essential for the preaching ministry. The words of Spurgeon are crucial that, 'The will of the Lord concerning pastors is made known through the prayerful judgment of his Church. It is needful, as the proof of your vocation, that your preaching should be acceptable to the people of God. God usually opens doors of utterance for those whom he has called to speak in his name.' He added, 'Standing up to preach, our spirit will be judged of the assembly, and if it be condemned, or if, as a general rule, the church is not edified, the conclusion may not be disputed that we are not sent of God.'

Men who do not have a divine calling and whose preaching is without a divine anointing would do better not to foist themselves upon congregations who sooner or later consider themselves to have erred in engaging the services of those who were never in the first place sent by Christ.

The gifts and calling of God respected

When, however, the godly component of the congregation are able to perceive the gift of teaching and the calling of God upon a servant of Christ, it is in the interest of all to take very seriously the commands of Scripture with respect to those who stand in the sacred office of being pastors to the people. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 reads: 'Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work

hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.’ Leon Morris in his commentary on these verses points out that the verb translated ‘hold them in the highest regard’, is a very strong one. It has meaning, according to Dr Morris, ‘beyond exceeding abundantly’. Morris suggests, ‘The whole sentence then is a strong plea for the leaders to be held in the highest regard. They are to be highly esteemed, not for reasons of personal eminence of office, but *for their work’s sake*. They have been spoken of as labouring in the preceding verse, and it is the duty of the rank and file to do all they can to forward the work. *Leaders can never do their best work when they are subject to carping criticism from those who should be their followers*’ (italics mine).

Churches that have worthy pastors, who are labouring in prayer and in doctrine to feed the flock which Christ has purchased with his blood, ought to consider themselves to be greatly privileged to have been blessed by the head of the Church with such spiritual leadership. Especially so since often long pastoral vacancies are endured in an increasing number of congregations who yearn for dedicated pastors who will ‘prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up’ (Eph 4:10-12).

Deceitful tendencies

When the children of Israel murmured against the leadership of Moses, there was no justification for their complaints. Their attitude of heart to God’s appointed prophet and leader provoked the righteous indignation of God. They suffered severely for their resentment of the pastoral leadership which was so evidently given to them from heaven. I have lived long enough to know of a number of instances where God has removed men of great worth from one congregation to another because of failure on the part of the people to value what God had given them in providing them with a man of God. Some churches take years to recover from the displeasure of the Lord for their lack of appreciation, while others never return to the prosperity they once enjoyed when they supported a godly leadership. There are churches which have destroyed good men and it is no wonder that they have difficulty in securing the services of would-be pastors when the men in question know that they will have to run the same gauntlet. What a blight that is!

We must ask the question, Is not the removal of the candlestick of Christ’s presence sometimes preceded by the removal of the principal messenger of divine truth? Furthermore when we read the seven letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor we ask the question, Is our Lord less sensitive to the prevailing

attitudes within his churches now? Does he not watch over the congregations with the same earnest concern now as he did then?

The text, 'Touch not the Lord's anointed', can be used wrongfully as though the pastor cannot err. That extreme must be avoided. Nevertheless there are happy examples of churches that have taken 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 to heart. The pastor has been highly esteemed in love for his work's sake. He has been fully and enthusiastically supported and abounding fruitfulness has resulted over many years.

In contrast to that there are instances of needless disaffection and personal criticism and exaggeration of faults. Gradually the habit forms in which the pastor becomes a football to be kicked around, or to use another metaphor, the pastor becomes the Sunday lunch at which time he becomes the butt of censorious fault finding criticism. The evil effects of such example on children and young people are extremely harmful. The Word preached is entirely nullified by carnal insensitive attitudes and the Holy Spirit driven far away. I believe that these carping exercises initiate the first processes on the road to the removing of the candlestick. A church can only avoid this road of spiritual barrenness by congregational repentance.

How to treat a pastor

How then does a church guarantee a fruitful existence in worship, spiritual growth and evangelism? If a church is to have maximum benefit from a pastor/people relationship the following principles should be observed.

1. Pray for your pastor

The injunctions to pray for the leadership and for the pastor in particular are paramount.

Paul appealed for prayer (1 Thess 5:25; 2 Thess 3:1,2). He longed for the prayerful support of God's people. Writing to the church at Ephesus he urged, 'Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains.' Gifted though Paul was he could not rely on his own ability.

To the Romans the same apostle wrote, 'I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.' And more specifically, 'Pray that I may be rescued from the

unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there' (Rom 15:30). Paul asked the Colossians to pray that he would be given an open door and that he would proclaim the message clearly. The most powerful preaching in the world will do nothing unless the Holy Spirit applies it. The Temple guards said of Jesus, 'No man ever spoke the way this man does' yet there seemed to be very little response at that time (John 7:26). Clarity is a great asset in preaching. Pray that your pastor will not be side-tracked or become muddled on important doctrines and so confuse his hearers. Make sure that he can afford to be equipped with the best and most reliable expository materials. Pray that he will attend conferences where iron sharpens iron and he will be influenced by the best ministers in the land.

