



by Larry Spargimino, Ph.D.

MESSAGES OF

Hope

Gospel seed is spreading in Iran; harvest to come

Sometimes the headlines can be discouraging. However, if you look behind the headlines, you will often find encouragement. This is especially true of headlines about Iran.

Iran is known for its utter and diabolical hostility against Israel, and the West. It sends a steady stream of weapons to terrorist organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah. We see video footage of bearded men talking about wiping Israel off the map. Their hope is in the coming of the Twelfth Imam who will right the wrongs imposed upon Iran by Jews. What else can we do but ask, “What’s wrong with these people?”

THE INSANITY IS REAL

We would be foolish to discount all the evil that has come from Iran under its Shi’ite leadership. Kamran Ashtary, a victim of torture as a teenager, is the director of Arseh Sevom (Third Sphere), a human rights organization that focuses on Iranian human rights abuses. In a piece for Global Voices, Ashtary wrote: “Any form of torture can cause psychological trauma. But it is especially bad for people under 25 because their brains are still forming. It becomes permanent and lifelong... Unfortunately for all of us who have experienced trauma, there is no returning to the people we once were. There is only finding ways to dim the nightmares.”

White Torture is the name of a book by the Iranian human rights activist Narges Mohammadi. “White torture” is also an Iranian torture technique in which inmates are held in all-white cells for long periods. The sensory deprivation can wipe out the will to resist, producing continual weeping and begging for mercy.

In Mohammadi’s book, 12 individuals are interviewed

and give their story. They are journalists, members of religious minority groups, and political activists. Their stories reveal the appalling state of Iranian prisons: Health-destroying sanitary conditions and tiny, poorly lit cells. Prisoners face intentional deprivation of medical care, long hours of interrogation, horrific threats to their family members and solitary confinement for long periods.

LOOKING BEHIND THE HEADLINES FROM IRAN

While the “bully on the block” looks big, that’s not the whole story. The Gospel has been spreading throughout Iran for many years. I first found out about this amazing work of the Lord in the 2013 book, *Captive in Iran*, written by two Iranian Christian women, Maryam Rostampour and Marziyeh Amirizadeh. In the Foreword, Anne Graham Lotz writes of her meeting with these women. One statement that they made still haunts Lotz: “They said it had been easier for them to experience God’s peace and presence and power inside Evin prison in Tehran than on the outside in America.” Evin prison in Tehran has a worse reputation than Angola, or Alcatraz in the U.S. This statement is just a small sample of the tenacity of Iranian believers and their utter faithfulness and commitment to the Gospel.

These two women from Tehran first met at an evangelical conference in Turkey. They decided that when they returned to Iran they would work together in disseminating the Good News. For three years they handed out New Testaments in Farsi cafes, gave them to taxi drivers and left them in cabs, coffee shops and mailboxes. Before their arrests, they had given out about 20,000 testaments. In addition, they started two house

churches in their apartment building, one for young people and another for prostitutes. They extended their ministry with mission trips to India, South Korea and Turkey.

In March of 2009 they were arrested for promoting Christianity—a capital crime in Iran—and imprisoned for 259 days in Evin prison. The charges against them were apostasy, anti-government activity and blasphemy for which they were subject to execution by hanging. Their courage could not be hidden. There were many organizations worldwide, including the Vatican and the U.N., that worked hard for their release.

HORMOZ SHARIAT—“THE BILLY GRAHAM OF IRAN”

Shariat was born into a Muslim family in Iran and came to the U.S. after the 1979 revolution. He came to Christ while earning his Ph.D. in computer engineering as a graduate student at USC in 1980. He has a passion for seeing Muslims turning in faith and following Jesus. His 16-year-old brother, Hamraz, was arrested on a minor political charge and executed by firing squad. “God showed me,” Shariat explains, “that the best way to respond to this tragedy was dedicate my life to loving Muslims and sharing the Gospel with as many of them as possible.” Shariat is the Spirit-filled head and founder of Iran Alive Ministries.

