# Theology  

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

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

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

Buy me a coffee https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology
https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb

PayPal https://paypal.me/robbradshaw

A table of contents for Honeycomb can be found here:
https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_honeycomb.php




A bilingual Khmer-English Theological Journal to give biblical knowledge to its readers as a honeycomb gives strength to exhausted travelers.


Voll. 4, No. 2

Gัe งume
Juully 2003







ชถ్లกิติกร Russell H. Bowers, Jr.






Honeycomb is published by Training of Timothys
© 2003 by Training of Timothys
Central Post Office, P.O. Box 479, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia
Email, Russell_Bowers@wvi.org Editor, Russell H. Bowers, Jr. Translation, Saing Chhinho
Khmer proofreading, Barnabas Mam
Technical support, Mark Chann Sitha
Manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the editor.
Opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily
those of the editor or of Training of Timothys.
Printed in Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia.


 ตุรสธช่ษั่ 4





















## 









 શสเธ์














 เชุูีย 4























## 















 ณาง่" 4





## ลารุรสยตรี่

 ตักกเบียยร 1










 โัน 4 ม






[^0]
## A Cockfight in a Common Nest



UON Seila

At dawn the eastern sky glows bright red from the sunrise. Birds sing, and trees sway in the gentle summer breeze from the south. A long, dusty trail winds through the countryside about eight kilometers off National Route One from Phnom Penh to Vietnam. It is 1967; a little peaceful village, Tong Neak, stretches along the trail.

As a farmer, I enjoyed country life very much. Every morning my favorite job was feeding the poultry. I took a bowl, scooped up grains of rice, and spread it in the yard in front of my house. Here come roosters, hens, ducks, drakes, and geese! How happily they cluck, crow, and quack as they eat their food! I liked to do this kind of job very much, and did not wait until my parents told me to do it. I especially loved the chicks.

As time passed my chicks matured into cocks or roosters. One day I wanted to see my roosters fight each other, but they would not do so because they were siblings. They knew one another very well because they had grown up as a family. Then an old man living next door gave me an idea.
"Do you want to see your roosters fight each other?" he asked.
"I do; please help me," I pleaded. As a boy living in the countryside with nothing to play with I wanted to play with something. So I decided to get excited by watching my roosters fighting one another. "What can I do to get my roosters to fight each other?" I keep asking him.

He inquired, "Does your mother have a frying pan in your kitchen?"
"Yes, she does. I see it hanging up on the wall."
"Go get a knife, scratch the black stuff from the frying pan, and apply it to the cheeks of the roosters you want to fight," he instructed me.

Because I fed them every day, my roosters were so tame that I could catch them any time I wanted. So I began to make the sound I usually did when feeding them-Kru-u-u-u-u-uh! They recognized my sound and came closer to me as their friend. I took a bowl of rice grains, put some in my hand, and started to call my roosters. They came out of the banana trees around the house. They came with a happy sound. They believed I was going to feed them again. I am sure some of them wondered why their master was calling them again? But others might not doubt at all, because they knew I was someone who fed them.

Finally I spotted two roosters that were similar in weight and height. so I took them in my hand. I start to rub the black stuff from my mother's frying pan onto their cheeks. I rubbed one, then the other, and finally let them go. Before long they started to fight their own sibling with whom they had grown up in the same nest. They did not realize that the other was a sibling. They could not recognize the other any more because of the black stuff I put on their faces. They fought and fought an hour or so. Each was soon severely bleeding on its face.

The other animals stood in astonishment to see roosters from the same nest fighting one another. Pigs, dogs, ducks, and cats might wonder why their master did not help separate them. They did not know that I wanted to see them fight one another.

Soon the other boys from my neighborhood came to watch and shout with joy. They praised me for being so clever and providing
them some cxciting entertainment. Some of the boys helped wash one rooster from its bleeding. The fight kept on and on until neither bird could stand. Finally I decided to stop my game, because I was afraid that if my father came home and saw what I had done he might not be happy.

The next morning one of them was in a serious condition. It could not eat its food because of a cut on its beak. It stood under a banana tree like a man with malaria covered with blanket. When my father found out about the incident he was angry. He scolded me-not because we lacked chickens, but because he said we were Buddhist. He told me it is a sin to harm somebody's life, even an animal's life. We believe there will be life after death, and if we do something wrong in this life we will suffer its consequences in the next. He said that in the next life I will be fool. fight my brother, and suffer like the two roosters of mine.

Thinking about how my roosters fought one another reminded me of Cambodia's situation after more than two decades of war. We Cambodians have been like roosters raised in one nest, yet fighting our compatriots because we were painted either red (Khmer Rouge) or blue (Khmer Serei). The superpower from the free world painted us blue (calling us "Freedom Fighters"), while the superpower from the communist bloc painted us red (calling us "Khmer Rouge").

Whether Khmer Rouge or Khmer Blue we are still Khmerbut we fought one another nearly two decades. In the end we all suffered and lost a great many of our own people. I remember that in my village of Tong Neak, all my relatives on my father`s side were Khmer Rouge, whereas all my relatives on my mother's side were Khmer Blue-Lon Nol's soldiers. They fought one another for five years. After the war both sides had perished. Not a single one of them was left

In 1975 the Khmer Rouge exterminated the Khmer Blue by forcing them to work hard for little food. In a Khmer Rouge purge in 1978 all the eastern region (including Tong Neak) was butchered. But who gained and who lost'? Cambodia lost.

