

# PRAISE THE ALMIGHTY

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## Peaceful Christmas in Orissa

Bhuvaneshwar: As the answer to Christians in India and across the globe, the state including Kandhamal district celebrated a peaceful Christmas on December 25, 2008. The threat of a bandh and violence loomed large on the state as the fundamentalists were continuing their aggression against Christians.

The voices of concern raised by Christian solidarity worldwide and the pressure of the Central Government and human rights organisations in the country forced the Navin Patnaik Government to strive to bring the fanatics on the path of negotiation and cancel their plans for more violence.

Many lament that even the ethnic cleansing of Christians could have been avoided had the govern-

ment acted earlier, to control the wicked designs of evil people. However Christmas celebrations just didn't pass off peacefully, but also "ushered in tremendous confidence among the affected people of Kandhamal," says Father Joe Xavier. The hope is that the government will continue to provide security.

The civil society organised a peace meeting in K. Nuagaon and Phulbani on December 25, 2008. The leaders highlighted the importance of peace, harmony and coexistence of Dalits and Adivasis. It was emphasised not to demonize the communities or become victims of fundamentalist forces.

About 4000 primary school teachers and 2000 youth have committed themselves for the peace process in

Kandhamal. The street plays enacted by social peace activists covering 11 blocks have helped promote social harmony. The activists of Naba Nirman Samiti, Sarvodaya Groups and the Primary Teachers' Federation worked very hard to promote peace process.

Thousands joined in prayer  
(Cont'd. on page 3)



## PTA to be fortnightly



Dear reader,  
This news magazine will be celebrating 10 years of God's faithfulness next month. Over the past 10 years, due to

God's faithfulness and mercy to us, not a single issue has been missed since its inception. We thank God for enabling us to make you aware of issue concerning Christians in our nation and abroad. We thank you for your patronage and prayers.

To commemorate the occasion, we are organising 10th anniversary celebration on February 6, 2009 at the Delhi Diocesan Community Hall, 1 Ashoka Place, New Delhi-1.

God has given us a vision to expand the magazine soon. It will be a fortnightly of 24 pages with more features, columns local news and articles from budding writers.

Steps will be taken to circulate the magazine widely by hand to churches in the city.

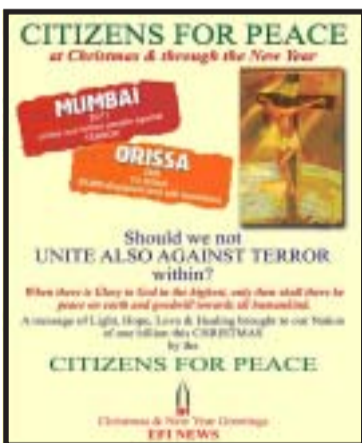
A web site has already been registered:

**We are bringing out a Directory-cum-Souvenir on the occasion.** For details you may please visit our site: [www.praisethealmighty.com](http://www.praisethealmighty.com).



## 'Citizens for Peace' conduct rally

New Delhi: On December 22, 2008 afternoon several hundred citizens of various faiths and communities gathered on the lawns of V. P. House, near the Indian Parliament, to listen to music and leaders speak up for peace at Christmas and through the new year. The event was organized by EFI's Reconciliation Commission under the banner of Citizens for Peace to demonstrate inter-faith solidarity with the Christians suffering in Orissa and all those who have suffered from terrorism right up to Mumbai's 26/11 at-



those suffering persecution.

He was followed by other speakers. Dr. John Dayal, Gen. Secretary, All India Christian Council, and Rev. Ivan Raskino from Mumbai. The lat-

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## Sheila Dixit Delhi CM again

New Delhi: Mrs. Sheila Dixit has become Chief Minister of Delhi for record 3rd time. The Congress party in the state under her able leadership emerged victorious in the recent Assembly elections conducted on November 29, 2008. Her party secured 43 out of 70 Assembly seats.



of the Congress Government for the last 10 years in developing the city, and its positive achievements.

Christians in the city prayed incessantly for a Government of God's choice to be installed in Delhi. Many Christian leaders conducted special intercessory prayer meetings before the elections.

The ruling party went to the polls on the achievements of the Government and on the promise of continuance of progress. The main slogans - "price rise and Congress being soft on terrorism" - of the opposition BJP could not deter the voters from acknowledging the determined efforts

The result on December 8, 2008 came as a surprise to many. However, Christian leaders have expressed faith that a secular party would continue to serve all sections of the people with social justice, upholding the nation's democratic and secular credentials.

## Journalists Arrested in Orissa

Bhuvaneshwar (Orissa): Lenin Kumar Roy, the editor of Nishan, a Left oriented quarterly magazine published from the state was arrested on December 7, 2008 and sent to jail on charges of writing provocative literature which as per the police version and the official report would disturb communal peace and harmony.

The police did not stop here. It also arrested two employees of Sovan Press, Bhubaneswar, after conducting a raid on it for printing the book 'Dharma naanre Kandhamalre Raktara Nadi' published by Lenin Kumar Roy.

The said book was alleged to be 'Maoist literature'. Next day, he was produced in the court for 'publishing provocative literature which can disturb communal peace and harmony'. The police cited page 38 to 41

of the above book. And what do those pages have in them? They produce a letter allegedly written by the RSS to its members for anti dalit, anti minority activities and also have some of Lenin's comments on this.

Dr Nutan Thakur, editor of 'Nutan Satta Pravah' and representative of the Institute for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences (IRDS) in Lucknow says that, "So, in India (and particularly in Orissa) it is a crime to write anything against the RSS or to produce an RSS letter or to comment upon it- more so if the government is supported by the BJP!

"But the actual reason goes even more deeper. In reality, Lenin had become a pain in the neck for the Navin Patnaik government which has completely failed in protecting the mi-  
(Cont'd. on page 2)

## Journalist arrested..

(Cont'd. from p. 1)

nority rights in the Kandhamal episode and has proved to be blatantly partisan and completely ineffective on the law and order front. He has been consistently raising voice of dissent for last one year in Nissan on all these, a fact that was to great distaste of the establishment, be it the CM and his party or the supporting ally BJP.

In August 2008, Nishan was labeled as a Maoist organ by SP Jagatsinghpur though the editor had protested this allegation. This is not the lone instance of the Orissa government coming up heavily against the dissenting members of the intelligentsia and the media who are critical about the government's activities. A few months ago, Rabindra Prasad Panda, a prominent Oriya writer, was sent to jail for writing a book, using similar Sections of the IPC.

Thus as the NDTV has rightly said- "Orissa cops have taken the term gag order to a new level altogether."

I am never able to understand what the police force in this nation want to prove by arresting people like Lenin Roy. Is it not completely shameful highly deplorable and atrocious? What is Lenin's fault- that he writes Maoist literature, that he speaks the language of Marxism, Leninism and Communism? Is this a free country we are living in?

I don't know what will happen

to our country where such local dictators who only want bards and sycophants around them. While it can be the case with the political persons, how can this be true also with the intellectuals and the media? Is this the way our Constitution makers had envisaged our Chief Ministers and governments to behave?

The media is known as the fourth estate and the watchdog of a democratic society. But can any society function properly if its chosen representatives are so intolerant, biased, personally stymied and spiteful as to pursue matters on a personal level and stop any person from expressing his/her views.?

Lenin's arrest is a blot on our society and must be resisted by each one of us as an example of complete dictatorship. Is this a free nation? In a subsequent press statement, the authors condemned the arrest and demanded his immediate release.

## Peace rally..

(Cont'd. from p. 1)

ter and Fr. Dominic Emmanuel, spokesman for the Catholic Archdiocese of Delhi, brought timely messages from God's word. Rev. Dr. Richard Howell highlighted the need to unite against the terror within as well as the need to accelerate inter-religious dialogue for peace. Bishop Karam Masih, CNI Bishop-emeritus, closed with prayer. Thaan Singh Josh proposed a vote of thanks.

## Dr. T.C. George promoted to glory

Bangalore (Karnataka): Dr. T C George (76), former General Superintendent of the South India Assemblies of God, was promoted to glory on December 17, 2008. He is survived by his wife Raji and son Rev. Ernest George, daughter-in-law Shirley and grand daughter Joanna. Rev. Ernest is the pastor of Garden City AG Church, Bangalore. Dr. George served as the Asst. General Supdt. of the SIAG for 12 years from 1979 and as the General Supdt., for 12 years from 1991. He served the Central District of the SIAG as the Dist. Supdt. for 33 consecutive years.



T C George was born in Kalanjoor, Kerala on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 1932. His parents belonged to the Brethren Assembly. He was saved at the age of 16 and following the call to the ministry entered full time ministry in 1955 in Trichy with his cousin Pastor E.V. Varghese who was doing ministry there. He received his first theological education at Southern Asia Bible College (SABC), Bangalore, from which he earned his Graduate in Theology in

1960. The following year he received his teachers training certificate from a college in Bangalore. Following that he joined Tamil Nadu Bible Institute as a teacher. After teaching there for a few years he went to USA for further training. He received his BA in Bible and Theology from Central Bible College, Springfield, Missouri and later earned his MA in Old Testament from Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis. In 1976 he successfully completed the Doctor of Missiology from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.