In an article in *The Christian Post* (5/18/24) titled, “This Pentecost, let’s remember the Iranian church—one of the world’s oldest,” Shariat points to Acts 2:8-9, “and how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites...” The first people groups mentioned in this Scripture were all from Persia, known today as Iran. Shariat writes, “This diverse gathering in Jerusalem underscores the multinational impact of Pentecost, making it a foundational moment not just for those in Jerusalem but for many distant lands, including Persia... The events that unfolded in Jerusalem over 2,000 years ago continue to resonate in the religious landscape of modern-day Iran.” Shariat boldly proclaims that Iran will become a Christian nation. He appeals to Jeremiah 49:38, “I will set my throne in Elam [a part of modern Iran], and will destroy from thence the king and the princes...”

Satan has done much to snuff out the light of the Gospel in Iran. As Christianity began to flourish centuries ago in Iran, Zoroastrianism, an ancient false religion combining monotheistic teachings about God plus a dualistic cosmology, similar to that of Gnosticism, also proclaimed beliefs that were contrary to the pure teachings of the Scripture. The founder, Zarathustra, was supposed to have instructed Pythagoras in Babylon and to have inspired the Chaldean doctrines of astrology

and magic. In the centuries that followed, Shia Islam became ascendant. But as Shariat writes, “The light of Christ cannot be snuffed out as many, even today, gather for worship in underground churches, secretly practicing their faith to avoid persecution.”

IRANIAN REVOLUTION & FRENZY THAT FOLLOWED

The history of modern Iran under the Shah explains, at least in part, the revolution of 1979 that launched a militant Shi’ite government into power. An extended study by Philip Jenkins printed in *patheos.com* relates that the Shah’s regime from the 1950s onward was strongly devoted to modernization and Westernization, which produced a rising tide of populist resentment. Iran’s economic woes under the Shah also fed the growing fires of revolution. Large numbers of young adults faced unemployment and poverty. They were readily available to recruitment by protest movements that were rooted in traditional Islamic beliefs. Modernization campaigns that promoted women’s rights and the legalization of abortion drew a holy rage from traditionalist Shi’ites.

In the last few years there has been a rise of protest groups against the “morality police” and their harsh efforts to crack down on “rebel women” whose numbers have grown after the September 2022 death of Mahsa Jina Amini, an Iranian-Kurdish woman who was severely beaten. Scores of activists, including human rights defenders, members of religious and ethnic minorities and dissidents remain in prison on vague national security charges or are serving sentences after grossly unfair trials. The fact that Iranian police and security forces seem to enjoy impunity, with no government investigations into their use of excessive and lethal force, torture, sexual assault, and other serious abuses, is particularly irksome. In an almost knee-jerk reaction authorities have expanded their efforts in enforcing abusive compulsory hijab laws.

Iran remains the world’s top practitioner of the death penalty. Iranian law deems actions such as “insulting the Prophet” (Muhammad), “same-sex relations,” “adultery,” “alcohol consumption” and certain non-violent drug-related offenses to be punishable by death. A report from the Iran Human Rights Organization found that more than 700 executions took place in Iran from January to November 2023. This was a substantial increase compared to the same period in 2022.

Yes, if hearts are not changed, people are not changed, no matter how horrific and severe the penalties. The new life that believers have in Christ comes through the gentle wooing of the Holy Spirit. Recent events in Iran are a clear indication of how God is preparing the world and the church for an end-time harvest.

MONUMENTAL ISSUES

by Josh Davis

National Monument to the Forefathers
in Plymouth, Mass. – ‘Faith’

FAITH NO LONGER CARVED IN STONE

America’s history is etched in granite and memorialized in bronze. In recent years, certain statues were targeted for removal based on the figure’s past. Now the defacing and destruction of historical statues has become random and senseless.

In June, pro-Hamas protestors spray painted statues in Lafayette Park across from the White House in Washington, D.C. A calm and steady park ranger tried to do his job by quietly standing next to the statue of Rochambeau, a French general who aided the 13 Colonies during the American Revolution. The protestors sprayed the statue and hurled trash at the park ranger as they chanted curse words and called him a fascist. Peaceful protests? Hardly.

