

God's Missionary

Jim vH

Now that Saul of Tarsus had embarked on 'the most important mission of his life', he made sure to follow through. Historian Luke would later describe Saul's Jerusalem campaign as "ravaging the church, entering house after house, dragging off men and women, and putting them in prison". Saul realized his mission must not be confined to Jerusalem, not when the Nazarene heresy was spreading like wildfire. Reports from Damascus were troubling, making it a prime target for firm action. Now, as his expeditionary force was getting closer, Saul almost relished the 'ravaging' he and his men would shortly be bringing down on the heads of the cursed Nazarenes in Damascus. They too must be seized and taken to Jerusalem for summary sentencing...

Much later, reminiscing as Paul the apostle, he would write to the Christians of Philippi about that state of mind and attitude: **"I once also had confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he has grounds for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised the eighth day; of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; regarding the law, a Pharisee; regarding zeal, persecuting the church (THE EKKLESIA); regarding the righteousness that is in the law, blameless."**

How many must have looked up to young Saul as their champion of the faith! Ever since the lynching of Stephen, Saul had felt this solemn vocation weighing heavily on his heart: the Nazarene heresy must be stamped out! If the faithful kept their arms crossed, then nothing was going to happen, so, "breathing threats and murder", Saul was now setting the pace. Wasn't it high time to show the Jewish nation that traitors and imposters among them - unworthy of Abraham, Moses and the prophets - could expect zero tolerance?

Only a short while now and they would be in Damascus... Strange how, every now and then, Stephen's face would be before him, radiant as he lay there bleeding, crushed under the heavy stones, and breathing his last, yet his mouth still uttering words of worship, love and forgiveness... Then, suddenly, it isn't Stephen's face Saul is seeing. It is the Nazarene himself, out of the blue - his face is brighter than the blazing sun at midday, his voice speaks to him in Hebrew: "Saul, Saul, what are you persecuting me for?" Now it is Saul who's down, smashed, writhing in the dirt, the proud persecutor slain by the prime Persecuted!

Three days of total blindness follow, then Ananias comes along, and Saul - now a disciple of the Nazarene - recovers his sight and is baptized. What had Ananias, a Christian Jew in Damascus, been told about Saul? Nothing but horribly negative things - enough to strike terror in anyone's heart. But then the Lord speaks to him, and Ananias hears a totally different story: **"This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel."**

Right there, Ananias probably got to sing a Damascus version of **"Trust and obey, for there's no other way!... What He says I will do, where He sends I will go, never fear, only trust and obey!"** Love threw out Ananias' fear and he went - didn't Saul of Tarsus need help? So what is it Ananias found?

The grand **Champion Apologist** is no more! Reduced to **Chief Apostate**, he has become his Master's **Choice Apostle!**

True apostles, i.e. true 'missionaries' (not the Mormon variety e.g.), are characterized by God's grace, and that grace often provides the right friends in the right places. In Damascus the friends rescued Saul from assassination, and again in Jerusalem. God's missionary still had 30 years of work cut out for him and much territory to cover. Then, with the good fight fought and the race run, Paul would be ready for that 'departure' he looked forward to in 2 Timothy 4.

After his radical conversion, many months are spent at his Lord's feet in Arabia, then, after getting into hot water in Damascus and again in Jerusalem, God's missionary is found 'preaching the faith' in his home-town of Tarsus. Antioch follows, then Cyprus, Galatia, Philippi, etc., etc. Saul, now called Paul, gathers other missionaries around him, committed workers like himself: Barnabas, Titus, Silas, Timothy, Luke and others. Writing to the Christians in Rome, Paul introduces himself as **"a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God - the gospel He promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son"**.

Note: This (special) issue of **PRESSING ON!** mentions many missionaries - 'set apart for the gospel of God'. Their stories continue to fascinate and inspire. Without exception, each one of these brave men and women has owed much to Paul's example and epistles! Never more than by taking his testimony to be their own: **"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me"**.

