

# MinistryWatch Direct

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December 2006



MinistryWatch.com

## Peace

By Dan Wray

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Sometimes it's easier to describe an idea in terms of its opposite. For example, consider darkness. Anyone who has ever been dazzled by bright light quickly understands an explanation of darkness as the absence of light. Other examples might include noise, quiet; heat, cold; sweet tasting, bitter.

Peace may be such an idea. No one need be surprised to discover the following dictionary entries for peace: *"freedom from civil clamor;" "absence of hostility between individuals or nations."* As a spiritual quality or condition peace might be described as *"freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions; absence of activity and noise."* Some dictionaries correctly mention God as a reference point for lasting peace, and no wonder, for Scripture has much to say about peace, as well as a theologically opposing idea: *enmity*.

When God expelled Adam and Eve from Eden's originally pristine surroundings, He pronounced a curse upon the ground (Gen 3:17-18): any farming for food would subsequently be toilsome and labored. In addition He cursed the serpent for its role in the temptation (Gen 3:15); mankind has exhibited an aversion to snakes by specie ever since. More ominously, the Genesis passage also marks prophetic pronouncement of enmity – *bitter hostility* – between Satan and Eve's eventual offspring, the Christ child, and ends with Adam and Eve being driven from the garden by a frightening judicial display of the awesome power of God (Gen 3:24). By any reading, freedom from clamor, hostility, disquieting and oppressive thoughts and emotions is notably absent from this Biblical narrative.

Enmity between mankind and Satan has proven to be perilous far beyond Adam's immediate comprehension. Most horrifying was the resultant enmity between God and mankind. Because of one man's disobedience all mankind would suffer the consequence of physical death, as well as the pervasive consequence of separation from God in spiritual death, (Rom 5:12).

Remedy was immediately foreshadowed in the animal skins provided as a covering (Gen 3:21) to veil Adam and Eve from the exacting judicial scrutiny of a holy God. Eventually, a complex sacrificial system would be demanded by God. However, it was not until the seed promised to Eve was born in the lowly surroundings of Bethlehem's stall that redemption's comprehensive provision began to come into clear view. In a sublime concert of divine will (Heb 10:5-7), the Father's unique, eternal Son stepped into time to become the baby Simeon lauded.

*He took him up in his arms and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."* (Lk 2:28-32)

God kept His promise to an old man and brought peace with the birth of Mary's baby, paradoxically, a baby born to die. This baby of lowly birth would indeed grow up to fulfill the prophecy of Simeon and others concerning Him, setting men against their fathers and daughters against their mothers (Matt 10:35). However, this baby's eventual death would do so much more. Listen to the Apostle Paul.

*"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."* (Rom 5:10)

Reconciliation – *eradication of bitter hostility* – and life – *eternal life* – provided through the very instrumentality of death (Rom 5:1). And *peace*, displacing enmity among individuals, communities, even within families. In a lament of Christmas past, a lyricist intones, *"...in despair I bowed my head, 'There is no peace on earth' I said."*

True enough. There is no peace on earth – not even during this season richly heralded for its promise of it – only relative political and economic stability, temporal, tenuous at best. Oh, there will be peace on earth when the Prince of Peace has His day. But for now, the work has been done, *finished*, sufficient to establish a permanent basis for the gracious offer of peace to be the portion of everyone who comes to Him by faith. Starkly rendered in the ignominy of a public death by execution, His offer culminated when He sat down at the apex of position and privilege, waiting patiently *until His enemies are made His footstool* (Heb 1:1-13).

Today, Mary's baby – God's unique Son – still offers peace in our hearts, freedom from clamor in our lives and discord in our conversation, absence of hostility in our homes and in the activity of our work. It is real, abiding peace of which the world has not even mild notion because it surpasses rational explanation, available to *"guard [our] hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Phil 4:7).

