

Book Reviews

God's century: Resurgent religion and global politics

Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott & Timothy Samuel Shah

New York: W.W. Norton, 2011, 276 p., ISBN 978-0393069266, US\$16.35.

This is a rare and excellent book from three American academics and tilted towards the policy and opinion making elite of the USA, which still struggled to come to terms with religion as an independent and increasingly significant factor in public life – at home and abroad.

This well written book seeks to establish two theses, one is simple, the other more sophisticated. Thesis one is simply to marshal evidence for the fact, “that a dramatic and worldwide increase in the political influence of religion has occurred in roughly the last forty years” (p. 9). This shift occurred in the sixties according to the authors when after three centuries of galloping secularisation, religion made its astonishing comeback. This trend is put down to a number of important factors, ranging from a new determination among believers themselves to resist their historic marginalisation, coinciding with a vacuum created by secular and nationalistic ideologies running out of steam, and given impetus by a new ability among savvy religious actors to harness the new powers of globalisation and technology to redefine their relationship to the state.

All well stated and well argued, and the stress is that this resurgence into the public sphere is permanent. The authors know their primary audience, which still struggles to accept this single fact. Douglas Johnston, President of the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, lamented in a June lecture in New York that only David Petraeus among the entire US military establishment “gets” the importance of treating religion as an independent factor that needs to be understood and enlisted in the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan.

However, if this was all the book was saying it would not be any better, or substantially different, to Micklethwait and Wooldridge’s rather bug-eyed account of the same phenomenon in “God is Back,” published by Penguin Books in 2009. It is the second, more sophisticated thesis that turns this book into essential reading even for those for whom God never went away in the first place.

This second thesis is ambitious, seeking to explain why religions act so differently in relation to the public sphere; “why some fly airplanes into buildings while others destroy dictatorial regimes; why some strive to erect theocracies while others seek to create peace settlements.” There are two general areas to look at in their

explanation: the first is to examine the type of political theology the religious actors have, the second is to correlate the degree and kind of independence religious institutions preserve with political authority. Once this is worked out, they claim, “a religious actor will tend to adopt a certain kind of politics.”

The independence factor is plotted along two axes. One measures whether the degree of independence between the state and religious authorities is high or low; high is classed as “independent,” low as “integrated,” i.e., where religious actors and institutions are in thrall to the state, such as the Orthodox Church in Russia, or Islam in Saudi Arabia. The other axis measures whether the relationship is consensual (i.e., friendly) between state and religion, or conflictual, where the two are quite hostile or opposed to each other, such as in communist states. This gives four quadrants – consensual-independent, as in the USA; consensual-integration, such as Saudi Arabia; conflictual-independent such as Turkey post 2002, and conflictual-integration, such as the church under the USSR. It is their view that civil wars and terrorism are likely to arise from the kind of religion-state relationship to be found in the consensual-integration quadrant, where a religion is dominated by the state and where religious minorities have a hard time of it, such as in Saudi Arabia. By contrast, the best relationship, they contend, is in the consensual-independent quadrant, where religion and the state have worked out a mutually beneficial relationship, such as in the USA. The conflictual-independent quadrant is where one finds religion fighting effectively for its space and freedom, whereas in the conflictual-integration quadrant religion is too weak to mount this fight effectively.

This theory is worked out historically as well as with contemporary examples. It is a relatively short book for such a complex argument, and not everyone will be convinced by it, especially as its historical treatment will be viewed by some as cavalier. But there are just too few books like this around – books that are readable, erudite and provocative on perhaps the most important political megatrend of our time, the irruption of religion back into the essential socio-political fabric of the nations of the world. While this irruption has been seen in negative terms, and deservedly so in the case of Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu extremist movements, the authors hold their nerve to keep the larger analytical picture in view, showing that the potential for religion to be a solution-factor, rather than a problem-factor, must be faced and embraced.

