

EDITORIAL

Spinning out of control?

THE world is tottering on the brink disaster. That may be the feeling of many since the Sept. 11 assault on the US, an event that has changed the global socio-political landscape of nation states.

Nevertheless, in the midst of the intense socio-political turbulence, we have seen positive strides made by the international community. The achievements made thus far include restoring social peace, enhancing economic and spiritual wellbeing, and creating a politically amiable environment for meaningful coexistence and sharing.

The local scene has not been devoid of similar disturbing episodes, which have caused uncertainty and uneasiness in the minds of the general population. Among them were:

- The verbal declaration of Malaysia as an Islamic State;
- The concurrent emergence of alarming activities of the Kumpulan Militan Malaysia;
- The passing of the Hudud Bill by the Terengganu State Assembly; and
- The announcement of the Prime Minister's resignation.

Another episode that has caused grave concern among Christians in Malaysia, especially those in Sabah and Sarawak, is the recent unfounded allegation by a senior government official that the Sidang Injil Borneo (SIB) is involved in extremist activities (see page 2).

Faced with such trials, the Church in Malaysia has pressed on faithfully, engaging in intercession for God to prevail over all situations. Malaysian Christians have stepped forward to be the 'salt and light', even in moments of despair. Intercessors have been wrestling "*against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*" (Eph. 6:12).

We are much comforted and thankful to God that our nation's leadership has had the capacity, capability and resilience to ward off any planned onslaughts, and has swiftly steered the nation through the turbulence to relatively calm waters.

Many of these issues directly or indirectly affect every aspect of individual Malaysians (Christians included). With such volatile and turbulent forces threatening to overwhelm us, it is only



In turbulent times, the Church must shine like a lighthouse in a stormy sea.

prudent for us to be prophetic and increasingly vigilant.

Detecting early warning signals of impending trouble is critical. So is the need to discern the underlying cause of the problem at hand, assess the potential danger, and develop appropriate remedial measures to overcome it. As responsible Christians, we can intercede against all forms of negative forces at work – injustice, oppression, corruption and unrighteousness.

Our 'salt and light' witness must be maintained at all times and be even more visible during times of crises. One of the most effective ways to maintain this witness is to be visibly involved in nation building. This has to be translated into tangible contribution such as providing policy input, channelling

needs to the authorities, articulating government policies, and providing spiritual guidance. Helping to guard national security is another major contribution that we can make to nation building.

Leadership Transition

Generally, the nation's leadership has a proven record of competence and, therefore, credibility through its efforts in, for example, ensuring high levels of economic productivity and economic wellbeing; and promoting national unity and social peace, public justice, religious liberty and national righteousness.

Many may raise concerns and even doubts as to whether the next Prime Minister (PM) has the capacity to lead the nation in its envisioned 2020 goal of achieving a developed nation's status. Based on past performance, ethics and character of the incoming PM, we can, with confidence, look forward to a consistently pragmatic leadership that will be relational, caring, sensitive and effective.

The international and local communities have expressed confidence that religious liberty will be upheld and socio-economic growth sustained. We believe that God, who is compassionately and totally concerned about the welfare of nations, will use the next PM and his team as His instruments to bring the country to greater heights.

In years past, many political leaders have ridden on ethnic or religion-based issues to gain popular support. The incoming

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QUICK END TO 'EXTREMIST' ISSUE

Problem Unites Church Leaders

GOOD government relations and quick action by Christian leaders helped diffused a potential threat to one of NECF Malaysia's biggest member – SIB Sabah, accused of extremism by a senior government official. The comments, which were highlighted in major newspapers in East Malaysia and broadcast on NTV7 evening news, created unrest and fear among the churches there.

The speed with which the matter was resolved – just two days – is significant; any delay may have injured the integrity of SIB Sabah, and ultimately, the Christian community at large. Here is the chronology of events:

- **July 3** The Daily Express (a major newspaper in East Malaysia) carried a front-page story quoting Che Moin Umar as saying that SIB was practising extremist teachings. The National Intelligence Committee Director of the National Security Division in the Prime Minister's Department said that the Brunei authorities had expelled SIB and this had "caused a stir in our relationship with Brunei." He added that SIB had "received full support from a certain political party in 1980s." He made the comments when tabling his paper "Overview of National Security Challenges with Special Focus on Sabah", in Kota Kinabalu at a seminar on regional security. SIB Sabah immediately contacted NECF Malaysia Secretary-General Rev. Wong Kim Kong, who was then speaking at an Orang Asli leadership conference in Port Dickson organised by the NECF OA Commission. He quickly released a press statement in support of SIB Sabah and flew to KK to help resolve the issue.
- **July 4** NECF's statement was published in the local newspapers. SIB Sabah organised a press conference attended by

Rev. Wong, SIB Sabah President Pr Taipin Molodoi, and many leaders from various denominations. Sabah Council of Churches (SCC) Honorary Secretary John Ho and Anglican Church of Sabah Assistant Bishop Yong Chen Fah were also present to lend support. At the conference, Rev. Wong expressed concern and disappointment over Che Moin's statement which "is damaging to the efforts of the government and the nation in building harmony and national integration." John Ho commented that SIB Sabah is one of SCC's founding members and has never expressed any extreme religious view.

- **July 5** The press conference was reported in the main English-, Bahasa- and Chinese-language newspapers in East Malaysia. Rev. Wong, still in Kota Kinabalu, received a telephone call from Che Moin, who apologised to SIB for the misunderstanding and confusion his comments had caused. Rev. Wong said Che Moin, who was on his way overseas when making the call, affirmed that SIB Sabah had been peaceful and had not caused any problems. He added that Che Moin spoke humbly and he was impressed by Che Moin's quick attempt to clarify the matter. Rev. Wong and Pr Taipin will meet up with Che Moin for further discussion and clarification when he returns from his overseas trip. Rev. Wong released a NECF press statement saying that the matter was closed.
- **July 6** Local newspapers published the statement and quoted Rev. Wong as saying that Che Moin had apologised to SIB.

The whole issue has brought Sabah churches closer and showed what solidarity can do in the face of trials. It has also strengthened SIB's position in Sabah and increased awareness of the Church's contribution to the state. ■

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PM, however, has so far avoided this stance, preferring to take a pragmatic and relational approach to resolving issues. Let us continue to pray for God to pave His way

for a smooth transition of political power, to provide the needed wisdom for, and "order the steps" of our next PM and the current leadership (1Tim. 2: 1-2). ■

NECF Malaysia 20th Anniversary Celebration

Family Reunion

THE gathering resembled that of a huge noisy class reunion – the joy of meeting old friends, the equal delight of chatting up contemporary acquaintances in the warm ambience of the grand ballroom over a hearty meal.

But the occasion was really the NECF Malaysia’s 20th anniversary dinner attended by over 1,500 people from at least 85 member -churches and -organisations. The coming-together of so many churches was the crowning achievement of God’s faithfulness in guiding NECF through the past 20 years.

Among the guests were many founding members of the fellowship and church leaders and representatives from all over Malaysia. Several prominent Christian politicians and businessmen took time off from their busy schedule to attend the dinner; they included MP Dr Maximus Ongkili, State Assemblymen Dato’ Lee Hwa Beng and Hoh Hee Lee and Land and Cooperative Development Deputy Minister Dr Ron Tan.

Also present to share NECF’s joy were leaders from other denominations, such as the Most Rev. Archbishop Datuk Yong Ping Chung (Archbishop of the Anglican diocese of South-east Asia); the Rt Rev. Tan Sri Lim Cheng Ean (Bishop of the Anglican diocese of West Malaysia); and Bishop Dr Gideon Chang (Lutheran Church of Malaysia) and Bishop Julius Paul (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Malaysia).

The dinner was graced by the second daughter of Dr Billy Graham, Dr Anne Graham Lotz, who delivered the night’s message. Following her uplifting sermon of heaven and hope, the guests were treated to a multi-media presentation of NECF’s history, development and current ministry involvement.

Overall, the gathering was a time of strengthening ties, a timely meeting to get acquainted with the growing family of NECF and affirm our bond in the Lord. ■

Dr Anne Graham will remember Malaysia with this pewter souvenir depicting Kuala Lumpur’s skyline, presented by NECF Malaysia Chairman Rev. Datuk Prince Guneratnam.



A hearty meal to cap off a good sermon.



NECF founding chairman David Boler closing the anniversary celebration in prayer. At 83 years, his voice resonated clearly through the hall ... with the help of the microphone.

From left: Former SIB Sarawak president (also former NECF Malaysia council member) Rev. Gerawat Maran; MP Dato’ Lee Hwa Beng and wife Datin Soo Soo.



Problems with your land? Land and Cooperative Development Deputy Minister Dr Ron Tan (left) listening attentively to Pr Daniel Ho of DUMC.