*"For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and who destroyed the dividing wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, putting to death the enmity in Himself."* (Eph 2:14-16)

Grace is yours, saints, ...and peace. ☞

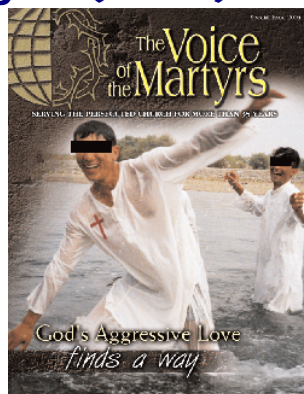
*\* Originally published in January, 2006; revised, used by permission*

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## Voice of the Martyrs (VOM)

### Conceived in suffering

In 1944, with communism infiltrating the Romanian church, Pastor Richard Wurmbrand began an underground effort to spread of the Gospel among communists and the Russian army. On a Sunday morning in 1948, Wurmbrand, a Romanian Jew, was abducted during his preparation for his ministerial duties, disappearing without a trace. Suffering what has become a hallmark of religious oppression and human rights indignities, Wurmbrand's loved ones were variously misinformed that he was dead, that he had recanted his religious faith, even that he had renounced his wife and family and had remarried. From his abduction in 1948 until his ultimate am-



nesty, Wurmbrand spent 14 years in prison, 3 years in solitary confinement. Beaten and tortured innumerable times, more bizarre forms of cruelty included expectation of family visits, only to wait in futility, tormented by the suggestion that family and friends had deserted him. In truth, no such visits were ever prearranged or granted. Wurmbrand's wife Sabina, also the target of abuse, labored three years in prison camps while Christian friends cared for the Wurmbrands' only child, Mihai. In 1964, after several near death illnesses, Richard Wurmbrand was granted freedom. He eventually left the country with his family upon payment by friends of a \$10,000 cash ransom to the Romanian government.

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## VOM

Transparency Grade

A

VOM exhibits a great deal of openness with regard to its operations and financial information.

5 Star Financial Efficiency Ratings

★★★★★

VOM directs a larger portion of its financial resources directly towards programs than other ministries as evidenced by its financial efficiency rating.

(Continued from page 1)

In 1966, facing threats of retaliation by Communist Secret Police, Wurmbrand testified before the U.S. Senate subcommittee on exploitation of religion under Communism, exposing 18 visible scars which gave witness to the years of systematic cruelty in Romanian prisons. Refusing to criticize western inurement, Wurmbrand simply plead repeatedly that the free world simply refrain from endorsing governments whose policies supported torture and persecution of their own citizens. The following year, Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand established The Voice of the Martyrs for the following purpose,

- To encourage and empower Christians to fulfill the Great Commission while under persecution...
- To give relief to the families of Christian martyrs...
- To equip Christians to win their persecutors to Christ...
- To undertake projects to encourage, build up and rebuild...
- To emphasize the fellowship, courage and faith of saints persecuted for their faith...

### Fellowship of Suffering

VOM is neither a church nor a denomination, existing internationally as a non-denominational ministry of service in support of the suffering church at large, for the purpose of drawing attention to the plight of Christians persecuted, even killed, for spreading the Gospel. With more than 30 offices worldwide and an interdenominational presence in over 50 countries, the ministry takes its central motivation from Hebrews 13:3, "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them who suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."

Matters of faith and practice are governed by a Statement of Faith covering what most evangelicals would call cardinal doctrines, including,

- Belief in the origin, inspiration and authority of Scripture as the Word of God
- Belief in the trinity of the Godhead, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Ghost
- Belief in the deity of Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, His sinless life, His miracles, vicarious and atoning death, His bodily resurrection, and His personal return in power and glory
- Belief in regeneration by the Holy Spirit as essential to the salvation of the lost
- Belief in the present indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit enabling godly living
- Belief in the bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost
- Belief in the spiritual unity of believers in Christ

### Mouthpiece for Martyrdom

Through news bulletins, publications and relief projects, VOM gives voice to the plight of Christian martyrs wherever they are found.