Prayer for your pastor is needed daily because he is the prime target of Satan. The principle pertains, strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.

2. Respect your pastor

Obviously I am referring here to the faithful labourers who are humble and conscientious in their submission to the Word of God. We should never submit ourselves to teaching which is not in submission to the authority of the Word of God. A people's regard and respect for a faithful minister is a barometer of their regard and respect for Christ.

3. Correct your pastor in a spirit of meekness

It will be unusual if your pastor never errs in a matter of fact or action or by forgetfulness or omission of something he pledged. Correction should be given in the context of encouragement and appreciation and in a spirit of humility and meekness. If you often express appreciation then it will not be difficult when there is a matter of correction to be faced.

'Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father' (1 Tim 5:1). The same principle applies when the pastor is in error over some matter. A true pastor will not resent criticism but if he is bombarded in an aggressive manner he will be discouraged.

4. Provide for your pastor

It is important that a pastor have the means to carry on his work without fear of debt. Ensure that there is generous support of his work especially for hospitality and for evangelism.

Missions to Muslims in the 21st Century

Bassam M Madany

As we approach the Third Millennium we need a new vision of world missions based on the *solid foundation of the Word of God coupled with a realistic description of our times*. We are living in a new era of world history. In the early days of modern missions, between 1800 and 1950, the West was more or less Christian, and its culture reflected the impact of the Christian tradition. The 'mission fields' in Asia and Africa formed an integral part of the vast colonial empires of Britain, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. Not so today. The West is secularised, and those European empires are a thing of the past. Furthermore, Christian missions overseas should never be abstracted from what is going on in the homelands. Hence the critical importance of reaffirming the uniqueness and finality of the Christian faith in our missionary endeavours within the global scene and for the support groups in the West to be identifiably Christian.

The post-World War II era has ushered in a new Diaspora which has brought millions of people from the former colonies to settle in Western European countries. And due to the changes in the immigration laws in Canada and the United States, the North American population is now more diversified than ever before. Such a mega shift in the global situation

requires a re-examination of our mission strategies.

At the outset it is very important to remind ourselves that whether working with Muslims or among the followers of other world faiths, we are never on our own. We are the messengers of him who presides over the spread of his Good News and the building up of his universal Church. The Bible teaches a theocentric view of missions. Our primary concern should be the faithful proclamation of the Word of God in the language of the people and in harmony with the historic Christian faith as we find it summarised and expounded in the ecumenical creeds and the confessions and catechisms of the Reformation. We should keep in mind a Pauline missionary principle: 'Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the preaching of Christ' (Romans 10:17). The establishment of Christian churches in new fields follows a vibrant and faithful preaching of the whole counsel of God.

Unfortunately, rather than basing their approaches on this solid heritage of the past, some missionary strategists during the last few decades have been very critical of the modern mission endeavour, charging it with lack of concern for the cultures of non-Western people. They have vigorously adopted

new theories and methods which supposedly guarantee success in missions. For example, great stress has been placed on contextualising the gospel in such a way that it becomes rather easy for a Muslim to convert to Christianity.

Certain advocates of contextualisation have espoused radical theories which conflict with the teachings of the Bible. Their inspiration did not originate from within the Christian tradition but from their fascination with cultural anthropology. These approaches have alarmed those missiologists who are committed to the biblical principles of missions. For example, in the Fall 1993 issue of *Trinity World Forum*, Professor Edward Rommen drew attention to the divorce which has taken place between Theology and Missiology. In an article entitled 'The De-Theologising of Missiology' Rommen wrote: 'The elevation of pragmatism to the status of a missiological norm has led to an uncritical acceptance of applied social science.' It is a very gratifying sign to notice that this professor of missiology in the School of World Mission at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois is calling for 'the re-theologisation of North American missiology'.

Setting aside theories which advocate a radical discontinuity with the work of the pioneer missionaries, we may now zero in on the Muslim world. Our approach should be marked by a macro or total vision of the real nature of Islam as a religion which encompasses all areas of life. It is basically a faith which

acknowledges God as creator and sovereign over all, but denies the event of the fall as described and explained in the Bible, the historicity of the crucifixion as well as the necessity of redemption. In Islam, man's salvation takes place under purely revelatory auspices. The attainment of eternal bliss in the paradise of Allah depends on the confession of the oneness of God and the apostleship of Muhammad coupled with a life of obedience to the demands of the Shari'a Law.

The majority of Muslims today live in the third world; most of them are historically conscious and quite aware of their great and glorious past. Their faith in the rightness of their religion is unshaken. God has entrusted them with his final message to mankind. They have taken it to distant lands and managed to found great empires. They consider their present predicament as transitory, an unfortunate phase which will eventually give way to a revival of their past glories. They do expect the triumph of Islam all over the globe. This belief forms an integral part of their eschatology.

