

# barnabasaid

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BARNABAS FUND - AID AGENCY FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2016



Suffering Church  
Action Week

30 OCTOBER – 6 NOVEMBER 2016

16 PAGES OF INFORMATION AND RESOURCES INSIDE  
FOR YOU AND YOUR CHURCH

# WAR ON THE SAINTS

  
barnabasfund  
hope and aid for the persecuted church

## The Barnabas Fund Distinctive

What helps make Barnabas Fund distinctive from other Christian organisations that deal with persecution?

### We work by:

- directing our aid only to Christians, although its benefits may not be exclusive to them ("As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." Galatians 6:10, emphasis added)
- aiming the majority of our aid at Christians living in Muslim environments
- channelling money from Christians through Christians to Christians
- channelling money through existing structures in the countries where funds are sent (e.g. local churches or Christian organisations)
- using the money to fund projects that have been developed by local Christians in their own communities, countries or regions
- considering any request, however small
- acting as equal partners with the persecuted Church, whose leaders often help shape our overall direction

- acting on behalf of the persecuted Church, to be their voice – making their needs known to Christians around the world and the injustice of their persecution known to governments and international bodies

### We seek to:

- meet both practical and spiritual needs
- encourage, strengthen and enable the existing local Church and Christian communities – so they can maintain their presence and witness rather than setting up our own structures or sending out missionaries
- tackle persecution at its root by making known the aspects of the Islamic faith and other ideologies that result in injustice and oppression of non-believers
- inform and enable Christians in the West to respond to the growing challenge of Islam to Church, society and mission in their own countries

- facilitate global intercession for the persecuted Church by providing comprehensive prayer materials

### We believe:

- we are called to address both religious and secular ideologies that deny full religious liberty to Christian minorities – while continuing to show God's love to all people
- in the clear Biblical teaching that Christians should treat all people of all faiths with love and compassion, even those who seek to persecute them
- in the power of prayer to change people's lives and situations, either through grace to endure or through deliverance from suffering

**"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."**

(Matthew 25:40)

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**www.barnabasfund.org** or **phone 0800 587 4006**  
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**barnabasfund**  
hope and aid for the persecuted church

# War in heaven

**K**ingdoms are in turmoil. Uncertainty abounds. Danger threatens.

On Wednesday 29 June 2016, Egyptian president Abdel Fattah el-Sisi declared that “the Muslim world is going through a dangerous turning point and is facing unprecedented challenges targeting its existence”. He spoke of the Muslim world fragmenting, of the creation of movements that are hostile to other religious groups and minorities, and of the dangers this will pose not only to Muslim societies but to the rest of humanity.

But it is not just Islam which is at a dangerous turning point. Hinduism has increasingly moved into militancy. It has taken a turn backwards in time to rediscover its lost heritage and to identify India and its peoples with a new militant ideology. The same goes for Buddhism, which is rediscovering its nationalist identity, as well as for the worldwide resurgence in totalitarianism of many kinds. In Russia, more and more the move is towards the suppression of religion liberty and free speech and a regurgitation of its old Marxist past. For the West, what has been termed “the new civic religion” is seeking to control the hearts and minds of nations with its own ethics, doctrines and practices.

What all of these movements have in common is their implacable hatred of Christianity, their desire to see the Church of Jesus Christ come to an end and to create a world that is free of Christian presence, Christian values and Christian ideals.

A war is currently raging. The rise of these ideologies and their conflict with Christianity and the Church must be seen not just from a human perspective but also from the divine. There is war in heaven (Revelation 12:7), with Satan and his hordes in violent conflict with Michael and the angels. At the heart of this conflict is Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)

The forces of hell have now been unleashed, as before in the past, but now with much greater ferocity. There is growing persecution of the Church worldwide, but it is taking the form not of mere discrimination but of annihilation. It seeks nothing less than the genocide of Christianity. The devil is on earth, roaming around, filled with fury and hatred (Revelation 12:14).

As for the Church, we can be assured that God keeps her in the palms of His hands, that she is destined for glory as Christ’s bride and that she will be victorious. But, for now, she must be faithful unto death, keep her testimony true and pure, and know that she is protected by the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:11).

*Please use the resources in this issue of Barnabas Aid to remember the persecuted Church during Suffering Church Action Week, 30 October – 6 November, which focuses on “War on the saints”.*

## AS FOR THE CHURCH, WE CAN BE ASSURED THAT GOD KEEPS HER IN THE PALMS OF HIS HANDS



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# how barnabas is helping

## Historic conference equips Musgum Christian women to face persecution

“We are very happy and overwhelmed with joy for what we have just experienced. Women are honoured and have understood that their place is essential to missionary work,” says Louise, following a unique four-day Christian women’s conference in Cameroon.

Attended by over 1,000 Christian women from the Muslim-majority Musgum people-group of Cameroon and Chad, the conference achieved a range of objectives, including equipping the women to face persecution (e.g. from Boko Haram) and engage in mission. Barnabas Fund contributed to the conference’s running costs.

“I am moved with joy for this historic meeting which is the first of its kind,” said Linda, another of the attendees.



Musgum Christian women during the conference

**£3,310 to assist with the running costs of a conference for Musgum Christian women living in Cameroon and Chad**  
(\$4,300; €3,890)

*Project reference 00-430  
Leadership Training Fund*

## Enabling pastors in Sierra Leone to support their families

“I am grateful that God made it possible for me to be a beneficiary of this project ... I am now able to take care of my family including some Ebola orphans we adopted and we are all very happy together,” says Pastor Edward.

Pastor Edward is part of the third group of 40 pastors serving in Muslim-dominated regions in Sierra Leone – all on very low wages – to benefit from a project, financed by Barnabas Fund, which is enabling them to supplement their meagre incomes and thus better provide for their families. The project provides the pastors with seeds, tools, goats and basic training in farming and goat rearing.

The project – which has helped 120 pastors over three years – is making an enormous difference, including improving families’ health through a better diet. Each pastor has also received a bicycle to use for pastoral visits.



Pastor Edward with his family

**£20,433 to help 40 rural pastors in Sierra Leone towards self-sufficiency**  
(\$26,535; €24,000)

*Project reference 46-851*

## Renovation of Bulgarian church building for convert congregation

“The funding has crucial significance for the existence and future development of the Turkish-speaking congregation,” writes a church leader in Bulgaria on the recent renovation of a church building which Barnabas Fund helped finance.

The congregation of 65-70 people are all converts from Bulgaria’s Turkish-speaking Muslim minority. The church building – which was purchased last year using a grant from Barnabas – was in need of major work. Local contributions and an additional grant from Barnabas have enabled the church to renovate the church hall and children’s room as well as install a new toilet and small kitchen.



The church gathering together in the building which Barnabas Fund helped purchase and, more recently, renovate

**£1,062 towards renovating church building for a Turkish-speaking congregation in Bulgaria**  
(\$1,377; €1,246)

*Project reference 62-1205*

Strengthened and encouraged. This is what we often hear from Christians who have received support from Barnabas Fund. Thank you for making this possible. The following pages are just a few examples of the many ways we have recently helped persecuted and pressurised Christians.

## New glasses draw big smiles

One hundred Syrian Christian children in Wadi Al-Nasara [Valley of the Christians], Syria, can now focus on their studies after support from Barnabas Fund provided them with eye tests and glasses.

Barnabas Fund stepped in because the parents could not pay for this comparatively low-cost medical intervention. Five years of unrelenting civil war – more than half of some of the children's lives – have left families displaced, jobless and impoverished. With the passing years, the eyesight problems of the children worsened.

“My headaches were very bad and I was embarrassed at school when I couldn't read well from the board,” said 13-year-old Diana from Aleppo. Now with new glasses, her headaches have been replaced with big smiles!



Thirteen-year-old Diana

**£3,860 for eyes tests and new glasses for Christian children in Syria**  
(\$5,000; €4,525)  
each eye test and pair of glasses cost on average £35  
(\$50; €45)

Project reference 00-1032

## Monthly food packages for 40 Christian families in Pakistan affected by persecution

Sobia, aged 35, lives in Pakistan's Punjab province with her three children. Her husband and the family's main breadwinner, Sawan Masih, has been in prison since 2013 on a false charge of “blasphemy”. In 2014 he was sentenced to death (a decision currently being appealed).

Struggling financially – including being unable to send her children to school – Sobia approached the Centre for Legal Aid, Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS) for help. Through its food project, which Barnabas Fund supports, the family now receives a monthly food package which is even enabling the children to return to school.

Since 2011 our support has equipped the project to provide monthly food packages for 30 families affected by persecution, especially false accusations of blasphemy. In January 2016 this support was increased to cover 40 families per month. Each food package costs £18 (\$24, €21).



Sobia with her three children

**£4,320 to provide monthly food packages for six months for 40 families affected by persecution in Pakistan**  
(\$5,605, €5,072)

Project reference 41-331

## Tractor purchased for seven Christian families

“It has helped individual Christians to work their own lands and provide for their own families,” writes “Rustam”, a local church leader in central Asia. “We still face strong discrimination and persecution but now we can be independent from locals.”