Dr. George's ministry with the Assemblies of God began when he joined Tamil Nadu Bible Institute in Madurai in 1961 and served there until 1966. In addition to teaching he also served as Registrar of TBI. In 1970 Dr. George joined the teaching faculty of SABC, his alma mater and stayed with the college until 1988 holding various positions including Dean of students and Academic Dean. In 1973 he was first elected as the superintendent of the Central District of the SIAG and was reelected in 1976 and continued to hold that position.

## "Violence on Christians shocking"

London (England): The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, on the eve of his visit to one renowned temple, contrasted the "organized attacks" on Christians in Orissa with the treatment of Hindus in Britain.

He said the violence on Orissa Christians, most of them the poorest of society, "is truly shocking. I understand that more than 50 Christians have been killed, and many tens of thousands have become refugees," he said in the letter to the Moderators of the Church of North India and the Church of South India.

"In this country we seek to maintain positive and respectful relationships for the good of society with Hindu communities and organizations who are a minority," he said. He also voiced his concern over reconversions, "Inappropriate pressure to reconvert is as unacceptable as inappropriate pressure to convert."

The Archbishop visited a temple,

what he described as a sign of friendship and hope. He also planted an olive tree on a 'Christian Hill' at the temple premises.

Williams in his letter praised the achievements of India and said it was not only the world's largest democracy but also a model for "rich religious diversity, and respect between most of the major faiths of the world".

"Your Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has condemned what is happening as a 'national shame' and asserted that 'Christianity is part of our national heritage'. I too feel that if a small minority community (less than three percent of the population) continue as the target of attacks - attacks which often seem to be organized - then India will have lost its place as an international beacon," he said.

He urged the central government to render justice and protection to the minorities, particularly those affected by the violence in Orissa.

## Christian appointed as minister

Islamabad: Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has welcomed the appointment of Shahbaz Bhatti as Pakistan's Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs, and the decision to make him a member of the cabinet.

Bhatti, a prominent Christian human rights activist and founder and President of the All Pakistan Minorities Alliance, has been one of the most active campaigners for the repeal of the country's blasphemy laws and equal rights for all religious minorities. He was elected as a Member of the National Assembly earlier last year, and appointed to the Cabinet

as Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs in November. It is the first time the Minister for Minorities Affairs has been a cabinet-level post.

"We have known and worked with Shahbaz for many years, and we know him to be an outstanding individual, a person of immense courage and commitment," said CSW Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas. "We hope that the whole government of Pakistan will support Shahbaz in his new position, and that significant progress will be made towards the protection of equal rights for all the people of Pakistan."

## JANUARY 2009 Prayer Center Dedicated

Itanagar: An advent Christmas Celebration was conducted on 6th and 7th December, 2008 by Pastor Deepak Nabum of Senki Park Prayer Center. The two days of meetings were a great blessing for all who attended. Pastor M. K. Babu and Bro. Jacob Simon ministered from the Word of God. Mr. Nikh Kamin, MLA, and other state and local leaders also graced this occasion with their presence.

In addition to the Christmas Celebration, the newly built Senki Park Prayer Centre was dedicated for God's glory by Pastor M.K. Babu. Mr. Nabum Tuki, Minister for PWD and UD of Arunachal Pradesh, inaugurated the building. This prayer centre serves the destitute people of Arunachal who are not able stay at their homes due to physical and mental diseases.

## Healing crusades in Pasighat and Kerang



Itanagar (Arunachal Pradesh): A healing crusade was conducted from 21 to 23, November, 2008 at Doying Gumin Hall, Pasighat in East Siang. The crusade was organized by Siang Adi Baptist Association (SABA). Honourable local MLA Bro. Bosiram Siram graced the meeting as the Chief Guest.

Altogether around 2700 people from the other district and neighbouring areas like Ruskin, Bilat, Pangin, Boleng, Yingkiang, Mebo, Roing, etc. attended the Healing crusade ministry. Many sick, paralytic

got healed and 20 people took water baptism on the last day.

### First ever Healing Crusade held at Kerang from December 19 to 21.

Kerang is situated at a distance of 45 km from Along, the district headquarters of west Siang district. Many people from the nearby villages like Manigaon, Mechuka (near China border), Kaying, Bogne, etc. attended the healing crusade.

Many non believers who never

heard the good news of Jesus Christ witnessed the miracles and mighty presence of Holy Spirit. The people of this area had been living under the influence of traditional bondages, ritual belief and practises from time immemorial. Now, these people have realized their credulous belief and acknowledged the living testimony of God. Out of these 20 people accepted Jesus Christ as personal saviour and took water baptism

## Real Challenge Camp concludes

The 2008 Real Challenge Youth Camp held at Sonepat, Haryana was a great blessing. Citing record attendance, the camp ran from 28th to 31st December, 2008. Over 150 delegates from various parts of Delhi and Haryana attended.

Pastor Stanley John (U.S.), Pastor M. K. Babu (Delhi), and Bro. Jones Thomas (U.S.) were the main speakers. Lives were changed, healing took place, and many youth

committed thier lives to the Lord.



Br. Stanley John speaking at the camp



Senki Park Prayer Centre Dedication: (From left to right: Pastor Deepak Nabum, Mr. Nabum Tuki, (Minister for PWD&UD) and Pastor M. K. Babu)

## Christmas celebrated peacefully

(Cont'd. from p. 1)

and still continue to pray for peace in Orissa and all over India. About 150 pastors spent two days in prayer and fasting on December 19th and 20th at YMCA, Bhubaneswar.

It is imperative for the state government to continue to provide security and maintain law and order. It has the goodwill of civil society. It should not betray again the confidence of poor citizens who happen to be Christians. The citizens for peace must continue to hold public institutions, policies and programs of government accountable for preserving justice and maintaining order.

Orissa DGP along with some officers flew to Kandhamal to personally oversee security arrangements. About 5000 security personnel from Orissa police, CRPF and RAF were deployed all over Kandhamal. For this purpose chopper was used over Kandhamal and Gajapati district.

At Barakhama village (a sensitive zone in Kandhamal), the tribals who are in conflict with Christians for decades observed "Saheed Diwas" (Martyrs day) in memory of Khageswar Mullick, a tribal who died in a sectar-

ian clash on 24th night, 2007. This program was organized by Kui Samaj coordination committee. Initially the government was reluctant to allow the tribals to hold the memorial program. However; the local officials after ensuring the peace allowed the group to celebrate peacefully. Officials said that the situation indicates the signs of return of communal amity in violence ridden areas. None the less, there were few reports about the arrest of a man in Tikabali one who fell down the tree to block the road. In Mohana, the shops were closed.

In all the relief camps in Kandhamal food was provided by Caritas India through district administration and the victims living in Bhubaneswar celebrated Christmas in the evening and program was sponsored by Orissa Follow Up under the leadership of Rev. Pranab Ku. Mukherjee, the director of Care and Share Mission. In Doberisahi church, the Christians and non Christian tribals celebrated Christmas joyfully. Beside this, in all the thirty district of Orissa celebrated Christmas peacefully.

# Christmas Programmes Conducted by Various Churches

**Rohini:** Sacred Assemblies Fellowship Church conducted Christmas celebrations at the Community Hall in Rohini, Sector 5.

Pastor Akash Roy Chowdaury, anchor for CBN's "Ek Nayi Zindagi," delivered the message. He impressed on the importance of the presence of God in our daily lives, drawing from how the Ark of the Covenant was a blessing first in the house of Obed-Edom and then in the palace of King David.

Member of Parliament, Sajjan Kumar was the chief guest to the program. He gave witness to the nonviolent nature of Christians, even in the midst of persecution.

The Sacred Singers led Praise and Worship and sang Christmas Carols.

The Sacred Assemblies Church also had Christmas celebrations at the following satellite locations: Badli, Baktavurpur, Holambi, Mangolpuri, Samalkha, and Sonapat. **See Page 7 for details on these meetings.**

**Munirka:** Shalom Assembly of God church in Munirka organised a special Christmas outreach programme on December 25, 2008 at the Munirka

Community Hall.

Pastor Arvind Roy preached from the Word of God. The church choir sang carols and led the praise and worship.

During the Christmas season, the church conducted mini Christmas outreach programmes in many places. Carols were sung on streets, bye-lanes and market places accompanied by gospel messages and distribution of tracts, thereby presenting the good news to hundreds of people. "The response of the audience, compared to previous years, was tremendous this year," Pastor Umanand Gaire said.

**Kamal Park:** Hebron Assembly of God celebrated Christmas at the Community Hall in Sagarpur. Pastor M. K. Babu was the guest speaker.

Local MLA and Councillors graced the occasion with their presence. There was an unprecedented attendance in the celebration from the locality. The church Choir led by Edward led the

praise and worship session. "I am glad that people from every walk of life are here to celebrate Christmas. Jesus is for the whole world", Pastor Baburaj Thomson said.