As mentioned in my book *Rise of the One-World Mind*, the term fascist is being used in a strategic way by the globalist left as the world war on words rages. How is a park ranger doing his job by quietly standing next to a random statue suddenly a fascist?

As anger boils over, protestors and rioters emote by attacking anyone and anything standing in their way. Gen. Rochambeau was not symbolic to the protestors. His statue just happened to be in the park where they were protesting and thus became the object of their rage, just like the park ranger.

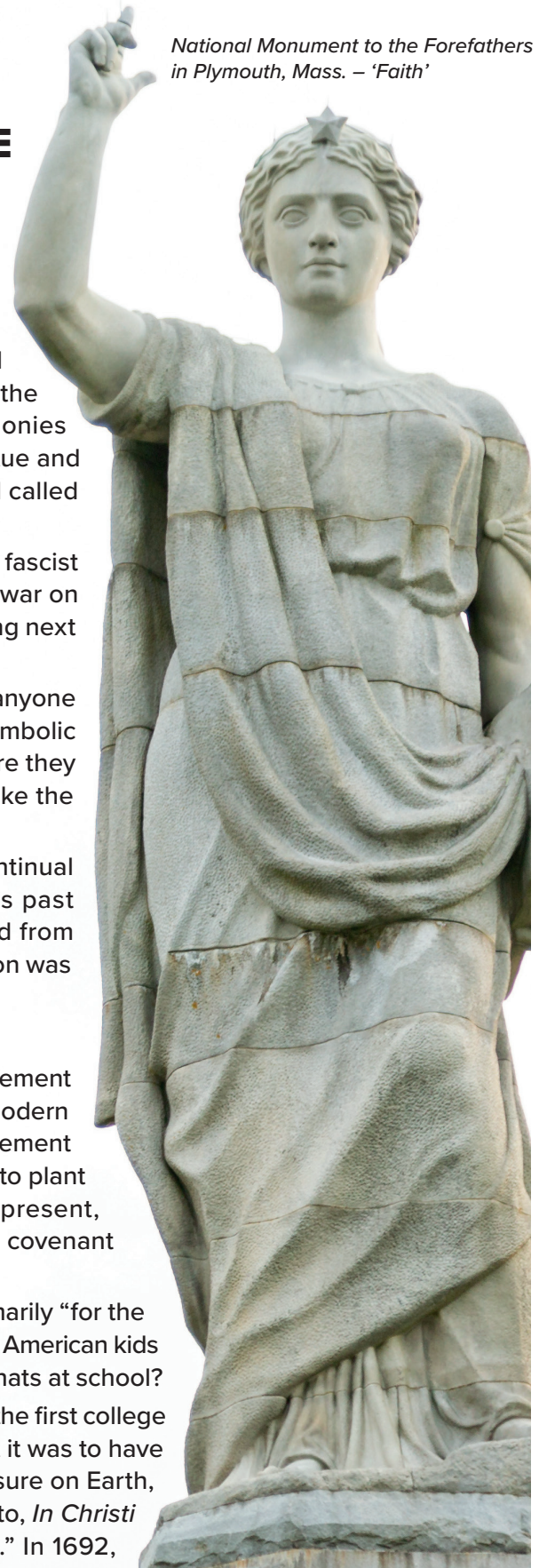
While vandalism and protests are not new to America, the continual downward spiral threatens its survival. Ignorance of America’s past will destroy America’s future. Attempts to remove Almighty God from America’s history reveals a dearth of understanding why this nation was founded in the first place.

FALLEN FROM A GREAT HEIGHT

The Mayflower Compact was drafted in 1620 as a covenant agreement for the orderly establishment of a new colony. Part of it reads (in modern English), “Having undertaken, for the glory of God, and the advancement of the Christian faith and honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the Northern parts of Virginia; do by these present, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic...”

Why did the Pilgrims seek to establish a new colony? It was primarily “for the glory of God, and the advancement of the Christian faith.” How many American kids hear that in November when they don construction paper pilgrim hats at school?

