My religion is nobody else’s business, says CJI TS Thakur

Indian Express, Nov. 20, 2016

Thakur, while releasing the book titled ‘The Inner Fire, faith, choice and modern-day living in Zoroastrianism’, that more destruction, damage and bloodshed in this world has taken place on the account of religious beliefs. (PTI Photo)

The relationship between man and God is “very personal” and should be “nobody else’s business”, Chief Justice of India T S Thakur said on Sunday, as he stressed on tolerance for peace in society. More lives have been lost in religious wars than due to political ideologies, Justice Thakur said during the release of a book on Zoroastrianism, penned by Supreme Court Judge Justice Rohinton F Nariman.

Thakur, while releasing the book titled ‘The Inner Fire, faith, choice and modern-day living in Zoroastrianism’, also said that more destruction, damage and bloodshed in this world has taken place on the account of religious beliefs.

“In this world, more lives have been lost in religious wars than on political ideologies. More humans have killed each other because they thought their path is better than his, that he is an infidel, that he is a non-believer. More destruction, damage, bloodshed has taken place in this world on account of religious beliefs.

“What is my religion? How do I connect with my God? What kind of relationship I share with my God. It is nobody else’s business. You can chose your relationship with your God,” the CJI said.

Relationship between man and God “is something which is very personal and individual. So no one else has anything to do with it,” he added.

“I think the message of brotherhood, tolerance and accepting that ultimately all path leads to one path, one God, will bring world peace, will bring prosperity. In that sense Rohinton has done a great service,” Justice Thakur said.

Former Supreme Court judge Justice B N Srikrishna explained certain verses of Gathas (the most sacred texts of the Zoroastrian faith believed to have been composed by Zoroaster himself) which dealt with equanimity. Justice Srikrishna also explained its connection with the Rigveda and the similarities with Sanskrit.

Speaking on the occasion, noted lawyer Fali S Nariman, father of the author Rohinton F Nariman, said parents learn in retrospective about their children.

“We as parents come to realise, as many parents do, for years we did not appreciate the qualities exhibited now by Rohinton. Parents learn, unfortunately, retrospectively what they should have know about the characteristics of their children from the beginning.”

High Priest of Parsi community, Khurshed Dastoor, was present at the function.

People must not only hear about the kingdom of GOD, but must see it in actual operation, on a small scale perhaps and in imperfect form, but a real demonstration nevertheless.

- Pandita Ramabai

MISSION: TO LINK THE FREE CHURCH OF THE WORLD WITH THE PERSECUTED CHURCH IN INDIA
AIM: FREEDOM TO WORSHIP JESUS CHRIST IN INDIA
MOTTO: SERVE PERSECUTED – LOVE PERSECUTOR

"THE EARLY CHURCH WAS MARRIED TO POVERTY, PRISONS & PERSECUTIONS. IS TODAY’S CHURCH MARRIED TO PROSPERITY, PERSONALITY & POPULARITY?"
This post was written by Nancy DeMossWolgemuth with Mindy Kroesche.

As cars speed past my home with windows open and music spilling out, I wonder if singers—and more specifically, songwriters—are not among the most influential voices in our culture.

A couple of centuries ago—before radio, iTunes, iPods, Pandora, or Spotify—I imagine hymn writers were some of the most influential people of their day. Men, women, and children sang their songs both corporately and as they went about their everyday work.

Anne Steele (1717–1778) was one of these major influencers—the first significant female hymn writer in history and purportedly the most popular Baptist hymn writer in the history of the church.

I was introduced to the late Anne Steele a couple years ago by my hymn-loving husband. In fact, if you ever unearth her three-volume work* in a used bookstore, I strongly recommend you buy it. I take possession of her collected works and this book is a greatly treasured object. But I digress...

Anne Steele

A Humble Heart

Anne never set out to become a successful writer. She wrote for her own personal reflection until her beloved pastor-father began to use her hymns in the church he pastored.