NECF Malaysia 20th Anniversary Celebration

Quick to Quit? Hang on...

“WE live in a soft and overly sensitive society. We get hurt and want to give up, resign and leave. When we don’t get what we want, we are quick to give a piece of our mind. We are temperamental and give in to our moods.”

Stinging words indeed, but too true to be shrugged off. This was the observation of Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Guneratnam who has been in full-time ministry for 38 years now.

The NECF Malaysia Chairman was speaking at the *Quest for Spiritual Perfection* seminar organised by NECF Malaysia in conjunction with its 20th anniversary. In his message *The EDGE: Towards Spiritual Perfection – Persistency*, he said persistency is one of the reasons for his continual success in ministry.

He urged the 170 participants to imitate and fix their eyes on Jesus who, despite the untold hardship He suffered, persevered to the end.

Quoting Jesus’ remark that “*he that*

Pr Phua: “You are a letter of Christ.””



Rev. Canon Wong: “In genuine revival, there is a tremendous transformation of the community.”

puts his hand to the plough and looks back is not worthy of the Kingdom”, he stressed: “Persistency looks ahead and causes one to keep moving. It does not look back at the past or play the blaming game.”

Rev. Guneratnam was the first of four speakers – with a combined spiritual age of 120 years – who shared the ‘secrets’ of their longevity in ministry at the seminar.

The EXPERIENCE: The Mark of Spiritual Preservation – Unity was the next topic and who better to speak about unity than NECF founding chairman Mr David Boler. For many years, the highly-regarded 83-year-old patriarch of the Malaysian Evangelical community has been relentlessly calling Evangelicals to “forget our differences and emphasise what we have in common.”

He said unity in the Church was critical to establish “the credibility and uniqueness of Jesus as the One sent from and by God ‘to be the Saviour of the world’ and ‘as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.’” Unity is, therefore, the evidence that “*He (God) loved us*” (1 John 4:9-14).

Mr Boler urged Christians to make every effort to preserve the unity – which we already have in the Spirit – by being humble, gentle, patient and gracious with one another according to Ephesians 4:1–16. Our effort on unity is also evidence that we are committed to renewal in the Church.

He concluded his message with his oft-given counsel: “The important working principle to follow is that Christians emphasise and act on what they have in common, never on distinctives that may divide. Only then can the Malaysian Church establish a credible witness among the multi-religious people of Malaysia.”

For Pr Phua Seng Tiong, the quest for spiritual perfection begins with living holy lives that are entirely aligned with God. In his message *The EXAMPLE: Preservation of Spiritual Perfection – Integrity*, he said that to preserve spiritual perfection, we need integrity – a quality that is like light in the sea of darkness, he said.

The highly-respected former headmaster of a secondary school in Kuala

Lumpur, who retired recently and is now Senior Pastor of SSMC Petaling Jaya, brought home this point by sharing some hilarious accounts of his teaching experience. (Pr Phua was presented the Master Principal award by the Government for his contribution to the teaching profession.)

“You are a letter of Christ. Stand and reflect His character,” he urged, adding that God would preserve us as a community if we have integrity of heart.

Rev. Canon James Wong, currently the Director of Anglican Schools in Singapore, concluded the seminar by sharing the prerequisites for revival in his message *The ESSENTIAL: Towards Revival and Renewal*.

Observing the pattern of church growth and God’s moving in Singapore and Malaysia, he believed that, though Christianity has grown in both countries, the churches have not experienced genuine revival apart from what had taken place in parts of East Malaysia some years ago.

He explained his view by clarifying the difference between revival and renewal. “In renewal, the church is touched and refreshed but it makes little impact on the world. In genuine revival, there is a tremendous transformation of the community where the revival is located. Indeed, the community becomes saturated with the heavy weight of God’s glorious presence,” he said.

He quoted South Korea as a country where genuine revival took place; today, Christians form one-third of the population. “In times of revival, people in large number will be converted without much human effort.”

So, how can revival come? Rev. Canon Wong said that from a study of past revivals, God will sweep the nation when Christians are praying fervently for: God’s visitation; a restoration of Christ-centred worship; a passion and hunger for God’s presence and glory; a deep brokenness and repentance; a new commitment to unity within and between churches; an openness to the Holy Spirit’s working; and a manifestation of His power in our midst. ■

NECF Malaysia 8th Biennial General Meeting

Two New Council Members Elected

THE NECF Malaysia 8th Biennial General Meeting approved enbloc the nominations for the NECF Malaysia Council. Two new members were elected. The line-up is as follows:

Chairman	: Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Guneratnam
Vice-Chairman	: Rev. Dr Eu Hong Seng
Honorary Secretary	: Elder Kong Yeng Phooi
Honorary Treasurer	: Mr Samuel Ang
Committee Members	: Ms Goh Poh Gaik
	Rev. Dr John Nagamuthu
	Rev. Dr Dexter Low
	Rev. Eddy Ho
	Dr Khoo Kay Hup
	Mr Chua Keng Seng
	Rev. Kalip Basar – President, SIB Sarawak (new)
	Rev. Lim Soon Hock – Senior Pastor, Georgetown Baptist Church (new)



Rev. Kalip Basar



Rev. Lim Soon Hock

The meeting also moved a motion of thanks to Rev. Gerawat Maran, who resigned as a council member with immediate effect, for his service for the past two terms.

Earlier, the meeting accepted a statement *Moral Standard of Church Representatives* which was presented by Rev. Wong on behalf of the council (see this page). The statement was in response to a previous query from a member on what action NECF should take on church representatives with dubious moral lives.

Following the meeting, Rev. Wong gave a briefing to the 57 delegates and 19 observers on several key issues that NECF had been pursuing. Among the issues were the change of name and religion in identity card, immigration matters, and the burning of churches.

Dr Living Lee, a delegate, informed the meeting that it had become a normal practice for the Registration Department to immediately list as 'Buddhist' in the identity card of a Chinese bearing a Chinese name.

The matter was noted for further action by NECF. Rev. Wong also clarified that non-Muslims have the option of not listing their religion in their identity cards. ■

NECF MALAYSIA STATEMENT

MORAL STANDARD

OF CHURCH

REPRESENTATIVES

NECF Malaysia is a fellowship of Evangelical churches committed to an Evangelical purpose and persuasion. As such, we have to abide by constitutional provisions that dictate our role and actions.

In matters relating to internal church discipline, NECF Malaysia has neither the jurisdiction nor the *locus standi* to be engaged in evoking disciplinary measures concerning church clergy or members. We, therefore, have to leave this matter to be dealt with by the church concerned or, as the situation demands, by the echelon denomination concerned.

However, the Council of NECF Malaysia or the Biennial General Meeting (BGM) could reserve the right to consider and approve the continuation / rejection / termination of the membership of an official representative on the basis of merit of each case. When, after consideration, a representative is found to be unsuitable to continue as a representative, NECF Malaysia will request the church concerned to provide an alternative.

NECF Malaysia assures that any decision made on a representative will be in accordance with Biblical principles with the prime objective being that of redemptive in action.

Soul-Searching Seminar for Men

THE 'confession' was unexpected. Three grown men went up and readily admitted they had been neglecting their wives and they were feeling poorly about it. The last man – the oldest of the three – cried as he shared.

During the impromptu testimony time, most of the men in the hall pensively cast their eyes on the floor, perhaps doing their own soul-searching as the willing men up there bared their souls.

The three were testifying on the second morning of the recent two-day Promise Keepers (PK) Men's Conference organised by NECF Malaysia. They were among the 155 participants who were convicted by messages on fidelity, male sexuality and female medical problems.

Speakers from the US-based PK Gordon England and Dr Ramesh Richards took participants through PK's seven promises covering personal holiness and spiritual discipline, relationships, sexual purity and service. The third PK speaker, Levi Velasco, spoke about the necessity of men's ministry in the local church and how to get it started.

But it was the eye-opening workshops

that seemed to hit the participants. Former gynaecologist and obstetrician Dr Chew Weng Chew, who is now senior pastor of SIB Kuala Lumpur, shared intimately about the medical problems unique to women during the 'Understanding the Mysterious Female' workshop.

His talk, which included the changes and risks women face during pregnancy, labour and post-childbirth period, helped the participants to literally see (through the stark visuals) the problems and perils women face.

Pr Chew also drew from his past medical experience to make his point about the physical dangers of extra-marital affairs. He had seen women suffering from their husbands' infidelity – they (the wives) contracted the venereal diseases from their husbands who contracted them through their extra-marital affairs.

Consultant urologist Dr Peter Ng's Male Sexual Health workshop was a memorable and hilarious session on the purpose, necessity and positive effects of God's 'gift' to married couples. Research has shown that active use of this 'gift' helps to prolong the couple's lives, Dr Ng said to the approval and applause of his eager listeners.