Dr Ronald Boyd-MacMillan, Chief Strategy Officer, Open Doors International, Santa Ana, USA; Author of “Faith that Endures: The Essential Guide to the Persecuted Church” (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Revell, 2006)

A new inquisition: Religious persecution in Britain today

Jon Gower Davies

London: Civitas – Institute for the Study of Civil Society, 2010, 53 p., ISBN 978-1-906837-15-0, £ 8.46

The United Kingdom is regarded by many as a liberal democracy based on centuries-old principles of free speech and as a model of tolerance. That has now changed. From 1997 to 2010 the UK Labour Government set out to dismantle the historic freedoms which are the attributes of a liberal society, including the freedom of speech. In this short essay, Davies, former Head of Religious Studies Department, University of Newcastle, England, vividly demonstrates how the change has been accomplished. He shows how Islamic militants are seeking to destroy the foundations of liberal society in order to turn the UK into an Islamic state governed by Sharia law. He takes as his starting point the prosecution of Ben and Sharon Vogelenzang, proprietors of a hotel, who got into conversation with a hotel guest, Mrs Erica Tazi, who married a Muslim, converted to Islam and adopted Muslim dress. One morning the Vogelenzangs had a perfectly reasonable discussion with Mrs Tazi about Islam and Christianity. The Muslim convert said she was offended by what the Vogelenzang had said. She made a complaint to the police under the malicious “hate speech” laws. Davies shows how by every available means the illiberal political establishment aided and abetted by extremist groups, the far-from-impartial police and a radicalised Crown Prosecution Service prosecuted the Vogelenzangs. Fortunately the court found them not guilty – but the fight does on. The anti-Christian establishment continues to seek to use all means to silence the right of free speech and in so doing reverse legal principles that have been upheld for centuries, such as the burden of proof in court and the presumption of innocence until found guilty - all inconceivable in the UK twenty years ago. Sadly the UK population are lulled into thinking that what is happening is impossible, but imperceptibly, little by little, intolerance is taking over. Davies shows why the liberal majority needs to reassert the principle that the law should be used not as a weapon to suppress unpopular opinions, but as the protector of free speech. This short book is a “must-read” for all who need to understand the unholy alliance between intolerant politicians, extremist groups and far-from-impartial police and Crown Prosecution Service, even in a “liberal” country like the United Kingdom. It is a warning to us all.

Advocate John Langlois, Human rights lawyer, Chairman of Advocates International, Chairman of the WEA Religious Liberty Commission, and a member of the IIRF Board of Supervisors, Guernsey, Channel Islands

Mass trauma and emotional healing around the world: Rituals and practices for resilience and meaning-making

Ani Kalayjian & Dominique Eugene (eds.)

Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010, 2 vols, 476 p., ISBN 978-0313375446, US\$ 105.

In light of such overwhelming trauma faced by survivors of religious persecution, how do we help families, churches and communities heal and find meaning in the face of both pernicious and direct forms of brutality? This book is a comprehensive collection from an array of specialists around the world in the field helping people heal and find meaning against both catastrophic natural disasters and unmitigated acts of mass violence.

Volume 1 deals with natural disasters and is helpful material concerning how survivors respond to direct trauma and how they can be best cared for. Research of disaster survivors revealed that some were able to find positive meaning by focusing on the present moment and on how the disaster opened a door for them to either help others or receive help from people all over the world. Other survivors struggled to find meaning, for example, some connected the Armenian earthquake in 1988 to the genocide of the previous generation and “globalized all their historic unresolved traumas in one and felt even more overwhelmed by their memories” (p. 16).

Volume 2 is dedicated to the result of violent conflict and its effect on succeeding generations. Chapters on the ongoing impact of colonization, slavery and persecution within marginalised communities are helpful when working within Christians facing exclusion, alienation or political oppression. There are two noteworthy chapters researching the effectiveness of forgiveness as part of a psycho-educational approach in Sierra Leone and helping Cambodian refugees find meaning after the Khmer Rouge. Although the role of forgiveness in the healing process is de rigueur for Judeo-Christian theologians, it is good to see a further substantiated integration of psychology and theology. Finally, there are chapters on issues of gender and genocide, terrorism, cross-cultural issues, healing intergenerational trauma and transforming humiliation into constructive meaning.

Volume 2 can be particularly helpful for those who are working with survivors of the trauma of religious persecution. There continues to be a large gap in the research on best practice for therapeutically supporting and counselling Christians who are subjected to torture, imprisonment, forced displacement and genocide. It is my hope that these books will stimulate more interest and research on this far-reaching, multi-generational subject, so that many more will be strengthened and many more will find meaning and healing in Christ.