According to John Gadsby

From early life [Anne] was exceedingly fond of poetry, but was very unwilling for her productions to be submitted to the public eye. When at last she gave her consent, she would not have her own name attached to the volumes, but published them under the signature of Theodosis ("The Gift of God"), and gave all the profits to charity.

Anne’s hymns first appeared in a hymnbook in 1769. Her father wrote in his diary:

Today Nanny sent part of her composition to London to be printed. I entreat a gracious God, who enabled and stirred her up to such a work, to direct it in and bless it for the good of many. I pray God to make it useful, and keep her humble. Humble she remained. In one letter to her father—whom she affectionately referred to as "honoured father"—Anne wrote:

If while I am sleeping in the silent grave, my thoughts are of any real benefit to the meanest of the servants of my God, be the praise ascribed to the almighty Giver of all grace.

Oh, how they have benefitted Christ’s Body! And not because she was perfect. Anne wrestled with doubts and assurance of salvation. In fact, that’s one of the things I appreciate most about her writing: She’s so candid about a believer’s doubts, pains, fears, and—at times—profound suffering.

Centuries later, it’s apparent that Anne’s hymns have stood the test of time. Kevin Twit, founder of Indebted Grace—an organization that produces old hymns set to new music—writes, "I find her hymns so rich, and yet easily understood even by those living 250 years after her death!"

A Deep Faith

Another thing I appreciate about Anne’s hymns is that they aren’t merely intellectual exercises. As John Sheppard, author of a short memoir about Anne, wrote, "The emotions expressed were ever genuine, and the faith which awakened them was true and operative."

That is probably due to how much she suffered:

Just three years after Anne was born, her mother passed away. She suffered physically; living with chronic recurring malaria, painful stomach issues, and severe teeth pain . . . as well as seriously injuring herself when thrown from a horse at nineteen.

When she was twenty-one, her fiancé, Robert, drowned. And yet those who knew her personally testify that in spite of all this, she . . . possessed a native cheerfulness, which not even the agonizing pains of her latter days could deprive. In every short interval of abated suffering, she would, in a variety of ways, as well as by her evenflowing conversation, give pleasure to all around her (Dr. Caleb Evans).

The only explanation is her rich, intimate relationship with God. For a glimpse into her envelopment of Him, look at just a few of the unique ways she referred to God in her hymns:

Thou lovely source of true delight
Dear refuge of my weary soul
Eternal source of joys divine
Great source of boundless power and grace
Father of mercies in Thy word

Dear center of my best desires

Personally, I wonder if the closeness she experienced with her heavenly Father was related to her relationship with her earthly father, who referred to her in letters as "dear little Nancy, more and more entertaining."

Anne lived with her father and stepmother until her father passed away. She spent her days writing (144 hymns, forty-eight psalms in verse, and about fifty poems) and helping her father with his pastoral duties. Anne herself died at age sixty-one, after nine painful years confined to her bed. Dr. Evans writes:

She often spoke, not merely with tranquility, but with joy, of her decease . . . she took the most affectionate leave of weeping friends around her... her last words: "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

Her tombstone in Broughton churchyard reads:

Silent the lyre, and dumb the tuneful tongue, that sung on earth her great Redeemer’s praise; But now in heaven she joins the angelic song, In more harmonious, more exalted lays.

Anne’s hymns live on; may her legacy live on in you and me as well:

Are you and I thoughtful and cheerful toward others even as we’re suffering? Are we diligent but humble in stewarding our gifts to bless members of Christ’s Body?

Is our hope fixed on that day we will be with God face to face... or on the trivial pursuits we experience here and now?

Are we honest with God and with others about our doubts and struggles?

Do you and I deeply enjoy our glorious God and shower Him with the praise He deserves?

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Panaji: Amidst the demonetization of 500 and 1,000 held by it on the day of November 8, 2016, it department made the request under Section 133(6) of the Income Tax Act. “Any failure or delay in furnishing the information will resulted in penalty proceedings without further notice,” Kumar added. Speaking to TOI, a priest of the Archdiocese of Goa said that they received the notice on November 21, which was the date they were asked to furnish the information.