Even so, there's the temptation and the tendency to sidestep one or more of the issues that Paul grappled with as a 'church-planter' - the lessons he learned and passed on in his epistles. How easy it was for them, and how easy it is for us, to conform to human traditions and miss what the New Testament, and Paul in particular, so clearly teach!

Take these four key issues: 1) Divine guidance in the congregations; 2) Elders in the congregations; 3) Ministry in (and through) the congregations; 4) Discipline in the congregations. The traditional concept of the "professional pastor" and his "pulpit" casts a long, long shadow over all of these issues, and as long as we go for the shadow, stepping out of the light of the Scriptures, we cannot really see clearly, or act coherently in accordance with God's eternal intention for His **EKKLESIA**.

God's missionary wrote:

"Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you... who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Co. 4).



The Torch Must Shine



From Jerusalem to China... and Back

Jim van Heiningen

Jesus prophesied that the Gospel would go into all the world (Mt. 24:14). Once He had lit the 'Torch' of the Great Commission for his disciples (Mt. 28:19-20), and handed it to the Twelve (including Matthias), and then to the other apostles, like Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, Titus, etc., they took it to the peoples surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. It was a wonderful and dynamic century, the light beginning to shine clearly in the darkness of the world's capitals and beyond: Jerusalem, Damascus, Antioch, Philippi, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Rome, and on to North Africa, France and Spain...

Then, somehow, the dynamism died down..., and the Great Commission became increasingly relegated to a bygone era. The bright light of the Torch of the Lord can only conquer every shadow when its bearers, decidedly, hold it high where darkness reigns. The more impenetrable that darkness, the more impressive the Light. But centuries passed and the Gospel seemed to have badly stagnated - by no means did it go worldwide! In fact, 'apostasy' took over, and soon the Dark Ages followed... Had the true Church and its light been snuffed out? A whole millennium passed - it seemed the long night was never going to give way to a new day...

However, at long last, something began to stir in

Europe. Sovereign God began to raise up "reformers" - from the 13th thru the 16th centuries. In the chronological order of their dates of birth, these are the men through whom the Light of the World began to shine out, wonderfully, in a new dawn: Valdo of Lyon with the Waldensians (France, Italy), John Wycliffe (England), John Hus (Bohemia), Martin Luther (Germany), Ulrich Zwingli (Switzerland), William Tyndale (England), Menno Simons (Holland), Conrad Grebel (Switzerland), John Calvin (France), John Knox (Scotland), Casiodoro de Reyna (Spain), and others.

In that same period of time, God also gave wisdom to still another John - John Gutenberg (Germany) - to invent the printing press! The first ever printed item coming off his press was the Latin Bible. Then, in due course, as the Bible was being translated into the peoples' own languages, these brand-new Bible translations also appeared in print - in ever increasing numbers.

So, in the four centuries mentioned, gradually a new kind of church emerged from the appalling darkness and bondage of Roman Catholic traditions, superstitions, idolatry and priestcraft. But how real and terrible were the birthpangs! Two of the reformers named, John Hus and William Tyndale, suffered public execution, but their deaths were benign, compared to what untold thousands had to endure...

Acts 8 and 11 tell us of the persecution of the church in Jerusalem, and how the refugees carried the Gospel Seed far and wide. In the same way, the brutal and indescribable tortures and massacres of the Waldensians, the Anabaptists, the Huguenots, and others, were the Lord's way of getting out the message as they fled, bereft of everything-but-the-Gospel, hoping to find safety and shelter in other lands...

Eventually the times of horror fizzled out, and the persecutions died down. And the persecuted? Sadly, as they settled down, their Master's **Great Commission** was watered down and toned down and, finally, shut down. Once again it became the disciples' "**Great Omission**"... The world's fields, white unto harvest, would have to wait another two centuries...