Roger Foster (pen name), Clinical Social Worker and Trauma Support Coordinator for a Religious Liberty Organisation in the Middle East

**International religious freedom advocacy:
A guide to organizations, law, and NGOs**

H. Knox Thames, Chris Seiple & Amy Rowe

Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2009, 262 p., ISBN 9781602581791, US\$ 21.86.

According to the authors, this book is meant to be a user-friendly, straightforward tool for empowering would-be advocates to effectively promote religious freedom. After a general introduction on the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief, it covers the United Nations, the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization of American States, the African Union, and United State Bodies and Institutions. Further, it describes the various roles NGOs can play advocating for religious freedom. These roles are illustrated by two case studies, one on Turkmenistan and one on Vietnam. The guidebook is completed by over hundred pages of relevant appendices including a list of NGOs.

Each chapter consists of a brief introduction of the institution covered, followed by a description of the relevant entities or procedures and means for advocates to interact with these bodies. In most cases, contact details and website are provided.

The authors have earned their credits in International Religious Freedom advocacy and their hands-on experience jumps off the pages. Therefore, it is a valuable guide for those who want to understand international advocacy better, both freshmen and more experienced advocates.

Inevitably, a guidebook with a host of practical details such as this, will become outdated sooner or later or at least parts of it will. This is especially true for the chapter on the European Union. Under the Lisbon treaty, the power of the European Parliament has been increased and there is a European High Commissioner for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy serving both the Council of the European Union and the European Commission. As the African Union is equally very much work in progress, this chapter might need some updating as well. However, we cannot blame the authors for these changes to occur. Most of the suggestions dating from 2009 are still valuable and worthwhile considering for International Religious Freedom advocates.

Arie de Pater, Advocacy Department, Open Doors International, Harderwijk, Netherlands

Persecution, persuasion and power: Readiness to withstand hardship as a corroboration of legitimacy in the New Testament

James A Kelhoffer

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010, 443 p., ISBN 978-3-16-150612-3, 99 p.

This monograph addresses one aspect of New Testament constructions of legitimacy. It examines the significance and value of Christians' withstanding suffering and persecution as a means of corroborating and affirming their identity and status. It does not address historical constructions of early Christian persecution, but rather offers "... an examination of how the NT's assorted claims about persecution function in the formation of religious identity – confirming believers' standing in Christ because they withstood persecution in the past, or if they will remain faithful amidst present or anticipated oppression" (vii).

The first chapter describes the problem and draws on the concept of cultural, social and symbolic capital which was developed by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1-29). The remaining chapters offer a detailed exegetical analysis of the descriptions of suffering in Paul's epistles (faithfulness in withstanding persecution as corroboration of believers' standing in Christ and of Paul's apostleship, Paul as instigator and recipient of persecution), First Peter (the audacity of hope that faithfulness amidst persecution will "win" one's oppressors and thereby further the Christian mission), Hebrews (persecution, perseverance and perfection), Revelation (the offer of authentication by withstanding the coming great tribulation), the four Gospels (e.g. readiness to suffer as a confirmation of standing as Jesus' followers in Mark) and the book of Acts (persecution as a basis for questioning, confirming and deriving legitimacy and as critique of the oppressors' standing).

The final chapter offers a summary (353-61), examines the ascription of value to martyrdom and persecution in later Christian contexts (e.g. maimed "confessors" at the Council of Nicaea), John Foxe's famous Book of Martyrs of 1563 (anti-Catholic tendencies and appeals to persecution as corroboration of the Protestant cause). It also raises the important ethical and hermeneutical problems involved in asserting the withstanding of persecution as a basis for legitimacy and status in ancient and modern contexts (376-443).

The volume offers interesting methodology and questions for the study of religious persecution and its inner-community consequences as well as a fine up-to-date survey of persecution in the New Testament. Kelhoffer raises several crucial questions for present day issues of religious freedom and the persecution of Christians. How do Christians who came through the fire of persecution present themselves? What authority do they derive from their fate and faithfulness? How do

others see them and construct their identity and status – at times to promote their own interests? Next to the challenge of actual suffering and persecution and strategies for coping with them, the consequences of such events for the identity of those who remained faithful, of those who failed or who were not affected need further attention.

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Suffering, persecution and martyrdom: Theological reflections Religious Freedom Series Vol. 2

Christof Sauer & Richard Howell (eds.)