“IT’s not possible for us to submit the information within such a quick time as we have almost 100 institutions. We will seek time to furnish the details,” he said, adding that the archdiocese will provide all information as requested by the IT department.
The (Scientific) Death of Jesus

For the next 60 seconds, set aside whatever you are doing and take this opportunity to read about THE (SCIENTIFIC) DEATH OF JESUS.

At the age of 33, Jesus was condemned to death. At that time, Crucifixion was the “worst” death. Only the worst Criminals were condemned to be crucified. Yet it was even more dreadful for Jesus, unlike other criminals condemned to death by crucifixion, Jesus was to be nailed to the Cross by His hands and feet.

Each nail was 6 to 8 inches long. The nails were driven into His wrist. Not into His palms as is commonly portrayed. There’s a tendon in the wrist that extends to the shoulder. The Roman guards knew that when the nails were being hammered into the wrist that the tendon would tear and break, forcing Jesus to use His back muscles to support himself so that He could breathe.

Both of His feet were nailed together. Thus He was forced to support Himself on the single nail that impaled His feet to the cross. Jesus could not support himself with His legs because of the pain so He was forced to alternate between arching His back then using his legs just to continue to breathe. Imagine the struggle, the pain, the suffering, the courage. Jesus endured this reality for over 3 hours.

Yes, over 3 hours! Can you imagine this kind of suffering? A few minutes before He died, Jesus stopped breathing. He was simply pouring water from His wounds.

From common images we see wounds to His hands and feet and even the spear wound to His side... But do we realize His wounds were actually made in his body. A hammer driving large nails through the wrist, the feet overlapped and an even large nail hammered through the arches, then a Roman guard piercing His side with a spear.

But before the nails and the spear Jesus was whipped and beaten. The whipping was so severe that it tore the flesh from His body. The beating so horrific that His face was torn and His beard ripped from His face. The crown of thorns cut deeply into His scalp. Most men would not have survived this torture.

He had no more blood to bleed out, only water poured from His wounds. The human adult body contains about 3.5 liters (just less than a gallon) of blood.

Jesus poured all 3.5 Liters of his blood; He had three nails hammered into His members; a crown of thorns on His head and, beyond that, a Roman soldier who stabbed a spear into His chest.

All these without mentioning the humiliation He suffered after carrying His own cross for almost 2 kilometers, while the crowd spat in His face and threw stones (the cross was almost 30 kg of weight, only for its higher part, where His hands were nailed).

Jesus had to endure this experience, to open the gates of heaven, so that you can have free access to God; so that your sins and my sins could be “washed” away. All of them, with no exception! Don’t ignore this situation.

The second coming is soon. In fact, Jesus promised His disciples that He would come again. John 14:1-3 says, “Let not your heart be troubled... In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may also be.”

When is Jesus coming back?

Jesus will come back soon. However, the exact time when Jesus is coming again no one knows. Mark 13:32 says, “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Interestingly, the disciples asked Jesus the same question just before He returned to heaven. At that time Jesus told them it was not for them to know the times or seasons which are in the Father’s authority. Therefore, Jesus may come back tomorrow, next month, next year or 100 years from now. So what does this mean for you and me? Always be ready for the second coming of Jesus Christ. Watch and focus on Jesus because the devil is seeking to distract mankind from understanding the signs and closeness of Jesus’ coming.

Why is Jesus taking so long to come back?

Jesus is patiently waiting to come back because He is giving humanity as much time as possible to choose and follow Him. Jesus wants as many people as possible to repent and return to heaven with Him. 2 Peter 3:8-9 says, “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

Warnings about the second coming of Jesus?

There are many confusing non-Biblical theories about the second coming of Christ which distract many people. Will He appear spiritually to only a select few? Will Jesus second coming to only be in certain physical locations? Will Jesus appear in the desert? Jesus warned about deceptions in the last days. In fact in Matthew 24:4-5 Jesus cautions believers not to be deceived by people coming in the name of Jesus claiming to be Christ. Therefore, our only safeguard is to turn to the Bible alone for answers.