With regard to the evangelisation of Muslims, we must realise that they come from a position of utter certainty about the rightness of their faith. They consider themselves the custodians of God's final and complete revelation. Thus, they have hardly any reason to consider seriously the claims of a previous and inferior faith. Furthermore, an average Muslim is convinced that he has nothing to gain by converting to Christianity. If he lives

within a Muslim country, his conversion will inevitably lead to death. If he has immigrated to a Western land, he sees no specific benefits that would accrue from his adoption of the Christian faith. Western societies present him with a very confusing scene. Their mores are a threat to his family. Back in his homeland, society and the state cooperated with him in the faithful practice of his religion. Over here in the West, no such help is available. The freedom he sought in this new world of economic opportunity surrounds him at the same time with a devastating type of secularism. He does not understand separation between religion and politics, or 'Church' and state. His culture is deeply religious and his religion has produced an assertive and self-consciously Islamic culture. Based on his experiences of living and working in the West, he identifies Christianity with Western culture. He regards it as decadent and hurtling towards disintegration. His personal faith and fervour are rekindled. In order to survive within a secular milieu, he must go on the offensive and engage in da'wah, i.e. in Islamic missions. He calls on Westerners to convert to Islam. This would involve both a religious and political change of mind on the part of his Western converts.

Thus, when we are considering Christian missions to Muslims in the twenty-first century, we must be fully aware that Muslims themselves are already engaged in a global effort to spread their faith. This is a new state of affairs which was not at work when William Carey launched the modern

missionary enterprise back in 1792. In other words, while we entertain a hope for conducting missions among Muslims, we must keep in mind that they will be tremendously engaged in a counter-offensive, endeavouring to convince Europeans and Americans that Islam can bring order to the chaotic moral and spiritual conditions of Western societies.

I would like to enlarge on this point by referring to the work of two prominent Christian professors, one of them teaching in the United States and the other from Germany. They both address the subject of Muslims living in the West, their struggles to survive, and their attempts to engage in missions within the host countries.

Before I quote from their works, a word of explanation is necessary concerning the traditional Islamic view of the world. According to Islam, the world is divided into two camps: Daru'l Islam and Daru'l Harb, i.e. the household of Islam and the household of war. Within Islamic countries, the Shari'a Law is supreme and is enforced within society through the arm of the state. Until very recently, the vast majority of Muslims lived almost exclusively within Daru'l Islam. Now that many have migrated to the West, it is very difficult for them to practise fully the requirements of their faith in an environment where the state is neutral vis-à-vis religious matters. Radical Muslims, enjoying the freedoms of our Western pluralistic societies, are working hard to create conditions which would allow the followers of Islam to live as if they

were still residing within an Islamic territory. However, such a quest can be realised only where the Shari'a Law is enforced by a theocratic state!

In the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* of October 1993, the noted West African scholar, Lamin Sanneh, wrote a thought-provoking article entitled 'Can a House Divided Stand? Reflections on Christian-Muslim Encounter in the West'. Dr Sanneh, a convert from Islam and a professor of Missions and World Christianity at Yale Divinity School, commented in his article on the inevitable confrontation between the 'pluralistic tradition of the West' and the demands of Muslim immigrants for implementing practices which stem from their theocratic view of the state. Dr. Sanneh wrote:

'It would be wrong for Westerners to think that they can preserve religious toleration by conceding the extreme Muslim case for territoriality, because a house constructed on that foundation would have no room in it for the very pluralistic principle that has made the West hospitable to Muslims and others in the first place. The fact that these religious groups have grown and thrived in the West at a time when religious minorities established in Islamic societies have continued to suffer civil disabilities shows how uneven are the two traditions.

'We risk perpetuating such a split-level structure in our relationship, including the risk to the survival of our great public institutions, unless we take

moral responsibility for the heritage of the West, including tolerance for religion. Such tolerance for religion cannot rest on the arguments of public utility but rather on the firm religious rock of the absolute moral law with which our Creator and Judge has fashioned us.

'In view of growing signs of Muslim pressure for religious territoriality, often expressed in terms of Shari'ah and political power, and in view of the utter inadequacy of the sterile utilitarian ethic of the secular national state, Westerners must recover responsibility for the gospel as public truth and must reconstitute by it the original foundations on which the modern West has built its ample view of the world.'