Hebron Assembly of God also conducted Christmas meetings at several places which were well attended by the local people.



Praying for leaders at the Christmas meeting, Kamal Park



Left: Celebration in Rohini Right: Sajjan Kumar, MP speaking at the celebration

# Supreme Court and the Scheduled Castes

By P. Radhakrishnan

The observations by the Supreme Court on whether the Christians would admit that they practise caste system and the Dalits among them face social discrimination, and the query since when the Muslims have started following the caste system seem to convey its perception of social deprivations in terms of religious texts, and its confusion between text and context. To place the debate in perspective there are six issues to be discussed here.

One, as the emergence of Dalits among the Hindus is often attributed to Manu's misdeeds through his now infamous injunctions, and the SC Hindus are the lower segment of the Hindus, the Christian and Muslim demands raise the question whether there are corresponding segments among them. The answer is 'yes' for at least three reasons:

(a) There is a world of difference between religion as ideology and religion as praxis; and change of religion by itself does not change the social reality through which religion expresses itself. Stated differently, the social disabilities of several centuries do not vanish by a mere change of religion; more so, when the converts do not live in a society of their own religion, but live in the society of the dominant religion which they have left. It is precisely for this reason that there has been indigenisation of the religion of the converts. Consequently, the Christian and Muslim reality in India is not the same as in other countries, and it is meaningless

to apply to it textual ideals of equal brotherhood and so on. In this context it is important to recall the observations of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, in his 'Annihilation of Caste', that caste being primarily the breath of the Hindus, "the Hindus have fouled the air all over and everybody is infected, Sikh, Muslim, and Christian."

(b) Far from being proselytism, that is, making of individual converts who at conversion are abstracted from their social and cultural context, conversions in India have been migration from one religion to another; or conversion of individuals and whole groups without detaching them from their social context.

(c) The Catholic tradition of accommodation. When Robert de Nobili established the mission in Madurai in 1606, he set himself up as a Christian sanyasi, separating from most contacts with low-caste Christians and conforming to high caste patterns of behaviour in food, dress, etc. His initial converts were from the high castes, including Brahmins, and he allowed them to maintain most of their customs. They were not required or encouraged to break caste by asso-

ciating with the mainly Paravar Christian congregation or with foreign Christians. "By becoming a Christian", he wrote, "One does not renounce his caste, nobility, or usages. The idea that Christianity interfered with them has been impressed upon the people by the devil, and is the great obstacle to Christianity. " Thus, de Nobili's converts

The social disabilities of several centuries do not vanish by a mere change of religion; more so, when the converts do not live in a society of their own religion, but live in the society of the dominant religion which they have left. It is precisely for this reason that there has been indigenisation of the religion of the converts.

were allowed to retain their t u f t (kudumi), s a c r e d t h r e a d, customary b a t h i n g and food rules, and all the regulations governing

social intercourse. It was therefore possible for them to remain Christians within Hindu society.

In spite of papal decrees of 1734 and 1744 denouncing untouchability as alien to Christianity, and widespread criticism of the Jesuits who were identified with this policy of accommodation, it became generally accepted among Catholics that caste was a civil institution, which could be used for evangelistic purposes and maintained with only minor modifications within the Church. A major outcome of this has been the social reality of Dalit Christians, caste-based segregation of the converts

within the church, and caste discrimination among the clergy and laity.

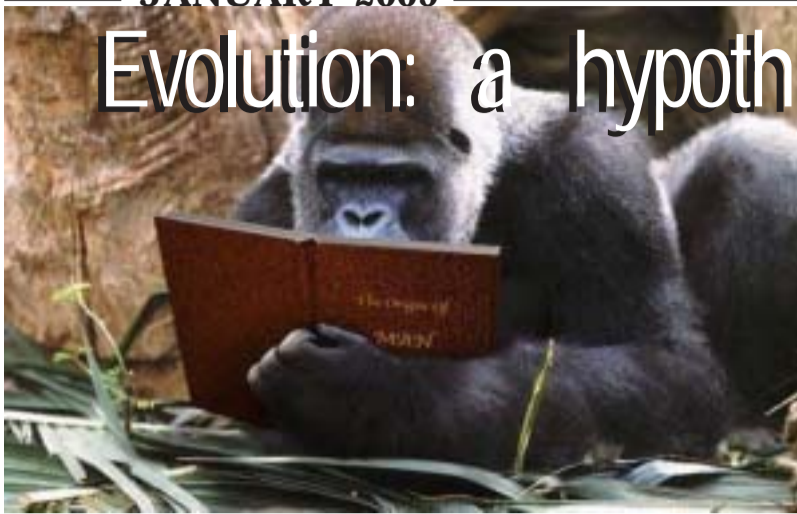
Two, the issues raised by the court are not new; they were debated by the colonial administration in the context of Hindu converts to Christianity. To draw upon a part of this debate, in the context of representations to the Madras government on securing to Indian Christian pupils of backward origin the concessions admissible to the backward classes under the Madras Educational Rule, in 1924 the Director of Public Instruction wrote:

Christianity is a religion while Panchamas (present SCs) form a social class with a definite place in the caste system, and it is not possible for any single individual to profess two different religions, Christianity and Hinduism at one and the same time and furthermore Christianity does not accept any caste. So that logically a person may be a Christian in which case he cannot accept any caste system, and is not a member of a backward class or he may be a Hindu Panchama or Adi Dravida in which case, he may be a member of a backward class. But he cannot be at one and the same time both, Christian and Hindu (Panchama), both non-backward and backward.

Responding to the DPI's argument the Education Secretary contended that conversion by itself does not automatically and materially alter the economic condition of the classes or remove their educational

(Cont'd.. on page 5)

# Evolution: a hypothesis based on no 'evidence'



By  
Jerry Bergman, Ph.D.

Chain concluded that he "would rather believe in fairies than in such wild speculation" as Darwinism. Chain's eldest son, Benjamin, added: "There was no doubt that he did not like the theory of evolution by natural selection—he disliked theories when they assumed the form of dogma. He also felt that evolution was not really a part of science, since it was, for the most part, not amenable to experimentation—and he was, and is, by no means alone in this view."

One of Antibiotics pioneer Ernst Boris Chain's (1906–1979) lifelong professional concerns was the validity of Darwin's theory of evolution, which he concluded was a "very feeble attempt" to explain the origin of species based on assumptions so flimsy, "mainly of morphological and anatomical nature," that "it can hardly be called a theory."

This mechanistic concept of the phenomena of life in its infinite varieties of manifestations which purports to ascribe the origin and development of all living species, animals, plants and micro-organisms, to the haphazard blind interplay of the forces of nature in the pursuance of one aim only, namely, that for the living systems to survive, is a typical product of the naive 19th century euphoric attitude to the potentialities of science which spread the belief that there were no secrets of nature which could not be solved by the scientific approach given only sufficient time.

A major reason why he rejected evolution was because he concluded that the postulate that biological development and survival of the fittest was "entirely a consequence of chance mutations" was a "hypothesis based on no evidence and irrefragable with the facts."

These classic evolutionary theories are a gross oversimplification of an immensely complex and intricate mass of facts, and it amazes me that they were swallowed so uncritically and readily, and for such a long time, by so many scientists without a murmur of protest.

Another reason he did not consider evolution a scientific theory was because it is obvious that "living systems do not survive if they are not fit to survive." Chain recognized that the problem was not the survival of the fittest but the arrival of the fittest, and that mutations do produce some variety: There is no doubt that such variants do arise in nature and that their emergence can and does make some limited contribution towards the evolution of species. The open question is the quantitative extent and significance of this contribution.

He added that evolution willfully neglects the principle of teleological purpose which stares the biologist in the face wherever he looks, whether he is studies different organs in one organism, or even of different subcellular compartments in relation to each other in a single cell, or whether he studies the interrelation and interactions of various species."

He was especially aware of how the research in his own field pointed to problems with evolution. In particular, Chain noted our modern knowledge of the genetic code and that its function in transmitting genetic information seems quite incompatible with classical Darwinian ideas of evolution.

Another concern about evolution that Chain expressed was evolution's moral implications. In a 1972 speech he presented in London, he stated: It is easy to draw analogies between the behavior of apes and man, and draw conclusions from the behavior of birds and fishes on human ethical behavior, but ...this fact does not allow the development of ethical guidelines for human behavior. All attempts to do this...suffer from the fail-

Scientific theories, in whatever field, are ephemeral and...may be even turned upside down by the discovery of one single new fact....This has happened time and again even in the exactest of sciences, physics and astronomy, and applies even more so to the biological field

ure to take into account the all important fact of man's capability to think and to be able to control his passions, and are therefore doomed to failure.

Chain did not accept some scientists' estimation that "religious belief" did not deserve serious consideration, countering that scientific theories themselves are ephemeral.

In a lecture which Crick, who, together with Watson and Wilkins, discovered the bihelical structure of DNA, gave a couple of years ago to students at University College...he said...that it was ridiculous to base serious decisions on religious belief.

