

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_sbct-01.php

CONFIDENT FAITH AND TODAY'S PERSECUTED CHURCH FINLAYSON MEMORIAL LECTURE, 2015

MICHAEL NAZIR-ALI

OXTRAD, 70 WIMPOLE STREET, LONDON W1G 8AX
oxtrad@gmail.com

TRADITIONS OF TOLERANCE AND FREEDOM¹

I want to begin with a story. A few years ago I was in Iran, and I had a meeting with some government officials. I was wondering what my opening gambit should be. I thought I'd start with Cyrus. And the reason was that at that time the British Museum had loaned the Cyrus Cylinder to the National Museum in Tehran. So I commented on this, and I began with my Iranian interlocutors by saying what a great tradition of tolerance the Iranian people had, going all the way back to Cyrus, who had of course enabled the Jewish people to return to their homeland, and so on. The chairman on the other side was looking at me rather impassively throughout this. When I'd finished he said, 'Bishop, we are not interested in the past. We are only interested in the future.' Well, I thought that was a great pity, because if people are not interested in their past, what can they say about their future? But it did alert me to the point that in so many different cultures and even religious traditions there are elements of freedom and of tolerance which are sometimes denied by these traditions, especially today.

In relationship to India, and the new kind of intolerance that is emerging there, I was reminded of the King Ashoka who was a great warrior king and the first to unite what we now know as India under his rule. But then he became a Buddhist, and he erected pillars all over India which are still there, proclaiming freedom of belief for the citizens of his kingdom. Well, there's another tradition. Coming closer to home, the so-called 'Edict of Milan'—which was neither an edict, nor had anything to do with Milan—is often taken in church history as a charter for tolerance for Christianity in the Roman Empire. But of course it was much more than that. It was actually an edict about freedom of belief, and for all the citizens of the Roman Empire, East and West, at that time.

¹ Delivered on 13 April 2015 at St Silas Church, Glasgow. This version has been lightly revised for the sake of publication, but otherwise retains the informal style of presentation.

I sometimes in my conversations with Muslim friends remind them of what is called the Constitution of Medina. This is when the prophet of Islam arrived in Medina and became both a temporal ruler as well as a religious leader. He inaugurated this Constitution of Medina which gave equal rights to Jews, Muslims, and others in Medina. There were at that time very large Jewish communities in Medina, much older than the Muslim presence, and it is true that this arrangement did not last very long. The story of the Medinan Jews is a very tragic one. Nevertheless, you could say that this was the constitution of the first Islamic state. When people say to me in different parts of the world as they do, 'We are going to have an Islamic State', I say to them, 'Will it be like the first one? And if not, why not?' So at least there can be some discussion about what is the meaning of an Islamic state.

This year is the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta, another declaration of freedom and justice for the people of England as it was then—I don't know what the Scottish equivalent would be, or whether Scotland ever accepted Magna Carta as a charter for itself. It would be interesting to know. And then of course the last century produced a plethora of declarations: the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, the European Convention, etc., all of which recognized not just freedom to believe, but freedom to manifest your belief, freedom to observe your belief in public and in private, and so on.

WHY THEY ARE DENIED

Now the point is, that with all of this background we still have a world where freedom to believe, freedom to manifest your belief, freedom to worship even, and freedom to witness—all of these are widely denied. So how do we square this particular circle?

And the reasons why these freedoms are denied also vary: they're not the same reason. So, for instance, there is still good old fashioned tyranny. In a place like Eritrea, that is the reason for the wide-spread persecution of Christians in that country. It began with the persecution of evangelical Christians, and the Orthodox and the Catholics kept silent. Then the Orthodox patriarch disappeared. And then the persecution started with the Catholics as well. So there is a lesson there: that if one part of the communities being persecuted remains quiet for our own strategic reasons, that's not a very wise thing to do because it will come to us also. But Eritrea is a good example of just personal tyranny resulting in a denial of freedom for believers of different kinds.