Dr Ng ... shared intimate secrets with participants.



Pr Chew ... urged participants to be more mindful of their wives.

Participants also learned about the tools available to protect their families from Internet filth through the Overcoming the Dangers on the Net workshop conducted by computer professional Hee Kim Fah.

Overall, the conference was a fresh and sterling reminder to the men about their responsibilities, role and marriage vow. One man candidly said as he was driving home after the conference: "I do not promise I'll be a good husband but I promise I will try." For the organiser, that's good enough. ■

Marrying the Old and New

THE choice of worship songs is a sticky issue with some churches. Often, the line is clearly drawn between the 'oldies' (such as hymns and 'gospels') and the contemporary blend of upbeat sentimental songs.

One can also easily guess, by the kind of songs they favour, the age groups on each side. Those who yawned at the 'oldies' find the tunes boring and repetitive, the words incomprehensible. Obviously, today's lower standard of English has not helped our youths appreciate the deep meaning of the songs of yore.

On the other hand, there are those who covertly disdain, what they call, today's "shallow, meaningless worship songs dressed in melodic tunes produced by a dizzy array of musical instruments." What's worse is that our modern songs contain serious doctrinal errors, huffs our indignant brethren.

Sandwiched between the two groups are the moderates – normally middle-aged Christians – who grew up on a more balanced diet of hymns, gospels and modern songs.

Most churches these days try hard to accommodate the likes of both groups in their worship service by inserting one or two ancient

songs in the line-up, but this sometimes causes a 'hiccup' to the flow.

To ease the flow, the worship leader may like to consider this suggestion from Dr Gordon England: Set a theme and choose songs from both the old and new eras that carry the theme. For example, the worship leader may start the worship with contemporary songs about the cross and move to hymns or yesteryear songs on the same subject.

England holds a Master's degree in Music from the University of Denver, US, and degrees in Sacred Music from Moody Bible Institute and Ethnomusicology from UCLA. He was sharing at the workshop Traditional vs Contemporary Music at the recent Men's Conference with the Promise Keepers organised by NECF Malaysia.

England urged both sides of the divide to appreciate each other's preferences. He said our youths need to recognise the rich heritage of the 'oldies' while the more elderly need to understand how music affects youths and be more appreciative of their struggles.

To order the taped message, contact 03-7806 2640 (tel.) or atkee@pl.jaring.my. ■

Dr England ... helping Christians of all ages to enjoy music from all ages.



I S S U E 6 2

Women to Women



WOMEN

in ACTS

By Chan Tean Yin

THE women in Acts were the fruits of Christ's revolutionary message, the Gospel. The coming of Jesus Christ resulted in the emergence of a group of liberated women, the New Covenant women, who were set free from the shackles of Judaism. They were no longer bound by the traditions and customs of Judaism that tended to diminish and suppress the status of women. They were instead filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to play a vital role in the extension of the Early Church and contributed to the spread of the Gospel.

We shall look at five types of roles the women in Acts appeared to perform. There is no clear-cut demarcation or distinction of roles in each woman or group of women, but rather some roles appeared to be more prominent in one woman than another.

1. Supportive Role

A number of women in Acts performed this supportive role. This means serving quietly, behind the scenes, doing tasks which may be menial, domestic and unnoticeable. The mention of Rhoda in Acts 12:13-25 is rather significant because of her position as a maidservant. Luke mentions her name perhaps to show that even performing menial domestic tasks can be just as important to the extension of the Kingdom of God as those more prominent roles. In the first place, she was a spiritual ally of the woman (Mary) she served. She faithfully guarded the gate while the other believers gathered to pray in Mary's house. She confessed Mary's God, experienced the same spiritual life that Mary experienced, and shared in the joys and woes of the Church of God. Naturally, she would have preferred to be inside where the others were at prayer. In spite of that, she faithfully performed her duty, keeping vigil over the house.

Another woman who played this supportive role was Lydia, the first European convert. She practised hospitality by urging

Paul and Silas to stay at her home (Acts 16:15). She was a wise woman who knew what a privilege and blessing it would be to open her home to God's servants. Her home became a refuge for Paul and Silas until the riot arose and they were imprisoned. We read that the other believers gathered in her house presumably to pray while Paul and Silas were in prison. They returned to Lydia's house, after their miraculous release and enjoyed her generous hospitality.

2. Social Care Provider

The one woman who stood out most prominently as initiating this role of Care Provider was Dorcas. There must have been many needy people in the 1st century, widows and orphans who had no public institutions to look after them. Dorcas, touched by the love and example of Christ, dedicated her life to the needs of many. She was described as "full of good works and charitable deeds which she did" (Acts 9:36). Abraham Kuyper (*Women of the New Testament*, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1962, 79) made this fitting comment about her, "For that reason Tabitha's being raised from the dead has a special significance. By completing that miraculous wonder the Lord placed His divine stamp of approval upon the work of caring for the poor, which Tabitha introduced. She lived that she might devote her life to His genuinely Christian philanthropy."

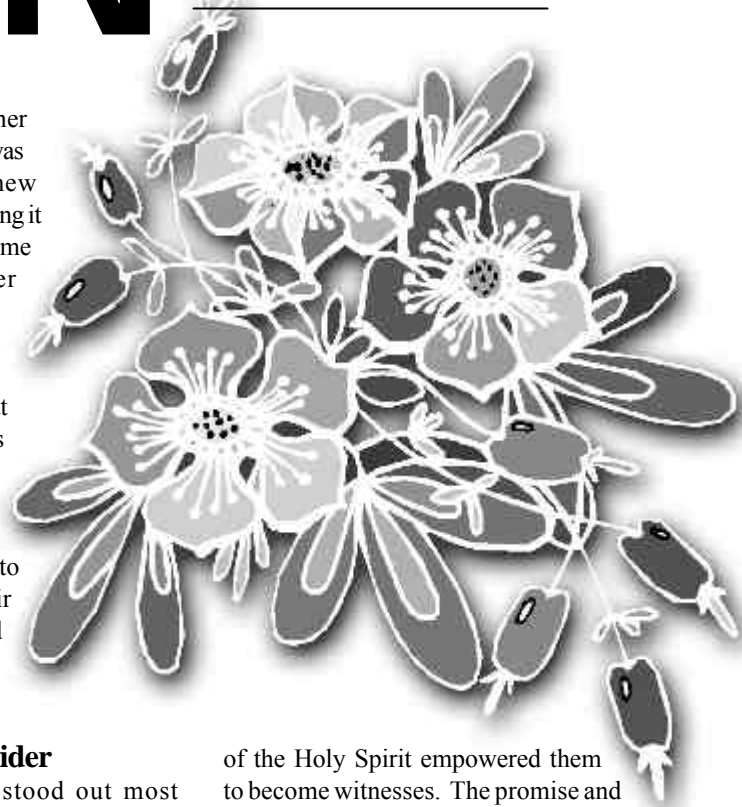
3. Outreach Role

The women in Acts contributed significantly to the spread of the Gospel. The outpouring

of the Holy Spirit empowered them to become witnesses. The promise and commission in Acts 1:8 were for the women as well. Since women were influential in the home, often the conversion of women led to the conversion of the entire household. For example, in Acts 16:14,15 we see Lydia's conversion resulted in the baptism of her entire household. We may also imply that the conversion of those prominent Greek women in Thessalonica and Berea led to the spread of the Gospel in these parts of the Roman Empire. It was also logical to conclude that both women and men were persecuted and were dispersed during the period of Saul's reign of terror. The women and men took the Gospel everywhere they were dispersed.

4. Teaching and Counselling Role

In Acts, we have an example of a woman performing the teaching role. It was possible that Priscilla shared teaching responsibilities with her husband at their house church in Ephesus.




There were other women who played the teaching and counselling role in an unobtrusive, informal way, as in the case of Timothy's mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois. Eunice, together with her mother, Lois, taught the Scriptures to young Timothy as attested by Paul in his letter, (2 Timothy 1:1–5; 3:15). This is significant, because Timothy's father was a non-believer, a Greek. Despite her difficulty in bringing up her son in a home where only one spouse was a believer, she did not fail in her duty in teaching him the scriptures, thus giving him a firm foundation.

5. Ministerial Role (Public Ministry)

The clearest evidence that women of Acts were involved in public ministry is found in Acts 21:9: "Now this man had four daughters who prophesied." Besides these four women, there was the illustrious Priscilla who featured prominently as a credible teacher. After the first mention in Acts 18:2, Priscilla's name always occurs first when they are discussed (Acts 18:18–19; Romans 16:3; 2 Timothy 4:19). Paul later commended her together with her husband as "fellow workers in Christ Jesus" (Romans 16:3,4).

