

## Jesus and the Powers that Be

A sermon preached by the Reverend Theodore S. Atkinson, Minister, Oxford Presbyterian Church, Oxford, PA on the second Sunday in Lent, March 8, 1998. Scripture Lessons: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Psalm 27; Philippians, 3:17-4:1; Luke 13:31-35.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN

Introduction: Overview and show map of the world

A Regent University study showed that worldwide, more Christians were martyred last year than in the first century: 156,000 people.

### I. Pesection in Egypt

Coptic Orthodox Church comprises 90% of the Christian community in Egypt. 9,900,000 adherents (or 16% of the country's population).

Upper Egypt in May 1992, 13 Christians and 1 Muslim were shot dead by Muslim extremists.

Kamel Azmy Samaan A church treasurer, married with 6 children. He was ambushed by members of a muslim extremist group on the morning of 21 December 1991 and beaten to unconsciousness by iron pipes.

Two converts from Islam to Christianity, Mustafa Muhammad Said Al Sharkawi and Muhammad Hussein Muhammad Sallam, were arrested by officers of the State Security Bureau at their homes at night on 28 September 1990. They were detained in Prison till their release on 13 July 1991 following international pressure. While in prison the converts were tortured and given food only on condition that they participate in Muslim prayers. Torture included being suspended by their wrists from manacles and subjected to electric shocks. The three were held without trial on the basis of Emergency Security Law. Criminal charges were never brought against them.

Dr Abdul-Rahman Muhammad Abdul-Ghaffar was arrested at Cairo International Airport upon his return to Egypt from abroad in October 1987. He had become a Christian in November 1986. He spent almost the next two years in prison- mostly in solitary confinement. He was denied visitors for the whole period of detention. Although he was detained ~~under addenda-98w~~ (see above), no specific charges were laid and there were no court appearances. During his detention he suffered beatings from other inmates and abuse by his guards for his apostasy;

Abdul Hamid Beshan Abd El Mohzen converted to Christianity in April 1986. He, too, was arrested in a Coptic Orthodox Church. His detention lasted from June 1989 until March 1990. In August 1989 and on 4 other occasions he was tortured in detention.

### II. Sudan

The Nuba mountains lie in the center of Africa's largest country, Sudan. The inhabitants of this mountainous area, collectively referred to as the Nuba people, are a cluster of 50 ethnic groups estimated to number 1,200,000 people. Some of the Nuba date their Christianity back to the early centuries. Christianity is currently on the increase, becoming very attractive to the youth in particular precisely because it has been opposed by the Muslim government.

The Muslims Arab North (Sudan's ruling power) has been attacking the Christians in the Black South since 1955 making it the longest war of this century and bringing the toll to an estimated 2 million. The atrocities have been the most severe in the Nuba Mountains. Most of the villages and churches have been destroyed, hundreds of Christians crucified, and over one million people have been forced into concentration camps.

The exceptionally severe human suffering, human rights abuses and persecution of the Christians communities in the Nuba mountains must be the worst experienced anywhere in the world today. At this critical time the Nuba need the prayers, solidarity, and practical support of Christians worldwide.

### III. Philippines

Bishop de Jesus, O.M.I., of the diocese of Jolo, the Philippines, was killed outside his cathedral. He was gunned down early on February 4th by three masked gunmen. Philippine police made no guesses to motive or suspects, but Bishop de Jesus had been frequently threatened with death by Muslim separatists.

### IV. Zaire

Marist Brothers Servando Mayor Garcia, Miguel Angel Isla Lucio, Fernando de la Fuente and Julio Rodriguez Jorge were murdered on October 31, 1995 in Eastern Zaire by Rwandan militants. The four missionaries were all from Spain and were working on behalf of the many Rwandan refugees in that war-torn district.

### V. Burundi

Archbishop Ruhuna, an ethnic Tutsi who presided over the central Diocese of Gitega, Burundi, was ambushed on September 9. His car was fired on and torched. Sister Concessa Ndacikiriwe, Sister Irene Gakobwa, and an unnamed woman church accountant were also killed.

### VI. Algeria

Earlier this year seven French Trappist monks were executed by Islamic extremists in Algeria after being used as political pawns. The stated objective of the terrorists was to rid Algeria of Christians. Archbishop Pierre Claverie (1996) - This Algerian bishop lost his life after speaking out against the senseless deaths of 7 French Trappists.

### VII. Guatemala

Conclusion: *You have persecuted - Jews, Muslims, other Xns, etc.*

1. Prayer for Christians around the world
2. Read and learn about Christians beyond the United States
3. Become pen-pals with Christians in other parts of the world
4. Support the church around the world through mission giving.
5. Visit personally when you take an overseas vacation