Coming from a tradition which considers religion as involving all areas of life, and having witnessed the moral collapse of Western societies, it is quite understandable that Muslims are ready and eager to offer their faith as a remedy to the deplorable spiritual conditions within the host countries. Their boldness stems from their deep conviction that the West is rapidly entering the twilight of its civilization. Only Islam has the answer. As the theme of a Muslim convention which was held in Chicago in December, 1994, put it: *Al-Islam li sa'adat al-bashariyya*: Islam is for the happiness of mankind! From across the Atlantic a noted German theologian contributed an article in which he touched on the subject of Muslim minorities in the West and their zeal to engage in missionary activities. It appeared in the December 1994 issue of *FIRST*

THINGS under the title: *Christianity and the West: Ambiguous Past, Uncertain Future*. Wolfhart Pannenberg who is professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Munich, wrote:

‘If Western freedom in fact means no more than individual license, others do well to try to defend their communities and spiritual values against the encroachment of Western secularism. Beyond the defensive mode, Islamic missions in Western societies express a strong sense of missionary vocation aimed at liberating Western nations from the materialism and immorality associated with secularism. These Muslims view Christians as having failed in the task of the moral transformation and reconstruction of society. Such criticism is a serious challenge to traditional Christianity and to Western culture. A culture devoid of spiritual and moral values is not equipped to meet that challenge, and is bound for disintegration and decay.’

This analysis of a leading European theologian requires our serious reflection. After all, we are not living in the days of William Carey or Samuel Zwemer. Their work was supported by a home front which exhibited a Christian culture. Before World War II the average Muslim in the Middle East, for example, thought of Americans as being thoroughly honest. He could trust them more than his fellow Muslims. Why ? Because all the Americans he knew were either missionaries or educators who exhibited in their life the higher ethic of an authentic Christian

faith! Quite often early United States diplomats in the area were children or grandchildren of the pioneer missionaries.

As mentioned earlier, even after living a long time outside Daru’l Islam, the household of Islam, Muslims still carry with them their own habits of thought. They do not comprehend the stark reality that Western culture has jettisoned its Christian heritage. Thus, they confuse Christianity with Western culture and regard it as exhibiting an inferior ethic. Therefore, it becomes both their responsibility and opportunity to engage in missions among Westerners. It is also a very telling matter that such activity is not rooted in an organised and official ‘sending’ by a mission agency. The Islamic view of missions is rooted in the concept of da’wah, i.e. calling people to Islamise. It is a spontaneous activity in which he engages as a Muslim, as a person who has submitted to God’s final revelation in the Qur’an. His solemn duty is to share his faith by all means, peaceful at times, or through holy war, jihad, at other times.

When we take these facts into account, we conclude that in planning for missions to Muslims in the next century, it becomes the responsibility of all Christians to fight tenaciously the steady advance of secularism into the various spheres of their life and communities. The credibility of the Christians’ missionary endeavours, at home within a pluralistic society, and overseas, depends on their distancing themselves from the norms and the

lifestyles of the secular societies which surround them. *Unless Christians lead lives which are concretely different from the lifestyles of the secularised citizenry, no Muslim will consider seriously what Christianity has to offer.* We have so much to learn from the history of the first three hundred years of the Christian era when to be a Christian meant both a marked separation from the corrupt heathen environment and, at the same time, engaging it with the bold Christian word-and-life testimony: Jesus is Lord.

Going back to Professor Pannenberg's article:

'And so, while we can envision a great resurgence of Christianity and Western culture in the third millennium, such a future is by no means certain. Western societies may ignore their need to recover the strength of their religious roots. They may continue headlong on a secularist course, unaware of its certain and dismal outcome. The end of Western culture, however, would not spell the end of Christianity. The Christian religion is not dependent upon the culture to which it gave birth. As it has in the past, the Church can survive and flourish in the context of other cultures.

'The further secularism advances the more urgent it is that Christian faith and Christian life be seen in sharp contrast to the secularist culture. It is quite possible that in the early part of the third millennium only the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches, on the

one hand, and evangelical Protestantism, on the other, will survive as ecclesial communities. What used to be called the Protestant mainline churches are in acute danger of disappearing. I expect they will disappear if they continue neither to resist the spirit of a progressively secularist culture nor to try to transform it.

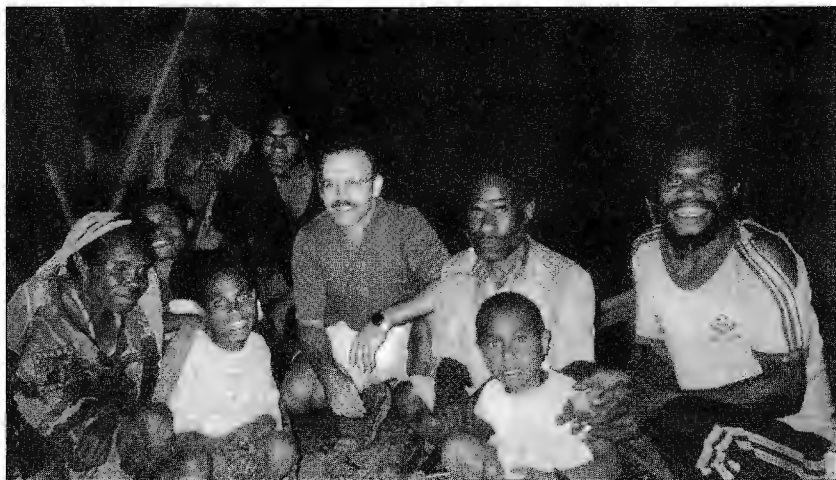
'There is no alternative to the Church. The further the secularist dominance of the general culture advances, the more clearly the Church, in clear distinction from that culture, emerges as the reference point of Christian existence.'