Christians living in a Central Asian village, all converts from Islam, are so isolated and rejected because of their decision to follow Christ that the Muslim majority refuse to speak with them, or to invite them to events like weddings and funerals, or even to allow them to use the bus. Seven Christian families have also been stopped from renting tractors from local Muslims.

Barnabas Fund, alongside local contributions, has enabled a local church to purchase a new tractor for the seven families to use. The church has even been able to lend the tractor to churches in surrounding villages who face similar challenges.



One of the seven Christian families to benefit from the new tractor which Barnabas Fund helped purchase

**£3,000 to help purchase a tractor for seven Christian families in Central Asia affected by persecution**  
(\$3,900, €3,520)

Project reference 00-345  
Victims of Violence Fund

1



Anwara, a regular viewer of Gawahi TV, being interviewed by the station; she says that following the fire she prayed daily for Gawahi TV to be restored

2



Sara and her daughter, Maryam

3



Barnabas Fund is standing alongside the parents of the Chibok schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram

# bringing hope, transforming lives



## Torched Pakistani Christian TV station back on air

**1** In November 2015, broadcasting equipment and computers for Gawahi TV, a Christian television station in Pakistan (the name means “testimony”), were destroyed in a suspected arson attack on their offices. The blaze – which took nearly two hours to extinguish and appeared to have been specifically aimed at destroying valuable computers and video cameras – took the station off air.

Barnabas Fund, alongside local contributors, has enabled the station to replace their video cameras, computers and an air conditioning unit. Gawahi TV is now back on air, sharing the Gospel with up to 14 million people across Karachi.

Christian television stations like Gawahi TV encourage believers and are a vital source of connection for those unable to be part of a local church community. The station began broadcasting on local cable networks in 2013 but now hopes to transmit via satellite to the whole of Pakistan and neighbouring countries.

Speaking of Barnabas Fund’s recent support, Sarfaz of Gawahi TV writes, “This funding really strengthened our churches here in Karachi”. One of the station’s regular viewers, Safia, a Christian who lives in a Muslim neighbourhood in Karachi, said that as there is no church in her area, she relies on Gawahi TV for encouragement, worship and Bible teaching. “We felt that we have church in our home,” she says.

**£14,305 to cover the cost of replacement broadcasting equipment at a Christian TV station in Pakistan**  
(\$16,800, €18,560)

Project reference 00-345  
Victims of Violence Fund



## Aid for Iraqi and Syrian Christian families in Turkey

**2** “Mainly through the generous support of Barnabas Fund,” writes our contact at a Middle East organisation to whom we recently sent a grant of £100,000, “we have built an effective infrastructure in Turkey to support these Iraqi and Syrian Christian refugees.”

This support is vital. As a minority group, Christian refugees in the country are especially vulnerable to being overlooked and even discriminated against, leaving them with little or no support.

An Iraqi Christian widow called “Sara” and her daughter, “Maryam”, like so many Iraqi Christians, had to flee the anti-Christian violence of Islamic State. They are now living in Turkey in very poor conditions. Essential aid has reached Sara and Maryam - food, clothing, and medical assistance for Sara’s asthma.

Barnabas Fund’s grant has so far helped 1,062 Syrian and Iraq Christian families in ten cities across Turkey, with support geared to each family’s circumstances. A key feature of the project is the provision of pre-paid cards which can be used to purchase food and other household items at a supermarket chain. This gives the refugees the dignity of shopping for themselves without it being obvious that they are receiving charitable aid.

The broad-ranging nature of the project also includes, where needed, the payment of electricity bills and legal advice for asylum applications.

**£100,000 to provide vital aid for 1,062 Iraqi and Syrian Christian families living in Turkey**  
(\$129,620, €117,340)

Project reference 00-1199  
Operation Safe Havens



## Standing alongside the parents of kidnapped Chibok schoolgirls

**3** “Since the abduction of my beloved daughter in 2014, it has been very difficult for me to trust people, mingle with others freely, eat and sleep as a normal human being,” says the mother of one of the 274 mainly Christian teenage girls kidnapped from their school in Chibok, Nigeria, in April 2014. “But your teachings have changed my perspective. I now leave everything to God.”

Another parent, whose daughters remain held, writes, “For the past two years it’s difficult for me to do something for myself. I cannot even eat to my satisfaction because anytime I have food placed before me as a father a question will come to my mind, ‘Do my daughters have something to eat in the bush?’ Then tears will flow from my eyes and I will just leave the food. But your counsel and advice has given me confidence to trust God for their needs.”

In May 2016, Barnabas Fund sent a grant to provide crucial aid and support to 215 sets of Christian parents still waiting for their daughters to be released. This included the provision of three sessions of trauma counselling, spiritual support and health care. Alongside this, each parent was given food items such as rice, maize, salt and oil, and to help generate income 105 families were given a sewing machine and 110 a knitting machine.

**£32,555 to provide food, income-generation equipment and trauma counselling for 215 sets of parents of schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram**  
(\$42,200, €38,200)

Project reference 39-1286

# WAR ON THE SAINTS

## RESOURCES

Getting resources for Suffering Church Action Week couldn't be easier. Just order our free **War on the Saints Inspiration Pack**, and we'll provide you with everything you need to get started.

### The Inspiration Pack includes (one of each):



A DVD about Barnabas Fund's work, including a video, a sermon PowerPoint presentation with photos, and digital copies of the SCAW resources.



An A3 **War on the Saints** poster to advertise your Suffering Church Action Week events (can also be downloaded at [www.barnabasfund.org/scaw](http://www.barnabasfund.org/scaw) or printed out from the DVD).



Prayer bookmark.



An eight-day devotional pull-out to help you pray through the week (can also be printed out from the DVD and a version is available at [www.barnabasfund.org/scaw](http://www.barnabasfund.org/scaw).)



A money box that could be used when taking up a collection or for individuals at home.



A sample Gift Aid envelope for a donation.



An additional copy of this issue of *Barnabas Aid* magazine.

Prayer resources can be used during the Barnabas Fund International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church on Saturday 5 November (please see right for further information).

### Sponsorship form

If you're planning a sponsored event for Barnabas, let us take the hassle out of your preparations. Download a pre-prepared sponsorship form from [www.barnabasfund.org/scaw](http://www.barnabasfund.org/scaw) or order hard copies using the form on page 19.



### Thinking BIG?

Extra quantities of any of the resources in the pack can be ordered for free. You may find it especially useful to order extras of the following items: A3 poster, eight-day devotional pull-out, prayer bookmarks, money boxes, Gift Aid envelopes.

For example, you may want to order an eight-day devotional pull-out for each member of your home group. You could also place a Gift Aid envelope on each seat at your Suffering Church Sunday service, so that Barnabas Fund can claim an extra 25p from the government for every £1 given by a UK taxpayer.



**T**

he Book of Revelation, chapter 12, describes the spiritual battle waged between Michael and his angelic army and Satan and his dark forces. In prophetic terms the Scriptures tell how Satan, thwarted, vents His fury on the Church, seeking to destroy, deceive or render spiritually ineffective the followers of Christ.

We see Satan at work today in the suffering being endured by Christians in the Middle East; in the bitter persecution being meted out to Christians in many other parts of the world; and in the strident calls from secular humanists and others in the West for Christianity to be relegated to the status of a mere lifestyle choice.

We know that Jesus has already won His victory over Satan, sin and death through the cross and His resurrection. We, His followers, will join in His victory, not by taking up arms against those who seek to harm us but through our faithfulness, our witness and by being prepared to give up our lives for Jesus' sake.

In the following pages, there are accounts of how persecution and opposition to Christians and the Christian faith have been growing in recent years – and also, how Christians have risen to the challenge to remain steadfast and courageous, sometimes to the very point of death.

There are also suggestions on how to get involved in Suffering Church Action Week. A pull-out Devotional Guide contains daily readings and prayers for the week. A free **War on the Saints** Inspiration Pack, containing examples of all the materials you will need to take part, is available to order (see page 19). There is also an appeal leaflet with this magazine giving information about how Barnabas supports Christians where they are at high risk of violence.



### Suggested songs for your Suffering Church Sunday Service



- **"Blessed be Your Name** – Matt Redman, Mission Praise 1036
- **Cornerstone** – Edward Mote, Eric Liljero, Jonas Myrin, Reuben Morgan
- **More than Conquerors** – Rend Collective
- **You Never Let Go** – Matt Redman, Songs of Fellowship 1753
- **A Safe Stronghold our God is Still** – Martin Luther
- **O Church, Arise and Put Your Armour On** – Stuart Townend and Keith Getty, Songs of Fellowship 1981
- **Stand Up! Stand Up for Jesus** – George Duffield, Songs of Fellowship 513
- **Turn your Eyes upon Jesus** – Helen H Lemmel

### Suffering Church Action Week offering



Persecuted Christians need spiritual support to stand firm in their hostile world, and they are also encouraged in their faith when we show them the love of Christ by meeting their material needs. Please turn to pages 4-7 to read about the many ways in which Barnabas Fund helps our persecuted brothers and sisters.