Israel consisted of twelve tribes. They were brothers. But Israel was invaded by a powerful foreign country. Most of its people were taken away from their beloved homeland, while the remnants became another hatred group, the Samaritans, who were labeled as not pure Israelites.

In the Christian world we have been dyed red or blue, or smeared with soot from the frying pan, by various denominations. The black stuff from denominations and groups has blinded us so that we do not recognize our own brothers and friends. Some groups warn their people, "Do not associate with that other group because they are not as holy as we are. Do not go with them-they speak in tongues, or they are very conservative, and we are not. Don't participate in their seminar because they might entice you to join their group. Our group is better than theirs." The list just goes on and on.

Who gains? Only the owner who feeds the roosters. He gains the pleasure of being able to sit back and watch an exciting fight. But the losers are the roosters themselves, both of which end up as food for the owner

Cambodians have lost in the recent past because they fought their own people. They hated their compatriots who shared the same land and the same country. I don't want to see history repeat itself. I want to break the cycle of crisis in Cambodia.

I don't want to bite a hand that feeds our own people. But I want to plead with some of the missions from outside. Let me repeat that I am talking about "some"-not "all"-of the missions from outside. I neither wish to equate all missions nor single out any one of them, but just express my concern to those who forget that they are only pioneers in this land, not permanent residents. One day they will leave and start another field of mission in another part of the world. So I hope that they will not get upset as they read this article.

As a Cambodian I very much appreciate all missions from other parts of the globe that have come to start some kind of work in my country. What legacy will you leave behind when you depart? The spirit of unity or of disunity? Let the Cambodians themselves discern the differences between one group and another. Do not dye them so they do not recognize their own folk, as some world superpowers did to
us in the past. I want to see my country delivered from the spirit of division after you, the spiritual giants, have left us.

Please play your role as best men and bridesmaids; don't try to be bride. The Cambodian church is a bride who will meet Jesus when he comes back, and will receive all the blessings and glory from him. The groom never comes to kiss the bridesmaid, but he will kiss the bride (the church), not missionary (bridesmaid). In the wedding the bride cannot do anything by her own; she really needs the bridesmaid to help her by holding umbrellas, or fanning her and massaging her leg while she sits in the ceremony for a long time. She really needs someone to help to ease her task. She knows her groom very well and how he feels, because they got to know one another during their dating. But the bridesmaids were simply asked to come to help in the wedding ceremony; they never knew the groom. Who knows the need and the feeling of the Cambodian Church? I would say a Cambodian knows better than anybody else.

I remember one day I met with a Cambodian pastor. I am sorry I cannot mention his name. He said to me, "Only a Cambodian can understand the needs of the Cambodian. Even though some missionary can speak our language fluently, or has lived in Asia for years and presumes he knows our culture very well, he still does not fully know what we need. A Cambodian would never voice some of his needs, but we Cambodians would know what they are without him having to say anything." I would say he was right. In our culture people do not speak straightforward. We often do a little bit of beating around the bush. Therefore let the Cambodian reveal something to you over a period of time. Don't quickly jump to a conclusion and say, "I know Cambodians very well."

Again I want to apologize if I have written too strongly. My primary purpose was to try to reveal some of the feelings of our people with whom I have talked, and who have murmured their complaints.

## Conclusion

- It is time to break the cycle of the spirit of division.
- Don't try to do something to get excitement by blackening the face of the nationals.
- We need partners, not colonizers, in the Christian community.
- Israel hated one another, roosters fought one another, and Cambodians killed their countrymen, because of ideology from the outside.
- We Christians do not try to follow the pattern of the fallen world. ${ }^{1}$
- History will record what you have done in this period of time.
- The earth is not our permanent place, and we never know our time of leaving the planet earth, so we don't invest too much in building our own kingdom instead of God's kingdom.
- God's purpose is to take very different peoples and make them one in Christ Jesus-not have them fight one another or remain strangers. ${ }^{2}$


# Pastors, Fathers, and Shepherds: <br> Models of the Kingdom 



Glenn MILES

Ifind the picture of the shepherd in sçripture to be very comfort ing. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. ' He knows the sheep by name and leads them. ${ }^{2}$ He will actively seek out the lost sheep to bring it home. ${ }^{3}$ He is so committed that he is prepared to die for the sheep. ${ }^{4}$

Jesus charged Peter with the responsibility of shepherding the lambs and sheep as a demonstration of his love for his Lord. ${ }^{5}$ As pastors and leaders in the church, and as fathers of our families, we are required to do the same. Isn't it interesting that Jesus mentions lambs before the sheep, surely as a reminder of God's priority for children?

> 'Jn 10:1-18; Lk 15:3-7.
> ${ }^{2}$ In 10:4.
> ${ }^{3}$ Lk 15:3-7.
> ${ }^{4}$ Jn 10:11.
> ${ }^{5}$ Jn 21:15-17.

In 1 Peter 5:2 we are asked to "be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care." As we would expect, youth are encouraged to submit to elders, but the verse teaches that "All of you (meaning youth and elders) are expected to "clothe yourselves with humility." Elders cannot be humble unless they listen to their flock. Shepherds are asked to be "not greedy for money but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you but ... examples to the flock."