Of course, there were wonderful exceptions to this rule. Here are two examples from England. In 1611, under King James I, the most famous of all Bible translations, generally named after the king, "the KJV", came off the presses. Its launch coincided with the rise of the first British Empire, and it is not difficult to imagine how, through far-flung agents of the Empire, this highly official version of God's Word traveled to every corner of the globe, leaving its mark.

Then, in 1628, John Bunyan was born.

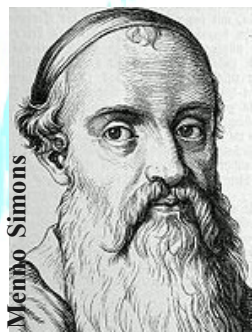
He became a humble 'tinker', who would later describe himself as the "chief of sinners". However, in his twenties, he found salvation and new life. That Good News that had transformed his life proved impossible to keep to himself.



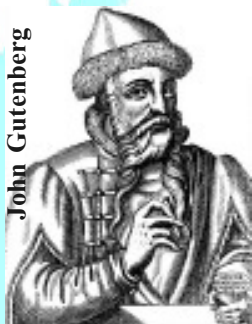
Singing martyrs



John Wycliffe



Menno Simons



John Gutenberg

In the beginning God created the heaven, and the Earth.
2 And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.
5 And God called the light, Day, and the darkness he called Night: and the evening and the morning were the first day.

Genesis 1 in the KJV



John Bunyan

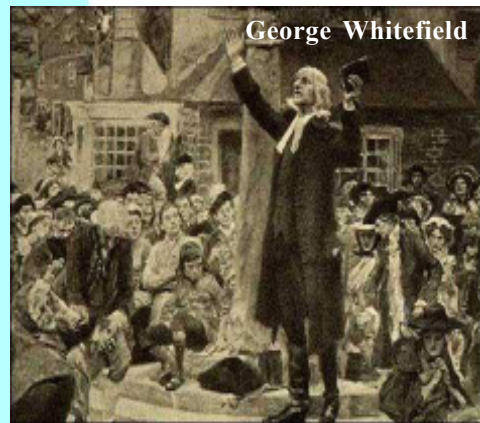
At every opportunity he preached his heart out. But not having the Anglican preaching licence that was required meant that John was jailed for over 12 years...

Yes, his enemies managed to effectively shut him up, but God overruled! Bunyan's book, written in prison, "The Pilgrim's

Progress", became the book that,

after the Bible, did more than any other to propagate the Gospel, and build up Christians in their faith - for centuries and in many languages.

At last, in the 18th century, concerted efforts to reach the unconverted masses began to stir in a number of Protestant churches in Bunyan's England. When Charles Spurgeon, the 'Prince of Preachers', looked back from the 19th century, he said: "How would the common people



George Whitefield

have become indoctrinated with the Gospel had it not been for those far-wandering evangelists and those daring innovators who found a pulpit on every heap of stones, and an audience chamber in every

open space near the abodes of men?"

Spurgeon was referring to men like George Whitefield, and then John and Charles Wesley. These were the ones who got the ball rolling again. Then others entered into their labors. At the same time, God raised up another German - one we might well call 'the



Nicolaus von Zinzendorf

Martin Luther of Missions' - Count Nicolaus L von Zinzendorf.

Nicolaus was born at the very close of the 17th century. As a young man he had a deep experience of the Lord that made him serve Christ wholeheartedly for the rest of his life. When a

group of refugees from Bohemia and Moravia approached him - descendants of the original followers of John Hus, who had suffered much through strife, persecution and exile - he allowed them to settle on his estate. They established 'Herrnhut' (Lord's Keeping), but when others joined them there, the atmosphere soured. The count then dedicated all his time to the group in prayer, Bible-study and exhortation, which resulted in a wonderful revival that transformed the whole community in August, 1727. There was continued spiritual growth after that, and also a rapid growth in numbers.