There is still a persecution that arises out of ideology. So Marxism is more or less dead in Europe, but is not dead in China. China works on the

basis of a capitalist economic system, but its political and social system is still heavily governed by Marxism. Whilst some parts of the church, particularly the officially recognized parts of the church, have more freedom now, there is still harassment, exile, restrictions for the underground church, both in its evangelical and pentecostal forms, and in the Catholic church which still remains loyal to the Vatican. As a bishop, I developed a particular empathy for some Catholic bishops in China who have been imprisoned for the whole of their episcopate. That's difficult to imagine, but it's true. So ideology remains a reason for the denial of freedom of belief in some parts of the world. China is a very good example.

But we have now in the West also a secular totalitarianism—this is probably the right word for it. Yesterday we were being told in the Sunday papers here in Glasgow that anyone who does not agree with the homosexual agenda should have charitable status withdrawn from them. This is not an example of secular tolerance! Peter Hitchens—the brother of Christopher Hitchens, the very active atheist who died recently—is himself a Christian and a journalist, a very trenchant journalist, but he spent seventeen years in the Soviet Union as a journalist. He has said in his very interesting book, *The Rage against God*, that secularism leads to totalitarianism. There is no example of secularism leading to recognition of freedom for people who don't agree with its agenda. Whether we question that theoretically or not, practically this seems increasingly to be the case in the West, that the secular attempt to win equality or freedom for certain groups does not necessarily mean equality or freedom for groups of believers and respect for their conscience and religious accommodation for them at their place of work.

FREEDOM AND THE WORLD OF ISLAM TODAY

Having said all of that, Rehman Chishti, the Muslim MP for Gillingham which is in what used to be my diocese, has said that 80% of the persecution of Christians is happening in the Islamic world. That is a Muslim MP saying this, and I think when he says it, we have to take it seriously. What are the reasons for it? The reasons are very complex, and I can't go in to all of them. But just to take Sunni extremism that is becoming more and more widespread throughout the Islamic world, its agenda is actually quite simple. It is the restoration of the Caliphate, so what the Islamic State has done is simply a concretization of an aspiration amongst most Sunni people. It is the primacy of the Ummah, of the Islamic people worldwide, which is why young people born in Britain are going to fight in Syria. We will continue to experience this, because it is the Ummah

that is primary, and any loyalty to the nation-state must be quite a bit down the priority agenda for these people.

The imposition of Sharia in the way that Sunni extremism understands it, that is without reference historically to how Sharia actually developed, and the restrictions around it in the course of history by various kingdoms and rulers and even the Ottoman caliph—so it is strictly speaking a fundamentalist view of Sharia, which has very rarely in Islamic history actually been practiced. But out of that, then, comes an interpretation of the place of non-Muslims in an Islamic polity. So if you look at Sharia in that way, the only place that non-Muslims can have in such a polity is that of a *dhimmi*, of second-class citizens who have to pay tax. The choice is—I think Islamic State is right to follow its logic—either you pay the *jizya*, the tax, or you accept Islam, or you emigrate. Those are choices. And those choices strictly speaking in Sharia are only for Christians and Jews. So that was not the choice for the Yezidis in Iraq, for example. For them it was either accept Islam, emigrate, or face the consequences.

That's another point on the agenda, the fifth point is of course the recovery of lands lost to Islam. Now, which ones are they? The whole of the Iberian peninsula, for example. A very liberal Muslim friend of mine recently wrote an article bemoaning the loss of the Cordoba mosque and its new persona as a cathedral, forgetting conveniently that it had been a church before it became a mosque! And this is someone certainly by no means extremist in her thinking. This is also of course the root of the Israeli-Palestinian question. Of course there are questions about justice for the Palestinian people, there are questions about how Jew and Arab, or Jew, Christian, and Muslim are to live together in the land—all of that. But the fundamental issue now is very much: here is a land that had been conquered by Muslims and is no longer Muslim. And until that question is addressed on every side there will not be any enduring solution to this problem.

So those are some of the reasons why Rehman Chishti's figure of 80% of the persecution of Christians taking place in the Islamic world has to be taken seriously.

A CONFIDENT FAITH?

If that is how it is, what are the issues that arise for us in terms of persecution? Now, the question of a 'confident faith' which is in our title—it's the theme for this conference and also for this lecture—well, the Evangelical Alliance report on the persecution of Christians says that the Christians who are persecuted are actually at varying places in their journey of faith. I think we have to recognize this. I do not wish in any way to idealize

these people, these Christians—brothers and sisters of ours—they are also human, they also have their own weaknesses, and these people are not angels!