That most familiar psalm, the twenty-third, is also a tribute to God as our shepherd-leading, restoring, guiding, anointing. The rod and staff are seen as comforters. It is better to have the shepherd's staff directing us than to be left vulnerable and without direction.

And yet Proverbs 13:24 ("He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him") and 29:15 ("The rod of correction imparts wisdom but a child left to himself disgraces his mother") are often used as an excuse to use a stick to beat a child. If these passages are understood in the light of a shepherd's rod, a different picture emerges of discipline, guidance, and nurture.

In a country that has experienced so much violence, it may be difficult for us to realize that discipline is not the same as violence, but we must remember that God is a God of grace and forgiveness.

I also find it interesting that the sheep need to listen to Jesus' voice so that they can follow him. ${ }^{6}$ As pastors and leaders, we will also have many who will listen to our voice so they can follow us. Does what we say echo the voice of the Good Shepherd, or do we speak with our own harsh voices?

The Old Testament warns shepherds who only take care of themselves. "You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally." Thankfully God himself intervenes and cares for the sheep by searching for the strays, binding up the injured, and strengthening the weak, but promises to destroy the "sleek and strong," concluding "I will shepherd the flock with justice. ${ }^{"}$

[^1]Perhaps you yourself have been the victim of another's harshness or brutality either physically or emotionally? In an anonymous survey at a recent provincial EFC pastors' conference, out of eightyfour responses, two individuals admitted to having been raped and twenty-two to having been beaten by their parents as a child. Five people felt it was less serious or not serious for a child aged twelve years to be touched on the genitals by an adult. Twenty-six felt it was less serious or not serious for parents to beat their children. I believe that these figures are causes of concern in view of our call as pastors, leaders, and fathers to be shepherds.

Abuse of children is something God cannot tolerate. ${ }^{9}$ We are called first to feed and nurture his lambs, and then to provide guidance and discipline. We are also called to be examples. This is where there can be a problem. Children who experience violence themselves are more likely to abuse their children when they become adults. They have poor role models and do not see violence as wrong, and so the cycle repeats itself.

Can you see how things repeat themselves from grandparent to parent to child? The cycle can only be broken when an adult chooses to stop using violence, and instead explores non-violent ways to discipline. Then the child experiences a different way. Patterns are difficult to change, but with God's love, grace, and healing, change is possible.

This is the same for pastors who have experienced abusive leadership themselves. They must also choose to do something different and become themselves examples of the Good Shepherd. ${ }^{10}$

For those of us who have experienced the consequences of abuse, what could be more hopeful than the picture of the lion lying down with the lamb in Isaiah 11:6?

But in the meantime, those of us in leadership must lose no time in "strengthening the weak, healing the sick, and binding up the
${ }^{8}$ Ezek 34:16.
${ }^{\text {º }}$ Lk 17:2.
${ }^{10} 1$ Pet 5:3.
injured" lambs and "bringing back the strays and searching for the lost" even where we may have driven them away. Then "when the Chief Shepherd appears you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. "ll


## 







โ็เยยงตูต


$$
\begin{aligned}
& \text { - citms のo:し }
\end{aligned}
$$

$$
\text { NG-RG:OQ } 8 U \cap \text { n }
$$



































































[^2]
## 






















```
"
```



#  





บ゙ich






## God Has Come Close



Russell H. BOWERS, Jr.

I$n$ the town of Anuradhapura in northern Sri Lanka stands one of the island's most sacred shrines. A Bo tree grows there that is said to be a direct descendant of the one under which the Buddha was enlightened. This old and sacred tree is surrounded by a metal fence, and hundreds of pilgrims come every day to meditate in front of it. During a recent visit I saw scores of people with hands folded in sampeah facing that tree, many with eyes closed. I asked my guide, "Are they praying to the Buddha?" "No," she replied. "The Buddha has passed beyond this life into nirvana. He cannot hear or answer prayer. These people are rather meditating on the Buddha's sayings and showing their respect. If they have a need and want to pray, they go to a devada."

The same kind of thing happens elsewhere in the world and with religions other than Buddhism. Many people intuitively understand that there is a Creator God, who designed and made all we see. The

This article was first presented as a Christmas message in Phnom Penh on 20 December 2002.
world is too well designed, and living beings too complex, to simply have emerged by chance or through endlessly-repeated cycles of history. If I see a computer, I know that somewhere there must be a computer designer; a watch requires a watch maker; a moto a moto manufacturer. Likewise, a rice seed that knows how to send its roots down for water and its leaves up for sunlight and air; a bird that soars the winds of heaven; and a human who can think and create; all mean that a wise designer and maker has been at work. We are not accidents, and most people recognize that. But many who know that there is a Creator fear that he is distant, perhaps unconcerned about us, virtually unknown and unknowable. We his creatures have been estranged from him. So if we need help in our daily lives we turn to lesser but closer deities and spirits.

Some of us worry about ghosts or ancestors that may harm us; others sacrifice to a neak ta; Thai people sacrifice to spirits called phi; in Myanmar coconuts and red cloth are offered to nats. Many Muslim people take care not to offend the jinn. And the list goes on and on. A common feeling around the world is that the most important and powerful god-the Great God who created us-is too big or distant or offended to care any longer for the people he made, and so we try to find help from lesser sources.