Johannesburg: AcadSA, 2010, 356 p., ISBN 978-1-920212-58-2,

ISBN 978-3-86269-008-4, Rand 250, US\$ 39.

Free online: <http://tinyurl.com/Sauer-Howell>.

Many of the most challenging mission fields today are places where the presence of a missionary may be resented as a foreign invasion, and those who embrace the Christian faith may be seen as traitors of their family and community. We need to be wise, acting with love, respect and humility, following Jesus' example of incarnation, seeking to understand the culture. But even missionaries who faithfully follow Jesus' example can be persecuted or cause persecution among the people they love. This book is a timely and necessary contribution to the church in its mission today.

It is the fruit of the vision and efforts of a number of theologians and missiologists who are concerned with the growing persecution Christians are suffering today, and with the need to develop a pastoral theological response to this reality. It helps the evangelical church to understand the theology of the cross as it relates to suffering, persecution and martyrdom for Christ.

Twenty-four participants from eighteen different countries met from 16 to 18 September 2009 in Bad Urach, Germany, for a consultation on "Developing an evangelical theology of suffering, persecution and martyrdom for the global church in mission". This was organized by the International Institute for Religious Freedom. Christof Sauer and Richard Howell were the conveners of the consultation.

The consultation produced the Bad Urach Statement, a deep, broad, biblical and practical theological reflection on suffering, persecution and martyrdom. It is

the fruit of evangelicals struggling with such issues, having a special pastoral commitment to those who suffer. The purpose is to reach especially theologians and Christian leaders committed to fulfill the mission to which God has called us.

The book also offers a number of articles written by participants and discussed among them, reflecting biblically, theologically and pastorally on issues of suffering and martyrdom.

Dr Antonia Leonora van der Meer, Viçosa, Brasil wrote a doctorate in missiology on "Understanding and supporting missionaries serving in contexts of suffering" Asia Graduate School of Theology, Philippines 2005

Christianity and resistance in the 20th century: From Kaj Munk and Dietrich Bonhoeffer to Desmond Tutu

Søren von Dosenrode (ed.)

(International Studies in Religion and Society, Vol. 8). Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2009, 290 p., ISBN: 978-9004171268, US\$ 130.

What are Christians to do in the face of an unjust and oppressive Government—suffer or resist? That is this book's fundamental question. The editor's Introduction sets the scene with the disagreement between the pastor and author, Kaj Munk, and a civil servant, Paul Petersen, in Denmark. When Munk called for resistance against the Nazis, Petersen wrote to ask him how a priest could urge the use of deadly weapons against his fellow men. Munk replied with exasperation: in the face of the sufferings of the Jews and of Poland and Norway how could one piously keep one's hands in one's pockets? (Munk later paid with his life.)

The book is a collection of papers delivered at a seminar with the same title at Aalborg University in Denmark in 2006. The first chapter (22 pp.) is the editor's synopsis of Christian thought on the issue until the Reformation and then secular thought until the French Revolution. Nine other authors provide chapters:

- Johannes Nissen on the meaning and effect of Rom. 13, the Sermon on the Mount and other texts, and on pacifism and the theory of the just war;
- Erna Putz on Franz Jägerstätter, the Austrian whom the Nazis executed for refusing military service;
- Arne Munk on Kaj Munk's resistance to Nazism;
- Annette Mertens on Henning von Tresckow's part in the plot to assassinate Hitler;
- Ulrik Nissen on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's "journey from pacifism to resistance";
- Ole Hartling on Paul Gerhard Braune's resistance against Nazi euthanasia;

- Enikő Böröcz on Bishop Lajos Ordass's resistance against Nazi and Communist totalitarianism in Hungary;
- Paul G. Schoenborn on Oscar Romero's struggle for the poor in San Salvador;
- Peter Lodberg on Desmond Tutu's resistance against apartheid.
- The editor concludes with a final brief chapter, "Instead of a Conclusion".

The subjects of these essays were not victims of religious persecution in the narrow sense. But they took their stand out of Christian commitment (though von Tresckow's motives have been disputed, and Mertens's essay weighs the evidence critically). All except Kaj Munk were reluctant to use or advocate violent resistance. Some resisted oppressive regimes non-violently, by refusing co-operation or by making a strong public stand. Others reluctantly resorted to violence as the only moral option they saw in their situations. Five, or at least four, of them died as Christian martyrs. (The reviewer would have loved to see a chapter on the Christian SS officer Kurt Gerstein included for the moral puzzle he poses.)