However, if we think about 'confidence', clearly there are some wonderful examples of Christian confidence. Maryam and Marziyeh, the two Iranian young women who were arrested some years ago in Iran, and kept in the notorious Evin Prison, were brought in periodically to the courts and they were only asked one question. This reminds us of what happened to Christians in the Roman empire. There, the only thing that the magistrate had to prove was that they were Christians: *propter nomen Christi* ['for the name of Christ']. If they said 'Yes', that they were Christians, that was enough to condemn them. Now this is exactly what happened to Maryam and Marziyeh. The only thing the judge was interested in was whether they would renounce the Christian faith. And each time they gave the same answer. They said the Holy Spirit had revealed to them that Jesus was the Messiah. So they were taken back to prison, brought in again, same question, same result, and so on. A wonderful example of constancy in witness by these two young women. We pray regularly for the pastor of a house church, Farshid Fathi, who was arrested for leading a house group. When Ahmadinejad was president, he said that Iran faced two threats: one was, of course, America; the other were the house churches. These are tiny groups of Christians meeting all over Iran. Anyway, Farshid Fathi was a leader of one of them. He was arrested and sentenced to seven years in prison. Lately, on trumped up charges, his sentence has been increased by another year. But he is a wonderful example of a confident faith. The communications that he gets out to us from prison show wonderful, confident faith in the face of adversity. I remember many years ago now visiting a Pakistani Christian in prison in the very, so-called, tolerant United Arab Emirates. He had been sentenced to six years in prison for giving a New Testament to an Arabic-speaking person—not a native of the UAE, but a Sudanese. I went to visit him, and I had never seen him before, so I was thinking to myself, how will I recognize him? And indeed, when we went in there were all these prisoners and their visitors milling around in the visiting room. But as soon as I saw him I knew who he was, because his face was shining. His name was Barkat Masik. We succeeded in getting his sentence reduced to two years—but he had to serve two years—and afterwards he became a great worker for the Lord in a very humble way in Pakistan.

So there are these wonderful examples of men and women of God, as I say, but it is not the case that all persecuted Christians are confident mature witnesses to the gospel. We had reference earlier this afternoon to the twenty-one Coptic Christians and one Chadian Christian, I think,

among them, who were martyred so cruelly on the beach in Libya. These young men were really workers, labourers, on building sites in Libya of which there are an indefinite number. We don't know where they were on their faith journey. We don't know how mature or well taught they were as Christians. But they did give their lives for Christ: that is the point.

I've just returned from Lahore, and I was there days after the suicide bombing of the two churches, the Catholic church and the Anglican church in a suburb of Lahore, at the very time that divine worship was coming to an end. So the bombers knew when they would optimize the casualties. Many people were killed and injured, but we do not know where each one of them was in his walk with the Lord. We don't know it: but it is enough for us to know that they suffered for the name. I think that is the point to take hold of.

So the degree of confidence varies, I think we have to accept that, and this will continue to be the case as we see and hear reports of what is happening in the world.

THE QUESTION OF EVIL

This raises the conundrum of the evil that is involved in the persecution of Christians, and indeed of others: why is God permitting this to happen, people ask, undestandably. I was asked this question repeatedly in the last few weeks. Particularly at this time of Easter—of course I cannot give you a complete theodicy of persecution tonight—but at this time of Easter we have to think of the cross as the place where the principalities and powers, as Paul says in Colossians, were unmasked, and he makes a public spectacle of them on the cross (Col. 2:13–15). So what is happening is that there is a cosmic battle, a cosmic war perhaps we should say, ever since the angelic and the human fall. This battle, this war, is raging over the whole universe and throughout the course of human history. The central point of this war is the cross. And the decisive battle, if you like, in the war, is the cross, and its consequence, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Roderick Finlayson says that we can be assured of the triumph of the good because this is the way the universe is structured. Every assumption about the universe, about human living, about human flourishing, is about the the triumph or the prevailing of the good over evil. Otherwise, we would all live in a counsel of despair, and no kind of creative human society would be possible. The cross and the resurrection—Peter's speech at Pentecost says that death and hell could not hold Jesus (Acts 2:24). Death could not hold its prey, that the goodness and the power of God triumphed over the worst that this cosmic evil could do, and its human agents.