Will Jesus come back secretly?

Many people ask, how many people will see Jesus when He returns? Christ’s second coming will be bright, loud and glorious. This event cannot be hidden, every human on planet earth will see Jesus. He will come back personally and literally. Revelation 1:7 says, “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him.” There will not be a person on earth who is unaware of Jesus’ return. Jesus Himself describes the manner of His coming. Matthew 24:27 states that the return of Christ will be like the brightness of lightning illuminating the entire sky from the east to the west. Verses 30 and 31 of the same chapter describe Jesus coming with power and great glory and with the sound of a great trumpet that awakens the righteous dead who are then gathered from the ends of the earth.

How should we live while we wait?

Christians should be on guard, watching and praying until the day of the Lord. The Bible says in Luke 21:34-36, “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

How will Jesus come back?

We know Jesus’ second coming will be a literal event and will be just like He went to heaven the first time. Acts 1:9-11 says the following, “Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was lifted up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

Are the wicked destroyed by Christ’s coming?

When Jesus returns to earth the wicked who are left alive will call for the rocks and hills to fall on them because they cannot look upon the face of Christ. (Revelation 6:15-17) The wicked will be destroyed with everlasting destruction because they did not know God or obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)

When will we get immortal bodies?

At the moment of Jesus’ second coming, at the last trump, the mortal bodies of the saved will be transformed and they will receive immortal bodies. 1 Corinthians 15:52-53 says, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal
NEWDELHI: Former Navy chief Admiral Laxminarayan Ramdas has written an open letter to President Pranab Mukherjee and Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemning the attacks on minorities and Dalits under the rule of the current government.

“The Hinduism I knew and experienced was gentle, inclusive, and filled with extraordinary diversity,” writes Ramdas in the letter. “Today, as a veteran in my eighties, I am forced to hang my head in shame.”

Ramdas, who won the Magsaysay award for peace, also emphasized how certain communities are being “singled out for special attention”.

“Today, a Muslim has to prove his or her loyalty, and they are being repeatedly put in a situation where their places of worship are under attack, as indeed their eating habits, and other basic freedoms,” writes Ramdas.

Here’s the full text of the letter:

“Honourable President and Honourable Prime Minister, It is with a heavy heart, that I write this open letter to you at a time when our beloved country and people are facing severe challenges and threats to our shared heritage. I have served in the Armed Forces of India - joining soon after Independence as a 14 year old, to end up 45 years later Chief of the Indian Navy [1990 to 1993]. I have witnessed many transitions in India - from the horrors of partition in 1947 to the very different world of digital connectivity that we see today. I also write to you as one who was brought up in the Hindu faith. However, the Hinduism I knew and experienced was gentle, inclusive, and filled with extraordinary diversity. My religion taught me values of love and respect for all beings. My brand of Hinduism was not narrow, parochial, intolerant, racist and even fascist. The violence visited upon vulnerable sections reinforces the image of India as an imperfect democracy where all forms of dissent are discouraged and human rights trampled upon with impunity.

The Prime Minister and his ministers in the government are sworn in by the President of India, and they take an oath pledging to uphold the Indian Constitution. Their failure to do so, as evidenced in the foregoing, is a serious matter and does not augur well either for national security or national integrity. The Central and State Governments must act swiftly, unequivocally condemn all such incidents and ensure that justice will be done and the guilty are punished. Such action alone will have a salutary deterrent effect on all those, be they fringe or mainstream, who are speaking and acting in many voices that are totally against and inimical to, our traditional ethos and the syncretic culture of our country and its people.

India represents a unique blend of peoples and cultures which have evolved over 5000 plus years in a constantly changing and dynamic process. This diversity and unique nature of our society and people can probably never be replicated anywhere on this earth - and for this reason alone, the concept of a single religious identity or mono culture represents an insult to this ancient civilizational heritage. Honourable Mr. President, Honourable Mr. Prime Minister, you have both sworn to honour the right of every single citizen to freedom of speech, worship, association as brilliantly articulated in the Indian Constitution. As a former serviceman and a veteran, like you, I too have promised to uphold the same constitution. It is our bounden duty that the elected Government of this nation must honour the rights of every citizen of this land as amply spelled out in the Preamble of the Constitution and further elaborated in the Directive Principles of state policy. As Supreme Commander and the Chief Executive - this is what you must ensure and implement by all the powers vested in you by the people of India.