3

When, timidly, a missionary work started in Denmark, it became an inspiration to von Zinzendorf. So much so that in 1732 the first 'Moravian missionaries' sailed to various countries, even though Herrnhut numbered only 300 inhabitants. During the following 30 years more and more workers were released into the worldwide harvest.

They went as far as Greenland and South Africa and to many countries in between, often working in the most deplorable conditions.



When von Zinzendorf died in 1760, he did not know it, but the very next year (1761), William Carey (who would be known as the 'Father of Modern Missions') was born in England. This William, though at first a cobbler, then a school-teacher, and later a pastor, picked up the newly blazing Torch from the Moravians. The Great Commission was yet to set alight many Gospel fires in many lands during the 19th century.

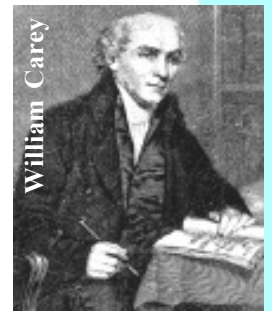
While the Moravians had already been very active among the American Indians, two notable Americans, Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd, had also labored and agonized among them, sharing the Gospel. Now William Carey in England devoured the accounts of these two men. In 1792 William published his well-researched mission-manifesto. Not only did it present the crying need for the Gospel in the world's nations, but also God's mandate that Christians go and take it to them. It was designed to open Christians' eyes, and to overcome the opposition of the theologians.

That same year, with some friends, William founded the very first Baptist missionary society. Preparations were begun for him and his family to leave for the field. And, in June, 1793, they and another missionary, John Thomas, left the English shores on a Danish ship, arriving in Calcutta, India, in November. But British India proved to be inhospitable in that the British economic interests frowned upon Gospel activities among Hindus. However, just north of Calcutta, in Serampore (a Danish colony), they found open doors to settle, study, start a printing press and receive new workers who were coming out.

Carey spent the rest of his life, 41 years, in India. They were years of rigorous labors, bitter disappointments and much suffering. He never went back to England, but as a legacy, the Bible was left translated, printed and distributed, in whole or in part, in 44 languages and dialects. Only some 700 converts could be counted in a nation of millions, but, apart from that, and the Bible translations, Carey and his companions had laid an impressive foundation for education, and social reform.



John Wesley



William Carey

The Great Commission Torch was now burning itself into more and more Christian consciences. William Carey and his faithful companions were still hard at work in northeastern India, when other notable workers were beginning to leave their native shores to emulate his example and serve their Lord among the foreign needy - ready to lay down their lives if called upon.

In 1806 - English Henry Martyn arrives in India.

In 1807 - Anglo-Scottish Robert Morrison arrives in China.

In 1813 - American Adoniram Judson arrives in Burma.

In 1816 - Scottish Robert Moffat arrives in Southern Africa.

In 1817 - Scottish James Thompson arrives in South America.

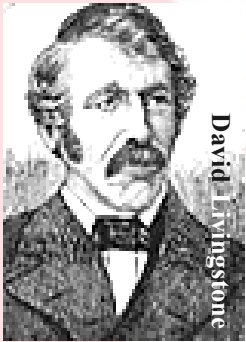
In 1817 - English Lancelot Threlkeld arrives in the South Sea Islands.

In 1820 - American Hiram Bingham arrives in Hawaii.

In 1827 - German Karl FA Gützlaff arrives in SE Asia.

In 1829 - English Anthony Norris Groves arrives in the Middle East.

In 1830 - Scottish Alexander Duff arrives in India.



David Livingstone

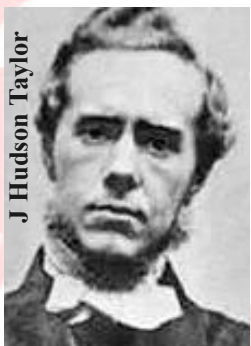
And so it went on. David Livingstone, from Scotland, became the most famous missionary of them all. He arrived in South Africa in 1841, married Mary Moffat, the daughter of Robert, criss-crossed the continent from coast to coast, got badly mauled by a lion, and wrote extensively about his important discoveries, not least the appalling slavetrade carried on by the Arabs - hand-in-glove with Western 'civilized' nations.