That is what I say to persecuted Christians, that they are, we are, part of this battle, of this war that is going on. But the cross and the resurrection tell us who is going to win. It is not impossible, therefore, for us to know whose will be the victory. It is known already, however difficult the struggle. And I don't in any way want to minimize the difficulties of the struggle, and the cost that people are having to pay for their following of Christ.

CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

Then, thirdly, there is the question about civic expectation. Christians, when they are persecuted, must expect (and I'll come to this later as well) those in authority to protect them. Of course the fact remains that in many cases the civil authority cannot protect them or does not protect them, or is ineffective in protecting them. But the expectation should be there so when Christians demand that their places of worship should be secure, I think this is a reasonable demand, it's a reasonable expectation from them, and civil authority has a duty to respond to this demand. I've spent the last few weeks talking to civil authorities in Pakistan precisely about this question: how to secure places of worship—only that, not more than that—for Christians? And there are all sorts of issues connected with that in the light of recent events. But what if the civil authority proves ineffective? What happens then? What do the Christians do? Well, Archbishop Justin Welby in his Easter address talks about passive resistance. That is possible: Christians can peacefully demonstrate to make their demands. They can engage in advocacy, in campaigning, in all sorts of ways that are not in any way repaying violence with violence.

I think passive resistance is one of the ways, but it only works in certain situations and not in others. I often say that Gandhi succeeded in his passive resistance because of the oppressor he was resisting. English judges even as they were convicting him to prison would apologize to him: 'I'm sorry Mr Gandhi, but we have to send you to prison for six years.' It wouldn't work in Eritrea, I don't think, to take an example just at random.

THE POSSIBILITY OF FLIGHT

What else is there? Well, there is flight. Jesus himself said—and I've had to face this personally myself—if they don't accept the good news in one town or village, what should you do? Shake the dust off from your feet and go somewhere else. That is possible. That will be the case in many situations. The world has given asylum and refuge to all sorts of people for all sorts of reasons, but persecuted Christians have not been at the centre of

attention, let's put it like that. But they ought to be; I think this ought to change. Why, for instance, can Britain give refuge to indefinite numbers of Muslims from Somalia or North Africa, so many different countries, Egypt now, but refuse to treat Christians even with equity let alone generosity? This is no longer possible.

Of course there is another side to the story. When the situation in Iraq came to a head, there was a move by people in Iraq, and outside, to bring all of Iraqi Christians, or most of them, out of Iraq. I said at that time, that would be doing ISIS's work for it, and that wasn't something we should consider. Of course there will be people, there are people, Iraqi Christians and Yezidis and others, who need to be brought out, who cannot any longer stay in Iraq. But we have to find ways of ensuring that the majority of these people can have a viable life in Iraq, whether it is Christians or Yezidis or Mandaeans or whoever it may be. I'm glad that some recent atrocities have caused some Western governments to revise their policies about Christians: Canada and the Netherlands come to mind in this connection.

WHAT IS MARTYRDOM?

How are we to understand the spiritual state of those who are persecuted or even those who are martyred for the faith? I never thought, when I began my Christian journey, that I would meet anyone who would be martyred for the Christian faith. But that has not proved true. I can now recount to you about a dozen people whom I knew who have been martyred for their faith.

And what does martyrdom mean? What does persecution mean? Because martyrdom may not mean being killed, but certainly it may mean suffering for witnessing to your faith. That is actually what the word means, doesn't it. In the past, and in the classical definition of martyrdom, a martyr was someone who suffered because of what was known as *odium fidei*, hatred of the Christian faith. I mean, that was a qualification, so if you suffered for some other reason, then you were not really a martyr. It had to be hatred of the faith—*odium fidei*. But more recently, people have begun to think about this, whether this is enough, because there have been notable instances of people dying or suffering for reasons that might not be *odium fidei* in the old sense. For example, those in the concentration camps, or in the story that is recorded in *The Miracle on the River Kwai*, people who put themselves forward to be killed because they didn't want others to be killed. So Father Maximilian Kolbe, for instance, saving the lives of those who had families by putting himself forward for execution by the Nazis. Well, that's not *odium fidei* in the old sense: the

Nazis just wanted to kill whoever they wanted to kill. Similarly in the story in *The Miracle on the River Kwai*, those who put themselves forward to be shot by the Japanese instead of other prisoners who were more vulnerable. Well, what category does that fall into?

