



HOW WIDE IS YOUR CONCERN?

By Richard Wurmbrand

While Cleopas and a friend journeyed toward a village called Emmaus, Jesus joined them and asked what they were discussing. But they did not recognize him. Cleopas asked Jesus, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And the resurrected Jesus said to them, "What things?" (Luke 24:18-19).

So many things had happened in Jerusalem. Two robbers had been crucified. Would one of Jesus' disciples have gone to comfort their grief-stricken mothers? One of these thieves had become a brother. Jesus' disciples should at least have provided him a decent burial. And what about his executioners? They had shown wickedness. They needed salvation. Would one of Jesus' disciples have loved

them and shown them the way to receive forgiveness?

Many things happened in three days. "What things?" asks Jesus. He is interested in all aspects of human life — virtues and sins, joys and sorrows. He wishes to share everything with us. But as the disciples spoke about "things" that had come to pass in Jerusalem, they were really obsessed with only one thing: What had happened to Jesus, whom they loved?

Many Christians are concerned only with their own personal relationship with the Lord. But Christ is the life — the life around them. It is he whom you can see in hungry, thirsty, naked, sick and enslaved humanity. He has become its sin. For many Christians, religion is only he and I, forgetting that the love between a man and Christ is always a love in a broader relationship: he, his whole creation and me. A Christian, as an heir of God, shares his responsibilities. The whole world is his parish, including our brothers and sisters in Communist countries.

The Communists have not succeeded in winning leading personalities or thinkers among Christ's followers to their cause. But the global body of Christ has won leading Communist personalities to Christ. The greater the persecution, the greater the inner urge for witnessing. So God makes the wrath of men to praise him. The terrible oppression makes Christians witness for Christ to the torturers who are ruling in Communist countries. And they do it with more success than we can disclose.

A pastor of the Russian underground church told me, "In the upper classes of the Communist structure it has become a fashion now to read the Bible and to inquire about God." He gave us names of those

converted. There were names that had made headlines in the news.

The gospel has advanced among the ruling class in other Communist countries also. When the Bolsheviks entered Czechoslovakia, the members of the Czech Parliament, surrounded by Russian troops, were in panic. Only one member, a Christian, quietly took out his Bible and read. The others asked him, "Don't you care about the tragedy around us? We ourselves might be arrested and deported to Siberia soon. How can you sit so quietly?" He answered, "This is the Word of God; it gives comfort to the troubled heart." Then they invited him to read the Scriptures from the rostrum of the Communist Parliament, from which only bitter Leninist theories had been propagated. Sixty members of Parliament asked for Bibles afterward and received them.

This is the underground church working under conditions of terror but winning even its oppressors for Christ. It is dangerous work not only for them, but for us, too. Yet the work must be done. It is stupid to fear those who can kill only the body and afterward can do nothing, instead of fearing the One who can throw body and soul into hell.

In China, a sword was put to the chest of a Christian, and its wielder asked, "Are you a Christian?" He answered, "Yes." They would have killed him, but an officer said, "Free him; he is an idiot." One asked him afterward, "How could you confess Christ with such courage?" His reply was, "I had read the story of Peter's denial of Christ, and I did not wish to weep bitterly." Neither do we wish to weep for the neglect of fulfilling our duty toward our oppressed brethren and their oppressors, who are also beloved by Christ.

Communism is advancing, and

we have to do our best to win the Communists for Christ. Communism has advanced in the United States.

The youth of America have been poisoned with Communist ideas.

"What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" Jesus asked the two disciples (Luke 24:17). If he asks you this question, let the answer not be, "My only concern is a very narrow one — you and me." Enlarge your vision. Love God, love his whole creation, love good and evil men, love the martyrs in prison and their torturers, and help that they might all be brought to the One who was concerned for all, who shares everybody's tears and joys and who died and resurrected for all. ■



Richard Wurmbbrand (1909 – 2001) was imprisoned in Communist Romania for his faith in Christ. He and his wife, Sabina (1913 – 2000), later sought ways to serve persecuted Christians and in 1967 started a global ministry known today as *The Voice of the Martyrs*. You can read VOM's books about Richard and Sabina Wurmbbrand and watch the two feature films about their lives for free on the VOM App. The app is available for download in the App Store and on Google Play.