Livingstone's writings from Africa's interior were read far and wide and stirred enormous interest. Added to that was his mysterious disappearance and eventual rediscovery by American Henry Stanley. All in all, the subject of foreign missions was now receiving the attention it deserved. In the churches there was more prayer and preaching on the subject than ever before, with the result that more and more would-be candidates started presenting themselves. Charles Gabriel's hymn interpreted the growing urge:

***“Send the light, the blessed Gospel light;
Let it shine from shore to shore!
Send the light, the blessed Gospel light;
Let it shine forevermore!”***



In 1854 another important 'landing' took place:



J Hudson Taylor

James Hudson Taylor, an Englishman, landed in Shanghai, China. That and his founding of the China Inland Mission in 1865, were truly significant landmarks. China was in turmoil for most of the 19th century, which makes it all the more remarkable that Taylor and the CIM, with dogged faith and persistence, saw the fruit they did. When he died in 1905, it is estimated there were 205 'mission-stations' with over 800

missionaries, and 125,000 Chinese Christians.

And the Lord raised up Chinese leaders who were to pass the Torch to countless others. Names like Pastor Hsi, Dora Yu, Wang Mingdao, John Sung, Andrew Gih, Watchman Nee,

Stephen Kaung, Samuel Lamb have become much beloved, not only in China, but all over the world. Their faithfulness cost them dearly, but crowns await them (Rev. 2:10).



Watchman Nee

Less than half a century after Taylor's death, China succumbed to violent communism. The Lord's truth was trampled on, publicly, brutally and outrageously. Yet must it not prevail - once again? Had HE not said that, in order to produce a harvest, ***the grain of wheat must die*** (John 12:24-25)?

China closed its doors to the outside world and, though some news did get out, it wasn't good. There was terrible persecution of the Christians. They were typically accused of being in the pay of America for espionage purposes. After many years of not hearing anything positive, the prospects seemed dim, indeed. One foreign missionary, expelled from China in 1950, reminisced many years later: "We felt so sorry for the church we left behind. They had no one to teach them, no printing presses, no seminaries, no one to run their clinics and orphanages. No resources, really, except the Holy Spirit..." Those were the feelings of many Christians in the West.

Then, after a bout of 'ping-pong diplomacy' in the early 1970's, the doors started to open - very slightly. Later, in the 80's, a most amazing picture began to emerge of explosive growth of the Gospel in many parts of China. Not even the ten years of 'Cultural Revolution' with its fierce persecution, had been able to stamp out the power and impact of the Gospel.

The "underground church" had suffered terribly, yet it kept on growing at an unprecedented rate - all over the place. The estimates now give the consistent number of 40 million Protestants, and counting! The number of 125,000 Christians at the outset of the 20th century, had multiplied no less than 320 times at the end of it.

At the present time, the Torch of the Testimony is still conquering 'territory', both within China and far beyond its borders. One report speaks of an ongoing work of evangelism, "being done anonymously by Chinese Christians who make no appeals for money". Their vision? To eventually get to Jerusalem with Messiah's Gospel, after having reached all the Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim countries that separate them from the City of David.

***“This is what the LORD has commanded us:
I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring salvation to the ends of
the earth!”*** (Acts 13:47)

Chief Sechele to David Livingstone:
"That's a wonderful message, but my forefathers were living, at the same time as yours."



How is it that they never heard of the love of God and of Jesus the Savior? Why did they all pass away into deep darkness?"



A Blessed Partnership

“Philippians”

Howel Jones

The letter to the Philippians was another that Paul wrote from a Roman prison to encourage the believers. He is getting on in age, but he hasn't quite "run the race" yet. At this point he is at liberty to communicate with some of the churches that he had planted, writing to those believers who had yet to master the challenges of living an effective Christian testimony in a hostile environment. In order to help them he shares his insight and experience.