... None of us should have the luxury of sitting back and simply supporting missions in a purely financial way. While busy with missions within our own communities and country, we should ardently support those whom we have sent to distant lands, through our prayers, our generous gifts as well as by a consistently Christian lifestyle. We must not leave it to the Muslims among us to be busily engaged in calling.

We have a great message to share with mankind. And if we, Western Christians, shirk our missionary responsibility, Christians from Africa, Asia and Latin America will accomplish what God had ordained from all eternity...

We acknowledge THE OUTLOOK, Grandville, MI, USA (Nov 1998) with whom we have a reciprocal arrangement for this article by Rev Bassam M Madany which we have abridged slightly.

News



Lance Hellar with Yagwoia people

Papua New Guinea

*by Cliff Hellar,
missionary in PNG for 37 years*

Early days.

My wife Martie and I arrived in PNG in 1962 with our two children. After a few months' orientation time with the New Tribes Mission base in the highlands we moved into the Keyagana area. The people were unreached and primitive with no written language and numbered about 10,000 living in rugged mountains with narrow valleys. It was a long day's hike from the base and there were no roads.

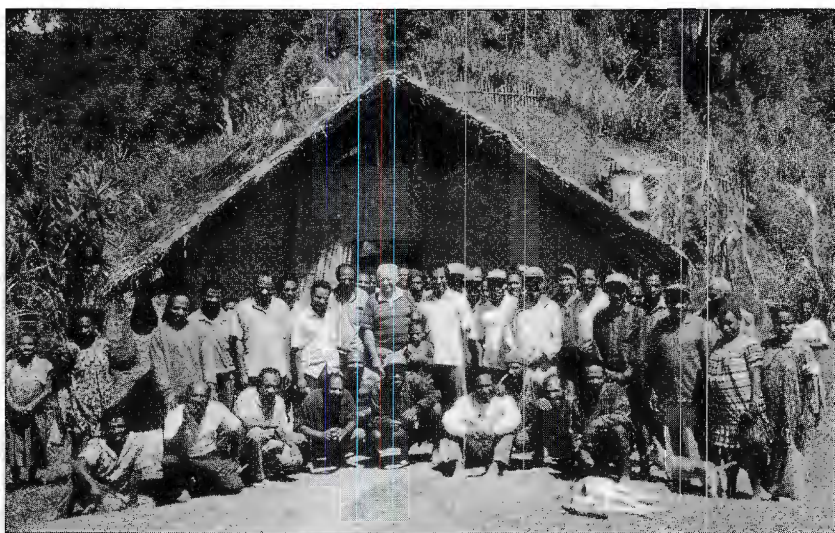
I had to build a house with timber from the forest. The people were involved in black magic and seemed violent. Listening to them I was unable even to mimic words or short phrases. How

would Martie and the children fit into such a primitive culture? I was overwhelmed. I wondered how we could ever live here, let alone have a ministry of evangelism and church planting. I felt ready to quit! Yet... the Lord had sent us to these people... I stopped struggling with myself and the Lord gave peace.

In 1965 we went on furlough and due to doctrinal differences with the Mission we returned to PNG on our own sponsored by our home church in New Jersey, USA.

Language learning.

In those days there were not many helps and I had little idea of how to go about it. I took down words and phrases as best I could and began to work out the alphabet. I would go into the villages to make friends and contacts, learn about the



Keyagana spiritual leaders (elders, deacons, evangelists, teachers)

culture, listen to the language and seek to witness as best I could in Pidgin English, the trade language of PNG. I spent hours and hours sitting at their fires, visiting their homes and listening, listening, listening. This is a very humbling experience. I had taught others and trained missionaries in New Tribes training camps. Now I was just a learner, knew nothing and couldn't even speak.

Literacy

I am not gifted at language but the Lord undertook and gradually I began to learn. After I arrived at an alphabet and put out some primers we began a mass literacy campaign! In every village I visited I gave out the first primer to all who wanted them. On my next visit I would check them and give the next primer to those who knew their book. I would also teach literacy before the meetings and would then seek to preach the Word. About 1,000 people started literacy.