Then there is the question of those who are struggling for justice, or for freedom, and who are killed because of that. Increasing numbers of Christians who are witnessing to justice and freedom, struggling for justice and freedom for powerless groups of people: if they are killed, are they martyrs? Oscar Romero is clearly an example of such a struggle, but there are many others. So have we got to re-define this whole business of martyrdom, of not just being killed for the faith, but suffering for the faith, of standing for justice, of suffering on behalf of other people? Christians most of all should understand that idea of suffering on behalf of others.

DEFENDING THE WEAK

Then there is the question of response. What kind of response should Christians make when they are persecuted? We have been told repeatedly all day today that Jesus taught us to love our enemies, to pray for those who persecute us. And that continues, of course, to be the case. There is no opting out of that. He also told us to turn the other cheek, and again, there is no opting out of this. But what else is there? We've talked about passive resistance: there is that.

I arrived in a village in Nigeria near Jos on one occasion that had that week been burned down to the ground by Islamic extremists. The people said to me, 'Bishop, we have run out of cheeks to turn.' What do you say to them? After the bombings in the suburbs in Youhanabad in Lahore, there was some very ugly rioting by Christian young people, and the question is, what are we to make of it? What sense? Of course there was pent up anger, there had been incident after incident, causing deaths of numerous Christians in the most horrible way, and nobody had done anything. Well, perhaps this was the last straw. But what are we to say to Christians and to the authorities in such a situation. What I say is this: as far as I can tell there is no case for self-defence in the gospel. What Jesus says is radical, and it holds for us as Christians—the words in St Matthew's gospel not to resist evil, if someone strikes you on one cheek, turn the other, if they take your shirt, give them also your cloak, your coat, and so on. That is true of every believer.

But what am I to say to these villagers in Nigeria about their children who are being killed, about the pregnant women who were horribly stabbed to death, resulting not just in one murder, but two? What am I going to say about their old women and men, being dragged out and

murdered? What about their churches being burned down to the ground? And I am prepared to say there, that whilst we are told not to defend ourselves, we are not told that we should not defend the weak. I'm putting it in that way—that sometimes it may be a Christian duty to defend those who cannot defend themselves, who are oppressed, who are unarmed, who are incapacitated for some reason, who are very young or very old. Now I don't say this lightly. I am not a pacifist, I honour those who are and I can see how what they say springs out of the Christian tradition, but I think it is possible for Christians to engage justifiably in conflict, and we will find in fact in the course of history that we will have to take a view on non-conventional modes of conflict in the world that we now live in. If Christians cannot justify participation at least sometimes in conflict—for example, to prevent genocide, or terrorism—then we will have to accept responsibility for what happens.

REFUGEES AND PROVIDENCE

Thirdly, the question of refugees, those who are unable or unwilling to resist passively or actively—because I've now laid out a case both for passive and sometimes for active resistance, for the reasons I've mentioned—and leave: refugees. What happens to them? The more I go around in the world, the more refugees I see, of course. It's a part of the world scene now. But I have begun to realize that the huge number of refugee movements in our world today are part of God's plan. It is not only tragedy, of course it can be tragedy, it is not only bad news. But this is an opportunity for the good news of Jesus Christ. On a visit recently to Turkey I was able to baptise and to confirm large numbers of refugees from Iran, Iraq, Syria, who would never otherwise have come even into contact with the Christian faith. Since the Islamic Revolution, there are more Irani Christians than there have ever been, *ever* been in history. What does this have to do with providence, with God's purpose for the Iranian people? So I think refugees, the movements are within God's purposes and we have to decide as churches how we are to respond to what God is doing already among these people. Sometimes it is not as dramatic as what has happened to Iranians outside Iran, but the fact that there are now small believing communities in Afghanistan is the result, direct or indirect, of five million Afghan refugees in Pakistan. So we have to make sense of this.