"Living systems do not survive if they are not fit to survive." Chain recognized that the problem was not the survival of the fittest but the arrival of the fittest.

This seems to me a very sweeping and dogmatic conclusion...scientific theories, in whatever field, are ephemeral and, may be even turned upside down by the discovery of one single new fact. This has happened time and again even in the exactest of sciences, physics and astronomy, and applies even more so to biological field, where the concepts and theories are much less securely founded than in physics and are much more liable to be overthrown at a moment's notice.

One might dismiss Chain's view on Darwinism as simply a result of his faith, but Clark stresses that how "directly such views were linked to his religious beliefs is open to endless argument." Chain's eldest son wrote that his father's concerns about evolution were not based on religion, but rather on science. Chain, though, made it clear that he was very concerned about the effect of Darwinism on human behavior.

Any speculation and conclusions pertaining to human behaviour drawn on the basis of Darwinian evolutionary theories...must be treated with the greatest caution and reserve....a less discriminating section of the public may enjoy reading about comparisons between the behaviour of apes and man, but this approach—which, by the way, is neither new nor original—does not really lead us very far.... Apes, after all, unlike man, have not produced great prophets, philosophers, mathematicians, writers, poets, composers, painters and scientists. They are not inspired by the divine spark which manifests itself so evidently in the spiritual creation of man and which differentiates man from animals.

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## Supreme Court and the Scheduled Castes

(Cont'd. from page 4)  
backwardness.

Three, though the SC list first appeared in a specific colonial context as part of the Government of India Act 1935, under pressures from the Depressed Classes and the prolonged campaign of their leader Dr. Ambedkar, and the groups included in the list were only Hindu Untouchables, what was the purpose of creating the SC list as part of the Constitution? It was not for abolition of untouchability, that too among the Hindus alone; the provision for that was in the fundamental rights under Article 17, which refers to only untouchability and its practice in any form without reference to religion. If the SC list was for social amelioration of the groups

included in it, it is only legitimate for Christians and Muslims to demand to be similarly placed among them as the Hindu SCs are also enumerated and included in the list. Failure to do so will perpetrate the Hindu tilt of the state in implementing a major provision of a secular Constitution.

Four, though the Government asked the Mishra Commission on religious and linguistic minorities to examine the demand of Christians and Muslims, and the commission recommended delinking SC status from religion by an amendment to the Constitution (SCs) Order, 1950, and inclusion of Dalits among Christians and Muslims in the SC list, the refusal of the government to make the report public makes its bona fides suspect.

Five, though the National Commission for Scheduled Castes has endorsed the recommendation of the Mishra Commission, its rider that inclusion of Dalit Christians and Muslims in the SC list should not encroach upon the benefits of those accessing reservations is questionable. Once the Dalit Christians and Muslims are included in the SC list they should be part of the same list, eligible for the entire package of affirmative action including political representation as now available to the SCs.

Six, if Christians and Muslims did not recognise Dalits among them and demand the same treatment to them as to the Hindu Dalits till recently, it is the state that needs to be blamed. Had the state paid adequate

attention to the SCs immediately after the Constitution came into force and continued it systematically, say for ten years, affirmative action as envisaged in the Constitution would have come to an end long ago. By its political chicanery and pussyfooting, as R H Tawney rightly stated in his classic work Equality, the state has only prolonged its indulgence in "inducing a thousand donkeys... to sweat by the prospect of a carrot that could be eaten by one." That indulgence has proved to be an irreversible and costly perversion of the very idea of welfarism.

(The writer is Professor of Sociology, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai)

- Selected

## Every citizen's life is precious!

The year 2008 witnessed many major events in the history of the world. A switchover from prevailing systems, that people considered impossible to change, changed in front of their very eyes. While the oldest democracy witnessed an unprecedented move towards 'change', the largest democracy suffered many blows when the terrorists and fundamentalists bared their teeth. We have to be proud of, and highly appreciate our security forces for devotedly dealing with the worst ever terrorist attack in Mumbai. Furthermore, the bold steps and strong words hurled on our neighbour for their nonperformance to curb the terrorism are to be highly praised. Moreover, the common man, seeming to be insensitive to the occurrences, raised their voice against the attack on innocent lives. The media did an excellent job in reporting the events on time and expressed the spirit of concern on the security of the nation and its people.

Life has the same value irrespective of caste, creed and nationality. Our heroes who gave their lives while protecting our nation from the terrorists in Mumbai and the innocent lives who were killed in attacks on the Christian minority community in Orissa were both citizens of this State. While the terrorist attacks were looked at with concern and compassion by the international community, the attack on the minority community in Orissa gave

the whole nation a black eye. Though the hue and cry drew the attention of the international community towards the massacre in Orissa, it took a few months for the government to act on it. I wish the government could have taken bold steps to protect life and property of people there. When innocent people were burned alive, church buildings and houses were torn down and people fled for their lives to forests leaving everything behind in Orissa, no alarm was raised from the authorities. Instead, they were finding and giving the reasons for the attack.

The result of the elections held in various states illustrated the gut feeling of the majority. Especially, the 'mini India' - Delhi, demonstrated the true spirit of the nation. The overwhelming victory of the democracy over communalism evidently shows the disinclination of the majority towards destructive religion based politics.

Now, 2009 is here. Let us hope that the eyes of the 'caretakers of the religion' be opened to know the fact that man is not made for religion but religion is made for man. Religion is one of the important factors in his life. He will, however, throw it away if it becomes more destructive than constructive in his life. Man needs God for sure, not religion.

- Editor

## The private church (?)

By Dr. C. S. Blesson

Few years back I met one of my professors on the road. He remembered me very well and stopped his vehicle and cared to say a 'hi' to me, getting down from his vehicle. I gracefully acknowledged his loving gesture and asked him where he was going. He informed me that he was coming back from a church and described how wonderful the meeting there was and so on. I asked him which church was it. He thought for a while and told me "...you might not know much about this Church, it is a PRIVATE church!"

Later, I was in another city and was talking to a student who is a very lively character. As we were talking I asked her what her parents were doing. She told me that her father was a pastor in another city. She told me about their ministry and how their whole family is behind the effort of her father and so on. In response to a question from me she said "My father first founded a Church and then got my first sister married to a pastor and gave that church to her, and then he did same to my second sister also, now he recently started third church". I laughingly said... "I understand now it's your turn!"

This time, I was in yet another city and was talking to a pastor who was

worried very much about the future of his children just like any other father. He sent his son and daughter-in-law to Bible College and was eagerly waiting for their return. I said "Life is tough isn't it; they will have to come back and start their ministry". "Where are they planning to start their ministry?" I asked. Hey brother... he said "I have a plan for them! They will start an English service in my church here...lots of software guys are around the city and they are from different states...we will get a lot of offering!" I should confess that my heart skipped a beat, but I said a bye quietly and came back.

I was final year bachelor's student then. One of my friends I and were actively involved in all sorts of Christian ministry. We were also working closely with several organizations that were doing ministry among the youth. One day after a program the 'big boss' of an organi-

zation came to meet the two of us (My friend is an excellent orator, singer and musician, I was doing all the talking, joking and was the MC). He told me... "Boy, you are smart, you speak in several languages nicely, and you have a presentable look on the stage... Why don't you join our organization? We

Where are they planning to start their ministry?" I asked. He said "I have a plan for them! They will start an English service in my church here...lots of software guys are around the city and they are from different states...we will get a lot of offering!"

will MAKE YOU BIG PEOPLE IN THE CHRISTIAN STAGE".

I was attending a Sunday service in a church and they had a guest speaker whom I shall leave unnamed. He is supposed to be a 'big chap' in his field (We talk like that only in scientific circles about scientists). He had radio and TV programs and so on. At the time of the message the host pastor handed over the pulpit to the speaker... everyone clapped and welcomed him. The guest speaker would not get up from his seat! Suddenly another guy came rushing towards the pulpit, sweating and nervous and took the stage. He apparently is the one who is supposed to intro-

duce the 'big chap'! And so he started and reciting the CV! I was sitting in a corner and scratching my head and thinking, if taken by what is being said his CV is better than the Son of God himself. It went on for around twenty minutes and then message by the 'big chap' was over in fifteen minutes just like his radio program! Amen!

If you are reading this, you might be wondering what in the earth am I trying to tell? Five seemingly unrelated incidences! I am writing this with a heavy heart because I know exactly how they are related and where it is pointing to. It is really painful. The ministry that God had entrusted us to carry on is not a silly joke and these people have made it to look like one. Someone had to pour out His Blood to put the foundations of this. Many had to pay with their lives to hold the torch high and before passing it on to us. These small (?) incidents disturbed me and sometimes gave me sleepless nights!

Think about the depth of the meaning of 'Private' church. These vocabularies have never been associated with the Church. When was Church privatized? Even before anyone would realize this, many congrega-

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# Why I don't believe in Zionism

Philip P. Eapen

There are churches in India and abroad that consider it their mission to identify Jews in their land and to help them go back to Palestine. However, I consider this exercise a waste of precious time and resources; it is a vain exercise that falls outside the pale of Christian mission. Here is why I believe so.