We find this attitude even in the Bible. The young man Daniel belonged to the nation of Israel. He worshiped the true and Great God, but his nation had been defeated in war by its enemy Babylon. So now Daniel was forced to serve the pagan Babylonian king. One night this king dreamed a dream and wanted to know its interpretation. He summoned his wise men and demanded, "Tell me what I dreamed, and then tell me what it means." They answered, "O king, you tell us the dream, and then we will interpret it for you." The king replied, "No, you tell me the dream. Then I will know that you are not just inventing something in your minds, but can tell me the true interpretation." The wise men protested in dismay to the king, "There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men." Do we hear
what these wise men said? There are gods who are wise and powerful, and even know such things as what people dream. But they are far away; they do not live among people or speak to us; we have no way of interacting with them. When we are in trouble we have to seek help from lesser (and sometimes false) spirits.

So this is a thread of thought throughout history-a Great God (or gods) exists. But he is too great or too distant. We can't contact him; he can not or will not help.

It can be terrifying to be separated from the wise and powerful who can help us. I have read several accounts of life in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, and have just started reading another. In this the author was a nine-year-old girl on that fateful day of April 17, 1975, when Pol Pot's pawns pushed Phnom Penh's people to the provinces. As this girl and her family shuffled with the crowds in their flight from the city, they passed an unattended three-year-old boy screaming and searching for his parents. He was lost and alone in a new, strange, dangerous, and terrifying world. His strong parents who had always comforted and protected him were nowhere to be found.

How like that little boy we sometimes are! We find ourselves alone, having to rely on our own limited (and sometimes faulty) wisdom and resources in'a world where we face droughts and famine and wars and corruption and terrorism and AIDS and sick children. We cry out, but no one stops to help. The Great God, if he is there, is distant and silent. So we grasp for anything close by we think might help, like a drowning man who grasps at bubbles or sticks on the surface in a desperate attempt to help him float.

There is some truth in the idea that the Great God is distant. It was not always so, but is now. When God created the first man and woman he used to stoop to walk and talk with them. But one day they rebelled against his command, and so lost their close fellowship with the Almighty. Centuries later God said to his people the nation of Israel, "Surely the arm of Yahweh is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear." Just as you and I do not wear into our houses sandals in which we have slogged through the sewerage on the streets, but leave them outside, even so
the clean and holy God does not allow wickedness and rebellion in his presence. Our sins have separated us from our God; our sins have hidden his face so that he will not hear. We are three-year-old boys screaming for help unheard in a world gone wild.

If that were the only message the Bible teaches, it would be sad indeed. But this is Christmas. Christmas is the story of how the Great God -the one who made us, knows us, and is wise and powerful enough to help us-has come close. He has indeed been offended by our sins, more than we are by filthy sandals, but in his love he has come near. He has come near to show us who he is, to cleanse us from our $\sin$, and to restore us to the closeness we as a race once enjoyed. The Old Testament of the Bible predicted the coming of a deliverer whose title would be "Immanuel." "Immanuel" is a Hebrew word consisting of three smaller Hebrew words that together mean "God with us." The New Testament of the Bible tells the story of how this Immanuelthis one whose title means "God with us"-has come. But how has he come'? In what way, and how close, has the Great God of Creation come to us?

Two weeks ago I attended the Third World Buddhist Conference at the Veang and Chaktomuk Theater. High monks and dignitaries from sixteen countries were there. At the opening ceremony our own King Sihanouk gave a speech, and then with the queen stood on the steps of the Silver Pagoda to have his photo taken with the delegates. I saw him-but only from two hundred meters away. The king was surrounded by officials, invited guests, and security guards. Most days I am not near the king at all. The closest I get is to hear about him on the radio or see his picture in the newspaper. I saw the king two years ago on Independence Day, but at the Conference was the first time I had ever heard him speak. So on December 5, 2002, for me the King of Cambodia had come close ... but not very close.

How close has the King of Heaven come? If kings of this earth rarely come near, but usually surround themselves with guards and dignitaries and finery, surely the God of Creation will keep himself at greater distance from us still. But Christmas is the story of how God came very, very close.

The one whose title is Immanuel--God with us-was born as a baby. But he was not born in a palace to a royal family, so that only a privileged few could ever hope to see him. He was born to a poor, traveling couple that found themselves with no place to sleep for the night. They were temporarily homeless; there was no place even for his mother Mary to give birth. So apparently she did so in some kind of feeding room for animals. It may have been a barn of some type, or a cave, or a place outside where animals are fed. But after Jesus was born his mother laid him in an animals' feeding box. If this baby, Jesus, is truly Immanuel, then God has indeed come very close.

The baby's first visitors were not prime ministers or court dignitaries, but shepherds. Shepherds were common figures in Israel in those days. They performed an important role in that society, because sheep provided both wool for clothing and meat for food and religious sacrifices. But shepherds were not generally wealthy people. It would be today as if the angels announced the baby's birth to motodups or cyclo drivers. These are people who are familiar to us, they perform an important role in our society, but they are not generally wealthy or influential people. Not people we would expect to be the first to be informed that a king has been born-that God has come close to us in human form. But it is a symbol of just how close God came that first Christmas that Jesus was born to a shelterless, traveling couple, and that his first visitors were not the wealthy politician or merchants, but shepherds. God has come so close that he is available to everybody.