DIFFICULTIES IN THE WEST

There is then the question of the return of persecution in the West. This has been mentioned in the course of our day today. There are some Chris-

tian leaders, very prominent Christian leaders, who say there is no persecution in Britain because look at, you know, real persecution that's going on in Iraq, or Iran, or Pakistan, whatever. Well it is true of course that people are not daily being murdered for their faith in this country. Praise the Lord for that. It is true on the whole that they're not being imprisoned, although I can give you examples of people who have been.

But persecution is not only murder, it is not only physical injury. In many cases, persecution begins with systemic discrimination, with exclusion from public life. And this is happening all over the place now in Britain. People are losing their jobs simply because they profess the Christian faith and therefore are unable to do everything their employer is asking of them. They are being struck off the registers of professional bodies because they have a conscience about some matter or the other. There has been the case of the midwives here in Scotland recently, but I am aware of about one hundred and fifty such cases. Street preachers are being arrested and spending time in the cells before Christian lawyers have the opportunity to get to them and have them released. So if you lose your job, and I know of one Christian family who lost their home because of their faith, that's not the same as being killed for your faith, or being physically injured, but it's not negligible either. Let's put it like this. So we have to think more and more about the suffering of Christians in our midst. We may not agree with everything they say or do, but they are suffering because of *odium fidei*, because of a hostility to the Christian faith and what it demands.

When I began my work—and this is why I stopped being the bishop of Rochester—it was in response to Christian leaders in different parts of the world saying, 'Help us to develop our leadership,' because it is the leadership that suffers first when a church is persecuted. I saw what the problem was: the leaders were being imprisoned, or exiled, or killed in some situations. But then Christians here began to say to me, that's fine, Bishop, that you are going and working with people in Iran, or Pakistan, or Egypt, or Iraq, or Sudan, but what about your own doorstep? What are you doing here? So I could not neglect what was happening on the doorstep, if I was with integrity to do something for people further away. I think we all have to consider this matter.

RENDERING TO CAESAR—ARE THERE LIMITS?

The default position for Christians is obedience to those who have been set to rule over us. That is St Paul's argument in Romans 13, also in 1 Peter 2, in 1 Timothy, that is the default position. But it assumes what you might call a godly magistrate, a ruler who is fulfilling God's purposes

for a particular society. But the question already in the New Testament is, how does a godly magistrate then turn into the evil beast of the Revelation? And what do you do then? What do you do when a Nero comes to the throne? I think in those situations, and actually in all situations, Christians will obey the powers that be except when they command us to do something which God forbids, or they forbid something that God commands. In those cases we have to say with the apostles, we must obey God rather than you.

I don't know about Scotland, but English Christians are not very good at saying this kind of thing. The spirit of compromise is everywhere, people don't want to raise their heads above parapets. It's dangerous business doing it of course, because it might be shot off. They don't want to lose their respectability in society—so many different reasons. But we have to be clear about this if we are ever going to be clear about our discipleship, whatever the cost, and not simply as individual believers but as churches. Fudging this question will mean the end of Christian faith in public life in this country. Now I'm not saying that we have to be extremist about this, or perhaps in the way that some people are, loud and offensive. But this can be done with graciousness, with love, and with a desire for the common good. That must be the ruling reason why we do this.

In England, anyway, this is probably true also of Scotland, the church has worked like salt, if we are going to use an evangelical metaphor. Salt is invisible, it does its work invisibly. If salt is visible, it means you've put in too much! It gives taste, it is a preservative, and it is also a nutrient. (This is a matter of debate between my wife and myself, whether salt is a nutrient or not—I think it is! Well, you try living without salt in a hot climate, and see what happens.) The point is, it does its work invisibly. And the churches in these islands have also been a bit like that. They have worked with the grain of society. The Church of England has been very good, no doubt the Church of Scotland as well, at hatching, matching, dispatching—the rites of passage that are important for every society. Nothing wrong with that: opportunities for mission. But the question is whether we have reached a stage in national life when we need to change the metaphor, from one evangelical metaphor to another, from salt to light. Now light is quite different from salt, because light works by being visible. There's no point in having light, as Jesus himself said—you don't light a candle and hide it under the table, but you put it where everyone can see it and be seen by it. So the question is are the churches going to be the light by which people can see the truth of the gospel, to adapt something that C.S. Lewis said a long time ago. If they're going to be that, then that of course means a reorientation from a pastoral paradigm to a missionary one. So it's no longer the paradigm of caring for people in times of

bereavement, times of joy, all of that. But to reorient ourselves to the world in such a way that we are being light in the darkness. And the darkness, of course, will increase as time goes on. We have to be prepared for that.