## 1. "The Promised Land" is not about a piece of land

Abraham understood God's promise of a "land" the way God wanted him to. Therefore, he looked heavenward to reach a heavenly city. "By faith Abraham ... lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob ... for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." (Heb. 11:8-10) We read in the Pentateuch that Moses and Joshua led Israel to an earthly "promised land." However, did Israel find real rest in this "promised land?" No. That is why David talks about another rest in Psalm 96. "For if Joshua had given them rest, He (David) would not have spoken of another day after that." (Hebrews 4:8). The real "promised land" is what Christ offers us. Moreover, the promise for that "promised land" is still valid and we all are waiting for it (Heb. 4:1).

The apostle Paul takes God's promise to Abraham to another level. He says that God promised the entire earth to Abraham (Rom 4:13). We do not see such a promise anywhere in the Old Testament. A similar promise is given to the Messiah in Psalm 2. This of course is a prophetic reference to the Kingdom of God in Christ. Therefore, God's promise to give the entire world to Abraham should be fulfilled in Jesus Christ's kingdom and mission (Cf. Matt 28:18-20).

## 2. Jesus and the early church did not

### support Zionism

The Jews of first century were going through a situation very similar to that in present Palestine. Yet, Jesus did not support the zealots or their political cause. Paul too did not do it. Neither did the other apostles. They preached the gospel to the Jews because that was what they needed the most. In addition, the early church was persecuted for this reason. Similarly, what the Jews today need is not a passport to an earthly Palestine. They need the gospel, which alone will give them the passport to the real "promised land."

Jesus did not fight the Romans; but he did more to liberate Israelites than what any of their kings did. By taking upon himself the curse of the Law, Jesus opened a new way for Israel (and for all) to enter the real "Promised Land." The apostles were a bit slow to understand this (One of them asked the risen Jesus, "Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" Acts 1:6). Jesus then charged them to wait in Jerusalem to receive the Holy Spirit and to be His witnesses to all people in all lands—the focus had shifted from a small strip of land to the entire world!

WHY SHOULD THE CHURCH TODAY DO FOR ISRAEL WHAT JESUS OR PAUL DID NOT DO? Are we more zealous for the Jewish cause than Paul was? Paul's heart-cry was: "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation." (Romans 10:1) I wish the American and other "Zionist" Christians will use their energy and funds to evangelize the Jews instead of providing them a journey to Palestine (and to hell).

## 3. The Church is the New Israel

The Bible makes it amply clear that the New Testament Church of Jesus

Christ is the New Israel (Galatians 6:16). This church has people from the Jewish background and from the Gentile background. Yet, there is no special privilege for any particular nation. God has broken all walls of division and has created a new "body" (Ephesians 2: 14ff). When James wrote to the "twelve tribes" (James 1:1), he was not addressing the Jews. How could he do that when ten tribes of earthly Israel were lost among the nations? He was addressing God's new Israel, the church. All true Christians are descendants of Abraham (Rom 4:16) because he was made righteous by faith even while he was still uncircumcised (Rom 4:10). "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise" (Gal 3:29). Gen 12:3 now applies to the church. The earthly Jerusalem is not as important as heavenly Jerusalem—the city of the Church. We, the church, are the new Israel. Notice what Peter says to all Christians.

"But you are a CHOSEN RACE,  
a royal PRIESTHOOD,  
a HOLY NATION,  
a PEOPLE for God's OWN  
POSSESSION,  
so that you may proclaim  
the excellencies of Him who has  
called you  
out of darkness into His marvelous  
light;  
for you once were NOT A PEOPLE,  
but now you are THE PEOPLE OF  
GOD;  
you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY,  
but now you have RECEIVED  
MERCY"  
(1 Peter 2:9-10).

## God does not recognise the unbelieving Jews as the real "Israel."

Neither did he ever do that in the past. See Romans 9: 6b-7: "For they are not

all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." So, as Paul says, "it is not as though the word of God has failed" (Romans 9:6a). It was not God who rejected Israel; it was Israel (or most of them) that rejected God and his Messiah. **Therefore, the question "Will God ever reject the Church the way he rejected Israel?" does not arise.**

## 4. I cannot see God's hand in today's Zionism

The Israelites were brought back from Babylon according to God's will. God had promised them through Jeremiah that he would bring them back after 70 years. They did not use military might but they trusted in God (Ezra 8:21, 22) When they returned, they were willing to share their land with Gentiles and they tried to co-exist with them. Compare that with what has happened in the late 19th century and 20th century. Lapiere's "O Jerusalem" and Leon Uris' well-researched novel "Exodus" describe how the Jewish people returned to Palestine. This return was NOT led by the religious Jews who trusted in God's promises. The religious Jews of 20th century always supported peaceful means. However, the fanatic groups supported violence (There are several Zionist groups with different philosophies). Thousands of Arabs and Palestinians were butchered mercilessly. This includes Palestinian Christians; yet we have no pity for them! Unlike in the times of Ezra/Nehemiah, today's extremist Jews are horrible terrorists and they cannot tolerate other people in their land.

## 1. God does not support extreme nationalism

We may feel proud to be Indians. The Americans may feel proud to be Americans. Similarly, the Jews too may have feelings of nationalism. However, God does not support nationalism! God always wanted to teach the Jews that he loved all people equally. To the Jews who thought that they were God's favoured people, God spoke through Amos: "Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me, O sons of Israel?" declares the LORD. "Have I not brought up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?" (9:7) The Jews boast about how God brought them out of Egypt by the might hand of God. What do we do with this new piece of information? Just as God brought Israel out of Egypt, he had brought Philistines out of Caphtor! So, is God a respecter of persons or nations? The RSS, a Hindu fundamentalist group, loves the Jews because they both are of the same kind - violent nationalists who are after building their temples! When will we realise that God does not love one nation more than another? We will quote verses from the OT to say that God loves Israel as God's special people. However, we forget that God chose

(Con't on p. 10)

## Sonal Shah distances herself from VHP

Washington (USA): After weeks of questions, Obama transition team member and former Google executive Sonal Shah renounced her former connection to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) accused of fomenting violence against Muslims and Christians in India.

Shah said that if she could have anticipated the role of the VHP in the 2002 outbreak of communal violence in Gujarat, she never would have associated with the group's American branch a year earlier:

In 2002, Gujarat suffered one of the most profound tragedies in its long history, when extremist political leaders, including some associated with the VHP, incited riots that resulted in the deaths of thousands. Had I been able to foresee the role of the VHP in India in these heinous events, or anticipate that the VHP of America could possibly stand by silently in the face of its Indian counterpart's complicity in the events of Gujarat in 2002 — thereby undermining the American group's cultural and humanitarian



efforts with which I was involved — I would not have associated with the VHP of America.

The controversy escalated this week

when Shah asked supporters for their help in stopping the spread of allegations that she had been a member of the VHP.

In an e-mail Shah asked her supporters for help combating the allegations and expressed fear that the Obama transition team would ask her to resign as a result of the story.

The controversy has been gathering steam in the Indian press and South Asian blogosphere for weeks, but it went mainstream when former GOP Senator Rick Santorum published an op-ed in the Philadelphia Inquirer questioning the appointment

of Shah to the transition team — prompting a Lost In Transition.

Her appointment to the administration has drawn strong reactions from the South Asian community. While many prominent Indian-Americans have stood behind Shah, others have raised doubts about her past.

Mr Ubaid and Vijay Prashad, a South Asian history professor at Trinity College (Conn.) who wrote the original article questioning Shah's ties to the VHP, pointed to a recent interview in which a VHP-America leader indicated that Shah was more than tangentially connected to the group. Prashad, interviewed before Shah's latest statement, called her a "leading figure" of the organization from 1998 to the early 2000s and said her claims of having participated only in the organization's earthquake relief efforts were "disingenuous."

"She was well aware of the politics. And she had been in a leadership role. It was not just happenstance."



## Welcome 2009!

The whole world celebrates the birth of a new year. There are parties all around and people are happy and try to start everything fresh all over again with a renewed sense of optimism. There are smiles and jubilation everywhere. It is a time for the personal reflection for many, making a mental journey through the ups and downs of the past year and hope for a brighter year ahead. Serious efforts are made by many to straighten up their tangled and mangled past, hoping against hope that it will be a successful effort this time. Several resolutions are taken, good ones like spending more time on studies, working hard to earn good grades, to play fair in all games, not to bunk classes, to be nicer to friends/brothers and sisters and so on.

While it is good to think about the past and take new resolutions, it is very important that we plan our future. As young people this is an essential discipline. Have you thought about that old saying 'If you fail to plan, you plan to

not plan properly? How much of time we wasted because of improper planning? Because, we did not plan properly we could not achieve the best we are capable of! How many times we missed opportunities by a whisker because we were unprepared or under-prepared? Well... friends in this New Year

Moses prays, "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." He was asking for a divine wisdom from God so that he may know his days and make the most of each day by planning it.

we will make every effort so that we will not repeat our past mistakes!