The early church gave women a place of honour and dignity. Today, as in the first century, there is plenty of scope for the ministry of a godly woman without violating the divine order. ■

This is an excerpt of a research paper Women in Acts by Chan Tean Yin. Tean Yin is a member of the NECF Women's Commission.



**Women to Women
Networking Tea**

**Sat. October 19, 2002
3pm – 6pm
NECF Conference Room**

Watch out for more details in the next issue!

Forget-Me-Not



God's aging children, whose memories fail them, must not be forgotten.

By Elisabeth Elliot

THE setting is pleasant indeed – the billowing fields and meadows of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. From the upper windows of the neat brick buildings you can see a few farmhouses, a pond, a herd of cows. The sound of traffic is rare and distant, so that you may occasionally hear a rooster crow.

In the retirement centre we visit the two aunts in their homey, comfortable rooms, furnished with family antiques, bone china and silver, pictures of people and places we all love. They are cheerful and always welcoming, not minding that we burst upon them at odd times and consume all the ice cream and pretzels they have in their tiny kitchenette. We hear the news and fortify ourselves for the other visit.

Mother is not in the retirement part anymore. She lives in what they tactfully call the 'convalescent' part. To get to her room we pass through a lobby filled with old women

Wrapped in afghans in wheelchairs, some bang on trays, some moan, sob, cry, or shout. Some of them, with jaws dropped, are sleeping in spite of the noise. We try to

smile at them, touch a hand or two, hurry on to another floor where we find Mother, tiny but erect in her wheelchair, with perhaps a book or a letter in her lap. The expression of perplexed sadness on her face gives way instantly to astonishment, and delight when she sees us. Up go the arms – so unbelievably thin you think they will snap if you hug her.

We hug her – as well as we can with her in a wheelchair.

"Where have you been? I've been here a week and not one of my six children has been to see me. Nobody comes near me. Oh, please get me out."

We explain that we have been to see her, many times. And the other children? So have they. She does not believe us. We explain that we all live a long way away.

"Why did you move so far away from me?"

We tell her she moved away from us. She lived first with one son and then with another. She denies this, then concedes that perhaps we are telling her the truth, she hopes we are, but she does not remember. It was her choice to move, to be near her

dear sisters-in-law, our aunts, but that, too, she has forgotten. It sounded like a good idea to us when she firmly decided she wanted that, so we consented.

Conversation is almost impossible. We try asking questions – what did she have for lunch? They didn't give her any lunch, she says. We try to tell her about her great-grandchildren. It is all news to her. The names of even her grandchildren are strange – “Why, I had no idea she had children! I didn't even know she was married! Why didn't you tell me?”

She asks why our father has not been to see her, not even once, since she came to the ‘hospital.’ We remind her that he has been with the Lord for 23 years. “Why, nobody told me!” she says, bewildered at our carelessness.

We read a few words from the Bible, asks if she remembers about the Everlasting Arms (she says she does), pray with her. She prays, too. Sometimes we sing. It is amazing how well she remembers the old hymns, though her voice (we remember how clear and strong it was in family prayers at home) won't do what she wants it to do anymore.

HOW shall we think of such men and women? Shall we visit them when we can and try not to think at all betweentimes? Leave them entirely to those who are paid to keep them alive, or, as in the case of many who work in Mother's place, those who serve the Lord Christ by caring for these His pitiful children? Is this all we can do?

I wanted to care for her myself. All six of us wanted to. It did not work. The time came when she was manifestly miserable in any of our homes and begged to be allowed to go where she is. We talked about it, prayed about it, laid ourselves

and our plans and that most beloved mother before God. We thought we did the right thing. Now we can do no more than pray; but how shall we pray, how shall we even think?

When I have asked the Lord these painful questions, a few answers seem to have been given that I share with those whose lives are closely bound with people like Mother.

- She is still a member of the body of Christ, although she can no longer fathom what that means. When she suffers, she does not suffer alone. The whole body suffers, and Christ suffers in and with her.
- In some mysterious way, because she belongs to Him, she is completing (literally “filling up,” according to Colossians 1:24) His sufferings. There is far more here than I can begin to grasp, but it is written and I believe it.
- Her warfare will not be accomplished until this part of it, this battle, is over. (Lord, may it be soon?)
- If she “groans,” may it not be that the Holy Spirit is making intercession “in those agonizing longings which never find words” (Romans 8:22–27) ?
- All efforts to do what she herself thinks she wants have come to nothing. Is that not simply evidence (for our hope and comfort) there is something else – Christ and heaven and nothing short of

that will “solve her problem”? Earthly comforts have been exhausted and, like the child that knocks her cup from her mother's hand and cries for it-doesn't-know-what, she does not know (she has forgotten) the Source of the Living Water. In our helplessness, we cast Mother and ourselves on Him who loves her and us more than we can dream.

- She was made in the image of Christ. Although that image is now, as Mother Teresa observed of the poor refuse of humanity she lifts from the streets, “in such distressing disguise,” it is His image still.
- The chief end for which Mother was made was to glorify God. Has He left her without any means whatever for fulfilling that end, just because she does not remember? I don't think He has. Her suffering (loneliness, feeling of total abandonment, confusion) is, because of the Cross, capable of transfiguration. It is not meaningless. It is not for nothing. If I ask the Lord how this can be, what meaning it can have, He reminds me of the clay in the Potter's hand. Even of the marred vessel His hands can make something.
- “An enemy hath done this” (Matt 13:28). Mother suffers – that is, she experiences evil in several forms. But the final victory will

not belong to the author of that evil. Her Lord promised tribulation, but added, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

The stripping of all human powers, mental as well as physical, is for some a part of the process that George MacDonald calls “undressing for the last sweet bed.” We have no permanent claim on any of these “clothes.” Soon, I trust, Mother will be “clothed upon,” with immortality, “swallowed up of life” (1 Cor. 15: 53).

The Shepherd still cares for the sheep – cares even more for the helpless ones, carries them in His bosom, makes them lie down, although it was green pastures they hoped for when what they got was a nursing home. The green pastures are still to come.

- The Spirit is not hindered from accomplishing His sanctifying work just because it seems to us who are mere watchers by a wheelchair that nothing can possibly be happening.

So we lift her up continually to Him whose promises are never broken, and stay our troubled minds and torn hearts on the hope of the resurrection. It is heartening to witness the corruption, dishonour, and weakness of one who was, not very long ago, alive, dignified, strong – a model to us of godly womanhood. But the promise is that this frail little body of hers that is sown in corruption will be raised in incorruption; sown in dishonour, raised in glory; sown in weakness, raised in power. “So when the perishable is lost in the imperishable, the mortal lost in the immortal, this saying will come true. Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor 15:54).

We are going to keep on loving her and praying for her, writing, calling, and visiting whenever we can, which of course can never slake her longing. And there is one other thing we will do because of those glorious promises: instead of sinking into guilt and despair, we are going to keep on singing. ■



Are you a turkey or an eagle in a Storm?

By Anne Graham Lotz

WHEN the telephone rang on February 26, 1998, I had no idea the call would precipitate a launch into the wild blue yonder of faith. My son's voice on the other end of the line sounded strong, but serious. "Mom, the doctor thinks I have cancer." With those few words, I was suddenly catapulted into the eye of an unexpected, raging storm of suffering that lashed at every aspect of my life.

Yet in the midst of the storm that hit as suddenly and fiercely as a devastating tornado, I experienced an unprecedented peace – and joy! As I prayed with my son, Jonathan, on the telephone during the initial conversation, I was able to praise God for His divine purpose for Jonathan's life, even if it included cancer. Although we were caught by surprise, we knew God had known about the cancer since before Jonathan's birth. We knew also that Jonathan had been prayed for before his conception, every day of my pregnancy, and every day of his life. He had been born again as a child, and now, as a young adult, was in God's will as far as he understood it. Therefore we had every confidence that this suffering would be for Jonathan's good and God's glory. We knew God had a plan for Jonathan's life, and this was part of it all.

The first doctor's diagnosis was confirmed by a specialist. Within a week of the first diagnosis, and just four weeks before his wedding, our twenty-eight-year-old son underwent successful surgery to

remove a malignant tumour. With the recommended follow-up treatments of radiation, the prognosis of total recovery has been excellent.

What storm of suffering has swept into your life? The storm of death? divorce? disease? debt?

Has a feud erupted in your family?

A betrayal in your marriage?

A rebellion to your parenting?

The miscarriage of a pregnancy?

A severance from a job?

How have you reacted to the storm?

A turkey and eagle react in different ways to the threat of a storm. A turkey reacts by running under the barn, hoping the storm won't come near it. On the other hand, an eagle leaves the security of its nest and spreads its wings to ride the air currents of the approaching storm, knowing the wind will carry it higher in the sky than it could soar on its own. So which are you – a turkey or an eagle – in the way you react to the storms of life?