Translation

In the beginning I preached in Pidgin English but most did not understand it so I had to use an interpreter. This has many disadvantages and I realised that a translation of the Scriptures was necessary. I had no training but in God's providence the main base of the Wycliffe Bible Translators in PNG was within a day's travel. I could not have done that translation without their help! The first draft of the New Testament was completed in 1982. Continuing to learn the language I became aware of many errors and made a revision of the whole New Testament. This was printed by the Korean Bible Society in 1996.

Evangelism

I taught and preached as best I could everywhere. I nearly always had many hearers. Our danger was that many professed but did not know the power of godliness. In my ignorance I made many

mistakes but the Lord saved his chosen and built his Church. There are now a score of villages with indigenous leadership, including two churches which were started by Keyagana believers in Port Moresby, the capital city, one in the town of Goroka, and one on a tea plantation in the Western Highlands. Keyagana Christians have also helped to spread the gospel to other tribal peoples beyond the borders of the Keyagana.

Outreach

At present 3 men are missionaries living outside the Keyagana. About 50 men gather every Saturday to pray and for teaching. They are the core of the work. Very few have any education at all but God has made them able ministers of the New Covenant, able to teach others.

Our work also includes ministry among the Menya people in the Morobe province. This work was started in 1967 by Bernie and Ann Crozier from Sydney, Australia. There are 10 established churches in Menya. The Croziers are now living in Australia to take care of his mother but Bernie tries to visit the work every year.

Our son and his wife, Lance and Robin Hellar and their family, began work among the Yagwoia people in 1990. This group borders the Menya tribe. Lance is doing much the same as we did: learning the language, working on the alphabet and preaching. The first fruits are one man and five women. The Lord willing, our eldest daughter and her husband and two of their children will be joining us at the end of this year to work with unevangelised people.

Our great desire is 'to preach the gospel where Christ is not named'. Brethren, pray for us!

Ministerial training in Sri Lanka, South India and Nepal

From a report by Pastor Stephen Turner of New Zealand

During May and June Stephen conducted seminars for ministerial students. The visits to Sri Lanka and Nepal were short but encouraging.

The main project was *Studies 1999* in Pravaham, Andra Pradesh, India. 45 sessions covered material studied from: *God's Ultimate Purpose* (DM Lloyd-Jones, chs. 7,8), *The Glorious Body of the Church* (RB Kuiper, chs. 15,46,51,52), *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (I Murray, ch.3), *Faith and Life* (B B Warfield, ch. 4), *The Relevance of Preaching* (PC Marcel, ch. 5).

The emphasis was on in-depth discussion of the material, covering as much ground as proved appropriate. The students were enchanted by Kuiper's book. A decision was made to translate the four chapters studied into Tamil.

Looking ahead, two of the students will help to organise the Pravaham studies in 2000. The aim remains for Stephen to return as often as possible over the coming years so as to make a spiritual and theological contribution to young men in the Tamil Baptist churches.

Christian care for orphans in Zambia

The desperate situation in which it is estimated that there will be 500,000 orphans in Zambia by the turn of the century has led to a project to provide Christian care for children whose parents have died as a result of HIV/AIDS.

Rev Alfred Nyirenda of Lusaka, with whom the editor spent time in 1990, is seeking to establish a branch of *Interplan* which already has projects in other countries such as Botswana, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique seeking to distribute help from Christians worldwide to give hope to destitute children. In many cases the impoverished guardians are illiterate grandparents with no income so that the children are abandoned on the streets to fend for themselves.

Enquiries may be made to *Interplan*,
P/Bag 156X, Lusaka, Zambia.
e-mail: interpam@hotmail.com

Kosova and Serbia

In RT 170 we described Simo Ralevic's fleeing from Pec. Subsequently we have learned that the warehouse of Christian literature was burned down on June 14th. Included in the burning was Simo's office and part of his personal library which he kept there. All materials which were being gathered to establish a Conference Centre around the warehouse were stolen. The warehouse contained literature in four languages all of which was destroyed with the exception of twenty titles in Albanian which had been rescued. The original manuscripts for all the literature materials are safe on electronic files. Simo's son Timothy is already at work on the long uphill labour to restore the literature industry which has been greatly used in Yugoslavia.

Simo's house is now occupied by Albanian friends. Albanian Baptists are using the church building in Pec for

services. This demonstrates how Bible Christianity rises above racial hatred. Simo is encouraged by signs of progress among the Kosovan Baptists.

Six years ago, under the leadership of Simo, a church was built in Nova Gajdobra, a village of 3,500 inhabitants. The village and environs have now formed a haven for eleven Serbian Christian families who are Kosovan refugees, including the Ralevics. Besides two Sunday services there is a weekly prayer meeting and a mid-week meeting in the church. The flight from their home in Pec has been exceedingly stressful especially for Simo's wife and his aged mother of 85. His daughter Rachel has three years of schooling to complete but there is a transport problem since the nearest suitable school is in another town eleven kilometres away.