The fact that Jesus was totally human-so like us in every way-caused many people in his day to doubt that he was Immanuel. In John I we hear Nathaniel grumbling, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" In John 7 the people of Jerusalem debate among themselves, "Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Messiah? But we know where this man is from; when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from." In Mark 6 and Matthew 13 we hear people ask, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers'? Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" And so they took offense at him and refused to believe that
he was God With Us, because God had come so close as to seem indistinguishable at first glance. The book of Isaiah says, "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him." Only when we look closer and hear his wisdom and watch his deeds and observe his sinlessness do we recognize that the scriptures that had predicted Immanuel have been fulfilled in this man.

The New Testament goes on to describe how close God has come to us in Jesus. The Apostle John begins his first letter by saying, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched-this we proclaim...." He begins his gospel by telling us that "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.... No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known." When Thomas doubted that Jesus had been raised from the dead Jesus appeared to him and urged him to put his finger where the nails had been in Jesus' hands, and to thrust his hand into where the spear had pierced Jesus' side. That's very, very close. In fact, the book of Hebrews says that God's Son "had to be made like [us] in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest ... and make atonement for the sins of the people." As a result "we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we areyet was without sin." At Christmas we celebrate the birth of one whose title is Immanuel-God with us. The Great and Powerful God of Creation has indeed come very, very close.

All of this is Good News for us. All of this means we don't need to fear or seek help from all kinds of spirits and other forcesreal or imagined. The Great God himself cares for us, and he is powerful to save. Jesus taught that God loves us so much that even the hairs on our heads are numbered. He told his disciples that "the Father [that is, God] himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God." Therefore "my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." Jesus promised that if anyone loved him he
would obey his teaching and "My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." Our bondage to the spirits is broken because the Great God loves us and lives in us as Christians, and he is greater than any other power. Christmas is Good News-the Great God has come close and lives with all who accept the pardon purchásed by his Son.

Have you accepted God's love to you in Jesus yet'? Have you said, "All my life I have been serving shadows and spirits-either things that I have imagined but that aren't really there, or things that are evil and should not be served. But now I turn from them to the Great God who has come close and shown me who he is in Jesus"? Have you understood what Christmas is-not a fat man with a white beard in a red suit who gives presents, not a decorated tree and special songs, but the birthday of the man in whom God has come close?

This Christmas message that God has come close to us in the person of Jesus not only has something to say to people who are not Christians, but also to those of us who are. How do we Christians think of Christmas, and how do we celebrate it'?

We are gathered today in a large stadium with many people in attendance. We have banners and music and dancing and a powerful sound system. We have invited dignitaries and special guests, and many of us are wearing our nice clothing. It is good for us to celebrate Christ's birth in this way, and show how important it is to us. It is good for us to meet together in a large meeting as Christians from different churches and denominations to show how our common faith in Jesus and love for him unites us, and is more important than the denominational differences that we sometimes allow to divide us. It is good to worship and be glad together like this in a big way.

But is that the only way we can celebrate Christmas? Is a big meeting the only way we can show how important it is to us that the Son of God has come among us to be our savior?

Let us remember that Christmas commemorates the coming of Immanuel-"God With Us." Let us remember that when God came to us in Christ he came close-not as presidents and kings and prime ministers do today, surrounded by guards to keep common people away, and dressed in fine clothing. He came close-born to a shelterless
couple, wrapped in strips of cloth, and laid in a box from which animals eat their food. His first visitors were shepherds. He looked so much like ordinary people and grew up in such an unimportant village that many could not believe he was anything special. John says he came so close that his eyes looked upon him and his hands touched him. Christmas is not primarily about big meetings and expensive programs, although, as I said, these are good and certainly have their place. Christmas is first of all God coming close to everyday people in the everyday concerns of their daily life.

So, as Christians, if we want our non-Christian neighbors to know this Jesus whom we love, we need to be little "Immanuels" to them. Jesus said to his apostles, "As the Father has sent me, so send I you." He sends us the same way God sent him-to live among people and show them by our lives what God is like. To care for them where we can in their everyday needs and problems.

So when a Christian takes a meal to a young mother dying of AIDS, that is Christmas for that woman. That is someone coming close to her in her poverty, and ministering to her in God's name. When a church gets together and decides to clean up its neighborhood streets, or teach local street children how to read, or donate rice to a family that lost their whole crop to a flood, that is showing what Christmas is. God coming cilose to us where we are, where we can see what he is like and experience his practical love and care. Our celebrations like this one can be very encouraging to us and honoring to God. But if that is all we do then our non-Christian neighbors are likely to say, "The Christians are celebrating one of their religious festivals again. That has nothing to do with me; I have my own religion and festivals." On the other hand, if we serve them up close, where they are, in practical and meaningful ways, then they will understand that Christmas is the coming of Immanuel-"God With Us"-right to where we live and work and play and struggle. Perhaps in time they will feel encouraged to abandon their fear of lesser spirits, because they will realize that the Great God himself has come close.