Within a period of eighteen months, my family experienced one storm after another. From Hurricane Fran, which downed 102 trees in our yard to the fire that consumed my husband's dental office, to the weddings of all three of our children, to Jonathan's cancer and surgery, we have reeled from one emergency or crisis to another. In the whirlwind, I have discovered I am an emotional turkey. I want to withdraw from the emotional pain and burdensome

demands and frenzied activities and unending responsibilities. I want to run under the barn with my wings over my head and hide from friends and family who feel ignored or slighted, misunderstanding my busyness and preoccupation as indifference or arrogance. I want to escape the hurt.

Yet I have chosen to be an eagle in my spirit. And in the midst of the storm, when I have spread my wings of faith to embrace the "Wind," placing my dependency upon Jesus and Jesus alone, I have experienced quiet, "everyday" miracles;

His joy has balanced the pain,

His power has lifted the burden,

His peace has calmed the worries,

and His all-sufficiency has been more than adequate to meet all my responsibilities.

Soaring has become an adventure of discovering just how faithful He can be when I am way out of my comfort zone in the stratosphere over the storm. In fact, soaring has become so exhilarating that I increasingly find I am no longer content to live in the barnyard of familiarity just for its relative security. I want to live by faith! And I imagine a smile of infinite tenderness on His face as the angels in heaven applaud, saying, "Anne, you've finally got it. Now you're beginning to understand."

And to a greater degree than ever before, I do understand. Looking back over that eighteen-month period, my thoughtful, confident conclusion is that these storms of suffering have increased and intensified in my life because Jesus wanted me to soar higher in my relationship with Him

– to fall deeper in love with Him,
to grow stronger in my faith in Him,
to be more consistent in my walk with Him,
to bear more fruit in my service to Him,
to draw closer to His heart,
to keep my focus on His face,
to live for His glory alone!

This growth in depth and strength and consistency and fruitfulness and ultimately in Christlikeness is only possible when the winds of life are contrary to personal comfort. Just as storms make it possible for eagles to soar, so suffering makes it possible for you and me to attain the highest pinnacles in the Christian life. Suffering develops our faith.

Taken from Just Give Me Jesus. Available at Christian bookstores.

WOMEN to WOMEN

Advisor/Co-ordinator: Goh Poh Gaik

Women to women, a project of the NECF Commission on Women's Concerns, is a bimonthly supplement to Berita NECF.

It has the broad objectives of:

- educating and raising awareness of the social and theological issues affecting women
- stimulating efforts towards networking and dialogue amongst women
- encouraging one another in the use of our gifts and talents for the Lord's Kingdom

Your letters and contributions (feedback, suggestions, ideas, articles, poems, cartoons, etc.) are most welcome.

Send to:

The Co-ordinator, **WOMEN TO WOMEN**

NECF, 32, Jalan SS2/103, 47300 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

The views expressed in this supplement do not necessarily reflect those of the Commission or the NECF.

Cross-Current Consultation

GROWING CHASM BETWEEN SECULAR AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

THE NECF Malaysia Research Commission concluded in May its series of consultations on globalisation with an examination of the media and counter-culture, the environment and religious resurgence.

Held on a monthly basis since last November, the five one-day consultations addressed strategic global, church, family and workplace issues, the unifying theme being the dissolving barriers of the nation state, distance, communications, culture and values. Other topics included business ethics, corporate governance, education, theology, missiology, parenting, pastoral care, post-modernism and religious resurgence.

The purpose of these consultations was to enable Christian leaders to engage these issues at an intellectual and practical level. Despite the relevance of the subjects and the quality of the speakers, the consultations themselves received only low-key interest – most notably from pastors and seminarians.

This can be attributed to a number of factors. Among them appears to be a persistent belief that globalisation is for the academics and has little bearing on Christian ministry and spiritual life. The response is also typical of inadequate reflection and the common ailment of ‘busyness’ in modern ministry. In addition, a more extreme view holds that such efforts are not only unnecessary but undermine the church’s central mission of evangelism and discipleship.

The dangers of ignoring the changes sweeping society are twofold. On the one hand, there is growing disconnectedness between the secular and sacred; many churches are unable to establish a vivid and dynamic relevance of the gospel to modern society. On the other hand, there is the risk that the rush to contextualise the gospel and accommodate modernity leads to teachings and practices that are less than Scripturally faithful and consistent.

The Cross-Current consultations made it clear that globalisation’s impact on the life of the Malaysian Church is varied and comprehensive. The trends are not entirely negative – many are highly conducive to the spread of the Word – but there can be no doubt that many issues and tensions are

ignored rather than addressed.

Growing disparities between the technological centres and the peripheries, and the lack of efficient and effective transfer mechanisms are resulting in many countries today being unable to feed and care for themselves, let alone prosper. The Church needs to be able not only to redeem its prophetic role and articulate the need for justice and righteousness, but also to translate Christ’s love and concern in tangible ways.

Christians are increasingly pictured as intolerant and pressured to adopt pluralistic values, while the same standards of behaviour do not apply to those of other faiths and persuasions. The Church needs to stand its ground in this period of shifting sand with firmness and understanding, recognising that a part of humanity has, throughout history, rejected and persecuted those who preach the unadulterated Word of God as the “power of God unto salvation.”

It is clear that an integrative theology would lay the foundations for a more relevant, appealing and fulfilling spiritual life – a stark contrast to the ‘dumbing-down’ that is many times taken as a necessary precursor to accepting the gospel.

Borrowing from the secular world – particularly in matters such as strategic planning, marketing and modern management – has helped birth and nurture mega churches. The need to continually ensure that church growth and management are received as God-given means, and not taken as ends in themselves, is self-evident.

In these and a host of other critical issues, the Cross Current consultations allowed productive in-depth exchanges among our Research Commission members, experts and practitioners, and the Christian community. They helped bridge the growing chasm between the secular and the sacred.

It is our deepest prayer that God will open the eyes of Christians to the dangers of limited exposure and excessive mental compartmentalisation, to the need to adopt holistic and integrative worldviews, and to recognise the opportunity to shape agenda and practices in line with Kingdom principles. – **Steven Wong (Research Commission Chairman)** ■

Spinning Success for Malaysian Website

WORSHIP songs, like many things, have long been the domain of the West. Likewise, websites of worship songs. At last, a Malaysian-based worship website, with worship songs written by Malaysian Christians, has penetrated the field and given an Asian flavour.

And it has proven to be quite a hit, registering over 100,000 hits from all over the world within 14 months – good enough for search engines Yahoo and Google to capture the entire website onto their database.

When Ng Wah Lok established www.tabernaclemusic.net in April 2001, his intention was to use the website to promote his album *Every Time I Pray*, and share some of his teaching materials on music and worship.

Spurred (and surprised) by the good response, he has gone on to expand the website to include teaching materials and albums from other Malaysian Christians. Besides music scores of six of his songs (available free of charge) the website also contains information on local prayer events and other Malaysian Christian albums.

“It is time for Malaysian Christians to arise and sing their own songs. For too long, we have relied on foreign worship songs from, for example, Integrity Music and Hillsongs. It is time for us to recognise our own songwriters and move them to a national and international audience,” Wah Lok said. ■

Wah Lok is the principal of Tung Ling Seminary. In his spare time, he writes songs and conducts workshop on praise and worship, among other activities.



'WATCH' GAINS MOMENTUM

Burdened by the spiritual atmosphere of the nation and the various issues threatening the country's stability, a group of intercessors from six churches representing several denominations started meeting in 1999 for all-night prayers.

The once-a-month intercession, called 'the Watch', at Christian Life Centre, Petaling Jaya, lasted from 1.30pm to 6am the next day.

Word got around and soon Christians – mainly prayer leaders and pastors – from other churches started attending; today, the number of churches represented has grown to at least 12 with an average attendance of 200 people from also the BM- and Chinese-speaking churches.

"We're not a prayer group but a prayer movement because we want to see an emergence of a prayer movement across the Klang Valley and the nation," clarifies Lucrece Loo, a member of Klang Valley Inter-Church Prayer Network (IPN), the group that mobilised the Watch.

Adds NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission Executive Secretary Ann Low, "A prayer group is a group of people praying. It is exclusive. A prayer movement has an extensive ministry – it seeks to influence or draw others into the ministry of intercession."

At the Watch, the focus of the intercession is revival in the nation. There is no agenda or programme because the organisers believe that "true intercession is hearing from God"; they trust God to prompt them on what to pray.

However, there is a loose programme based on team confirmation of what God is impressing on the different teams to pray for monthly.

As a result of the Watch, IPN members have noticed a growing unity among the participating churches. Some of the churches have even jointly organised community events.