The essays are well researched. On the negative side the English of a few contributions (the editor's and Arne Munk's in particular) is a bit rough in places. Despite this the book is a fascinating and profoundly moving resource that certainly deserves wide use.

Douglas S Bax, Cape Town, South Africa, a retired Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa

Liberty to the captives – Freedom from Islam and dhimmitude through the cross

Mark Durie

Australia: Deror Books, 2010, 96 p., ISBN 978-0980722321, US\$ 14.95.

This book provides tools for Christians (particularly those living under the dominance of Islam) to adopt a biblical understanding of the cross in order to set them free from the influence of Islam, especially from the covenantal declaration of the shahada (Muslim confession of faith) and from the dhimma pact of surrender to Islam, which determines the status of Christians and others who refuse to convert to Islam under sharia.

Reciting the shahada obligates a Muslim to follow Muhammad's example and to obey the classical Islamic law designed to impose inferiority and vulnerability upon non-Muslims. For example, "the witness of dhimmis is not accepted in sharia courts; dhimmis were allowed no means of self-defence; no public displays of re-

ligious symbols or rituals were permitted . . .” (p. 14). In this way the dhimmitude was designed to weaken and humiliate non-Muslims as an integral part of Islam, even in the West as a form of jihad terror.

Durie describes Muhammad as the root and the body of Islam and some aspects of his life story which lie behind the dhimma pact, e.g., painful experiences of family life, self-rejection and other rejection reactions leading to “a wounded spirit, a spirit of offense, a victim mentality, a spirit of violence and a will to dominate others” (p. 65), driven by this oppressed ‘spiritual’ condition. Muhammad systematically eliminated all manifestations of rejection expressed towards him and his religious community through an ideological and military program. By contrast compare this to the life of Jesus who also had a story of rejection but responded to persecution without retribution, offense, violence, dominating other, nor adopting a wounded spirit. Jesus’ life culminated in the cross, without any aggression or violence. Jesus rather embraced rejection because the cross was the central part of God’s plan. He showed that submission to rejection was “an essential part of his vocation as God’s suffering Messiah” (p. 40). Jesus renounced the use of force to achieve his goal, paying the ultimate price. In contrast to the teaching of Muhammad which encourages Muslims to respond to suffering with violence, Jesus taught his followers not to tarnish their testimony when suffering persecution. They should be at peace and return good for evil and rejoice when they are persecuted.

It teaches that non-Muslims who live under sharia rule should reject and renounce Islam’s demand for them to surrender to the shahada or the dhimma pact. They should not react with violence but rather with “political and community action, human rights advocacy, academic inquiry, and the use of media to communicate the truth” (vi). This book, moreover, considers the power of Christ and his cross as the key to overcoming these two ‘spiritual’ claims. It helps Christians to apply the power of the cross to all bitterness and rejection. In this way it is possible for Christians to engage in nailing the dhimma pact to the cross and expose its false claims, confronting the power of Satan, who is the ultimate spiritual force behind all rejection. This book challenges Christians to renounce through prayer the dhimma pact, setting people free from fear, breaking generational strongholds, and releasing people from the suffering under the spiritual bondage. Christians may thus be released from the oppressive effects of dhimmitude and become bold witnesses to Muslims of the saving power of Christ. The book asserts the Christian prayers and declarations are powerful and effective and that complete freedom through Christ is a possibility.

Missions in contexts of violence

Keith E Eitel (ed.)

Pasadena, CA: WCL, 2008, 415 p., ISBN 978-0-87808-389-3, US\$ 14.99.

This book speaks to a significant current missiological challenge: doing missions in contexts of violence. Part of an Evangelical Missiological Society series, it is a collection of 19 articles by 21 authors and co-authors. The articles are arranged under four headings related to the book's theme: general reflections, biblical and theological foundations, life-style strategies and practices, and area or thematic studies.

The sources of violence covered in this book include Islamic and communist contexts, as well as pervasive inter-ethnic conflicts. All of these infringe significantly on religious freedom and complicate missionary work. Some articles suggest principles and methods for coping with violence or mitigating it, as in peacekeeping.

Readers can expect considerable diversity in the text – diversity that extends to definitions of key terms, quality of research and documentation, style and length, and even relevance to the main topic. The contributions demonstrate that suffering and violence are normative for Christians and have been experienced throughout history.