If you take up an offering for persecuted Christians on Suffering Church Sunday, you may like it to support a particular project or need described in these pages. If not, we recommend that you donate it to our General Fund (Project number 000). Giving to the General Fund allows us flexibility in allocating funds, so that we can use your donation wherever the need is greatest. It enables us to react quickly to emergency situations and to meet needs that are too sensitive for us to publicise.

### Tell us what you think



We aim to make our resources as relevant, useful and inclusive as possible. But we can only make this happen if we know what our supporters need and want. Please let us know what you think about this year's resources: what was useful, what could be improved and if there is anything you would like to see included in the future. You can provide your feedback by filling in the online form at [www.barnabasfund.org/scaw](http://www.barnabasfund.org/scaw) or by contacting your nearest Barnabas office (address on inside front cover).

### Daily devotional pull-out feature



**War on the Saints** is a devotional resource that has been specially designed for SCAW. It includes daily readings and prayers from Revelation 12:7-12 based on the theme for the week, "War on the Saints". For each of the eight days you will find a reading, a comment and a suggested prayer.

The pull-out is included in this issue of *Barnabas Aid* magazine.

## PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH 2016

*Come, O Lord, and save Your suffering people.  
In their distress and anguish, rescue them.  
Bring them aid and deliverance by Your power.  
Turn Your eyes upon them,  
Enfold them in Your arms,  
Keep them close to Your heart,  
And sustain them by Your presence.*

*From Satan's hand, keep them.  
From Satan's conspiracies, save them.  
From Satan's destructive powers, deliver them.  
From Satan's slanderous accusations, guard them.  
From Satan's lies and deceit, enlighten them.*

*O Lord, deliver them from the evil one.  
Give them faith to stand against the works of Satan,  
Protect them with the blood of the Lamb,  
Make them faithful in the word of their testimony,  
Give them grace to embrace a martyr's death,  
Embolden them with courage,  
And grant them victory over the power of evil.*

*In Christ's Name we pray,*

**Amen**

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## BARNABAS FUND DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH



### Saturday 5 November

Can you join with us in praying for our suffering brothers and sisters, asking the Lord to strengthen them and help them to be faithful to Him in the face of persecution?

### Getting involved

You can use our resources for your own prayer on the day, or maybe your church could set up a special event. Let us know if your day of prayer event is open to all. You can register the details on the special website devoted to Suffering Church Action Week [www.barnabasfund.org/scaw](http://www.barnabasfund.org/scaw).

If your church or group is not running an event but you would like to join with others to pray, why not check the map on the website? It marks the location of all prayer events that have been registered with us.

# WAR ON THE SAINTS

## INTENSIFIES

<b>2001</b>											
<b>2002</b>	Signing of peace deal in Moluccan Islands, Indonesia, after thousands of Christians had been killed by armed groups.										
	Boko Haram founded in Maiduguri, Nigeria.	<b>2003</b>	Beginning of US led invasion of Iraq.	<b>2004</b>	Renewed violence in Ambon, Moluccan Islands, Indonesia. Christians killed and injured. Churches and theological university destroyed.	<b>2005</b>	Second Sudanese Civil War finally ends, after hundreds of thousands of Christians were killed.	<b>2006</b>	Taliban insurgency gains momentum, destabilising Pakistan and Afghanistan.	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>



The last twenty years have seen a dramatic increase in violence against Christians, both in the number of

incidents and in their severity. Over the last five years there has been an even more rapid acceleration.

Some countries, where Christians lived relatively peaceably a generation ago, have disintegrated into an all-out religious cleansing of Christians. In others, the low-level violence that was already present has intensified.

Although violence is just one of the forms of persecution that Christians face around the globe – others include discrimination, harassment and intimidation – it is generally the most shocking and severe. Christians have their property looted; their churches, houses, businesses or fields torched; they are forced from their homes; suffer physical assault and injury. They may be arrested, imprisoned, tortured, even executed.

Barnabas Fund has made an analysis of the level of violence against Christians around the globe now in 2016 and in 1996, illustrated in the two world maps overleaf. A comparison of the two shows how over 20 years the conditions for Christians have severely deteriorated.

Eleven countries have seen a worsening of violence against Christians, four of them moving up two categories. Eight additional countries are seeing violence against Christians, two of which are in the critical category (Somalia and Syria), and two in the high-level category (Iraq and Libya). Three additional countries are now seeing a critical level of violence, up by 300% compared to 1996.

Countries that have seen improvements are few. Only four have seen a decrease in the levels of violence, and in only one country (Mongolia) have conditions for Christians improved to the degree that it is no longer marked on the map.

When looking at the sources of violence, a high number of

governments continue to be violators, although their level of violence has largely remained about the same. Authorities in Iran, for example, continue to imprison and torture believers, especially those from a Muslim background.

The authorities in North Korea – for many years cited as the most dangerous place in the world to be a Christian – have become even harsher. It is now thought that the number of Christians abused, tortured and worked to death in labour camps for their faith could be as high as 100,000.

The sources which are fuelling the increase are primarily community violence and terrorism. Terrorism, especially, has increased dramatically over the last two decades, with an accelerated rise in the last five years.

### Why is this happening?

The upsurge in anti-Christian violence that is taking place today has its roots in long-term changes, many of which have had an impact over a period of decades.

Violent attack against Christians in Orissa, India. Scores are killed, hundreds of homes and churches destroyed.

**2009**

Boko Haram leads violent uprising after police crackdown. Thousands of Christians have been killed by ongoing insurgency, many more become refugees.

Eight Christians burnt to death in mob attack in Gojra, Pakistan.

**2010**

Hundreds of Christians killed in Dogo Nahauwa, Nigeria.

58 killed in attack on church in Baghdad.

Beginning of "Arab Spring".

**2011**

Start of Syrian Civil War. Hundreds of thousands of Christians made refugees, thousands killed, thousands more taken hostage.

Al-Shabaab begins to carry out terror attacks in Kenya – many of which target Christians.

**2012**

Scores killed in Easter suicide bomb attack on Church, Kaduna, Nigeria.

One important trend is that religion is increasingly mixed up with national identity. People feel that their own cultural particularities are under threat and must be protected. They argue that only someone who belongs to the majority religion can be a proper citizen of the country. As a consequence, they consider Christians to be traitors and want to purify their country from Christianity.

This is happening widely across the Muslim-majority world, but also with some other religions.

In India, the Hindutva movement within Hinduism argues that every Indian must belong to a religion which has originated in India. This view has become increasingly popular and is now a dominant force in Indian politics. Mob attacks on pastors and members of their congregations, with attempts to force them to convert to Hinduism, have increased greatly, so much so that there was an average of one incident of violence against India's Christians for every day in 2015. This figure seems set to continue, if not worsen, in 2016.

There has been a similar move by Buddhist activists in Sri Lanka who strive for Buddhism to have the foremost place. They have carried out numerous attacks, especially on churches and church leaders. A human rights organisation, which recorded 52 attacks on Christians in 2012, saw that figure almost double in 2013 to 103.

*Some countries, where Christians lived relatively peaceably a generation ago, have disintegrated into an all-out religious cleansing of Christians*

Another significant trend that is driving the violence, especially in Islamic contexts, is that many people are moving away from a secular identity to a religious identity, sadly,

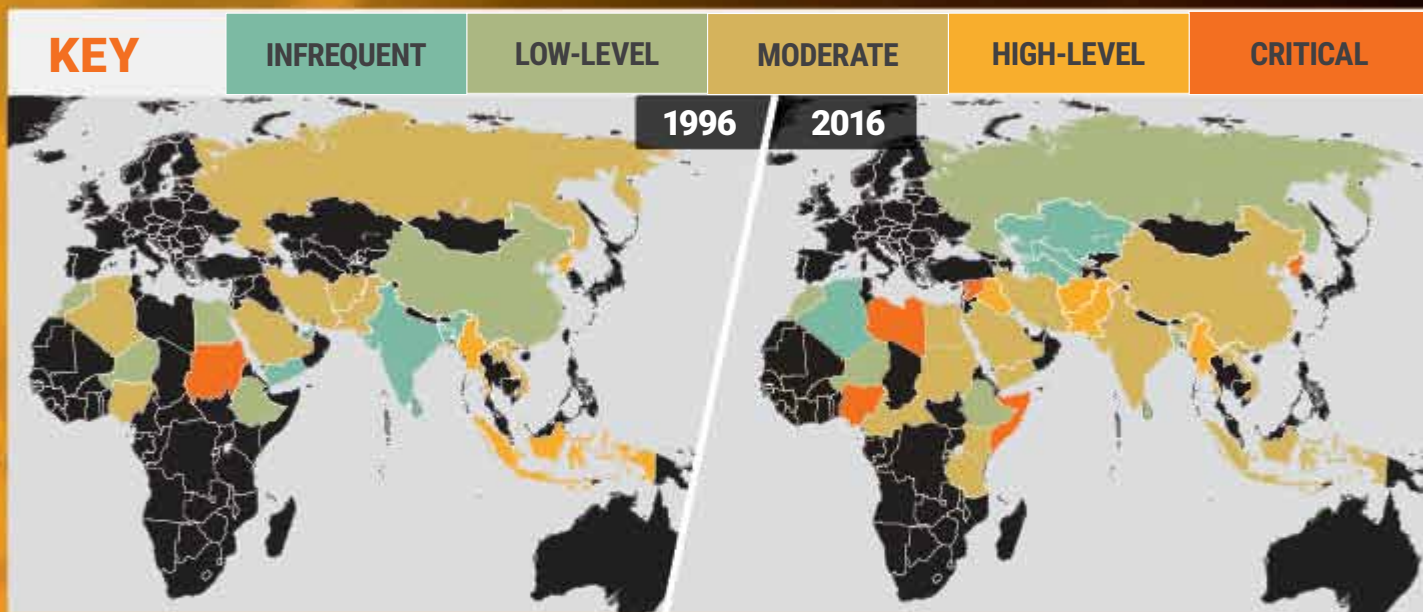
one that is increasingly extreme.