The main theme of this letter is 'partnership'; and Paul writes as a senior partner to junior partners, trusting his teaching and experience may be of benefit. It is all very positive. Proud of them, as he was of so many of his 'converts', he is both appreciative and optimistic. In their case he is confident that **"He which has begun a good work in you will continue it to a successful completion."** That is reason to rejoice - a recurring exhortation throughout the letter. However hard it may seem, victory is both possible and probable: the struggle will be worth it.

In structure, the letter shifts the focus from Paul to the Philippian believers and back again in a series of dialogues. He cites his own experience and then challenges them to adopt the same stance or follow the same principles. Indeed, at one point he says, "Imitate me!"

The first focus is on them (1:3-11). He gives thanks for them, expresses confidence in the prognosis, prays for them and urges them to "go for gold!"

Turning to himself (1:12-26), Paul explains that what has happened to him, though apparently a disaster (captivity, restriction, inhibition, etc.) has in fact turned out positively. The gospel is being preached, the work is progressing; and, although the motives in some instances appear to be in opposition to him and his aspiration, the end result is that, **"Christ is preached, and I rejoice!"**

He is not interested in himself but in Christ. Indeed, Christ is life for Paul and he would be happy to leave this world to be "with Christ". Yet, recognizing his responsibility as 'senior partner', he trusts he will stay to continue to be of help to them.

Focusing now on them (1:27-30), he challenges them to follow suit by making sure that their behavior reflects the gospel, in spite of facing difficulties and opposition. Indeed, just like himself (and his Lord before him) their calling is **"not only to believe in Him but also to suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had"**.

That brings a further challenge (2:1-18): the truths taught and the principles expounded should provide the key element for effective survival and success. The key to it all is a selfless attitude, one that was so admirably exemplified by Christ Jesus in his abandonment of heavenly rights in order to face humiliation and death on the Cross; which was followed by glorious exaltation and supreme victory. Christian truth works!

Therefore, they should obey it and experience the fact that in their abasement for the gospel, God Himself is working out their salvation in them as they comply. As Peter would later say, **"Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God and he will exalt you in due season"**. Such behavior - meek acceptance of humiliation while trusting God - is, in fact, a positive testimony. As such, they evidence unique behavior as they "shine as stars" in an evil age and also demonstrate the effective teaching and nurture they have received from Paul; and the support offered by such men as Timothy and Epaphroditus. They have reason to be confident and to rejoice.

But, that is not the prevailing climate. In their world there are alternatives and opponents to whom such teaching is anathema. They favour putting confidence in human achievement. Paul warns against that.

Turning the focus back on himself (3:1-16) and his life experience, he reminds them that he had grounds for confidence in his (religious / Pharisaical) achievements. But, practising what he preaches, he disregards all of that; discounts it all; considers it worthless as against the value of gaining Christ and his righteousness, and pressing on to achieve the prize of his calling.

Turning the focus back on them (3:17-21) and their obligation, Paul encourages them to imitate his life and example, even though many don't. They need to realise that they are citizens of a heavenly regime and, as such, should reflect its standards and practices in their Christian behavior.

That means standing firm (4:1-9). It also means that the two contentious women - Euodia and Syntyche - are to change their behavior and agree with each other. The Philippians are to rejoice; not be anxious but confidently pray for enabling. They are to practise moderation - behavior governed by higher motives and inspired by divine truth. In doing so they will know a **'peace that passes all understanding'**, and that should further motivate them to concentrate on higher values, the refinements of their new life, and experience victory of the spiritual over the natural. That is his partnership contribution to them. As senior partner he wants to lead them higher, to their 'utmost for God's highest'.