Speaking of school, Harvard University was founded in 1636 as the first college in the American colonies. The Pilgrims understood how important it was to have a clergy well-trained in properly understanding the greatest treasure on Earth, the Holy Bible. Originally, Harvard University used the Latin motto, *In Christi Gloriam*, which is translated in English, “For the Glory of Christ.” In 1692,



Harvard University adopted the motto, *Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae*, which is Latin for “Truth for Christ and the Church.” Unitarians influenced the school to change its motto during the 19th century. For over 100 years, Harvard has used only *Veritas*, “Truth,” as its motto.

When God and His Word are removed as the standard for *veritas*, is there a foundation for truth to stand upon outside of changing human opinions? Is truth determined by popular vote or by the loudest voices? The random vandalism of historic statues stems from a postmodern worldview that places *veritas* in the eye of the beholder instead of in the transcendent God of the universe.

ETCHED IN STONE

Tucked away in a grove of trees in Plymouth, Massachusetts is the world’s largest solid granite monument known as the National Monument to the Forefathers. This 81-foot-tall monument is a memorial to the Mayflower Pilgrims.

Upon its highest pedestal stands lady “Faith” with one hand pointing up to heaven and the other clutching a Geneva Bible, the Bible that the Mayflower Pilgrims brought on their voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. Seated beneath her on four corners are four figures: Morality, Law, Education and Liberty. These five virtues were foundational to the Pilgrim’s purpose and are deeply rooted in the Christian faith.

It is impossible to divorce the Pilgrims’ Christian faith from their purpose and goals for the new colony. That is why Faith stands above the other four. The Pilgrims knew it was impossible to have morality, law, education and liberty apart from faith in Almighty God. How far away from their vision America has moved!

Etched on a panel on this monument is a quote from Gov. William Bradford’s “Of Plymouth Plantation:”

“Thus out of small beginnings greater things have been produced by His hand that made all things of nothing and gives being to all things that are; and as one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone unto many, yea in some sort to our whole nation; let the glorious name of Jehovah have all praise.”

Sadly, this history is scarcely known and taught in America. Monuments like this are carved in stone so that their lessons will not soon be forgotten. Kirk Cameron did his part to shed light on the significance of the National Monument to the Forefathers in his 2011 documentary *Monumental*. Each generation has a responsibility to pass on this history to the next generation. When one generation fails in this responsibility, the next becomes oblivious.

Is America witnessing the rise of a historically oblivious generation?

IS THERE HOPE?

Yes! Some Bible prophecy teachers are all doom and gloom. That is one reason why some people are turned off from studying Bible prophecy. This is tragic since Bible prophecy is ultimately a message of tremendous hope, joy and peace. The Apostle Paul described the rapture and ended with, “Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess. 4:18). Those who use Bible prophecy to scare others are not following this biblical mandate to comfort one another with these words.

Faithful pastors and Bible scholars differ widely on America’s future in Bible prophecy as they seek to answer the question: “Is there any hope for America?” The Bible teaches that God forgives those who turn to Him in repentance and faith. Could many Americans do that? Yes. They could. But will they? That is up to every person to decide. Each American must cast their own vote on whether they will accept or reject Jesus’ offer of eternal life.

If no changes occur, America should expect continued erosion. Two of my favorite words in the Bible are “but God.” No situation is too bleak for God to turn around. No one is too far gone to be redeemed by Jesus. God can turn any nation around as they turn to Him in repentance and faith.

Christians must seek the face of Almighty God for the souls of people who are heading to eternity without Jesus’ salvation. Pray for God to do a great work in their hearts and minds. Pray for the Gospel to go forth with great power in this moment of world history.

When I am tempted to hate a person or a group of people, I make John 3:16 more specific and put that person’s name in the verse when it says “world” or “whosoever.” It refocuses me on God’s heart for every person in this world. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

The only cure for the spiritual erosion of America and this world is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That is why Christians must remain steadfast in proclaiming this life-giving message while we have a window of opportunity.

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