[^3]







 ช6โ




























 โ్ర1รม








[^4]









 กติดแย่

































 เยธ โ్రాรม















 เม็શฟโ


 โ̧ tifiocix



## 

















 รกัธธี่ $?$







## 






















 โุด งศ


[10ร8\%



 เชีฟัเยฐเบียฺ 4






















 โ็โธ์์













































 โุใm
 โీ
































 ยกตีโกษชัธ

 เษฑูตีต ฯ คู่โูะโุ 4


















 ตัก่า 4







## 


























## A Christian Perspective on Corruption

Arun SOK NHEP

Corruption is widely practiced in Cambodia. Even some highly respected professionals, such as schoolteachers, medical doctors, and lawyers, are infected by this disease. Corruption has become so common that even Christians-nationals and expatriates alike-often find themselves unconsciously involved in it (let alone a few "believers" who actively practice corruption as part of their strategy to expand the "Kingdom of God").

Since God has called us to live in this society, we should reflect on this problem from his perspective, rather than ignore or overlook it.

## The Universality of Corruption

Corruption is a universal social phenomenon with which every society has struggled throughout human history. Each culture has its own definition for corruption, but all consider it to be immoral.

Some define corruption as using a public position for personal benefit. For others it is a means to divert someone from his duty. The former focuses on the action of taking bribes; the latter on offering them. But both actions are fraudulent.

The problem of corruption dates back to the beginning of recorded human history. In the Old Testament, when Samuel spoke to the Israelites after having chosen a king for them, he asked, "From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes?" Samuel's question shows that the practice was already known in ancient Israel. Later, when King Jehoshaphat appointed judges for the people of Judah, he urged them to "Judge carefully, for with Yahweh our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery."

Throughout history, corruption has begun with electoral and political delinquency. Candidates purchase votes with money. Civil servants pay bribes to access higher positions that entitle them to more money and honor. The practice was well known in ancient Roman society. The Romans enacted laws to punish or banish people practicing corruption. In ancient Greece, corruption was often related to judicial affairs. One paid jurists to hand down verdicts that flew in the face of evidence, or paid public officials for improper favors.

Many countries nowadays have laws against fraud in elections, or in political, administrative, and judicial affairs. In modern society, corrupt practices may also take place within the economic system, such as financial manipulation or business corruption. Economic corruption is sometimes practiced at the international level. Business people pay bribes to obtain contracts or markets so that they can make larger profits. They sometimes increase their profits by using inferior materials and cheating on the quality of work provided.

Some governments often fight corruption because it deprives them of finances. Others oppose it because corruption leads to inefficiency (a citizen's needs are met only if he pays for the official's attention).

Corporations fight corruption because it reduces profits. The legal profession opposes bribery because it violates the principle of free and equal justice for all, not just those who can pay for it.

[^5]Institutions such as Christian churches perceive corruption as an ethical problem. They therefore denounce this practice, as they do other forms of $\sin$.

## Riches, Poverty and Corruption

In many societies, corruption is practiced at all levels, from simple day-to-day transactions to high-level state decisions. In such societies, the triad of "riches, poverty, and corruption" are so intertwined that we cannot approach these phenomena separately. Corruption becomes so deeply engrained that it comprises part of "the system"the way things get done. Parents bribe schoolteachers to give their children good grades, or allow them to graduate. Medical care is accessible only to those who can bribe the practitioner. Officials issue licenses and other approvals if the applicant pays them under the counter, etc.

The first victims in such a society are the poor. Lack of finances denies them access to education or medical care. Those who rule over them often oppress them. National riches are misappropriatedsquandered by those in authority. The powerless poor, with no access to "the system," end up exploited, treated unfairly, and abused. Corrupt practices are not punished. Honesty appears to be unrewarded. People begin to perceive all riches and wealth negatively as dishonest gain. This state of affairs contradicts God's intention.

In the Old Testament, especially during the patriarchal period, wealth was often perceived as a sign of God's favor and blessing. "Riches are initially success guaranteed by God to those who observe the laws of the covenant. ${ }^{3}$ 3 This positive view of riches is also a concept in Wisdom tradition. For instance, Job received a double reward after proving himself righteous and faithful before God. ${ }^{4}$ By contrast,
${ }^{3}$ Conrad Boerma, The Rich, the Poor and the Bible (Philadelphia:
Westminster, 1980) 11.
${ }^{4}$ Job 42:10.
some Old Testament passages state that poverty may result either from God's punishment for violating the Law ${ }^{5}$ or from laziness. ${ }^{6}$

But in a corrupt society, these concepts of riches and poverty are inverted. The rich are in fact often those who transgress the laws of God and society, while the poor suffer as victims of the selfishness and covetousness of others. This reversed situation was already known in later Old Testament history, when God condemned the rich and declared himself the defender of the poor and oppressed.?

## Corruption in Cambodian Society

In Cambodia, corruption is not a new problem. It is part of traditional political mentality. Each "key position" is a "benefit" that one must purchase by money or gift.

We must, however, make distinction between "corruption in high levels" and "small day-to-day corruption." The first is practiced by those who unscrupulously squander national resources. They neither worry about national interest nor concern themselves with the wellbeing of the poor. This kind of corruption needs to be condemned energetically, not only by individuals, but also by moral forces such as Christian churches.