Yet, it is not all one-sided (4:10-23). In one particular area they have been very practical partners to him, providing material support - to him and the work - to the extent that they are exemplary to others. But the same principles apply: they will not lose out by being generous, but Paul confidently asserts that **"my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."**

And that reciprocal partnership will mean **"glory forever and ever to our God and Father. Amen"**.

God's Astronomy and God's People

Jonathan Sarfati of CREATION Ministries International

The observable universe is so huge—**46 billion light years radius**—that it is estimated to contain about **10²² stars**. This number is so vast that even using a computer that could count a trillion of these every second, it would take over 300 years to count this high.

It's notable that the Bible says that it is impossible for any man to number the stars: God told Abraham, **"Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them... So shall your offspring be"** (Gn. 15:5).

Jeremiah writes, **"As the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the offspring of David my servant, and the Levitical priests who minister to me"** (Jer. 33:22).

NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRIES UNLIMITED

The NTMU has been a fellowship of Gospel workers since 1902, always engaged in preaching the Good News of God's love and salvation in Jesus Christ, seeking to plant New Testament churches.

To read more, go to:
www.ntmu.net/

CHINA'S UNDERGROUND CHURCH

Author unknown

Before the takeover of Mao Tse-Tung in 1949, churches operated freely, often with foreign missionaries in control. The Communists expelled the missionaries and forced Protestants and Anglicans to dissolve their denominations and unite under the "Three-Self Patriotic Movement" (TSPM), founded in 1954.

(RAB) to control religion, the TSPM was the RAB's instrument to direct Protestant affairs. All churches came under TSPM control. Surveillance was ordered for all religious leaders. Detailed files were kept. By 1958, the government had a tight grip on every church. Christian leaders who refused to submit to the TSPM were publicly accused and imprisoned. During the "Cultural Revolution" (1966-76), all religious groups were banned. Even the TSPM vanished. Thousands of clergy and church members were shipped to labor camps. Hundreds were executed.

But underground Protestantism survived and grew into the Chinese house-church movement.

By 1980, the TSPM was back, under the leadership of Nanjing Bishop Ding Guangxun, a liberal theologian and former Anglican.

The TSPM decides what buildings can be used for church services, which pastors can preach and to what areas can be traveled to spread religion. Church activities are restricted to Sunday services. No mid-week meetings. No Bible studies. No gatherings in private homes. Religious activities are outlawed outside of church buildings. No one under 18 may be evangelized or baptized. Members are allowed no contact with overseas church groups and forbidden to read foreign Christian literature, listen to foreign Christian tapes or tune in to gospel radio broadcasts. Most of all, the State is the head of the Church.

Under Bishop Ding a theological reconstruction campaign was started among the official seminaries.

The purpose was to change the focus of teaching from justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ to justification by love in doing good deeds. Under the guidance of TSPM and the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA), religious messages are to be made "compatible with socialism". Pastors are discouraged from preaching about Jesus' divinity, miracles or resurrection, so that believers and non-believers can be united together to build a "prosperous Socialist China".

As a result, more and more believers have abandoned TSPM churches and are meeting secretly in

their homes. Which means that most Christians are now in house churches. They preach, worship and evangelize, risking the loss of jobs and homes, arrest, imprisonment, torture and death. The apostle would say: "the world is not worthy of them" (Hb. 11:38), but, as Acts 2:47 has it: "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved".

By TSPM estimates, China currently has 16 million Protestants and 3 million Catholics. But Ye Xiaowen, Director of China's State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), claimed behind closed doors in 2006 that the combined total is closer to 130 million. Because members of unregistered churches must meet secretly in abandoned buildings, forests, even caves "and because their numbers grow exponentially (some estimate 35,000 daily)", their need for prayer, Bibles and training is desperate and virtually insatiable.

In the midst of a new program of modernization, Communist government and religious officials want the outside world to believe that China has religious freedom. And in fact the Chinese Constitution declares that "The state protects legitimate religious activities"...