### The Web:

Billed as a compliment to other ministry information outlets, www.persecution.com offers varied news and wire service glimpses into the plight of present day suffering among Christians. Web site visi-

tors can access VOM's Prisoner List, a lengthy and comprehensive global composite of detainees, replete with personal histories, contact information and case by case analyses of suffering, and suggestions for effective response from supporters. News of prisoner release is also posted in the list, with thanksgiving, along with answers to frequently asked questions about how to petition appropriate institutions of government in the United States and abroad. Interactive web visitors can also access and view up to six rotating, regularly updated breaking and current news features. News updates may be posted within hours of the events.

VOM member services include "pass coded" access to member pages, prayer fellowships, media rooms and archival news information of a sufficiently delicate nature that unmonitored public access would almost certainly compromise the safety of Christians in some countries. Additional levels of registered member access to delicate and discretionary information provide still greater safeguards for those whose daily lives under persecution are already compromised.

### Monthly Newsletter:

A complimentary monthly newsletter entitled The Voice of the Martyrs, offers in-depth accounts of suffering saints as well as editorial and guest analyses of the state of Christian martyrdom worldwide and some suggestions for bringing this issue into clearer focus throughout the free world. The newsletter also provides opportunity to feature the ongoing influence of Richard Wurmbrand's writings for those unable or disinclined to purchase his books.


### Books and Publications:

As with many ministries of this kind, donor-purchases of books, dedicated publications and other tokens of the ministry help to publicize the work and inform the Christian community, as well as providing a needed source of support revenue. Since his death on February 17, 2001, Richard Wurmbrand's devotional meditations and accounts of suffering for the cause of Christ have continued to proliferate under the auspices of the ministry he began, as have the writings of his wife and others. Available literary works include selections from John Piper, and Church historians James and Marti Hefley, and current VOM Director, Tom White.

### Donor involvement

Additional donor opportunities range from "Action Packs," - individualized relief packs with life essentials such as toiletries, clothing and Gospel enclosures, to monetary gifts. Personal items must be carefully packaged to strict standards published on web member pages. VOM does not encourage accrual of credit card debt, but cautiously accepts such donations through secure credit card processing sites. Additional ministry opportunities are available for those desiring more extensive personal involvement.

### "...this is acceptable with God."

The Apostles witnessed repeatedly to their prison bonds for the sake of the Gospel (2 Cor. 6:5; Phil. 1:7-16), with thanksgiving (Phil. 1:3; 4:16; Rom. 12:13; Eph. 6:18-20). After the events of Pentecost (Acts 2:4; 4:13-20; cp. Lk. 22:31-33), these brave ones counseled concerning the virtues of suffering for Christ (1 Pet. 2:19-21). In anticipation of the cross, Christ had warned of impending persecution and torment, asking, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? (Matt. 20:22) Without a trace of rhetorical nuance, the question resonates today. In the words of the Christian hymn and with voice that cannot be stilled, Richard Wurmbrand and thousands of faithful Christians have answered resoundingly, "Lord, we are able!" 

### Organizational Details

Home Office	PO Box 443 Bartlesville, OK 74005-0443
Phone	(918) 337-8015
Website	www.persecution.com
Federal Law	EIN: 73-1395057 Tax-Exempt Tax Deductible

### Worldview Considerations

- Theologically conservative
- Theocentric emphasis (God's glory is the goal in everything He does)
- Dissemination of the Gospel is central
- Demonstration of Christian love is foundational

### They being dead, yet speak...

Among the final words spoken by the Lord Jesus to His disciples before His ascension was an assurance that He would be with them "always, even unto the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Sustained by this blessed promise, Christians from that day until now have committed everything to the cause of spreading the Gospel, many giving their very lives though their voices still echo. Paul knew such commitment, having been chosen of God "to be His witness unto all men," specifically, of what he had "seen and heard" (Acts 22:15; cp. Acts 26:13-18). Such was also the commitment of Richard Wurmbrand, bond slave of Jesus Christ, 14 years a prisoner in Communist Romania for the cause of the Gospel.



### Contact Us

MinistryWatch Direct aims to spur donors to examine ministries and make discerning giving decisions.

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