"For CLC (the hosting church), the church has grown since the start of the Watch. We had so many new people on Sunday morning that we didn't have enough communion cups, and they always prepare extra just in case," says an IPN member worshipping at CLC. ■

EVERYONE'S A FULL-TIME WORKER

A new breed of ministers is emerging. They are called of God and know it, but not in the traditional sense of preaching, teaching, or even evangelism as we have known it.

They serve the Lord in the marketplace. Why? Because they are business and professional people, and they know that their work is their ministry.

Two of the more popular and useful concepts (of service) were the phrases *priesthood of all believers* and *every Christian a minister* which are born out of 1 Pet. 2:9–10. From this passage, we understand that all of us are called, we are a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people."

However, most of the time we choose to use the word *priesthood* and ignore the word *royal*. Darby's Translation uses the phrase *kingly priesthood*. I believe that Peter used both the words *priesthood* and *royal* or *kingly* for the same reason that the Lord Jesus called us *kings* and *priests* (Rev. 1:6).

Don't confuse the call to ministry in the marketplace with the call to ministry in the local church. We need both the kings and priests ministering in their respective callings to see the national transformation we desire. The words priest or priesthood automatically draws our thoughts to church- or mission-related activities. It is my conviction that in these days, ministry must have a much broader base than church-related activities and concerns.

So, who are these "kings" that will lead us in the coming harvest? One is a taxi driver in La Plata, Argentina. He was driving me to my speaking engagements in his city and we began to talk about seeing one's business as ministry. He said he desired this, so I prayed for him, and declared him a "king". I saw him again four months later and he excitedly told me, "I have had the opportunity to lead someone to Christ every day since you prayed for me. It really does work. My business is my ministry."

Yes, he is one of the kings and so are you! CEO and manager, administrator and assistant, computer programmer and custodian. Politician and plumber, football player or interior designer, God is looking on your heart.

New Members

We welcome the following 16 churches and one organisation as Ordinary Members into our fellowship:

- **Pusat Gospel Malaysia**, Bukit Mertajam, represented by Rev. M. Davaraj Samuel
- **ACTS Church**, Subang Jaya, pastored by Rev. Kenneth Chin
- **New Life Fellowship**, Miri, pastored by Elder Jeti anak Mamba
- **Gereja Charis**, Kuala Lumpur, pastored by Rev. Foo Moy Peng
- **Rumah Charis**, Kuala Lumpur, represented by Teo How Ken
- **The Upper Room Fellowship**, Melaka, pastored by Shirley Woon
- **Grace Harvest**, Kota Kinabalu, pastored by Lim Koh Beng @ Arthur Lim
- **Seremban Praise Sanctuary**, Seremban, pastored by Rev. Angeline Leong Sin Keow
- **Yesuvin Mahligai**, Kajang, pastored by Rev. Murasu Rajan
- **Rumah Sembahyang Semenanjung Orang Asli Malaysia**, Kepong, Selangor, pastored by Timothy Cheah
- **Evangel Assembly**, Ipoh, pastored by Rudy Goh
- **Sungai Lembing Gospel Centre**, Kuantan, represented by Elder Teng Pooi Kui
- **Tabernacle of Praise**, AOG, Penang, pastored by Rev. Geoffrey Yee
- **Gereja Emmanuel Subang Permai**, Shah Alam, pastored by Ping Epoi
- **Canaan Life Assembly**, Penang, pastored by Rev. Chan Hon Kwong
- **Harvest Creative Fellowship**, Johor Bahru, pastored by Ong Teng Tee
- **The Girls' Brigade Malaysia** represented by Captain Tnay Yong Hua

We also welcome 11 individuals as Associate Members. ■

He wants to use you in reaching your city for Himself. He wants to use you to spark a revival that will change and transform your city. Pastors, missionaries, evangelists, teachers... we have an equipping task that must be completed in these last days. We must... release the kings into ministry. ■

(Extracted from *GOD@WORK – Discovering the Anointing for Business* by Rich Marshall, one of the speakers at the God@Work Conference to be held from Aug. 28 to 29 at Renewal Lutheran Church, Petaling Jaya. See page 14 for more details.)

Sharing Resources

Church Survey Report

THIS NECF Malaysia report contains results of the first survey on churches in Peninsular Malaysia. The report covers a diverse range of information on the profile of churches, the work and ministry of pastors and Christians, their attitudes and perspectives towards issues, and their spirituality and lifestyle. Available from NECF Malaysia at RM10 per copy. Add RM1 per copy for postage.

Other resources available from NECF Malaysia:

- *Engagement or Isolation: A Malaysian Christian Perspective on Globalisation* presents a Christian encounter and perspective with globalisation. RM8 each.
- *Watchmen's Forum 3* is a compilation of research papers on current issues written by members of the NECF Malaysia Research Commission. RM10 each.
- *Watchmen's Forum 2* at RM8 each.
- *Handbook on Missions Agencies* contains information on the mission agencies operating here and some data on the global state and needs of missions. RM8 each.
- *Pursuit of God's Cause* is a collection of essays on the life and impact of the Evangelical Church in Malaysia. The book was released in honour of David Boler, founding chairman of NECF Malaysia. RM 15 each.
- *John's Gospel* booklet at 40 sen each.
- *NECF Malaysia 20th Anniversary magazine* at RM3 each.
- *Pastor's Prayer Shield Message from the Heart* CD at RM5 each
- *Breakthrough (King of Kings) worship* CD at RM8 each.

WEA APPOINTS NEW SECRETARY-GENERAL

World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) has appointed Gary L. Edmonds as its new Secretary-General with effect from July. Edmonds comes to WEA after three years of service as associate international director at Interdev.

Rev. Wong Kim Kong – Vice-Chairman of WEA's international council and chairman of the search committee for the secretary-general – said: "Gary L. Edmonds is a leader with western background but cross-cultural mindset and experience. He is also well equipped to relate to the international Christian community with his global experience in international ministry and mission organisations.

"His theological and academic qualifications further strengthen the integrated ministry vision of WEA."

During the commissioning service, Edmonds quoted an African proverb, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Edmonds has served as senior associate pastor at Mariners Church in Irvine, California; European director of Christian Associates International; and has 18 years' experience in leadership development and church planting in eastern and western Europe.

WEA represents over a million local churches in 110 nations.

Book Review

Title : BEHOLD YOUR PASTOR!

Author: DR LEE BEE TEIK

THE issue of the challenges and struggles faced by pastors is old story, and many books have been written on the subject. So what makes this one different and how will it help Malaysian Christians?

Firstly, the book is written by a local Christian who not only understands the local culture and oriental nuances but is also the wife of a former pastor. It is a collection of her observations and research, personal encounters and interviews over a period of at least a decade.

She discusses the identity crisis facing the modern-day pastor as a result of the many roles he is expected to play – administrator, CEO, fund raiser, church-growth strategist, et cetera. Even pastors in traditional churches – whose traditional roles were preaching, visiting and liturgical duties – are beginning to face similar pressures.

This 'pressure cooker' situation is brought about by the paradigm shift where lay leaders are beginning to exercise more influence over the pastor's job description (and unwritten expectations) and the church's direction and ministry.

Not all problems of the pastors are caused by the church board though; the author observes that overuse of authority can be a pitfall of some CEO-orientated pastor. She also recommends some practical steps to overcome some of the problems of the modern-day pastorate. Besides challenging board members to understand the life and ministry of pastors, she also urges them to re-examine the ways the local church choose, train, affirm and care for full-time pastors.

Typical of her other books, she has a smaller section at the end of each chapter, consisting of soul-searching questions for readers to reflect on and pray over.

In reading this book, pastors (and their families) will be able to interact and identify with similar experiences of other pastors, and be encouraged to know that there are people who share their pains and cries.

On the other side, the book is an eye-opener to the congregation members into the personal lives and ministry of full-time workers and pastors.

The layout, especially the shaded parts, is a bit confusing, though not entirely her doing but that of the typesetter and artist. Nevertheless, it has not taken the *oomph* out of the book.

Hopefully, this book will build bridges between pastors and church boards/congregations, where, together, the forces of darkness will find them a mighty force to reckon with. After all, that is what we are all called to do in the first place – to destroy the domain of Satan and release many more people into the kingdom of light. –

Reviewed by Patrick Cheng

(Note: Behold Your Pastor! is available from Glad Sounds at RM25 per copy.)



COMING UP ...

Freedom & Revival Seminar – Aug 15 & 16

Renowned author **DR NEIL T. ANDERSON** will share how to maintain victory and renewal over the

Adversary in our personal lives. Dr Anderson's bestsellers on victorious Christian living and deliverance have helped many overcome their past through understanding their true identity and worth in Christ. Among his books are *The Bondage Breaker*, *Victory Over The Darkness* and *The Seduction of Our Children*.



Dr Anderson

He is the founder and past president of Freedom in Christ Ministries and the former chairman of the Biola University Practical Theology Department at Talbot School of Theology, US.