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"Three-self" originally coined in 1851 by Henry Venn, founder of the Church Missionary Society, described a policy adopted by mission groups to build indigenous churches on the mission field (self-governing, self-propagating, self-supporting). In 1950, however, the "three-self" slogan became political. The Chinese Church was to dissociate itself from all "imperialist" contact and submit to the direction of the Communist Party. A similar Patriotic Catholic Association, begun in 1957, was forced to break with the Vatican.

When the Communist government organized the Religious Affairs Bureau

You'd rather receive
"PRESSING ON!"
by snailmail?
Let us know!

Brother Paul from China: "The Chinese church has a powerful vision of the Great Commission. They believe it is the Church's responsibility to preach the Gospel to their generation. Because of their persistence in preaching the Gospel, they are persecuted repeatedly. But the persecution brings purifying and revival."

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PRESSING ON! (DL: MA 1367-98)
Three-issues-a-year - free subscription!

Dear reader,

We think and we hope that you will enjoy this latest issue of **PRESSING ON!**

Like every other true Christian, you're in the "race", in the spiritual one. And you know that after a while it's easy to start dragging your feet, lose sight of the "finishing line", get side-tracked, faint, even turn back. **Pressing On!** is here to inform you, to encourage you and to challenge you about **counting on God's grace for all of the race...**

As Philippians 3 informs us, there's the **goal** and there's the **prize** that are set before us, but then Hebrews 10 tells us that the "**considering**", the "**stirring up**", the "**exhorting**" are the things **all** of us are involved in: "*Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching*". It will be obvious to you that the 'considering, stirring up and exhorting' have everything to do with the "assembling". Jesus says that two or three in his name are sufficient for him to be very much present in the midst of them with all that He has to offer. It is absolutely basic for fruitful encouragement and challenge, that you and I plus other 'runners in the race' do so very humbly around HIM, looking to HIM and his open word. You too can be wonderfully used for your fellow "athletes". **Pressing On!** prepares and encourages the encouragers, and can prove to be a very worthwhile tool in your hands...

Picture yourself traveling round the planet, say from Canada, to Croatia, to Cameroon, to the Comoros, to Cambodia, to the Cook Islands, to Colombia or to Cuba. In every one of these countries you'll find true Christians. You may find some big groups, meeting in churches, and you'll find there are small groups, meeting in homes or wherever, even in prisons, but as you get to know them, you'll also find that among them a high percentage are feeling the effects of Satan's 3-D strategy - **Discouragement**, **Depression**, or outright **Defeat** - Christian "athletes" falling, or fallen, by the wayside. The crown laid up for them (2 Tim. 4:8) is receding and could be taken from them (Rev. 3:11).

*Discouraged
Depressed
Defeated*



Not in every country can such folks read English. In many of the 70 countries to which we send **Pressing On!**, English is not even the second language. However, there usually are individual Christians who know sufficient English to grasp the message. And some of these are receiving up to 30 or 40 copies for regular distribution.

We are fully persuaded that you too can become a most valuable encourager of the brethren! And we want you to plainly realize that **PRESSING ON!** is entirely at your disposal to help you, in other words, free of charge!

Please, consider the form below, pray over it, then fill out what applies and send it to us:

-
- I can be a regular distributor to Christian individuals, house church(es) or other Christians in **my** region. I need ___ free paper copies of future issues (even of this one too if available).
 - I have access to professional-quality production facilities. I only need a print-ready PDF copy to become a printer-distributor of **PRESSING ON!** in my region (at my own cost). I need info about the format to be printed.
 - Regardless of having the printed copy (copies) sent snailmail, I'd also like you to send me the **pdf** e-copy, so I can easily forward it by email to my Christian friends.
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- OUR INFO:**
1. Print this form, fill out what applies, sign it, then mail to:
Apartado 31, 29700 Vélez-Málaga, Spain. **Or:**
 2. Once printed and filled out, scan and email the form to:
pressingonstill@gmail.com

“And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward” - Mt. 10:42.