Three strong articles are historical studies of mission (and church) in contexts of violence. Paul and Lila Balisky's "The Ethiopian Church and Mission in Contexts of Violence" is a succinct summary of a valuable longer work. The treatment of ancient Celtic missionary spirituality by David Strong should be required reading for missionary preparation. John Moldova's work on ministry in the context of communist Eastern European violence has important implications for church and mission in other communist contexts.

Charles Tieszen's recent work on definitions for this area of study is an important inclusion because it attempts to provide common definitions for this discussion.

Worth the price of the book is missionary-to-Japan Hau Chuang Chua's "Divine Suffering and Divine Grace: a Missiological Interpretation of Kitamori Kazo's Pain of God theology". This chapter makes a significant contribution to the theodicy question. Aply mediated by a missionary in this case, the experiences and reflections of those actually in contexts of violence, need more to be directly heard on the topic of mission in contexts of violence.

Clearly, if it ever existed, the chronological window when the Christian missionary movement could expect to work without concern for violence is over. Both in-service and missionaries-in-training will find this book useful.

Reginald E Reimer, Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada

Selected media on North Korea

Escaping North Korea: Defiance and hope in the world's most repressive country

Mike Kim

Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield. 2008, 239 p., ISBN 0742556204, \$ 16.95.

Mike Kim focuses on the question why such a large number of North Koreans are seeking refuge in China. He describes their flight and their situation in China as well as the living conditions in North Korea, including the situation of Christians under the North Korean regime. Among their sufferings are the following: poverty, famine, unemployment, violence, alcoholism, theft, corruption, bribery, oppression, gambling, abuse, rape, human trafficking, child soldier slavery, etc. According to Kim, famine and the search of food is the most common reason why North Koreans defect.

Kim is an American Korean who has worked for four years (2003-2006) in the North Eastern Provinces of China bordering on North Korea. He founded an agency, Crossing Borders Ministry (www.crossingbordersnk.org), that is supporting North Korean refugees there. He was also one of the first US Americans to be allowed entry into North Korea. North Korean migrants and defectors are not recognized as refugees in China and are repatriated when caught. Girls and women succeeding to cross the border from North Korea into China, are often abducted by human traffickers operating in the area, who sell them into forced marriages, prostitution and slavery. Chinese police and North Korean agents are also hunting for the refugees who, once repatriated, face the prospect of labour camp and sometimes execution. Contact with Christians is particularly harshly punished, conversion even more so. In China it is forbidden to help and harbour North Korean refugees, and Christian churches are among the few who do so. For numerous North Koreans this is their first ever contact with Christians and some are choosing to become Christians.

Kim's account, while partly autobiographical, is well researched and tries to present the best current information available on a country that is so highly secretive and blocking out the outside world, that it is often called "the Hermit Kingdom". Due to reports of migrants and refugees some of whom return to North Korea or are forcibly repatriated, the author foresees the brainwashing and lack of exposure to the truth potentially slowly losing their influence. "They are learning the truth about the world situation and there is great potential for change as the regime's grip loosens further." (p .201)

The author writes for an American audience, particularly focusing on the enmity between North Korea and the United States. In the closing chapter “The future of North Korea” Kim collates what he deems the best advice from experts on how to engage with North Korea. This gives the book an edge for policy makers.

North Korea: Good news reaches the Hermit Kingdom

The Voice of the Martyrs with P. Todd Nettleton

Bartlesville, OK: Living Sacrifice. 2008, 112 p., ISBN 978-0882640303, \$ 6.09.

This little booklet in the “Restricted Nations” series of The Voice of the Martyrs has a Christian focus. It recounts the history of Christian witness and the church in Korea, starting with Korean prisoners of war in Japan who had become Christians around 1600 A.D. and focusing on North Korea after 1945. The narrative is interspersed with testimonies and stories of Christians in North Korea: a teenage beggar who was arrested for passing on a Bible and later died in a political prisoner camp – not without “infecting” many with his faith; adults whose only crime was spreading Christianity; Christian merchants from China who visit North Korea bringing the Gospel. One chapter gives a short introduction to the North Korean Juche ideology. This book gives a good overview of the facts available, while its main purpose is to encourage the reader to pray for North Korea.