If we do not stem the rot now - it might be too late. Indeed we the people of India look to you to take all the steps necessary to restore faith in our democracy and in the promise of bringing dignity, fraternity and equality to each of our citizens.”

Times of India | October 25, 2016
Former Navy Chief Admiral Ramdas.
The Forgotten Freedom in the Women’s Rights Movement
Chelsan A. Vicari, November 10, 2016

The notion of a women’s rights movement that overlooks the right to religious freedom is a futile one. Too bad that’s exactly what’s happening within the international female equality movement.

UN Women, the United Nations’ agency focused on gender equality, spent $315 million during their 2015-2016 fiscal year on resources to empower women and girls around the globe. Did you catch that? Three hundred and fifteen million dollars.

Strange then, that in a world of murder, rape, and displacement of religious minorities from places like Syria and Iraq, the international women’s rights movement failed to provide any substantial resources to promote women’s religious freedom.

You’ve probably seen the gruesome images of the Islamic State, also called ISIS, committing atrocious genocide of Christians and Yazidis—an ethnic group of Kurdish people whose religion combines elements of Christianity, Islam, and Zoroastrianism—including beheadings, child crucifixions, and enslavement.

Its women who are ISIS rape victims. Its women who ISIS enslaves into sex trafficking. Its women alongside men and their children who ISIS threatens with death if they don’t deny their faith and convert to Islam.

So shame on leaders within the women’s rights movement who remain silent as ISIS invaded communities like Sinjar in Northern Iraq, killing 3,000 men and older women, and taking thousands of Christian and Yazidi women and girls into slavery and when publicly raped Christian women in Iraq on Friday to pray for the church in Iraq.

As many as 50,000 Christians are expected to gather in Erbil, Iraq on Friday to pray for the church in Iraq. As monstrous attacks on women like these played out in the Middle East over the past year, what endeavors preoccupy UN Women’s attention? What monstrous attacks on women consistently overlook religious freedom as a human right. Here’s what women’s empowerment really looks like: An Assyrian Christian mother’s right to read the Bible to her children without worrying that ISIS might crucify her little ones if they refuse to deny Jesus. A Yazidi woman’s right to walk down the market streets of Baghdad with her daughters without fear of being dragged into sex slavery. An Iraqi Christian woman gathering with her friends and family to worship God in church without fear of ISIS militants beheading her entire congregation.

"The very leaders who say they want to empower women consistently overlook religious freedom as a human right.” - Chelsan Vicari

Peace negotiations mean nothing if women’s religious freedom is ignored, no matter how many women are placed on the commission. Female leadership is meaningless when those leaders cannot even practice their personal faith without fear of repercussions.

Many activists emphasize their desire to “liberate” women. We know only the ultimate Liberator’s goodness and mercy offers true equality to women in a fallen world. But until He returns, Christians cannot close a blind eye to the injustices against women of faith, no matter how far away they may live from our neighborhoods.

American Christian women cannot mimic the women’s rights movement and ignore the plight of our sisters in Christ being persecuted for their faith abroad. To help, we can lend our voices on behalf of women like Ding Cuimei, the wife of Chinese Christian pastor who was callously buried alive at the Beitou Church in Henan Province by a demolition crew sent by the Chinese government to demolish her husband’s church.

Iraq: As Many as 50,000 Christians to Pray for Peace

Veroica Hoffnager, Editor, Christian Headlines.com.

Thursday, November 17, 2016

As many as 50,000 Christians are expected to gather in Erbil, Iraq on Friday to pray for the church in Iraq and for peace to prevail.

Iraqi forces have been in the process of liberating many Iraqi towns from control by Islamic State. While most of ISIS’ strongholds have fallen, Iraqis have a long road ahead of them to restore their homeland.