New Biblical Library in NW England

Biblical Library (NW) housed at The Baptist Tabernacle, 2 Springfield Road, Blackpool FY1 1QL, is due to open on Saturday 9 October 1999. The facilities will be mainly for reference but it is intended that some books will be made available on loan.

The main section will be doctrinal and there will also be a Missiology section and a childrens section. Young people between 14 and 19 are invited to write for a copy of 'Young Person's Challenge'.

As a regular user of The Evangelical Library and Dr Williams's Library in London the editor warmly commends the potential of this new facility in the NW.

Is Mary Co-Redeemer?

David Samuel

It has recently been reported that millions of signatures from around the world have been collected in an appeal to the Pope to proclaim the Virgin Mary a 'co-redeemer', placing her on a par with Jesus Christ. The official terms are 'co-redemptrix' and 'mediatrix of all graces'.

Some Roman Catholics have expressed concern about these proposals. Nicholas Coote, secretary to the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, has said that this makes him feel uneasy. However, the Pope, who is a special devotee of Mary, and after his shooting in St. Peter's Square attributed his survival to Mary's protection, is known to favour the cause of the petitioners. The Pope's commitment to Mary is well known, but perhaps not so well known are the extreme terms in which he couches it. He is on record as stating that Mary is the one to whom God has committed the Church and the whole mystery of salvation. The proclamation of her as co-redemptrix must inevitably follow from such teaching.

Accompanying this announcement in *The Times* was an article seeking to allay the anxieties of Protestants and those Roman Catholics who might think that such a move was taking things too far. 'The question of co-redemptrix,' it said, 'would be a mere refinement of doctrine.' The author maintained that the petitioners' demand that Mary be recognised as 'The Mother of all Graces' and 'Advocate of the People of God' does not contradict Catholic doctrine. If it does not contradict Roman Catholic doctrine, which is no doubt what the writer meant, it certainly contradicts the Catholic teaching of Holy Scripture.

The writer went on to try to defend his assertion by stating: 'Precisely because she is not divine but human, Mary seems more approachable than Christ himself. If our Lord brings salvation to mankind, it is Our Lady who comforts

The prominence given to Mary is seen by the the series of meditations by the late Cardinal Hume published in the Internet. For the 'Holy Year 2000' we read, 'Christ is our Way, our Truth, our Life. It is to Him that we must turn.' But this is followed by 'Mary, His Mother and ours, must be with us constantly as we prepare for the Holy Year.' Then there is a meditation on faith, 'Prayer to Our Lady can deepen our faith in Jesus Christ her Son and His presence in the Eucharist.'

Editor

us in our troubles.' This statement is a mare's nest; nothing could be further from the truth. The Bible teaches that Christ himself is both Redeemer and Advocate of the people of God; that he alone, because he was made man and suffered, is uniquely qualified and fitted to intercede and obtain all graces for his people (Heb 2:16-18 and 7:26-27). This explodes completely the false teaching of the Church of Rome about the mediation and intercession of the Virgin Mary and makes entirely redundant any such offices that it attributes to her.

The root of the matter is that the Church of Rome is deeply in error with regard to the doctrines of redemption and salvation, and by virtue of its supposed infallibility those errors are now irreformable. Its direction was determined by the Council of Trent and now Rome is set on a trajectory which must take her ever more deeply into error. That is the logic inherent in this present agitation concerning the elevation of the Virgin Mary to a position which would effectively infringe the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The inexorable unfolding of this position can be traced from Trent, through the promulgation of the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary (1854), Papal Infallibility (1871), and the Bodily Assumption of Mary (1950), to the present proposal to make her co-redemptrix. And each erroneous dogma buttresses and strengthens the others so that the whole becomes one stupendous, irreformable edifice of false doctrine. Rome cannot help herself in this; she is the prisoner of her own presuppositions.

For example, the doctrine of the Virgin Mary's mediation and intercession is built upon the erroneous doctrine of merit. Mediation is by definition an appeal to God on the ground of the merits and works of a mediator. According to the Scriptures none but Christ can fulfil such an office, since he alone is without sin and he alone has fulfilled the law of God and all righteousness on behalf of his people. Scripture teaches that Mary herself is dependent upon the merits of Christ for her salvation. 'My spirit,' she said, 'hath rejoiced in God my Saviour' (Luke 1:47). But the Church of Rome with its Semi-Pelagian doctrine, teaches the acquisition of human merit and so turns men into 'saints' and 'mediators', something nowhere found in Scripture, and thus encourages her people to pray to them to intercede, by their merits, for them to God.

The whole Roman position is one elaborate and compound error stemming from wrong and unscriptural doctrinal premises, yet fixed and irreversible by virtue of Rome's claim that she cannot err. She carries along with her all who trust in her and refuse to test her doctrines by Scripture and who will, in consequence, share in her eventual destruction.