After gaining independence from colonialism, many Muslim-majority countries tried out various forms of government, following socialist or Arab-nationalist ideologies. But by the 1970s a growing number of young Muslims and intellectuals felt that these borrowed ideologies had failed the Muslim world. They returned to a traditional and literal application of Islamic teaching, looking for answers within their own historical and religious tradition and especially searching for the lost key to political and military power.

Christian minorities in these countries quickly became more marginalised and attacks against them more frequent. In places such as Egypt, Pakistan, Northern and Middle Belt Nigeria, and recently also Tanzania, communal riots stirred up against Christians became increasingly frequent.

Christian women in Egypt and Pakistan have long been vulnerable to kidnap by Muslims, followed by forcible marriage and conversion.

These maps show the increasing levels of anti-Christian violence across the world



2013

Muslim Seleka rebels attack many Christians in Central African Republic (CAR).

Bomb attack on church kills 80 in Peshawar, Pakistan.

Many churches destroyed after Egyptian president Morsi removed from power.

2014

Islamic State (IS) seizes vast territory in Northern Iraq, forcing tens of thousands of Christians to flee. Declares establishment of a "Caliphate".

Boko Haram kidnaps hundreds of Christian school girls.

Hindutva-linked Narendra Modi becomes Prime Minister of India.

2015

IS video shows 21 Egyptian Christians being beheaded in Libya.

Boko Haram declares affiliation to Islamic State.

Christian students targeted in a Kenyan university attack, killing 147 people.

2016

Bomb attack targeting Easter celebrations kills scores of people in a park in Pakistan.

But the number of such cases has increased. In Egypt it was reported that in little more than two years since January 2011 over 500 Christian women and girls had been abducted.

One of the most extreme expressions of this identification with religion is terrorism. This past generation has seen the birth and ascent of many Islamist groups such as Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, Al Shabaab and Islamic State (IS).

Groups like these are responsible for the addition of six of the eight newly marked countries on the world map, countries where Christians could still live in relative safety in 1996 but are now experiencing high levels of aggression. Social media has also allowed religious extremists to push their message beyond geographical boundaries, putting Christian minorities in almost every Muslim-majority context at risk.

The deadliest, Boko Haram, has been carrying out brutal attacks on churches, Christian villages, moderate Muslims, security forces and Western-style educational

establishments in Western Africa since it started its military campaign in Nigeria in 2009. Their violence spilled over into once-peaceful Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Over the last two years it has attacked more churches and killed more Christians than any other Islamist terrorist group or government in the world.

In East Africa, Al Shabaab wants to establish a radical Islamic state in the region. Since seizing control of central and southern Somalia, the group, which has said its intention is "to get rid of the barbaric and non-Islamic culture in the country", has killed dozens of Christians there.

Al Shabaab violence has also spread to once-peaceful Kenya where it is estimated that in the two years up to the summer of 2015 around 500 people, mainly Christians and Kenyans from the Christian-majority south of the country, have been killed in Islamist attacks.

In the Middle East, following the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the "Arab Spring" in 2011, terrorist groups such as Islamic State have

filled the power vacuum created by the collapse of authoritarian regimes which had previously protected Christians and other minority groups.

These terrorist groups now threaten to completely destroy the historical Christian presence in the Middle East which has survived for 2,000 years. In Iraq, the Christian population has dwindled from 1.5 million in 1990 and is now estimated to be as low as 250,000 to 300,000.

The Iraqi Defence Minister reported in August 2015 that Islamic State had killed 2,000 Iraqis in the largely Christian Nineveh Plains between January and August 2015. Up to 200,000 fled to save their lives. Many Christian women and girls were sold as slaves by Islamic State alongside Yazidi women and girls.

As Christians flee from violent situations such as the ones described above, they are again exposed and vulnerable to more violence.

These facts may look incredibly bleak and hopeless. Please turn to page 13 to read how Christians stand firm in the spiritual battle. ●

# WAR ON THE SAINTS

PULL-OUT 

Eight days of devotional readings for Suffering Church Action Week 2016

1



Suffering Church  
Action Week

Sunday 30 October 2016

## SPIRITUAL WARFARE – A REALITY

### Revelation 12:7-8

In the Old Testament we read how Satan, filled with pride, wanted to be like God and to usurp His throne. He who was described as the Day Star (literally the Shining One, Lucifer) wanted to take over the high priestly roles of Jesus Christ. In his defiance of God, he tried to assert his will above the will of God. We read in Isaiah 14:13 his repeated plans: “I will ... I will...” In his rebellion, he fell (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-17; 1 Timothy 3:6).

The name of the archangel Michael means “Who is like God?” In his very name, Michael poses a question which answers itself in that there is no one like God. God alone is unique, without an equal and no comparison can be made with Him. That is what Michael’s name means. Michael, therefore, stands for all that is in opposition to Satan and his works.

In the Bible, Michael is presented as the protector of God’s people (Daniel 12:1). He watches over the people of God. Revelation 12:7-9 depicts the conflict between Christ, represented by his archangel Michael, and Satan. The battle rages on earth and in heaven, with Christians the target, as they suffer temptation, persecution and death. We need to remember that this is not an eternal conflict and it is not dualism. Rather it is a conflict between Christ who is uncreated, almighty, omniscient, omnipresent and eternal, and Satan who is created and therefore limited in his power and knowledge, unable to be everywhere at the same time. There is a victor – Christ.

*I praise you, Lord Jesus Christ, for the victory that You won on the cross over sin, death and Satan.*

2

Monday 31 October 2016

## KNOW YOUR ENEMY

### Revelation 12:9

The word “Satan” itself originally meant any “adversary” or “enemy”. Gradually the meaning narrowed to the way we use it now. While the Christian seeks to make no one an enemy, we are faced with an enemy not of our making. He is an enemy from whom we cannot retreat, with whom we can neither make peace nor compromise.

The Bible gives at least 41 names for Satan. He is the father of lies, the destroying angel, the accuser of the brethren, Beelzebub. He is described as a roaring lion, intimidating and frightening us. He is the epitome of all that is evil, cruel and opposed to God. This is the enemy that now confronts the Church.

He is the “dragon”, the creator of chaos. As we think of the death and destruction caused today in the Middle East by groups like Islamic State, we can see very well why he carries this name. The dragon is the arch-enemy of Christ and the Church. He tried to devour the Christ-Child and now he persecutes the mother Church.

He is the “ancient serpent”, who tempted Adam and Eve, causing them to sin. He tried to do the same to Job, but failed; Job remained faithful to God (Job 1:1-2:9).

The word “devil” is only found in the New Testament. The literal meaning is “slanderer” and much of his destructive work is in the form of accusatory lying words. Truly he is the deceiver of the whole world.

*“The ancient prince of hell hath risen with purpose fell; strong mail of craft and power he weareth in this hour.” (Martin Luther)*

3

Tuesday 1 November 2016

## HOW SATAN ATTACKS

### Revelation 12:9-10

One of Satan's methods is deception. He tries to lead the world astray. In Genesis 3:1-5 he led our first parents astray by lying, and he continues, often disguising himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). He seems to offer truth and insight but in reality what he offers is false and deceptive.

As deceiver, he uses every wile and device (Ephesians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 2:11) to trick and trap us, to lure the people of God away from the right path. He snatches away the Word before it can take root in our hearts (Luke 8:5,12).

In verse 10 he is called the accuser. This a translation of *delator*, a prosecution lawyer. The devil's original role was as prosecuting counsel in the heavenly court (Zechariah 3:1; Job 1-2). But often, as here, he acts maliciously, making false accusations. It is only a small step from bringing charges to inventing charges, from accuser to slanderer. Slander and false accusation are amongst his favourite methods of operating. Satan is "the cynical libeller of all that God has made" (H.B. Swete).

When Revelation was written, ancient Rome was a society of people constantly informing on each other, denouncing each other to the authorities, leading to arrest, torture and death. The Roman historian Tacitus commented that "he who had no foe was betrayed by his friend". Satan put the idea of betrayal in Judas's mind (John 13:2,27). Many Christians today are falsely accused, such as Aasia Bibi, a Pakistani Christian mother sentenced to death on a false charge of blasphemy.