The prayer event is being organized by Agape Love, a ministry that partners with local churches. Between 25,000 to 50,000 Christians who have been persecuted by Islamic State or displaced from their homes are expected to participate in the six-hour long event which will also be broadcast across the Middle East by Christian satellite network SAT-7.

In addition to prayer, the event will include stories and testimony from those who come from the recently-liberated towns near Mosul, Iraq. According to George Makeen, SAT-7 ARABIC’s programming director, participants in the event will also write prayers on balloons and release them “as a symbol of raising prayer on behalf of the whole nation.”

“MY prayer is for God’s peace and wisdom as they experience such difficult times,” he said. “While Iraqis celebrate successes in defeating IS and liberation of their towns, the fear of violence committed by Shia militias... and the fears people will have as they consider returning to homes they were forced to leave: all of these limit the joy and hope people should be experiencing.” Makeen continued.

“The country still lacks the sense of true unity and belonging,” he said. “I pray that God will give leaders wisdom to help their people to feel that the current developments are the start of a better future.”

The prayer event is meant to be a start to that end.
Can Evangelicals Unite after the 2016 Election?

Emily McFarlan Miller, Religion News Service, Thursday, November 17, 2016

According to want to build a church. lawmakers would create more rights to build, but faces fewer restrictions. then been attacked by Muslims. illegally built buildings, which have contributed to the shame and abuse now associated with the word evangelical.

The same sentiment has been echoed by a number of prominent evangelicals in the wake of the 2016 presidential election.

History professor John Fea, authors Preston Yancey, D.L. Mayfield and Skye Jethani; and author and activist Shane Claiborne all have distanced themselves from, if not abandoned, the label. While still identifying as evangelical, former Christianity Today editor Katelyn Beaty wrote she “can’t defend my people. I barely recognize them.”

Earlier this week, Fuller Theological Seminary issued a statement that was nothing short of remarkable for the influential evangelical institution.

“The church and the government must be appropriate to the number of Christians in the area.” The governor will also take into consideration “the preservation of security and public order” when considering the building permit.

The church and the government reached a recon-tilatory agreement. Thank God we have this law now,” said Father Sergius, a top official in the Coptic Church.

Another Christian lawyer, Nadia Henary said the law has flaws, but that “we have to respect the opinion of the majority. I am a daughter of the Church and I respect the priests and the Church leadership.”

According to Egypt’s state agency, the law passed with two-thirds of the lawmakers.

Eagle: New Law Restricts Church Construction

Amanda Casanova, Religion Today Contributing Writer, Wednesday, August 31, 2016

Egyptian officials passed a law this week regarding rules for building a church, but critics are worried the law isn’t enough to protect Christians.

In the past, local authorities have often blocked building permits for new churches and Christians have illegally built buildings, which have then been attacked by Muslims. Comparatively, building a mosque faces fewer restrictions.

Christians had hoped that a law passed by Egyptian lawmakers would create more rights to build, but under the law passed Tuesday, Christians must apply to the local provincial governor when they want to build a church.

According to ABCNews.com, “the size of the church must be appropriate to the number of Christians in the area.” The governor will also take into consideration “the preservation of security and public order” when considering the building permit.

“Once the evangelical rank and file closed in behind Donald Trump long before most of the leaders did,” he said, because those in the pews were “tired of business as usual” and excited by Trump’s choice of Mike Pence as running mate.

For the Rev. Sammy Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, the schism is between white evangelicals and African-American born-again Christians and as a result of the election it “just grew larger.”

Harper, of Sojourners, also sees deep-rooted problems.

“I don’t believe Jesus would look on this fear that is rising — fear and actual assaults that have risen over the last few days — and say, ‘We just need to agree to disagree and get along again.’ I think that Jesus would stand with those who are hurting,” she said.

Trump’s election has helped her see where things have gone wrong, where she needed to hear the “very real cry from white America, particularly rural white America,” she said.