The second category of corruption concerns ordinary day-today transactions in society-e.g., paying an official to obtain papers, or a policeman an imaginary "toll" in order to continue traveling. Fulltime employment should enable someone to feed his family. At the present, in order to live honorably, an average family in Phnom Penh needs a monthly income of US $\$ 200$. But a schoolteacher, policeman, or soldier earns less than US \$50 per month. How can they increase their income and provide honestly for their families? From a Christian moral perspective, I think it is hard to condemn someone involved in corruption in order to feed his family, without trying to find means of helping him meet his daily needs.

[^6]Another act of giving is worth mentioning here that in itself is not fraud, but when misused could easily become so. In traditional societies, especially in Asia, a "gratuity" becomes part of interpersonal relations between those who occupy a position of authority and those who do not. In Cambodian society, one never goes to see another person for a favor with empty hands. The "gift" is part of elementary courtesy. However, one must make the distinction between a "gift" to influence the decision and a "gift" as an act of gratitude. The gap between these two is so narrow and slippery that we must rely on much wisdom when we find ourselves in such a situation.

For instance, all of us are aware that local authorities often require Christians to pay $\$ 500$ for permission to open a church or a Christian ministry. I think paying $\$ 500$ to a village chief for his personal gain in order to obtain authorization for evangelism, church planting, or other holistic ministry, is reprehensible. But if the law requires you pay this amount into local administrative coffers, this entails no corruption. After you get the license, you are free to offer a gift to the village chief as recognition for the service he has provided, and I think this is culturally acceptable.

We must keep in mind that corruption takes place when a gift influences the decision of its recipient.

## The Christian Attitude and Biblical Teaching toward Corruption

In Christian Social Ethics, Exerting Christian Influence, ${ }^{8}$ Rasmussen describes two categories of reaction vis-à-vis the problem of corruption.

1. Righteous indignation: Those who react this way consider themselves blameless. They separate society in two exclusive classes: the bad and the good, but forget that all human hearts contain a mixture of both.
${ }^{8}$ Albert Terrill Rasmussen, Christian Social Ethics, Exerting Christian Influence (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1956).
2. Cynical Complacency: Those who react this way oppose the above moralist attitude, and excuse corruption as simply a part of human nature. They regard corruption as a reality of life, and therefore adopt an attitude of complacency. They hold this cynical and conformist attitude, and tend to compare corruption in their society to the worst ones.

I believe that as Christians we should react to this problem with humble recognition of our own involvement, rather than considering ourselves innocent and only blaming others. Instead of either condemning or ignoring the problem, Christians should actively critique the morality of the society we belong to, while simultaneously sharing responsibility and guilt.

Scripture clearly states God's view of corruption:
"Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous." ${ }^{\text {" }}$

Israel's prophets urged justice for all of God's people. They considered corruption as an offense against the justice of God, and announced that such practices would incur punishment from God. They condemned these evil practices, and called for repentance. Amos said:

You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain.
Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them;
though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine.
For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins.
You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts.
Therefore the prudent man keeps quiet in such times, for the times are evil.
Seek good, not evil, that you may live.
${ }^{9}$ Deut 16:19; Ex 23:8.

Then Yahweh God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is.
Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts.
Perhaps Yahweh God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph. ${ }^{10}$

## Conclusion

When living in a society where corruption has engrained itself in the culture, the Christian should not only condemn the practice, but also individually reflect God's holiness through his or her honest lifestyle. There is often a significant price to pay to be honest.

We must also highlight the value of work as the only valid means to gain income, and as one of the best remedies against corruption and poverty.

Corruption is more than a personal moral issue; it is a national ill that cries out to be cured. As Christians we long for a society free from corruption. Churches are often shy in denouncing this evil, even as it continues to spread, fattening the wealthy and emaciating the poor. Although a minority in this country, we should act as parapets against corruption in society, taking stands clearly. We must, on the one hand, unite to fight all forms of corruption, and on the other, struggle proactively against corruption through our holistic ministries. Throughout history, the church of Christ has always cared for the poor and needy. The church of Cambodia is not exempt from this calling. Our church is growing, and it is now time for us to aspire to maturity. Instead of "delegating" NGO's to fulfill our duties towards to poor, the Cambodian church must become more responsible. Proclamation of the gospel and the concern for the needy must go together.












## 




















> -a ariudtar ob:m
> ${ }^{\circ} \mathrm{G}$ raniter oal:

## 

















 เตโัถ่ตู 4









 โิน้นับร 4

## 
















 โโุ

## 


 โฺ๐เกียสร บ
 โ̧






 TGTg $4^{5}$






[^7]















































##  


















[^8]























[^9]








## Rโรุรtas in










 ธง







 ต็โీรก







#  










 ริโูู 4


 เงากโตฺ


 ธัธรึษรเร 4










































































































UON Seila

## Meet Pastor Seang Aung



SEANG Aung

Pastor Seang Aung was born on May 19, 1918. He was raised in a Buddhist farmer's family in Roeusey village, Baray subdistrict, Trang district, Takeo province. His parents are Mr. Seang Beth and Mrs. Am. Pastor Seang Aung has four sisters, and is himself the fourth child in the family.