*"No condemnation now I dread; Jesus, and all in him is mine! Alive in him, my living Head, and clothed in righteousness divine, bold I approach the eternal throne, and claim the crown, through Christ my own."  
(Charles Wesley). Thank you, Lord.*

4

Wednesday 2 November 2016

## THE PROCLAMATION OF VICTORY

### Revelation 12:10

The seeming defeat of Jesus on the cross gave way to the triumph of the resurrection. The disciples too experienced defeat. They had betrayed their Lord. They had forsaken Him in His hour of need and, filled with fear, they faced the future. Then Jesus revealed Himself to them and this encounter brought new hope and new courage. From a beleaguered minority they became a mighty force, an army, which transformed the then known world. Salvation came.

They offered to that world salvation and redemption, whether it be to the Jew with an inner longing for the Messiah and the promised Day, or the Graeco-Roman religions with their multiplicity of gods, or the mystery esoteric religions with their desire for an inner experience. Salvation in Jesus Christ alone became their message.

Through the power of God and the authority of Christ, the Church was established. Jesus Himself had said, "I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18). Jesus the Messiah, the anointed one, the Son of God, brings into being a people filled with the divine presence, who now, through Christ, can exercise that divine authority and, like their Master, bring healing and hope to a broken world.

Yet this message, far from being received as it was in the earliest days, soon met with obstruction, hostility and even hatred as the disciples were abused, stoned, imprisoned and killed. So today it continues, for example in Russia where since July it has been illegal to witness without prior permission from the state.

*Lord, give me the grace and courage to persevere in serving You and sharing the Gospel, no matter what opposition I may encounter.*

5

Thursday 3 November 2016

## CONQUERING THROUGH THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB

### Revelation 12:11a

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” said John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus approaching. Jesus is the Lamb who was slain (Revelation 5:6), who was sacrificed for our sins, who shed His blood for us on the cross. The lamb is an emblem of innocence and purity. It was also the animal commonly offered in sacrifice. For both these reasons, Jesus our Messiah is called the Lamb.

The blood of Christ speaks of the Atonement, with its primary emphasis on death which leads to life. In the New Testament blood indicates a violent death, so the blood of the Lamb speaks of the violent death of Christ, once for all, upon the cross. It is the blood of the New Covenant that Jeremiah foretold (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Jesus is both the sacrificial lamb and the high priest. His blood seals the covenant relationship between God and His people and has power to effect salvation, to sanctify, redeem, forgive and protect. For God’s suffering people, abused and persecuted, the blood of Jesus has not lost its efficacy or power. It continues not only to sanctify but also to shelter them and, together with the angelic host, to bring them safely Home.

“Blood of Christ, victor over demons, save us.”

In Revelation 7:14 we read of those in heaven, dressed in white robes, who have come out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The Lamb that was slain rose to life again, our sins are forgiven, and the accuser has lost his power over us.

**Jesus, Lamb of God, protect me by the power of Your shed blood and bring me to Your glory at the end.**

6

Friday 4 November 2016

## CONQUERING THROUGH THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY

### Revelation 12:11b

In a law court, the one who gives testimony to what he or she has personally witnessed is crucial. It can determine life or death. The Christian’s testimony is what they have experienced, the reality of Jesus and the truth of His Word. The martyr’s witness to Christ and to His saving work is a direct attack on Satan himself. Their faithfulness not to deny Him by their word, despite all opposition, is crucial. Time and again, we read of faithful Christians who in their simplicity refuse to deny Jesus but continue to bear witness to Him. Well may they echo, “I will sing the wondrous story of the Christ who died for me.”

“Kill me, but I will not abuse the Name of Jesus,” said Deepak, an Indian evangelist, to the Hindu extremists who had chained and beaten him for five hours until he lost consciousness, stripped him naked, given him electric shocks and threatened to throw him on a railway track unless he insulted Jesus. The attack occurred on 5 April as Deepak was travelling to a village in Bihar state to share the Gospel. He knew well the power of his word of testimony.

*Though the winds roar  
And the storms rage  
I will not deny You,  
O my Lord.  
Though the blows abound  
And the anguish mounts  
I will not deny You,  
O my Lord.*

*For You hold me  
In the palms of Your hands.  
You will not deny me.  
For my name is written  
On Your forehead.  
You will not deny me.*

**Lord, keep me a faithful witness that, when You take me Home, I may affirm, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Timothy 4:7)**

7

Saturday 5 November 2016

## CONQUERING THROUGH MARTYRDOM

### Revelation 12:11c

“The blood of the martyrs is to the Church as water to a garden.” – John Chrysostom

Martyrdom is victory. It signals the defeat of Satan. The saints themselves, however, far from being defeated, rise in victory, through their shed blood, like their Saviour who endured the cross and was faithful even unto death. The blood of the martyrs causes new life to spring forth, as a garden radiant with the beauty of flowers.

Willing to embrace the cross and sacrifice their lives, the martyrs demonstrate their loyalty to Christ and willingness to pay that ultimate price of death for the sake of their Lord. Such commitment knows no bounds. Such love knows no end.

Christian martyrs are not like suicide “martyrs” who deliberately die for their cause. Rather, for Christian martyrs it is simply that they do not cling to earthly life. They are willing, if necessary, to let go, to lay down their lives for Christ, as did the 21 Egyptian martyrs in Libya, beheaded by Islamic State in February 2015. It is a natural progression from a life of witnessing to the ultimate witness of a martyr’s death. The martyrs have a glorious place in heaven and receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

While we are not all called or permitted to die for Christ, He has called us all to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily (Matthew 16:24-25). This is a living martyrdom (1 Corinthians 15:31). For some who have been entrusted with a very heavy cross, it is perhaps more difficult to carry it day after day year after year than to die once.

*Jesus, my Lord and Saviour, help me to continue faithful and true, loving and forgiving, committed only to You, whether in life or in death.*

8

Sunday 6 November 2016

## REJOICING

### Revelation 12:12

In the great battle that is being fought in the heavens, and is also experienced here on earth with its pain and even death, there is to be found joy and victory and ultimately glory. There is joy in heaven as the angels sing. There is joy on earth as the saints rejoice. For salvation has indeed come, the Gospel is being proclaimed across the face of the earth, countless souls are being won for Christ, His Kingdom is being established with the Lord Jesus at its head. Satan’s darkness and Satan’s forces are defeated.

In the midst of the greatest suffering can be found the greatest Kingdom growth. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, where believers bear the brunt of oppression and violence, Muslims from all walks of life are turning to Christ so fast that the Church can barely cope. The martyr church of China now resounds with the praises of Christ as a hundred million or more love, trust and follow Him.

For the faithful, those who have borne the heat of the day and the cold of the night, those who have experienced and endured the battle, for them awaits the victor’s crown and the words: “Well done, good and faithful servant.” They will sing with the angels, the elders, the martyrs and the multitude from every nation that stand before the Lamb upon the throne (Revelation 7:9-17).

*Cover the Way with flowers  
Clap your hands  
For Jesus reigns!  
Dance together,  
Sing halleluiah,  
Marching in Christ’s triumphant train.*

*Blessing and honour and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen. (Revelation 7:12)*



# STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS POWER

Standing Firm in the Spiritual Battle



*For the accuser of our  
brothers and sisters,  
Who accuses them before  
our God day and night,  
Has been hurled down.  
They triumphed over him  
By the blood of the lamb  
And by the word of their testimony;  
They did not love their lives so much  
As to shrink from death.*

*Revelation 12:10,11*

IN

the book of Revelation, the true nature of the struggle in which Christians are engaged

is revealed. It is the outworking of the Messiah's final victory over Satan, the accuser; a victory won not with missiles, rockets, bombs or bullets, but with Jesus' loving sacrifice, the faithful witness of believers and willing martyrdom if the ultimate price is called for.

The call to Jesus' followers is to fly in the face of conventional wisdom by forsaking violence, anger and any desire for revenge and remaining constant to His message of unconditional love, peace and service. Christians are to stand fast whatever the enemy brings to bear in his quest to destroy, deceive and distract those who acknowledge Jesus as Lord. The victory of a Christian may not always be dramatic, sensational or even obvious to outsiders, but the victory is promised to those who endure.

Jesus teaches that His followers can expect opposition when they take up His cross and follow Him. They become combatants in the "War in Heaven", a spiritual battle which Jesus won at the cross. Jesus spent time with His disciples teaching them about the realities of this war, how to meet the challenges they would face, and what it takes to confound the enemy.

Time and again, our project contacts bring us encouraging stories of the bravery, patient endurance and faithfulness of Christians undergoing either the most terrible persecution or hardships and suffering following natural disasters. We also hear of those who have been left grieving because of the murderous acts of Islamists or other anti-Christian groups, yet even in such dark times they find hope and strength from their faith in Jesus and His victory won on the Cross.

Through the testimonies and accounts given below, may we all draw strength from the example and the courage of our Christian brothers and sisters.

## Christian converts from Islam under attack in Syria

*"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"*

*Romans 8:35*

When Islamic State (IS) fighters launched on a particular Syrian town last year many people were killed or injured. Amongst the deaths was 19-year-old Shigho, who was "executed" for having left Islam to follow Christ. There were other converts from Islam hiding in the city, unable to leave and now finding themselves in mortal danger from the Islamists. People outside the city, and those suffering the attack alongside them, sought to encourage and comfort the remaining converts after Shigho's execution. The converts' simple response was, "Don't worry about us. Even if they were to cut our heads off ten times we would still say 'Jesus is Lord!'"