Still, the church must be vigilant in fighting “the erosion of decency, the erosion of care for the image of God in all, the erosion of the institutions that are set up in our democracy in order to protect the least of these,” she said.

Harper said the healing process within the church needs to start with “deep listening and the creation within churches of safe, sacred spaces where stories can be shared on all sides of the equation so we might understand each other better.”

As for those excited by Trump’s election, Charisma Magazine cultural commentator Larry Tomczak wrote a post discouraging them from triumphalist behavior.

Instead, he said they should “express genuine love to people obsessed with tearing down Mr. Trump, no matter how belligerent or unreasonable some seem. And yes, sometimes this means smiling and simply walking away from a conversation.”

Moore argues that it’s up to a new generation of evangelicals not to disengage from politics, but rather to create new coalitions that preserve the “best of religious conservatism” — on questions of life and religious freedom and stable families and communities.

“I think there’s a sense of the need to turn the page toward something new,” he said.

In the end, Harper decided not to give up on the name “evangelical,” which she described as having a rich legacy of faith that includes abolitionists William Wilberforce and Sojourner Truth. And besides, she said, Christians are people who believe in resurrection.

“I believe the evangelical church may be on death’s door, but it isn’t dead.”
I Found the Gospel in Communist Romania
And then I shared it with the man the government sent to kill me.

Virginia Prodan / September 23, 2016

Like most people, I was born with a hunger for truth and freedom. Unfortunately, I was born in Communist Romania under the brutal totalitarian regime of Nicolae Ceausescu. Ceausescu’s Romania was a land of lies, where simply questioning a government directive could lead to imprisonment, physical torture, and—in some cases—death.

Needless to say, we lived in a constant state of anxiety and mistrust. Anyone could arbitrarily denounce a neighbor, classmate, or family member for making “anti-government” statements. The government even had spies planted in the churches. The best way to avoid trouble was to remain silent, question nothing, and try to blend in.

For years, I watched my parents and relatives play the part of “good citizens” while privately whispering their contempt for the government. I wondered, Why do people always speak in whispers? Why are they so afraid to speak the truth?

“Do you go to church?”

The more fear battered those around me into silence, the more obsessed I became with finding the truth. After graduation, I went to law school and became an attorney. But my job—assigned by the government— consisted of little more than rubber-stamping newly-created communist rules and regulations. It was demoralizing.

One evening a client came in to discuss some paperwork related to a property settlement. We had been meeting for months now, and frankly, I was exhausted. But this particular client never seemed to get discouraged. He always smiled, and he had a sense of contentment unlike anything I had ever seen. It was as though he were somehow oblivious to all of the misery that surrounded him. He radiated joy and peace, and for some reason, it troubled me.

Without thinking, I confessed, “I wish I had what you have in your life. I wish I had your sense of peace and happiness.”

“Do you go to church?” he asked.


“And you like to come with me to church this Sunday?”

My first instinct was to decline. After all, the communist government was notoriously anti-church. Under Ceausescu’s rule, Christians were frequently arrested, beaten, and imprisoned. Church buildings were bulldozed, their land confiscated to make room for Ceausescu’s palace. Anyone who questioned his anti-God stance was either thrown in jail or “disappeared.” For all I knew, this could be a trick to test my loyalty. I paused briefly to consider my next move. Then I saw once again that look of peace and contentment. I wanted that—so much so that I decided it was worth the risk.

The next Sunday I visited his church. As soon as the choir finished the opening song, the pastor read John 14:6—“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” I could not believe what I heard. Someone was claiming to be the truth?

As the pastor continued to describe the truth of Jesus Christ, I felt as though the verses he shared were written specifically for me. Looking across the aisle, I saw my client. He smiled, nodded, and gently patted his Bible as if to say, “Now do you understand?”

I did. Without realizing it, I was beaming back at him. For the first time in my life, everything made sense. I had spent years searching for the truth, but I had been looking in the wrong places—law school, the government, the justice system. I suddenly realized that truth was something that came not from law books, but from God himself: the Creator of the universe—my Creator, the source of all life, peace, and happiness.

Does God Cause Christians to Suffer?