Crossing

Directed by Kim Tae-kyun

*Big House/ Vantage Holdings 2008. US\$ 20.00. www.crossingnk.com,
info@wakingupmedia.com.*

This screenplay narrates the story of a former soccer player in a small coal mining village in North Korea. When his pregnant wife becomes critically ill, he travels to China to buy medicine for her. However, he finally ends up in the South Korean Embassy and then in South Korea itself, somewhat against his will. His wife dies unbeknown to him. His young son embarks on a search for him in China but is caught at the border and held in a detention facility. The father pays a ransom which results in the son’s release. The son crosses the border to China and later to Mongolia. However, he dies in the Mongolian desert and his father who had flown there from South Korea to be reunited with his son, sadly has to

bury him. A tragic and convincing story that well illustrates the facts documented in the books above.

Escape from North Korea

Paul Estabrooks

Santa Ana, California, USA: Open Doors International 2006, 158 p., ISBN 978-0-901644-25-1, (www.od.org).

This is a true story of a family who lived under the North Korean regime. It describes their experiences in escaping to China where they are helped by Christians. It is written like a novel.

The aquariums of Pyongyang: Ten years in the North Korean Gulag

Kan Chol-hwan & Pierre Rigoulet

New York: Basic Book, 2nd ed. 2005, 238 p. ISBN 978-0-465-01104-9, US\$ 16.95.

This autobiographical account, originally published in French in 2000, was at the time the most detailed report on life in a North Korean labour camp between 1977-1987. At the age of 9 the author was deported along with members of his family to the notorious Yodok labour camp, through guilt by association. After 1945 his grandparents returned from Japan as rich emigrants. His grandmother was a committed communist who wanted to help build up North Korea. One day his grandfather became a victim of an intrigue and disappeared. Ten years later he died in a different camp where the conditions were much harsher. His relatives were only released after his death. In 1992, Kan fled as a 25 year old to South Korea “in order to expose to the world the unimaginable crimes committed in the political prison camps by the Pyongyang regime” (viii). Kan has been working as a journalist in Seoul for the leading newspaper Chosun Ilbo since 2000, and has “met and reported on approximately 500 North Korean refugees and defectors”, both in China and in South Korea. He not only relates his family’s story but also other North Koreans’ experiences whilst giving general information. While he seems to have become a Christian in South Korea this does not play a major role in the book. He is the co-founder of the Democracy Network against the North Korean Gulag, www.nkgulag.org. The title of the book is inspired by his boyhood passion for exotic fish which he held in his numerous aquariums in Pyongyang.

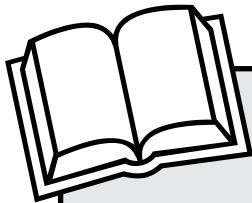
Eyes of the tailless animals: Prison memoirs of a North Korean woman

Soon Ok Lee

Bartlesville, OK, Living Sacrifice 1999, 160 p., ISBN 0-88264-335-5, US\$ 10.00.

The author was a devoted member of the Communist party in a supervisory position at a distribution centre. She was imprisoned on trumped-up charges owing to the greed of her superiors. For six years she suffered in the North Korean prison system (1986-1992). Her prison memoirs, originally published in Korean in 1996, are an account of inhumane atrocities. Prisoners were regarded as sub-human – as “tailless animals”. Lee gives a vivid account of interrogations, torture, forced labour of a minimum of 19 hours a day, beatings for no reason or the slightest offenses, solitary confinement, malnutrition, epidemics, forced abortions and executions. The prisoners were forced to work as slaves. They were dispensable and could be replaced by a new quota of prisoners any time. The regime only needed to arrest people on trumped-up charges in order to keep the system going. The conditions in the prison factories were intolerable, where goods had to be produced for export in order to enrich the regime. The author also witnessed the loving behaviour of Christian prisoners who were given the most dangerous jobs and treated even more severely than the other prisoners. Only after her escape to South Korea in 1995 together with her son did the author become a Christian herself and discover the Christian roots of her parents. Her determination to inform the free world about the abuse and system of lies in North Korea, and her desire for revenge, were replaced by a mission “to ask Christians around the world to pray for the persecuted people in North Korea”. Her memoirs without any literary embellishments make for very disturbing reading.

Dr Byeong Jun and Dr Christof Sauer, Cape Town, South Africa



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