The seminar, jointly organised by NECF Malaysia and Malaysian Campus Crusade for Christ, will begin on Aug 15 (Thurs.) night from 8pm to 10pm and continue on Aug 16 (Fri.) from 9am to 12pm at First Baptist Church, Petaling Jaya.

Spiritual Protection for Our Children Seminar – Aug 16 & 17

Coming together with Dr Anderson are **Dr JOSEPH** and **KATHY WASMOND**, who will give insights on the many subtle ways our children are being seduced, and share practical plans to fortify our families against Satan's slick strategies. Parents and those involved in the children's ministry will richly benefit from this seminar which will start on Aug 16 (Fri.) night from 8pm to 10pm and continue on Aug 17 (Sat.) from 9am to 4pm at First Baptist Church, Petaling Jaya.

Joseph is the current president of

Freedom In Christ Ministries and has a PhD in Ministry in Missiology from Trinity International University while Kathy has a Masters in Child and Family Counselling from Philadelphia Biblical University.

The fee for registration for this and the above seminar is RM55 per seminar or RM100 for both. Simultaneous Chinese and Bahasa Malaysia interpretation is available. Please bring your FM recorder and headphones.

God@Work Conference – Aug 28 & 29

This morning conference will inspire Christians in the marketplace to view their jobs as their ministry, their workplaces as their mission fields. They can change the spiritual atmosphere in their companies and ultimately, in their cities.

The conference is organised by NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission in conjunction with the nationwide 40-day Prayer and Fast.

The speakers are Rich Marshall from the US and Keith Edwards from Australia. Marshall, author of bestseller *God@Work*, *Discovering the Anointing for Business*, was a pastor for over 30 years before founding ROI, a ministry to equip Christians in the business community. He is also a founding member of Nehemiah Partners, a group of business and ministry leaders committed to rebuilding the biblical walls of commerce.

Keith Edwards is senior pastor of one of Newcastle's largest churches as well as chairman of ACTION (A City Transformation Initiative Over Newcastle) which is an affiliation of local pastors, Christian businessmen, youth leaders and intercessors formed six years ago to unify the churches in that area.

The conference will be held from 8.30am to 12.30pm at Renewal Lutheran Church, Petaling Jaya.

Registration fee of RM60 (before Aug 1) and RM70 thereafter includes seminar materials and tea.

In addition, night meetings (open to the

public) will be held on both days from 8pm to 10pm. Marshall will deliver the messages.

Merdeka Prayer Rallies for Chinese-speaking Churches

The Government has designated Aug 28 as a day of prayer for the nation. In response, NECF Malaysia, in partnership with Chinese-speaking churches in the Klang Valley, is organising two separate prayer rallies for Chinese-speaking churches.

Both gatherings will be held simultaneously at 8pm on Aug 28 (Wednesday) at the Confucian Private Secondary School (for KL churches) and Christian Life Centre, Petaling Jaya (for PJ churches).



MERDEKA EVE PRAYER RALLY

Aug 30 from 8pm to midnight at Wisma MCA, KL

Rich Marshall will speak at the rally, which focuses on praying for the nation.



Foreign News

Church Facing Up to Divorce

DivorceCare UK praised a recent survey by the Evangelical Alliance which showed that churches are increasingly facing up to the controversial issues of divorce and separation by providing pastoral support and teaching on marriage and divorce.

Ninety-five percent of the churches questioned had both adults and children in their congregations who are directly affected by separation or divorce. Almost 75 percent of the churches which responded provide teaching on marriage, divorce and family life, with 95 percent providing ongoing pastoral support for those affected by marriage breakdown or separation. — *Evangelicals Now*

Church In India Faces Increasing Threats

Most Christians understand the threat posed by Islamic fundamentalism around the world, but few are aware of a virulent strain of Hindu radicalism targeting believers in India.

“There is a well-rehearsed plan for violence against churches and evangelists,” says George Ninan, a South Asia director for Campus Crusade for Christ.

In recent years, militant groups have arisen that trumpet a Hindu “race” and culture, urging that Hinduism be recognised as the official state religion. One such far right group, the National Volunteer Service (RSS), is influenced by 1930s-style Nazism. Sadly, such groups are gaining influence in high places.

“I may be wrong, but there is a feeling that the ones who are in power would support this,” Ninan added, referring to the persecution.

Over 100 incidents of violence have been documented against Christians since 1998, including the rape of four nuns and one nun shot in the face. Many Christians were injured, killed or left homeless by such attacks.

While Ninan hasn’t seen the revival he prays for daily, he remains hopeful about India, despite its unusual obstacles to the Christian faith. “Most of the ministries are

seeing results. We might not make a lot of noise, but the church is growing, and I’m excited about that.” — *ASSIST News Service*

Statistics Every Pastor Can Use

More than one-third of Americans say they are paying more attention now, after Sept 11, to how the news might relate to the end of the world, according to a *Time/CNN* poll.

Other stats from the poll reported in the July 1 issue of *Time* magazine: 36% believe the Bible is God’s word and is to be taken literally; 59% believe the prophecies in Revelation will come true; 36% who support Israel say they do so because they believe in biblical prophecies that Jews must control Israel before Christ can come again; and 17% believe the end of the world will happen in their lifetime.

More disturbing are the results of a recent poll by the Colonial Willaimsburg Foundation, as reported in the *Orlando Sentinel*. Most respondents to the survey considered affordable health care and the right to an education more important than the First Amendment to the Constitution. And nearly half (49%) agreed that “if we need to relinquish some of our personal freedom and privacies to protect our country, we should all be prepared to do that.” — *Ministries Today Update*

Christian ‘Cults’ Alarm China

China is alarmed over the rapid rise of Christian ‘cults’ in the countryside and will do more to win over people who flock to such groups, reports *AFP*.

The cults are influential in rural areas, where the number of Christians is rising so rapidly that the official church does not have enough staff to accommodate them all. “Reality has shown us that the future of Chinese Christianity will be harmed if we do not attach importance to the churches in rural areas and help followers improve,” said China Christian Council president Cao Shengjie.

Cao said the cults had made ingenious use of the Bible, “quoting it out of context and making up heresies.” Christian cults are Beijing’s shorthand for unofficial Christian congregations.

Bible Translation

United Bible Societies says books of the Bible are available in 2,287 languages, according to *World Pulse*. Complete Bibles have been published in 392 languages.

Bucking the Terrorism Trend

Terrorist incidents declined worldwide in 2001 by nearly one-fifth, but more than half of the terrorist attacks occurred in Colombia. Some 2,800 people were abducted and 3,500 were murdered in this violent country.

The annual report on *Patterns of Global Terrorism* states, “An increased international awareness of terrorism did nothing to stop or even slow the pace of terrorist actions by Colombia’s three terrorist organisations.”

In most cases, Evangelicals become war casualties because they are in the wrong place at the wrong time. Christians who have stayed to reach out to the suffering country say the rewards are great. “A lot of people are coming to the Lord. The unity of the church, of pastors, of missionaries, is great,” said Pedro Hernandez, head of the Medellin Association of Evangelical Pastors. — *Compass*

Muslim-Christian ‘Allies’ Lobby U.N.

Making unlikely allies, conservative Muslim Christian organisations and Islamic bloc governments have teamed up to stop the spread of sexual and political protections, and rights for gays at United Nations (U.N.) conferences.

The new alliance, which coalesced during the past year, has been largely galvanised by Christians who have set aside their doctrinal differences, cemented links with the Vatican and sought fresh ties with more than 50 moderate and hard-line Muslim nations, including Sudan, Libya, Iraq and Iran, *The Washington Post* reported.

“We look at them as allies, not necessarily as friends,” said Austin Ruse, founder and president of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, a New York-based organisation that promotes conservative values at U.N. social conferences. — *Charisma News Service*

FOR Your Prayers



WEST EUROPE

Many missionaries have laboured long and hard in unresponsive West Europe. While some have given up, others continue to look to the Lord for a harvest. Progress is slow in countries such as France, Spain, Portugal and Italy, but people are coming to the Lord to encourage His servants in these lands. Belgium is said to be the hardest mission field in this region. Evangelicals represent only 0.5% of the over 10-million population. There is just one Christian worker to every 34,000 inhabitants. Belgian Christians urgently need expatriate missionary help to evangelise and plant churches. Pray for our Belgium brethren.