I got a mail titled 'Three things' which asks us to list three things from each category for the past and the coming year. This exercise will help in planning the New Year and will help us to set goals. Try this exercise...

1. Three things you need to thank God for...

"If you fail to plan, you plan to fail"...how true! How many times we failed in the last year simply because we did not plan properly?

By Dr. Blesson C.S.



2. Three happy moments...
3. Three friends you need to thank...
4. Three things you were able to get done...
5. Three things you wanted to do but couldn't...
6. Three things you did for the family...
7. Three new things that you tried this year...
8. Three things you are proud of...
9. Three regrets you have...
10. Three life lessons you learnt...
11. Three fears for the New Year...
12. Three challenges that await you...

13. Three things you want to get done...

14. Three new things you want to try...

15. Three things you must avoid...

Look at Psalm 90! I think by this time Moses was old and was well advanced in his age. He has packed it with his experience. I have read it several times before but this time, I viewed it in the point of view of 'time'. See how he contrasts it with time (Man's perspective) and eternity (God's Perspective). Just look at the time words in this psalm and how many times it is being repeated...morning, evening, day, days, years, generations and phrases like 'just gone by',

'quickly pass' and so on. I think that the climacteric statement is in verse 12. (Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. NIV). He was asking for a divine wisdom from God so that he may know his days and make the most of each day by planning it.

So friends, let's spend some time to thank, pray and plan for this year. May be you have to face your biggest challenge



this year...plan well in advance and start getting prepared for that. Write down the tasks you would like to do this year, split them into smaller workable units and work towards it day by day. What seemed like a mountain last year will be very easy if you plan properly with God's help.

Pray, Plan and then Proceed! Happy New Year!

(About the author: Dr. Blesson C. S. M.Sc., M.Phil., Ph.D. is working as Research Scientist in the Division for Reproductive Endocrinology, Department of Woman and Child Health, Karolinska University Hospital in Sweden.)  
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## The private church (?)

(Cont'd. from page 6)

tions are being run like a family owned private business. I think that in future we might have churches named like this "Say...Hallelujah Church public Limited", CEO Rev. Dr. XYZ. (There are several so called 'Christian universities' now-a-days with a computer, printer and lots of colorful gowns ready to give honorary doctorates to anyone who would pay a fee. The doctorates are door delivered... ops sorry... church delivered. Needless to say any one who bought application form from a theological college is calling himself 'Reverend' now-a-days).

Church bulletin may read something like this "In order to raise enough funds now we are selling stocks in the BSE Mumbai. We also have special stock options for adults, families, oldies, youth and kids. If you are member, you are eligible to get a new offer...buy one and get one free. Our stocks are running well and are making more profits; even if it

flops here, you will get them back as heavenly treasures with compound interest when you reach there. Now, we are considering foreign direct investment (FDI) to our church through our mission secretary. We desperately need FDI in our infrastructure sector. We need to build schools, university, hospital, hotel, orphanages, old age homes, gym, studio, convention centre, anointing oil company and more importantly bicycles for our missionaries and knitting needles for their wives". Don't be surprised if you find something like this soon.

So, now churches are family properties and will be given to daughters as a gift (dowry...in Indian terms). They can be split between services as gifts for sons who are anointed as future CEOs. They sincerely know that it will not run very well because after all it is their kids you see... To make it run you need some charismatic young individuals as assistants...so advertise for people. You may read in the Classified as follows "Wanted

charming young people to work as ministers in a million dollar institution. You should have sharp features, should be charismatic, know how to act, sing, and play music, shout and dance. You should be fashionable, trendy and adorable. If you have a good pedigree, it is an added advantage. Experience in facing a camera and being photogenic is a plus. Salary is not a problem at all, stock options available. Walk in for an interview and audition".

It appears to me that we have decorated and honored the periphery and forgot our core values. Churches need smart and highly talented people to run the 'show' now-a-days. 'Big Guys' in the field can make anybody BIG! We don't seem to want God anymore but there are several 'godfathers' waiting around to make people BIG. No one seems to care about anyone who is holy, prayerful, humble, righteous or meek. These wolves under the sheep's skin build an empire brick by brick for their own family using all the latest managerial techniques. They are busy building a per-

sonality cult around themselves and making themselves the centre in all that is done making the most of every opportunity.

What a comedy! Or is it... a tragedy! I hope that by now all the five incidents above make sense. The motto of the poor believers in these 'private churches' appears to be like this... we jump and dance, rumble and rattle and call it a REVIVAL. Every Sunday we sing and shout, read and listen and put up a show and call it a SERVICE. On every occasion we rock and roll, clap and scream and call it WORSHIP! I think we have forgotten what are we doing, why we are doing and where we are going! Believers are blinded by these bold barons and are made to bend and break. Believers wake up! Is this what God wanted you to do in Church?

After all, Church has been privatized, with powerful personalities called pastors passing the baton to their progeny using pure propaganda to persuade people and preying on them in the name of praying for them.

Oh Come on, Jesus is weeping!



# Sacred Assemblies Fellowship Christmas Meetings



*The Sacred Assemblies Fellowship Church conducted Christmas Celebrations at various locations throughout Delhi and Haryana from 18th to 25th December.*

*Praise and Worship at all the following meetings were led by Sacred Singers: The team constituted by Evg. Anil Kumar, Evg. Samuel Hembrom, Evg. Surinder, Evg. Anil Soni, Bro. Dilan Marandi, and Bro. Vikas*



## SAF Rohini

Sacred Assemblies Fellowship Church Rohini conducted Christmas celebrations at the Community Hall in Rohini, Sector 5. Pastor Akash Roy Chowdaury, anchor for CBN's "Ek Nayi Zindagi," delivered the message. He impressed on the importance of the presence of God in our daily lives, drawing from how the Ark of the Covenant was a blessing first in the house of Obed-Edom and then in the palace of King David. Member of Parliament, Sajjan Kumar was the chief guest to the program. He gave witness to the nonviolent nature of Christians, even in the midst of persecution.



## SAF Samalkha

Pastor Satyam organised the Christmas celebrations at the Samalkha Church. Pastor M.K. Pachan spoke from the Word of God.

## SAF Sonapat

Pastor Sonu Masih conducted the Christmas celebrations at the Sonapat Prarthana Bhawan. Pastor J.S. Martin delivered the message of Christmas.

## SAF Sahibganj

SAF Sahibganj, Jharkhand arranged a Christmas celebration at Sahibganj. Team leader Pastor Samuel Soren delivered the Christmas message and Sacred singers led the praise and worship. It was a new kind of Christmas celebration for the people.



## SAF Baktavurpur

Christmas celebration was held at Chotu Ram School in Baktavurpur. Pastor Rothas organised the meeting. Bro. Jones Thomas delivered the message and Bro. Pankaj K. G. translated into Hindi.

## SAF Katihar

SAF Katihar, Bihar organised a Christmas celebration in Katihar which was well attended by the local people. Pastor Samuel Murmu delivered the Christmas message.

## SAF MCD Colony, Badli

Pastor Stanly John organized the Badli Christmas celebration at MCD Colony, Samaepur Badli. Pastor K. V. Samuel delivered the Christmas message. The message was well received by the people in the MCD Colony of Badli. The Sunday School students showed their talents through skits and carol singing.



## Deaddiction Centre

SAF Rohini arranged a Christmas celebration at the Nasha Mukti Kendra (Drug Deaddiction Centre) in Kirari village. These destitute people were refreshed and enlightened by the praise and worship and the Christmas message.



## CRPF Camp Wazirabad

Pastor Rajmani Hanok conducted a Christmas celebration at the CRPF camp in Wazirabad. Pastor M. K. Babu spoke from the Word of God. Hundreds of jawans keenly listened to the praise and worship and the Christmas message.

## SAF Mangolpuri

Bro. Jasbir and family arranged the Christmas program at a local community park. Pastor M. K. shared the gospel which was readily accepted by the listeners.



## Christian killed in Orissa

Bhuvaneshwar: On the evening of December 16, approximately 20 Hindu fanatics stopped Yuvraj Dugal (40), a respected Christian leader, and his 20-year-old son as they were heading home on motorbike from the village of Tikabali, Kandhamal district.

The Hindus accused Dugal of being involved in the murder of Hindu leader Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati, and began beating him. His son was able to escape the attackers and seek help from the police. Dugal, however, disappeared and his

body was found on December 18.

The situation remains tense for Christians in Orissa even though Hindu militant groups have called off a protest that was planned for Christmas Day. The district has employed additional security measures, but many Christians remain apprehensive about possible outbreaks of violence in the coming days. District authorities in Kandhamal have asked churches not to hold midnight services. Many churches have cancelled Christmas ceremonies.

## Christians arrested on false charges

Bhuvaneshwar (Orissa): The police on November 22 arrested three believers on false charges of attempting to rape and murder in Guntaput, Koraput district.