Barnabas helps Syrian Christians by providing food, medical and other practical aid, funding repairs to buildings and particular support to widows and families who have lost loved ones in the ongoing conflict.

Nineteen-year-old Shigho was executed for having become a Christian



## 21 martyred in Libya

*"Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown."*

*Revelation 2:10*

A video released by Islamic State (IS) on 15 February 2015 shows their militants beheading 21 Christian migrant workers whom they had abducted from the Libyan city of Sirte. IS raided the men's sleeping quarters at night, and using a list of names separated the workers into two groups: Christians and Muslims. One of the Egyptians had a Muslim-sounding name, but courageously asked to be moved from the Muslim group to the Christian group. In all, 23 believers were separated out by IS. Offered a choice between converting to Islam or death, 21 remained faithful. These 20 Egyptians and one Ghanaian were taken to the seashore by masked militants dressed entirely in black. A chilling caption on the video spelt out the charge against them: "The people of the cross, followers of the hostile Egyptian church".

Martyrdom is considered by Egyptian Christians to be the greatest blessing which God can bestow on a believer. One observer of the video wrote, "When you look at the martyrs' faces you notice that they have a high level of faith and satisfaction of their destiny. The proof of this [was] that they were sitting [kneeling] on the ground and praying to God, they enjoyed serenity and psychological peacefulness ... They saw a better place."

Barnabas is supporting the widows and other dependents of the Egyptian martyrs



## God never abandons His children

*"They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the lord."  
Psalm 112:7*

Alfa is aged 92. One of the first in his village to become a Christian in 1972, he lives in a Christian-majority village in Senegal. Early in 2015, fire swept through the village, killing a woman and two children. A church building, 70 homes, valuable livestock and stores of grain and food were destroyed, lost to the flames. Families were left grief-stricken and destitute.

Muslims from nearby villages refused to help, mocking the Christians' misfortune. They told Musu, a mother of four, that this was punishment on her and her children for leaving Islam. Some Christians were offered food if they would deny Christ and become Muslims.

But the Christians stood firm in their faith. Barnabas Fund sent food aid, sleeping mats and blankets.

Alfa said, "I believe that God never abandons His children. He touched the hearts of brothers in the UK to come to our rescue."

Alfa, at 92, faithful even in the face of tragedy



## Christians beaten and falsely accused simply for sharing the Gospel

Three Christian men, Vijay Paul, Moses Edward and church leader Bharat Kumar Wadhvani were severely beaten by a mob led by a group of Hindu extremists on Sunday 19 June 2016 in Jabalpur, India. They were then beaten as they were led to the local police station where a case was registered against them for alleged attempts to forcibly convert Hindus to Christianity. This is a frequent accusation against Indian Christians who have simply been sharing their faith with Hindus.

"Until midnight the Hindu extremists shouted slogans outside the police station verbally abusing us and blaming us of forceful conversion," said Wadhvani, who suffered injury to his right eye. Vijay Paul and Moses Edward both sustained internal injuries and damage to their ear drums. But in spite of their injuries, the men rejoiced, saying, "We got to testify about Christ [at the police station] and it is worth the beating we suffered."

Vijay Paul (left) and church leader  
Bharat Kumar Wadhvani



# WAR IN HEAVEN

Revelation 12:7-12



*This sermon outline can be used at a Suffering Church service or meeting. It can be read out as it stands, though you may want to add some illustrations of your own or take some from the information on pages 10-15. You might also find helpful material in the small group Bible study on page 18 or the devotional readings on pull-out pages i-iv. Alternatively the outline can be used as a framework for your own ideas and applications.*

## 1 CONFLICT (verse 7)

The Church is called to warfare – it is inescapable.

As Christians we are on a journey to heaven. But is it on a cruise liner or a battleship? For some the cruise liner offers five-star luxury, ease, rest and plenty as they sail gently across the sea of life towards their heavenly destination. For others, it is the battleship ready to engage in fearsome battle, cutting its way through the storms and winds to arrive at their heavenly destination weary, perhaps wounded, but joyful that the battle has been won and they have been found faithful to the end.

Conflict is central to the Christian's life. It is not a conflict that we have made, but one that we have chosen to enter. It is being waged in the heavenly realm but involves us here on earth. Jesus warned His disciples, "If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." (John 15:20)

Satan, who was so active in seeking the destruction of Jesus, will be equally active working through human beings and circumstances to try to bring about the defeat and downfall of

Christians. He will wage unceasing war in the form of marginalisation, discrimination, false accusation, outright persecution, imprisonment, and ultimately death in martyrdom.

The Church today is engaged in this conflict. In Western countries, the conflict may be less visible, but the "new civic religion" of secular humanism is seeking to impose its will and values upon Christian communities, to control and then potentially even to destroy Christianity. In other parts of the world the conflict is more overt. In Russia this year new laws are being created to severely restrict Christian worship and witness. Elsewhere, resurgent religious ideologies seek to suppress the Christian faith. Whether seen or unseen, the battle is real.

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Ephesians 6:12)

## 2 COMBATANTS (verses 7-9)

Ultimately, the combatants in this conflict are Christ and Satan. From the dawn of history when Satan, through pride, sought to usurp the place of Christ, he has had an implacable hatred for our Lord. Satan sought His destruction at birth, killing the babies in Jerusalem. He sought through temptation to divert Him from God's will. Finally at Calvary, Satan thought he had destroyed Christ and won. But he reckoned without the resurrection. In reality it was Satan who was defeated. The seed of the woman had crushed the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).

“Where, O death, is your victory?”  
(1 Corinthians 15:55)

Jesus ascended to heaven, glorious and victorious. But the battle will continue until Satan's ultimate defeat when he is cast into the fiery lake (Revelation 20:10). Michael, on behalf of the people of God, fights against Satan, each with their own angels, and Satan wages war on earth against the saints.

Satan: the dragon, the devil, the accuser of the brethren, the slanderer, the deceiver, the destroyer. He subtly seeks to lead astray. Coming as an angel of light he perverts the good in order to capture and use the willing. He causes calamity and evil to befall the people of God, who face persecution and hatred simply because they are followers of Christ.

## 3 CONQUEST (verses 10-11)

It was by enduring persecution that the Church turned the tables on Satan and became victorious. In persecution the Church triumphed and Satan was defeated. The victim became victorious. The vulnerable became the conqueror.

This was brought about through the blood of Jesus Christ, with its power, protection and saving efficacy, and through the faithful testimony of the Christian communities as they proclaimed the undying message of salvation, took up their cross and followed Christ, willingly giving up their lives for Him and His cause.

This faithfulness in persecution led to the proclamation of the triumph of God and of His Christ. The Lamb that was slain rose again victorious. He continues to be with His people, as they proclaim the glorious message of salvation through divine power, the forgiveness of sins,

and freedom from the tyranny of the evil one. This divine power saw the establishing of a new Kingdom, God's Kingdom on earth, the Kingdom of heaven in the hearts of men and women, a Kingdom of shalom peace and of a love that transcends all hatred, bitterness and division. Jesus is at the centre of this Kingdom, reigning over His people who serve Him in love and thankfulness.

This Kingdom exists under the rule and authority of the Messiah, the promised one, the long-awaited one, who will usher in the final age. This authority is absolute. It extends over people, rulers and nations, even over Satan. The people of God live under Christ's authority. For Him they live and would willingly die. They will offer no worship to any other deity. Their Messiah stands alone, the unique, universal and ultimate Lord.

## 4 CONCLUSION (verse 12)

Satan has now been cast down to earth to wage war on Christians. He seeks to extend his role in every corner of God's creation. Together with his demonic hordes, he pursues the people of God. But far from being defeated, far from being filled with fear, the people of God know that his rage is not a sign of his power but a sign of his frustration and defeat. We see in the Middle East and elsewhere terrible and tumultuous times as Satan creates havoc. But his time is short. Soon the battle will be won.

By maintaining their witness, even to the point of death, the Christian martyrs follow Jesus to death and win the victory. So the heavens rejoice,

singing blessing, glory and honour to their God. And amongst that joyful, praising multitude of worshippers are those in white robes, washed in the blood of the Lamb, who have come out of the tribulation, and are now before the throne of God day and night. They will hunger and thirst no more, the Lamb will be their shepherd, He will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (Revelation 7:11-17).

As the old hymn says,

“The strife is o'er, the battle done,  
the victory of life is won;  
the song of triumph has begun. Alleluia!”

# WAR IN HEAVEN

This study is on the same theme as the sermon outline (pages 16-17) and looks at some of the same verses mentioned in it. It can be used before or after hearing the sermon. If it is used without the sermon, it may be helpful for the group leader to read through the sermon outline beforehand. You may also like to read the SCAW 2016 eight-day devotional pull-out on pages i-iv.

The section at the end entitled "Digging Deeper" is intended for those who would like to explore the theme in more depth.