We acknowledge with gratitude the permission of The English Churchman to use this material by David Samuel which was first published in September 1997.

Their Blood Cries Out

Editor

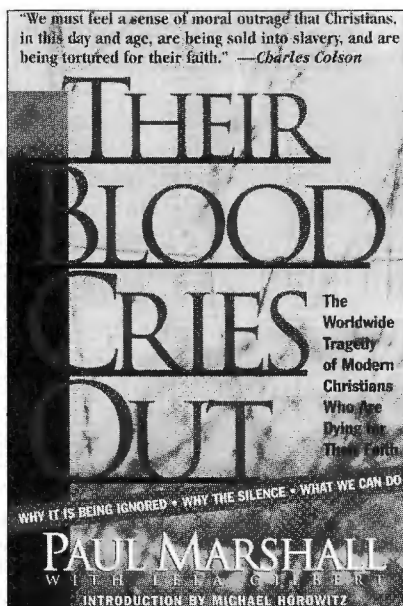
Their Blood Cries Out

Paul Marshall with Lela Gilbert
Word Publishing, Dallas, London,
Vancouver, Melbourne large size
paperback, 334 pages, 1997

This book is not to be confused with *By Their Blood - Christian Martyrs of the 20th Century* by James and Marti Hefler a 632 page paperback which was reviewed and highly commended in RT 120. *By Their Blood* claims to be a continuation of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* but really describes Christian martyrs of the 20th century. That of course leaves a great gap between Foxe (1517-1587) and the modern era.

Dr Paul Marshall sometimes traces events back over the 20th century but he is mainly concerned with the up-to-date world-wide situation, that is in the 1990s. There are two parts to his work. The first (130 pages) is descriptive. The second (101 pages) is polemical, aimed at American apathy and also the failure of the Western secular media which allows appalling barbarities to go unchallenged and unreported.

In part one the author begins with what he calls 'The Advancing Jihad', that is persecution at the hands of Islam in Sudan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Egypt. He continues on this theme by dividing Islamic countries into three zones: The Fear Zones, (Algeria, Morocco, Turkey, Kuwait, Brunei), The Friction Zones, (Bangladesh,



Malaysia, Indonesia) and The Fragmented Zones, (East Timor, Philippines, West Africa, East Africa, Central Asia and Nagorna Karabakh).

The next section is titled 'Communism's Continuing Grip'. Described here are China, Vietnam, Cuba and North Korea. On China the author asserts that 'The core of the human rights issue in China today is that there is a fundamental machinery crushing human beings – physically, psychologically, and spiritually. This is called the *laogai* camp system, of which we have identified eleven hundred separate camps. . . . the *laogai* is not simply a prison system; it is a

political tool for maintaining the Communist Party's totalitarian rule. It is fundamentally no different from the notorious Gulag system.'

One chapter describes persecution in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Bhutan, Burma, and Kampuchea.

'Christian versus Christian' is a chapter devoted to the Russian Orthodox Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church and Roman Catholicism in Latin America. When the Bible is buried under a huge pile of tradition and formalistic ritual it is not surprising that those who somehow or another are liberated and born again are persecuted severely.

The value of the volume is enhanced by seven informative appendices; 1. Details of American organisations fighting religious persecution, 2. A selection of material describing the call by the National Association of Evangelicals for freedom of conscience, 3. The meaning of religious freedom, 4. The meaning of the term 'Christian' and principles involved in statistics, 5. A plea for freedom, 6. A brief history of Christian Orthodoxy, 7. Christianity in Soviet Russia.

Printed in italics are brief but terrifying descriptions of martyrdoms of a kind just as cruel as the burning alive of the Marian martyrs.

The style of presentation is not triumphalistic. It continues to be evident that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, but there are instances that seem to end in inexplic-

able defeat for the faithful, and victory for Satan and the realms of darkness. We are reminded that Christianity today is growing rapidly in the world. Today three quarters of Christians are in the third world. 'More people take part in Christian Sunday worship in China than do people in the entirety of Western Europe. The same is true of Nigeria, and probably true of India, Brazil, and even the world's largest Muslim country, Indonesia' (p 8).

There are some instances like that of Saul of Tarsus who was present at the stoning of Stephen, but not long after was converted in a remarkable way. There are instances of modern martyrs praying for their tormentors. The effect of all this highlights the vast contrast between the religion of the Lamb and belief systems, whether religious or political, that seem to inflame the sinful depravity of men and turn them into devils rather than humans. With natures so evil we can well understand the truth of eternal hell. The present day killings confirm the book of Revelation which describes world history in terms of tribulation and martyrdom.

The author has lectured from China to Sudan. His basic approach is to treat all groupings fairly and he is fully alert to the fact that dead Christian orthodoxy produced the Crusades which have left a terrible legacy. Baroness Cox, Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords, describes this work as a classic which should be read by all concerned with religious liberty as a fundamental human right.

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