EGYPT

Islam is the official state religion of Egypt and Christians there have suffered discrimination and persecution for generations. Whilst the government is now slowly responding to international pressure on these issues, societal tensions between the Christian and Muslim communities can run high. On Feb. 10 in a village south-east of Cairo, Christians celebrating the opening of their renovated church were attacked by Muslim rioters who claimed the church bells were too loud. There were 50 arrests after several people were injured and property was destroyed. Pray for peace. Pray also for William Shaiboub Aarsal, a 39-year-old Christian father of three, who is serving 15 years' hard labour for a false conviction of murder. In August 1998, police tortured over 1,000 Christians to secure 'confessions' for a trial that was a farce. Pray for wise, sensitive and strong leadership in the Egyptian churches, enabling Christians to stay focused on Jesus while their leaders pursue justice graciously; and for the spirit of God to comfort and heal the hearts of Egyptian Christians who have lived for generations with discrimination, persecution and the resentment and fear they breed.

UNITED KINGDOM

Significant increases in the sale of Bibles were reported by UK high street bookshops in the aftermath of the Sept 11

terrorist attacks, according to the *Daily Telegraph*. Pray for the many unsaved people to find Christ through His Word. "Revival is coming; in fact we are experiencing the firstfruits of it through the letters and phone calls we receive here at UCB (United Christian Broadcasters)," wrote its managing director, Ian Mackie. Pray for UCB radio broadcasts to impact the listeners. Over 72,000 UK churches were running Alpha courses last summer. In the autumn the course was featured in a series on ITV where it was estimated that there were some 180,000 attending Alpha programmes throughout the land. Pray for transformed lives.

SUDAN

At Easter 2000, Muslims in Khartoum were shocked to see 210,000 people turn out for the Easter Celebration put on by the All Sudan Council of Churches. When the event was due to be repeated in Easter 2001, Muslims forced its cancellation. The Government of Sudan's (GoS) persecution of Christians in Khartoum, especially of Muslims who become Christians, has intensified over the past year. Whilst the Sudanese constitution boasts religious liberty with "Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience and religion ... no one shall be coerced to profess a faith in which he does not believe ...", Sudanese law makes apostasy a criminal offence punishable by death. Alladin Omer Ajjabna Mohammed, 34, is one of several Christians who have been detained, tortured for apostasy and are in hiding. Pray for: the faith, hope and perseverance of the Christians whose lives are at risk; great wisdom for church leaders in Khartoum as they witness to ALL people and then seek to protect those who become Christians; international pressure to challenge the GoS to be consistent and faithful to its constitution and so uphold the principles of freedom they boast about; and God to intervene and bring peace to Sudan as human efforts at peace fall apart, with GoS bombing of civilians in the South appearing to escalate.

POLAND

Research by Greater Europe Mission shows that 2,228 of Poland's 2,500 districts have no Evangelical church and that half of the country's people are outside the geographical reach of existing churches. Christian leaders call the unreached districts *bialy plamy* – 'white spots' – and a growing number of them realise the situation calls for action. If each church would adopt five unreached Polish districts and plant a church in each of them, there would soon be an Evangelical church in every district, said one pastor. Church leaders have sought the help of the Alliance for Saturation Church Planting in spreading the vision and training Christians. Pray for the progress of the gospel in Poland.

WWWEEB

God is much more important to Internet surfers than money, concludes a study conducted by the Pew Internet and American Life Project. More adult Americans go online for religious purposes than gambling, banking or the stock market, says the study. Over three million a day seek a religious connection on the Internet, although most belong to a church. They use the Internet to find additional information and help for their faith. A year ago, the Barna Research Group (BRG) found that eight percent of American adults and 12 percent of teenagers surf the Web for spiritual experiences. BRG predicted that by the end of the decade, 50 million Americans would seek to have their spiritual experience solely through the Internet and more than 100 million for some kind of supplement to the teaching they receive in their church. The biggest challenge of the Internet for Christians is to draw unsaved people to Christ. Pray for effective ministry on the Internet.



Implications of the Hudud Bill

Why you should be concerned

The Terengganu State Legislative Assembly's approval of the *Syariah Offences (Hudud and Qisas) Bill*, or the Hudud Bill, on July 8 has given rise to grave apprehensions across-the-board and within the non-Muslim community in particular. The Bill prescribes Islamic punishments for specific criminal acts and joins the earlier *Syariah Criminal Code (II) Bill 1993* enacted by the Kelantan State Government.

A great deal has been said and written, both in favour and against, the two PAS-sponsored Hudud Bills since they were introduced. These originate from different worldviews or perceptions of reality and it is therefore difficult, if not impossible, to achieve any degree of real compromise. This is especially true when one party considers it a God-given duty to impose the law.

While the religious motivation behind the Bills is rather clear, opposition typically comes from different quarters; the arguments made tend to be multi-faceted, overlapping and, quite often, also confusing. It is, however, imperative to be clear and consistent in answering the question: "Why do you oppose the hudud law?" Before addressing this, it is important to note the law's main features.

The Hudud Bill has several parts:

- **Penalties** Much of the focus on the Hudud Bill centres on the nature of the punishments. There are six punishable offences: theft, highway robbery, unlawful carnal intercourse, false accusations of unlawful carnal intercourse, consumption of alcohol and any act done or word uttered by a Muslim against Islamic beliefs (*irtidad*), including seeking to renounce the Islamic faith. For example, the sentence for theft is the amputation of body parts; for highway robbery, it's death and, where murder is involved, crucifixion. *Zina* or sexual relations outside of marriage leads to death by stoning when married persons are involved or one hundred lashes of the whip, and one year's imprisonment in the case of unmarried persons. False accusations of *zina* and alcohol consumption can attract up to 80 lashes of the whip, while the penalty for *irtidad* is death or imprisonment.
- **Qisa or "just retaliation"** contains provisions to cover acts that lead to death or loss of use of body parts. The penalties include death, *irsy* or payments to the victim or the victim's family members, and "similar bodily injury as that which he has inflicted upon his victim." The *qiso* thus relate to "an-eye-for-an-eye" punishments.
- **Other parts** of the Bill cover the enforcement of the punishments, general provisions and court proceedings.

It is essential to be able to effectively articulate concerns about the hudud legislation. Highlighted below are seven arguments proposed:

1. The fact that two out of Malaysia's 13 state governments have, by exploiting provisions in the Federal Constitution, chosen to adopt different legislation from the rest of the country carries **wide repercussions for the nature and political unity** of the Malaysian state. Introducing legislation in areas where federal laws already exist [namely the Federal Penal Code and *Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act, 1965*

(Amended 1984)] directly challenges the role of Parliament and the system of parliamentary democracy.

2. The Bill further widens the divide between Muslims and non-Muslims by introducing two sets of criminal punishments. Apart from leading to possible unfair and illogical situations, it also has **negative implications for efforts at fostering social unity and cohesion**, which is facilitated by policies, rules and practices that, as far as possible, are designed and applied irrespective of race, religion, gender and social status. By being based on religion, the Hudud Bill clearly contravenes this principle.
3. The argument that the Hudud Bill affects Muslims and should therefore not be opposed by non-Muslims should not detract from the fact that **PAS' ultimate objective is to make it applicable to everyone**. PAS' leadership, in countering objections to there being two standards, explicitly said this prior to the tabling of the Kelantan Bill in 1992 and after the 2002 Terengganu Bill.
4. While there is no question that the Federal Constitution allows states to enact legislation for Muslims, the act of giving non-Muslims the choice of being tried under the Hudud Bill is considered by senior jurists to be **constitutionally outside the state's powers**. At the same time, provisions within the Bill allow any person (Muslim or non-Muslim) who "abets or assists or conspires or plots for the commission of ... offence(s)" to be punished with "imprisonment as *ta'zir* punishment for a term not exceeding ten years."
5. Non-Muslims are entitled to argue that any legal system, Islamic or otherwise, that prescribes amputation, death by stoning and crucifixion is **excessive, non-proportional and does not accord with modern and international concepts of justice and human rights**. PAS has often contended that this objection is based largely on Western origin, but the party has ignored the fact that there is a large body of Islamic theological thought who also holds that the hudud punishments are inapplicable in their original form.
6. All citizens are entitled to argue that, however socially undesirable they may be, **matters of conscience and morality** such as sexual conduct, alcohol consumption and religious conversion, **should not be subject to criminal sanctions**, especially those that involve as severe a penalty as death or whipping.
7. There are **doubts over the methods of implementation** of the hudud law, especially in cases of rape where the burden of proof is placed on the victim rather than the state. Thus, a rape victim who is unable to provide incontrovertible evidence of the rape act can be held guilty of false accusation and may be liable to be whipped.

PAS has unambiguously stated that it will introduce the Hudud Bill in every state that it wins the right to form the government. At the same time, it has challenged the Federal Government to amend the Federal Constitution, the Penal Code and the Syariah Courts Act to enable hudud punishments to be carried out.

While the Government has so far maintained its resolve not to do so, the future does not seem to be so certain. The original character of the Federal Constitution must be preserved at all cost and it is essential that Christians be prepared to act decisively in the political, social and legal arena to ensure this.