From the desk of John MacArthur
October 28, 2016

For Christians, this verse contains perhaps the most glorious promise in Scripture. It is breathtaking in its magnitude, encompassing absolutely everything that pertains to a believer’s life.

And we know (8:28a) the context of the truths that follow in Romans 8, these three simple words express the Christians absolute certainty of eternal security in the Holy Spirit. Paul is not expressing his personal intuitions or opinions but is setting forth the inerrant truth of God’s Word. It is not Paul the man, but Paul the apostle and channel of God’s revelation who continues to declare the truth he has received from the Holy Spirit. He therefore asserts with God’s own authority that, as believers in Jesus Christ, we know beyond all doubt that every aspect of our lives is in God’s hands and will be divinely used by the Lord not only to manifest His own glory but also to work out our own ultimate blessing.

The phrase we know here carries the meaning of can know. Tragically, many Christians throughout the history of the church, including many in our own day, refuse to believe that God guarantees the believer’s eternal security. Such denial is tied to the belief that salvation is a cooperative effort between man and God, and although God will not fail on His side, man might-thus the sense of insecurity. Belief in salvation by a sovereign God alone, however, leads to the confidence that salvation is secure, because God, who alone is responsible, cannot fail. Beyond that, theological consideration Paul is saying that the truth of eternal security is clearly revealed by God to us, so that all believers are able with certainty to know the comfort and hope of that reality if they simply take God at His word. God’s child need never fear being cast out of his heavenly Father’s house or fear losing his citizenship in His eternal kingdom of righteousness.

That God causes all things to work together for good (28b) The extent of the believer’s security is as limitless as its certainty is absolute. As with every other element of the believer’s security, God is the Guarantor. It is He who causes everything in the believer’s life to eventuate in blessing.

Paul emphasizes that God Himself brings about the good that comes to His people. This magnificent promise does not operate through impersonal statements, but requires divine action to fulfill. God’s decree of security is actually carried out by the direct, personal, and gracious work of His divine Son and His Holy Spirit. “Hence, also, [Christ] is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).

And as Paul has just proclaimed, “The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groaning too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom. 8:26–27).

All things are utterly comprehensive, having no qualifications or limits. Neither this verse nor its context allows for restrictions or conditions. All things is inclusive in the fullest possible sense. Nothing existing or occurring in heaven or on earth "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus" (8:39).

Paul is not saying that God prevents His children from experiencing things that can harm them. He is rather attesting that the Lord takes all that He allows to happen to His beloved children, even the worst things, and turns those things ultimately into blessings.

No matter what our situation, our suffering, our persecution, our sin and failure, our pain, our lack of faith in those things, as well as in all other things, our heavenly Father will work to produce our ultimate victory and blessing. The corollary of that truth is that nothing can ultimately work against us. Any temporary harm we suffer will be used by God for our benefit (see 2 Cor. 12:7–10). All things includes circumstances and events that are good and beneficial in themselves as well as those that are in themselves evil and harmful.
This is a recurring theme in the psalms: “Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise” (Ps. 100:4). “Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving” (Ps. 95:2). Thanksgiving ushers us into the very presence of God!

The tabernacle in the Old Testament was the place God set apart to meet with His people. In front of the entrance to the Holy of Holies—the sacred seat of God’s manifest presence—stood the altar of incense, where every morning and every evening the priest would offer up the sweet scents, representing the prayers and thanksgiving of God’s people who sought to draw near to Him.

Those ancient rituals were types and symbols of a relationship that we as New Testament believers can enjoy with God anytime, anyplace. Through His sacrifice on the cross, Christ has granted us access to the Father who dwells in us by His Spirit. See what happens when you open your heart afresh to the Lord, moving beyond the normal, the canned, the almost routine, the normal, the unCarthy. See what happens when you open your heart afresh to the Lord, moving beyond the normal, the canned, the almost routine, the normal, the unCarthy. See what happens when you open your heart afresh to the Lord, moving beyond the normal, the canned, the almost routine, the normal, the unCarthy.