This is already the case in many other parts of the world where Christians see themselves as light in an encroaching darkness. And that is the reason why they attract people to themselves. In a country like Iran where all kinds of reasons can be given against people approaching Christians or the church, and yet the house churches are growing. The most remarkable people are coming to faith in Jesus Christ. They are being attracted by the light of the gospel that they see in Christians and also in churches. There are numerous stories that I can tell and others can tell about that.

WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

So then, finally, if we're thinking of confident faith, building up confident faith, in a world where the church is being persecuted in many different ways, what should our attitude be towards these Christians, whether they're near at hand, or further away? The first, of course, is praying: praying in an informed way for situations and peoples. I am so encouraged now that churches have more information about how to pray: Open Doors, Christian Solidarity, Release International, Aid to the Church in Need—so many people now are providing information. There is no excuse now for you not to pray as a church, in your personal prayers or family prayers, to pray in an informed way for Christians who are being persecuted. Secondly, giving. Again, it is good that we are so easily able to give to Christians, to help with their spiritual and material needs. Every church should have some priority for that, every Christian, this should be part of their tithing, their giving, however they organize it, but it should be a part of it intentionally. Thirdly, going. Not just giving from a distance, but getting involved. This is the kind of *kenosis*, the incarnational model for Christian witness and Christian life that we were talking about earlier.

I am always amazed at how valued it is when Christians from somewhere else come to visit those who are under pressure. It means an incredible amount to them, perhaps beyond our comprehension. We may think, well, what will we do, what can we do? But simply that act of solidarity, and there are now tours that will take you to places where there is need. These are not easy places to visit. This is not tourism. But it is necessary. Some theological educators came to me a few years ago and said, Bishop, can you tell us where there is a need for theological education, we'd like to go and help. So I gave them a particular situation, and the chairman then came to me and he said, they're asking whether it's safe. And again, you

know, quoting C.S. Lewis, I had to say to them: it's not safe, but it's good. So we have to take risks for the sake of our fellow Christians, and for the strengthening of our own faith.

And then there is campaigning. I think it does make a difference to people on the spot if the world takes notice. So to American Christians, I'm always telling them to go to their Congressman. I think here we should go to our MPs, we should go to the Foreign Office, who are sometimes unaware of what is happening to Christians in a particular place. We should go to the Home Office where it's a question of asylum and refuge for Christians. International organizations—the United Nations Human Rights Council, is sitting at the moment in Geneva. I know of one Christian agency from this country that is present there at this time. I'm not sure if others are, but they should be, and we should be asking them to be. With foreign governments—we had a gathering of Christians in Parliament recently, and we invited the former Pakistani High Commissioner there to listen to what Christians were saying, and in the course of the meeting he said he was ashamed to hear what was being said about the way in which Christians were being treated in Pakistan. I think there is a process of conscientizing people about what is happening, and that may be Muslims. There are many Muslims who are well disposed: Reh Chishti, I mentioned him. He and I have worked together more than I have with any Christian on the blasphemy laws in Pakistan. So we should be finding such partners, but we will not if we don't campaign.

Just to finish with a story. I went with a Christian organization to pray outside the Pakistani High Commission. We were standing there praying, a posse of police in between us and the front door. Anyway, after a while the High Commissioner sent for me. So I went in, and he said, why are you demonstrating against us outside. So I said, we are not demonstrating, we are praying for you. So he said, Oh really, you're praying for us? I said, yes, that's what they're doing. So he immediately picked up his telephone, and asked his communications man to come. He said, these people are praying for us outside! Anyway, he then said, when this man arrived with his camera, Can I come and pray with them, to the consternation of the London police, who were trying of course to keep us apart. So we ended up on the pavement outside, with these people who had come with me, the Christians, praying for the High Commissioner and his government that he represented. That is how it should be.