The Rev. Abhiram, Co-ordinator of Good Shepherd Community Churches (GSCC) reported that an advocate and an active RSS worker identified only as Nanda lodged a police complaint against three believers identified as Rajat Kuldip, Saliman Kondhpan, Gokul Kondhpan of “at-

tempting to rape and murder” a tribal woman identified as Radha Pangi when she was attending nature call in the field.

The Christians were arrested under Section 147,149,254,307 and 506 of the Indian Penal Code and were released on bail on November 28.

The said victim, Radha Pangi has no clue about the incident.

It was also reported the police are now searching another three believers from the GSSC for enquiry.

## Christian organisation attacked

Suspected Hindu extremists on November 25 attacked a Christian office and set ablaze their vehicle in Parkakhemundi, Gajapath, Orissa.

According to reports, the assailants stormed the India Gospel Outreach and Social Action (IGOSA) office and assaulted the director Rev. Niranjana Bardha before completely burning down the organization's vehicle. No other serious damage was done to the office.

The Christian filed a complaint in Parlakhemundi police station. Po-

lice investigation is going on but no arrests has been made at press time.

The IGOSA office is set up at an anti-Christian area and they face tremendous pressure and opposition from the Hindutva elements. The fanatics had also earlier attempted to burn down the jeep. Sporadic violence still occur in the state.

Orissa is ruled by a coalition of a local party, the Biju Janata Dal, and the Hindunationist Bharatiya Janata Party, which has a close ties with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

## Pastor attacked

Bangalore (Karnataka): Hindu Extremists belonging to the Hindu Rakshane Vedike (A movement to save Hinduism) on December 8 attacked a pastor, accusing him of ‘forceful conversion’ in Ibrahim Pura, Bellary.

According to reports, at about 5 p.m., a mob of about 25 extremists stopped Pastor N. Satyam from Assembly of God Church and one believer on their way back home from a prayer meeting. The extremists dragged the Christians out from an auto-rickshaw, verbally abused them and falsely accused the pastor of

forceful conversion.

The police arrived at the scene and took the Christians to the police station, where they were detained for about 6 hours.

Later in the evening, about 100 Christians turned up at the police station and staged a protest against the violence shown upon the Christians. The dalits also supported the Christians as atrocities against the Christians took place on a regular basis in the area.

No police complaint was lodged and the matter was settled peacefully between the two parties.

## Pastors beaten up

Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh): Hindu extremists attacked two pastors in Palasapara village on December 5 in Meghasah Tehsil.

According to the reports, at about 3 p.m. a mob of about 20 extremists belonging to the RSS attacked two pastors identified as Pangala Bhai and Limba Bhai on their way back home after conducting a prayer meeting organized by the Indian Evan-

gelical Team.

The extremists beat up the pastors, verbally abused them and accused them of ‘forceful’ conversion. They also took the Christians’ bike, cell phone and money. The injured pastors were taken to a private hospital by the village sarpanth.

No parties lodged a police complaint. The pastors decided to forgive the culprits.

## Zionism ...

(contd. from page 7)

Abraham and his descendants in order that He might bless ALL nations through Abraham. As global Christians, we must remain impartial. Only then can we preach the gospel to all nations. If I support Zionism, I will also have to support the nationalism of Tibetans who are scattered away from their homeland. I will also have to support the nationalistic ambitions of the Nagas; the Mizos; the Manipuris; the Kashmiris; the Lankan Tamils; the East Timorese... the list goes on. So many language groups eagerly desire for a state of their own!

Some Christian fundamentalists would want us to believe that the formation of the state of Israel in 1948 was an act of God similar to the Biblical Exodus and the conquest of Palestine. In the light of Amos 9:7, God might say today to these Christians/Jews that He also helped the formation of several states in the twentieth century. If the Jews claim that the state of Israel was specially formed by God’s miraculous work, the Pakistanis too would make similar claims about their state “Pakistan” (meaning=“holy land”)!

### 2. A new Temple in Jerusalem will symbolise Jewish rejection of the Gospel

I fail to understand why Christians are rejoicing at the prospect of a new Jewish temple in Jerusalem. When the New Testament talks of a heavenly Jerusalem and the heavenly temple (Hebrews 9: 23), why are we after a new Jewish temple? The building of a Jewish temple stands against the claims of the gospel. Jesus is the new Temple; his sacrifice is the ultimate sacrifice. If Jews want to build a temple to offer sacrifices, it is because of their unbelief in the work of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the day when a temple is built in Jerusalem should be a sad day for all Christians.

### 3. Zionism has closed the door for the gospel in Muslim lands

Christian support for Zionism has angered Muslims. This should partly explain why we are not able to make inroads into the Muslim community, especially those in the closed West Asian countries. Still, many Christians blindly support Zionism.

How will we ever share the gospel to the suffering Palestinians and other Muslims if we take sides with the Jews? As a people who have received the Great Commission to disciple ALL nations, how can we afford to prefer one nation to the others? The Christians of America and other lands have done a great disservice to the gospel by favouring the Jews over the Palestinians. (Another blunder that Americans and others have done is to use the word “Crusade” for gospel campaigns. Any one who has a little knowledge of history will understand why we should not use that word. Muslims have not forgotten what Roman Catholics did to them in the name of “Crusades.”)

### 4. An exclusive Jewish nation will close the doors for evangelism in Palestine

Christians who pump millions of dollars into bringing Jews to Palestine fail to realise that they are working against the gospel. Once Jews in America or India or Russia go to Palestine, they get out of the reach of the gospel. You may at least attempt to share the gospel with a Jew in India or USA. However, how many Indians or Americans can reach the Jews with the gospel after they have reached the “Jewish homeland?” **God is doing exactly the opposite of what these Christians are doing!** God is bringing people out of the countries that are closed to the gospel. He brought millions of Chinese people out of China; He brought Arabs out of Saudi Arabia; the Tibetans out of Tibet; and the Nepalese out of Nepal—so that the church can preach the gospel to these people who were otherwise out-of-reach. What are the Zionist Christians doing? They are sending Jews back to Palestine, where they will remain far away from the reach of the gospel! Some of these people have to convert to Judaism before they are given permits to

migrate to Israel. Israel confirmed that the Mizo people are descendants of Manasseh. Some of them, even Christians, converted to Judaism and went to Israel! (See Gal. 5:2-4). I do not undermine the efforts of Christians who share the gospel with immigrant Jews in Israel. I feel however that it is so much easier to reach Jews who are scattered around the world than to reach Jews who have migrated to Israel.

### 5. What the Jews need today is salvation through Jesus Christ

If God should save Israel again, it will NOT be because of their ancestry. ONLY those Jews who believe in JESUS will be remembered by God. I shall explain.

When Paul says that God has not rejected Israel (Romans 11:1) he mentions about a “remnant” of Israel that will be saved by grace (Romans 11:5). Why is there a mention about “a remnant”? This is because God does not count every natural descendant of Abraham as a real Israelite. According to Paul, “For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel” (Rom 9:6) If that is so, the real Israel is a subset of the natural Israel. That real Israel is called the remnant. Only the remnant will be saved. Who is the remnant?

Paul goes on to give an illustration of the native olive tree and the wild olive branches that were grafted in. Some of the native olive’s branches (Jews) were broken off because of their unbelief and in their place, some branches of a wild olive tree (Gentiles) were grafted in. The God who grafted in the branches of a wild olive tree can restore the “broken” branches. However, on what grounds will God graft them back in? Will it be just because they are Abraham’s children? No! *They were broken off because of unbelief. And as long as they continue in unbelief, they will remain*

## More than 500 Christians killed in Nigeria

Abuja: More than 500 Christians including six pastors were killed and thousands displaced during the violence that broke out on November 28-29 following local elections here. Around 40 churches have been razed to the ground.

Several Bible League national staff members were trapped in a ministry center in Jos, amid several days of violent riots and protests. The staff members went to God in prayer during the violence, according to Bible League's Jeff Hale.

Religious leaders from both the Muslim and Christian communities recently met in hopes of bringing peace to the Jos area. What began as outrage regarding suspected vote fraud in local elections quickly hit the religious fault line that quakes from time to time in Jos between Nigeria's Islamic north and Christian south.

Police and troops reportedly killed about 400 rampaging Muslims in an effort to quell the unrest. Islamists shot, slashed or stabbed to death most of more than 100 Christians.

More than 25,000 persons have been displaced in the two days of violence, according to the National Emergency Management Agency. Authorities' efforts to halt the rampage, including a Muslim assault on a police barracks, accounted for the estimated 400 corpses reportedly deposited in a key mosque.

Christian Aid Mission received word from native missionaries inside of Jos, who said media reports contain skewed information, received directly from the Nigerian government. This information includes false claims that Christians attacked and killed Muslims, and vastly underestimates the damage done to Christian

lives and property.

Rev. Ignatius Kaigama, Roman Catholic archbishop of the Jos Archdiocese and Plateau state chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria, said that fanatical Muslims ignited the violence by attacking Christians.

"The attacks were carefully planned and executed," he said. "The questions that bog our minds are: Why were churches and clergy attacked and killed? Why were politicians and political party offices not attacked, if it was a political conflict?"