## CONFLICT (verse 7)

1. What do you think of when you hear that the Church is called to warfare?
2. Have you or anyone you know faced persecution for being Christian? How did it make you or them feel?
3. Do you think the Christians in your community are in a cruise liner or a battleship? Give reasons why you think this.
4. Are there things that Christians in your country or community are not standing up for because they are scared of being persecuted?
5. In John 15:20, Jesus says, "If they persecute me, they will also persecute you." What feelings does this verse evoke within you when you hear it?
6. In what ways do you think the "new civic religion", or secular humanism, is seeking to impose its will and values upon Christian communities?
7. Are there areas in your life or the Church that have been influenced by secular humanism?
8. Read Ephesians 6:10-12. Have you had experiences of being engaged in a spiritual battle? How have you overcome these struggles?

## COMBATANTS (verses 7-9)

9. The devil is called the deceiver and the accuser. In what ways does he try to deceive the world and accuse Christians? Have you or those you know been deceived or accused by the devil? What truths from the Word of God can we use to overcome these deceptions and accusations?
10. Ultimately this battle is between our Lord Jesus Christ and Satan. Does knowing that Jesus is on our side fill you with confidence? Why is that?
11. Read 1 Samuel 17:47. What does this verse mean in the context of David and Goliath and Revelation 12:7-12? What does this verse mean in the context of your life and the lives of those who are being persecuted?

## CONQUEST (verses 10-11)

12. Jesus defeated Satan on the cross. What does this victory mean for you and for the world?
13. Jesus is depicted as a lamb that has been slain yet He is victorious. Are there examples from your life or testimonies you know of where what had at first appeared to be weakness or a defeat turned out to be powerful and victorious?
14. Read verse 11. In what ways can we overcome Satan? Do these verses encourage you?

## CONCLUSION (v12)

15. Verse 12 tells us that Satan has come down to earth with great wrath. Are there events in the world and in your life and the lives of those you know where you can see Satan wreaking havoc? What is there in this verse to give us hope and courage?
16. We may not all be facing direct persecution, however as part of the universal Church and body of Christ we are all part of the battle. How can we support and help those who do face direct persecution and attack on a daily basis?

## DIGGING DEEPER

1. John the Baptist called Jesus "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29). What are the characteristics of a lamb? What Old Testament teaching do you think John had in mind when he spoke of the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world? What does the New Testament say about Christ's sacrifice (see for example Hebrews 9 and 10)?
2. The power of God in verse 10 is *dunamis* in Greek. It is used numerous times throughout the New Testament. What insights about the power of God or *dunamis* do you get when you compare how it is used in the context of 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (especially verse 9) and 2 Corinthians 13:4, with how it is used in the context of Revelation 12:7-12 (especially verse 10)?
3. What other verses in the New Testament speak of *dunamis*? How can the concept of *dunamis* be applied to your personal faith as well as those you minister to?
4. The Greek word for testimony used in verse 11 is *marturia*. One of its meanings is to tell the truth, usually before a judge. Why do you think our testimony is so powerful? What should our testimony consist of?
5. *Marturia* is very similar to the Greek word *martus* which is sometimes translated as "witness" and sometimes translated as "martyr". What is the link between these two different meanings in the context of Revelation 12:11 and our Christian faith?

# ACTION PLAN

-  BARNABAS AID MAGAZINE
-  DVD
-  EIGHT-DAY DEVOTIONAL PULL-OUT
-  POSTER
-  SERMON OUTLINE
-  GIFT AID ENVELOPE
-  MONEY BOX
-  PRAYER BOOKMARK

There are many ways in which to highlight the plight of persecuted Christians who are caught up in the “War on the Saints” and to build ourselves up in our own faith during Suffering Church Action Week. Below are some ideas for events and activities. We invite you to make the most of the opportunities the week offers, enjoy supporting and praying for your fellow believers and keep in touch by sharing your events at [www.barnabasfund.org/scaw](http://www.barnabasfund.org/scaw).

All the resources highlighted on this page are included in a free Suffering Church Inspiration Pack, available to order now (see bottom of page).

## SUFFERING CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

Dedicate a special service on 30 October or 6 November (or any other Sunday that suits your church calendar) to remember those caught up in the “**War on the Saints**”, suffering for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Available resources for this service include a **sermon outline** (see pages 16-17), a **DVD**, a **poster**, a **money box** and **Gift Aid envelopes** for each seat. You could also make a display board for your church using photographs and information from *Barnabas Aid magazine* or from our website, [www.barnabasfund.org](http://www.barnabasfund.org).

**RESOURCES THAT CAN BE USED ARE:**



## FUNDRAISING

Fundraising ideas are limited only by your imagination. You could hold a sale, concert or auction on behalf of Barnabas, or arrange a “dress down” day, quiz night or car wash. You could challenge yourself to take part in a sponsored event, or sell the products of your own unique skills such as crafts or painted portraits. Available resources include a **poster**, a **money box** and a **Gift Aid envelope** for collecting donations. A sponsorship form can be downloaded from our website, [www.barnabasfund.org/scaw](http://www.barnabasfund.org/scaw).

**RESOURCES THAT CAN BE USED ARE:**



## BIBLE STUDIES

Devote your Bible study or home group meeting to this year’s theme. The **Bible study** on page 18 of this magazine can be used to structure and focus your meeting. Take time to pray for persecuted Christians, to identify actions you could take on their behalf as individuals or as a group, and to encourage one another. You could also use this Bible study, or the **eight-day devotional pull-out**, in your own quiet time.

**RESOURCES THAT CAN BE USED ARE:**



## PRAYER

Organise a prayer meeting focused on lifting up our brothers and sisters to the Lord. **Saturday 5 November** is the Barnabas Fund International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. You could also pray individually, using our Suffering Church Action Week **eight-day devotional prayer pull-out** on Revelation 12: 7-12. A **prayer bookmark** is also available. A special prayer for 2016 is on page 9.

**RESOURCES THAT CAN BE USED ARE:**



## COFFEE MORNINGS

Hold a coffee morning at your church or home, and place copies of *Barnabas Aid magazine* and other resources on the table along with **money boxes** or **Gift Aid envelopes**. Share the theme “**War on the Saints**”, perhaps using the articles on pages 10-15 of this magazine or the video on the **DVD**, and invite prayer for persecuted Christians.

**RESOURCES THAT CAN BE USED ARE:**



Please send me a *War on the Saints* Inspiration Pack

Additionally, please also send me the following resource(s) (state quantity of each):

.....  
 .....  
 .....

Name .....

Address .....

Email address ..... Phone .....

Name of church/group .....



## Muslims helping fund and build new church for small Christian community

PAKISTAN

Muslims in a village near Gojra in Pakistan's Punjab province are assisting local Christians with a new church building. The Muslim-majority village is home to eight Christian families. The new building will be the first ever church in the village. Muslim villagers are contributing finance as well as assisting with the actual construction work.

Ijaz Farooq, a Muslim villager, said, "Our mosque stands here from times past, but our Christian brothers also have the right to worship in their church." Faryal Masih, a Christian, said, "As far as I can remember, we have been living together; we partake in each other's happiness, sorrows and religious festivals." He added that Christians can "rest assured that our Muslim neighbours will stand by our side in times of trouble".

## Church minister murdered by Islamic State (IS) for "fighting Islam"

EGYPT

On 30 June a church minister in Al Arish, northern Egypt, was gunned down as he prepared to return home following a church service. Raphail Moussa was shot four times in the head by gunmen in a taxi. Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility on social media for his murder, saying the minister had been "waging war against Islam." It is the second murder of a church leader in Al Arish by IS. The first was shot outside his church in 2013.

## Christian brick kiln worker beaten, shaved and made to stand on one leg under scorching sun for five hours after asking for promised wages

PAKISTAN



Nadeem Masih after his ordeal

On 19 June, a Christian brick kiln worker in the Kasur district of Pakistan's Punjab province was appallingly victimised after confronting the brick kiln's Muslim owner about being underpaid. Nadeem Masih was beaten, shaved and made to stand on one leg under the scorching sun for five hours by Haji Musa and two other men.

Before beginning work at the brick kiln, Nadeem Masih agreed with the owner a payment of 962 rupees (£6.82) for every 1,000 bricks prepared, but instead only 800 rupees (£5.66) was being paid for every 1,000 bricks. Nadeem Masih asked to be paid what he had earned, but instead encountered the owner's wrath.

## More "reconciliation" meetings again deprive Christians of justice

EGYPT

Christians in the town of Qaryat Al Bayda, in Egypt's Alexandria province, who were attacked by Muslims have been forced to agree to so-called "reconciliation" meetings. This means the Christians have to give up their recourse to justice by a proper legal process. Worse still, such "reconciliation" processes in rural Egypt usually end up with the Christian victims having to yield further to Muslim demands while their attackers go unpunished.

On 17 June, Muslim extremists attacked Christian buildings and homes, citing false rumours that the believers were in the process of building the village's first church. After being held under house arrest and threatened with

prosecution for "rioting", the Christians felt they had no choice but to agree to the reconciliation process. "There was no way we could say 'no'," said a local Christian, "especially because we had been threatened with police arrest."