In 1934 he entered the monkhood, where he remained for eight years. Praise God for giving him this opportunity to learn first hand about the Buddhist faith, because this knowledge would later help him in his evangelistic work. In 1943 he married Bun Sok, who lived in the
same village. He was converted to Christ by a Christian and Missionary Alliance pastor, Chum Beang, and then attended the Bible School in Takhau town, Kandal province, for four years. After graduating he worked as an evangelist with the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

In 1954 Pastor Seang Aung went to evangelize in Takeo province. As a result, many people converted to Christ. The authorities accused him of disgracing Buddhism and inciting people to betray their own religion, and arrested him. He was asked to pay 2,500 riel. In those days that was a high sum, but they said if he did not pay they would not release him. His wife borrowed money from relatives and paid the authorities as the deadline required. But thank God for working miracles in their lives. The authorities seemed frightened, returned the money, and apologized to him.

In 1961 he went to serve the Lord in Prek Kranh village, Psar SreThom KomChay mountain, Toek Laok subdistrict, Prey Nop district, Kampot province. He planted a church there for the Lord, and stayed in Kampot until 1970.

A Christian conference in Phnom Penh decided to send volunteers to work as missionaries in Kampuchea Kraom. He volunteered to serve in Klang province, Kampuchea Kraom. Before he left, the central committee pledged to support him every month. But when he reached this new place that was not his home country he encountered a lot of persecution, and the promised support did not come. His family faced severe hardship. He stayed in MonoTen village, Prek Roeusy subdistrict, Klang province, Kampuchea Kraom. Because of his experience in Buddhism he could share the Good News with the Buddhist monks and people in Kampuchea Kraom very easily, but at the same there was also a lot of persecution.

When he was in Kampuchea Kraom he received no salary from Cambodia, and so entrusted himself to God's provision. God proved to be so faithful in caring for his family. He always encouraged his children to trust God, and he led a Bible study for his family every night before bedtime. He quoted verses from Psalms 1, 23, and 91, and from Matthew 5, to remind his children to put their trust in the Lord. Kampuchea Kraum does not have many palm trees, as does most of Cambodia. He earned his living by farming and climbing palm trees to
collect juice to sell. There was one palm tree about two kilometers from his place. His life of farmer and palm tree climber was not easy, but God provided what he needed and took care of his family during their five years in Kampuchea Kraom. By the grace of God he was able to plant a church in Klang province.

In 1979 Cambodia was delivered from the hand of the Khmer Rouge and the genocidal Pol Pot régime. His mission as missionary in Kampuchea Kraum thus ended, he repatriated to Cambodia. Upon arrival he learned that forty pastors who had graduated from Takhau Bible School had been promoted into glory with God. Only four pastors remained alive. Two are living in the United States, and two in Cambodia-Ngov Vorn and Seang Aung. At that time he started to gather some remnants and new converts, and established one church out of the scratch the war had left us. In the spirit of Nehemiah he worked very hard for the Lord, and before long one church emerged in Prek Talong village, Sangkat Chak Aungre Kraum, Meanchey district, Phnom Penh. He named it "Ta Khau Church."

In 1982 he went to share the gospel and visit some congregations in secret, because in those days the government did not recognize Christianity. Then he traveled to the Thai border area to visit some war remnant Christians. He settled in Kao I Dang camp, Thailand, to serve the Lord, and there met some of his old friends. Eventually he was chosen to resettle in a third country, but refused to go for two reasons: he did not want to go alone, and he did want to leave the church in the midst of troubles. Rather, he decided to return to Phnom Penh in 1984. There he faced tension and more persecutions every day, but they could not stop him from sharing the gospel and visiting churches. At last he was arrested, sentenced to three to five years, and thrown into jail. In prison he did as Paul and refused to worry, even though they banned church members and relatives from visiting him. In jail he still kept telling people about Jesus. By the grace of God he remained in jail only one hundred twenty days.

In 1985 pastor Seang Aung and his wife continued to serve God, and planted a church that today is called "Ta Aung Metrey Takhau Church." In forty-eight years of serving the Lord he never enjoyed regular financial support from any group, but God took care of him and
his family. He is now eighty-four years and his wife seventy-five. They have three sons and five daughters. Two sons died in the Pol Pot régime, and one daughter died in Australia. They have twenty-two grandchildren and four great grandchildren. They all are Christian, and three of his sons-in-law are pastors.

Pastor Seang Aung is retiring as pastor and has given all the responsibilities to his children and the board of elders in the church. He and his wife live with happiness in their old age as they see the fruit of their effort over the past years, and their children and grandchildren maturing in their faith like the sprout of the olive. This is the blessing by which God has honored their hard work and their trust in Him rather than in people. Had he put his trust in people and their pledges while he was in Kampuchea Kraom, he might not have ended up serving God until his old age. Praise God that they both put their trust in the Lord rather than in man. Therefore they have been successful in serving the Lord, and provide us a good example. Amen.



[^0]:    
    

[^1]:    ${ }^{6}$ Jn 10:3-4.
    'Ezek 34:4.

[^2]:    
    

[^3]:    
    

[^4]:    

[^5]:    ${ }^{1} 1$ Sam 12:3.
    ${ }^{2} 2$ Chron 19:7.

[^6]:    ${ }^{5}$ Lev 26:14-26; Deut 15:24.
    ${ }^{6}$ Prov 6:6-11.
    ${ }^{7} E x 22: 21-27 ; 23: 6-7$.

[^7]:    
    
    ＂氏゙̛ण LG：のO
    
    

[^8]:    
    

[^9]:    