Plateau Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice Edward Pwajok said in a December 9, 2008 statement that 500 people had been arrested in connection with the violence, and that they will appear for trial at the High Court of Justice and Magistrates Courts.

## Pastor and family martyred

Caracas (Venezuela): On December 12, Pastor Jean Carlos Salazar (30), his wife, Ingrid Higuera (33), and their young daughter were brutally murdered in the town of El Trigrilo, Anzoategui state by suspected satanic cult members.

At 3:30 a.m., neighbours of the Salazars noticed that the family's home was in flames and phoned the fire department. When the fire officials arrived, they found the decapitated bodies of the Christians. The assailants reportedly also painted satanic slogans on the walls.

Pastor Salazar was a preacher at the World Centre of Peace church and was well-known in the area.

## Missionary couple arrested

Banjul (Gambia): British missionaries David (60) and Fiona Fulton (60) have been arrested on charges of sedition here. The couple has worked in the country for 12 years.

On Thursday, December 4, they were paraded on state television and subsequently charged with writing letters that criticized the country and for publishing and distributing materials "with the intent to bring into hatred or contempt, to excite disaffection against the president or the government of Gambia."

The Fultons pleaded not guilty

to the charges, and the case was adjourned. Sources close to the Fultons maintain that the couple desires only to spread the good news and that David's work as chaplain to the Gambian Army and Fiona's care of the terminally ill is not political.

At last report, the Fultons were unable to secure bail and remained in detention. David is being held at the high-security Mile Two prison while Fiona and their 2-year-old adopted daughter are in custody at a police station in Gambia's capital, Banjul.

## Christian shot

Nairobi (Kenya): Salat Sekondo Mberwa, a Somali Christian who fled to a refugee camp in Dadaab here in 2005 after Muslims murdered a Christian relative, was shot by Muslims on November 26.

At approximately 6:00 p.m., the Muslims broke into Mberwa's residence in the camp and shot him in the shoulder as he tried to escape out a window. The assailants left him for dead. He was later discovered by his family and is recovering in Dadaab.

Mberwa faced a similar attack on October 13 when five Muslim youths threatened him and forcibly entered his residence. When Mberwa and his son fought off the assailants, Mberwa was arrested and detained in the relief camp's police cell.

## Underground Christians arrested

Beijing (China): House church Christians continue to be targeted and arrested throughout China.

More than 50 house church Christians were gathered for fellowship in Xiji town, Zaozhuang city, Shandong province on December 2 when Public Security Bureau officials surrounded them and arrested approximately 20 believers. The officials claimed that they would release the prisoners for 2500 Yuan each.

On December 3, more than 50 house church Christians were arrested by the local police in Tai Kang county, Henan province. At the time of the report, none of the believers had been released.

## Church destroyed, believers beaten

Beijing (China): On the morning of December 17, the officially registered Chengnan Christian Church of Tinghu District in Jiangsu province was attacked by a mob led by government officials.

Over 50 Christians were gathered for worship when police officers barged in and dragged the believers outside where more than a 1000 people were gathered, including government officials and security guards. The crowd then demolished the church's

office, training centre and cafeteria and confiscated church property.

Ten believers were beaten when they tried to stop the destruction. The church has faced harassment from government officials and had obtained a court order on the evening of December 16 to protect their building from such an attack. It is suspected that the destruction was the result of officials and powerful businessmen working in collusion to obtain the coveted church property by force.

## Riots erupt after alleged blasphemy

Jakarta (Indonesia): Riots broke out in Masohi, Central Maluku province, here on December 9, 2008 after Welhelmina Holle, a Christian elementary school teacher, allegedly made comments that insulted Islam while tutoring a Muslim student.

News of the incident spread throughout the Muslim community, sparking the Indonesian Ulema Council to file a complaint against Holle to the police. At around 8:30 a.m., approximately 500 Muslims protested outside the Central Maluku Education Agency, accusing Holle of blasphemy and calling for his dismissal. The mob then gathered out-

side the Central Maluku Police headquarters and demanded to meet with the police chief, but when informed that he was not on the premises, the Muslims dispersed.

However, confrontations between some of the Muslims and police officials incited violence. Police and soldiers were eventually able to intervene but two churches, a health clinic, several vehicles and approximately 65 homes were burned. At the time of the report, Holle remained in detention. He is reportedly being charged with blasphemy — a charge that carries a maximum sentence of 15 years imprisonment.

*broken off!* Romans 11:23 makes it very clear: "And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again." **THE REMNANT COMPRISES OF THOSE JEWS WHO WILL BELIEVE IN JESUS THE MESSIAH.**

Thus, the remnant of Israel — those Jews who believe in Jesus the Messiah — will become a part of the church, which is the new Israel (Gal 6:16). In Romans 11:26, when Paul says that "all Israel will be saved," we must understand that he is referring to the real Israel — the remnant — that will come to believe in Jesus when they hear the gospel.

That is why Paul desired to SAVE some of the Jews through the preaching of the gospel (Romans 11:14).

So, what is the difference between Jews and Gentiles? There is no difference as far as salvation is concerned! Faith in Jesus saves Gentiles, and faith in Jesus saves the Jews. **We do not have two gospels** — one for the Jews and one for the Gentiles. **We have one gospel. Whomever it may be — Jew or Gentile — there is no salvation apart from Jesus Christ.**

It is my earnest desire that Christians who support the Zionist cause will come out of their ignorance. I know

## Many arrested in Eritrea

Asmara: A campaign of mass arrests initiated by Eritrean authorities in late November, 2008 has now reached the capital city of Asmara, leading to the

that there are so many Christians in the USA, and in other nations, who do not agree with what I have written. I hope you too will discover the truth and teach it to others. The easiest way for you to change your mind is to find a Jew as early as possible. Try sharing the gospel with him/her! You will realize in a fresh way what great a privilege God has given us Gentiles (along with Jews who believe in Jesus) to be called the new Israel.

detention of approximately 100 Christians including men, women and children from a variety of denominations, according to reports.

The wave of house arrests began in northern Eritrean cities and moved to southern regions before reaching the capital on December 12. Some of the detained Christians were reportedly transferred to a military facility and were severely mistreated.

Local sources indicate that an unspecified number may have died due to untreated injuries sustained in detention. Non traditional Christians are systematically persecuted.

## Church demolsihed, believers attacked

Hanoi (Vietnam): Local government officials destroyed a church building and assaulted several believers in Dak Lak Province on December 17, according to reports.

At approximately 7:00 a.m., a large group of officials and demolition workers arrived at the site of the Vietnam Good News Mission and Church and dismantled the building. When hundreds of Christians rushed to the site to try to intervene, police officers repelled them with electric cattle prods.

Several Christians were seriously injured in the assault, including a

child whose arm was broken and a pregnant woman who fainted when jabbed in the stomach.

The building, which was built in September, was deemed an "illegal construction" because the believers did not have a building permit. On December 2, the Christians were informed that if they did not tear the building down within two weeks, officials would.

However, the Christians' registration attempts over the past year were either denied or ignored and virtually all the buildings in the area were built without permits.

## Church attacked

Cairo (Egypt): Thousands of Muslims attacked the Coptic Church of St. Mary and Anba Abraam building in Ain Shams on November 23, angry that an extension had been recently added to the building.

The mob gathered at the premises at approximately 5:00 p.m., following a consecration service that was held by the believers earlier that day. The mob, shouting anti-Christian slogans, threw stones at the building and set a portion of the structure on fire with the believers trapped inside. A nearby shop and two cars belonging to Christians were also burned in the violence.

## Anti-religion law passed

Baku (Azerbaijan): A restrictive religion law passed its final parliamentary reading in the unrecognized Azerbaijani breakaway republic of Nagorno-Karabakh on November 26.

President Sahakyan has one month to either approve or reject the law that imposes ambiguous restrictions on religious groups. The law includes an apparent ban on unregistered religious activity, even though a minimum of 100 adult citizens would be necessary to register. Further restrictions include the censorship of religious literature by the state and the ban on some religious groups from spreading their faith.

## Christians beaten, churches raided

Beijing (China): There were several incidents of attacks on Christians in China during Christmas week. On the afternoon of December 24, approximately 40 police officers raided a construction site in the village of Jingjia, Sichuan province where Christian volunteers were helping to rebuild homes destroyed in the massive May 12 earthquake.

The allegedly intoxicated officers beat and swore at those present and seized Bibles, hymnals, televisions, and other items belonging to the Christians. They refused to present legal documents giving reason for the raid. One of the earthquake victims and several of the Christian volunteers were eventually taken into cus-

tody by officials.

Also on December 24, nine Christian women were arrested in Yucheng county, Henan province while leading a Christmas celebration. Five of the women were released the next day after their families paid fines ranging from 1,500 to 3,500 Yuan while the others, at last report, remained in detention.

At least two Chinese house churches were raided while holding holiday celebrations on Christmas Day. Several leaders were arrested in the raids — two in Bozhou city, Anhui province and seven in Qitai county, Xinjiang Autonomous Region. At last report, all of these Christians were still imprisoned.

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