In a separate attack on 29 June in the village of Kom Al Lufi, Minya province, a crowd of Muslim extremists, shouting "Allahu akbar [God is great]", set fire to four Christian homes following false rumours that one of them was being converted into a church. The rioters beat children and prevented a fire engine from reaching the burning houses. There is no church in Kom Al Lufi, even though the Christian community applied for a licence to build one ten years ago.



## Nine Christians hacked to death

DR CONGO

On 5 July, in yet another attack in the Christian-majority eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, uniformed men armed with guns and machetes attacked three Christian communities near the town of Oicha. They looted homes and stole livestock, killing five women and four men, including a church elder. The attack took place less than two miles from a United Nations base. Local sources claim that an Islamist militant group called the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) was responsible.

## Putin signs Draconian anti-Christian provisions into law

RUSSIA

On 3 July, President Vladimir Putin signed into law new anti-terror legislation which, while primarily aimed at anti-terrorist activities, includes many clauses that are strongly anti-Christian. It came into effect on 20 July.

The new law requires any sharing of the Christian faith, even a casual conversation, to have prior authorisation from the state. This includes something as basic as an emailed invitation for a friend to attend church. Even in a private home, worship and prayer will only be allowed if there are no unbelievers present.

Churches are also held accountable for the activities of their members. If a church member mentions their faith in conversation with a work colleague, both member and church could be punished, with individuals facing fines of up to 50,000 roubles (£580).

There are also restrictions on the extent to which churches can have contact with foreigners. This means that any non-Russian citizen attending a church service is required to have a work visa or otherwise they could face a fine and expulsion from the country.

## Two pastor's wives murdered in separate attacks

NIGERIA

Bridget Agbahime, a 74-year-old market trader and wife of Pastor Mike Agbahime, was murdered in her shop on 2 June by an angry mob in Kano state, north-west Nigeria, after being accused of blaspheming Muhammad. The attack began with one man and after he shouted "Allahu akbar [God is great]" other people joined in.

In another incident, Eunice Elisha, also a pastor's wife, was murdered on 10 July as she shared the Gospel in her local neighbourhood in Abuja. Eunice's Bible was placed prominently by her body, which was discovered near a mosque close to the family's home. Her husband, Olawale, reports that Eunice - who regularly witnessed in the community - had been denounced by the leader of the local mosque.

## Daughter killed by Hindu mother for converting to Christianity

SRI LANKA



Christians in Sri Lanka at worship

On Tuesday 31 May, in the Ampara district of Sri Lanka, a Hindu mother murdered her 21-year-old daughter, Janani, for converting from Hinduism to Christianity. Following an argument between the two, the mother took a wooden plank from the bed and attacked Janani, killing her instantly. She buried Janani's body behind her house and reported her as missing, but later confessed to police what she had done.

## Granddaughter and grandmother thrown out of home for becoming Christians

INDIA

In India's Punjab state, a seven-year-old girl and her grandmother were thrown out of their home by the girl's Hindu father because of their conversion from Hinduism to Christianity. The decision was made by the father after the young girl gave her life to Jesus following her grandmother who became a Christian five years ago. The father also filed a police complaint against the pastor of the church which the girl and her grandmother attend.

## Christian prisoner again denied extension of medical leave

IRAN

Christian prisoner Maryam (Nasim) Naghash Zargaran, aged 36 and a convert from Islam, has once again been refused an extension to her medical leave by an Iranian court, even though her doctor has strongly advised that she should continue her treatment. She was forced to return to prison on 27 June.

Maryam - who has a heart condition known as Atrial Septal Defect (ASD) - was arrested in 2013 and sentenced to four years in prison for "propagating against the Islamic regime, and colluding to undermine national security", a typical accusation made against many Iranian converts from Islam.



To view our most current news scan this with your device

# In Touch

## Grace's sponsored swim benefits needy Christians

Grace Gregory, a student at Uppingham School in Rutland, UK, completed her 50 length swim for the Duke of Edinburgh Award in fine style – beating her fundraising target and raising £185.50. She said in her letter to Barnabas that she hoped that the money would be useful “in helping the greatest need of our fellow Christians”. We sent her gift immediately to bless Christians in Aleppo, Syria, who have suffered so very much in recent months.



Grace Gregory, whose swim raised money to help Christians in Aleppo

## HARVEST FESTIVAL OFFERING:



## SAVE CHRISTIAN LIVES THROUGH PROJECT JOSEPH

Is your church planning a special service to thank God for His goodness at harvest time?

A terrible drought has afflicted much of Africa this year, especially Ethiopia and Zimbabwe. Harvests have failed and millions of lives are potentially at risk. Barnabas Fund is working through local churches to feed many of the neediest. We are calling this “Project Joseph” because of the story we read in Genesis of how Joseph saved the people of Egypt from starvation during a time of famine. Read more in the enclosed booklet, “**Famine in Africa**”, which explains what Barnabas is doing to help through our Project Joseph programme. (Further copies available from your nearest Barnabas office.)

Why not ask your church leaders if this year’s harvest offering can go to Project Joseph? Together we can make a huge difference. You can save a life.

## Remember, remember, the fifth of November!



## Barnabas Fund International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church

In England, November 5 is perhaps best remembered as Bonfire Night, when a plot to blow up Parliament in 1605 was foiled. As part of *Suffering Church Action Week*, we invite all Barnabas Fund supporters around the world to join us in prayer on Saturday 5 November, to pray about the present-day sufferings of our brothers and sisters in Christ who are persecuted for their faith. In this magazine and in the SCAW Inspiration Pack there is a wealth of materials to help you make the most of this opportunity to stand with them, call to mind what they are going through, and pray that God will comfort them and deliver them from every evil.

Turn to page 9 for the SCAW 2016 prayer.

# YES, I WOULD LIKE TO HELP THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

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MAG 09/16

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£ ..... (amount in words) .....

Please start on **1st/3rd/7th/11th/15th/21st/28th** (delete as applicable) of .....(month) and then **every month/quarter/year** until further notice. This Direct Debit is a **new one/in addition to/replaces an earlier Standing Order/Direct Debit** in favour of Barnabas Fund.

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**Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate**  
Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year.  
**Your address is needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer, please fill in the white box at the top of the page.**

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Please return this form to Barnabas Fund at your national office or to the UK office. Addresses are on the inside front cover. Barnabas Fund will not give your address, telephone number or email to anyone else.

**Supporters in Germany:** please turn to inside front cover for how to send gifts to Barnabas Fund. Phone **0800 587 4006** or visit our website at [www.barnabasfund.org](http://www.barnabasfund.org) to make a donation by Direct Debit, credit or debit card. From outside UK phone **+44 24 7623 1923**.

## ALTERNATIVE GIFT CARD

If you would like to make a donation as an alternative gift for a friend or relative, we can supply you with an attractive "Thank you" card, which you can send to the person for whom you have made the donation. Please contact your local office to order one.



## FUNDRAISING

Barnabas works hard to be ethical in the way we raise funds and in the ways we contact supporters.

### We raise funds from:

- appeals through our own literature such as the magazine, which is sent to people on our mailing list
- appeals via emails sent to people on our email list
- appeal leaflets in other Christian publications
- appeals on our website and social media

### We never:

- cold call people
- have street collections
- use external fundraising organisations

If you ask us to stop mailing you we will take you off the mailing list as soon as we receive your request. Please note that you may still receive some printed material if the mailing list has been used by our printer to create a mailing shortly before we removed you from the list.

\*If the project chosen is sufficiently funded, we reserve the right to use designated gifts either for another project of a similar type or for another project in the same country.  
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## Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by Direct Debit



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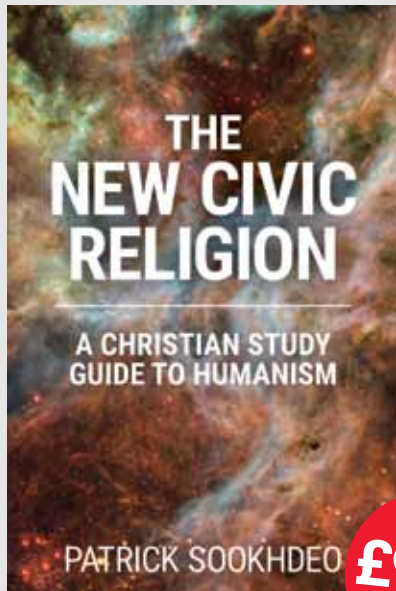
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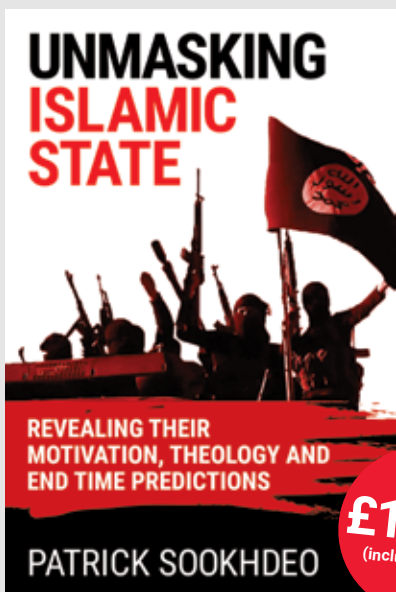
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