

# WALDRON NEWSLETTER

Vol. 34

May 2000

No. 5

## REAL OLD FASHION PERSECUTION

As you read the following you may recall the persecution of Paul, Silas and others in the book of Acts (e.g., 17:5-8, 13; 19:23-41). When you do you will see that Satan and his disciples are still up to the same old tricks. The city of Erode in South India has about a million inhabitants and the church in the area has in the last eleven years grown by leaps and bounds. Two and a half years ago K. M. Peter told me there were 51 churches in the area. He went on to say that when the first school of preaching was begun in 1989 there were eight. Since that time seven other such schools have been started including the one year school at Erode, which Peter directs. Last month I asked Peter to list all the congregations in the area today and he named 83 and said they were being served by 53 gospel preachers. About ninety-five percent of these were trained in our schools and only a half dozen or so are on foreign support, not by us but others. This rapid growth has also been pushed by the van evangelism work.

Satan has not been an uninterested bystander (See 2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:12; I Peter 5:8) during this time of growth. About three years ago the church where Peter preaches asked a brother named Thangaraj to help one of their members start a church in a community near Erode called Kolikkal Nathan. In February 1998 a gospel meeting was held there during the annual eVANGELISM campaign. Three couples obeyed the gospel. Almost immediately the unbelievers began to harass brother Thangaraj and the new saints. At first they argued in this manner, "You are saying our gods are not gods." "You should just worship your God and not say anything about our gods, but you say our gods are only wood, clay and stone." "Why should you degrade our gods?"

During the van work in February 1999 two more couples gave up idols and turned to the living God. This further incensed the unbelievers. They intensified their quarrels and physical abuse. They accused brother Thangaraj saying, "You are trying to convert the whole village." They told the police that the brothers were forcing the Hindus to convert. Brother Thangaraj branded this a lie. The unbelievers met him at the local bus station on two occasions when he arrived from Erode and threatened him with a beating if he continued to come. He did not stop. During the van campaign a tree at the side of the street was used for a loud speaker over which they preached the gospel. The Hindus cut the tree down.

Water is a very difficult item for the poor people of the community to obtain and many quarrels broke out between the Hindu women and our sisters at the local water tap. They forbade the saints to use the community water. Even when the Christians got another tap installed in a different location they fought them over that. One sister was beaten and her sari torn off. The unbelievers during the Hindu festival insisted that the Christians had to pay the temple tax for the idol's house. This they refused to do and more abuse was heaped on them. Heavy rocks were piled in front of a brother's door so that no one could come in or go out. The home of the brother where the church met on the Lord's day was padlocked. The police got involved and unlocked the brother's house. They insisted that the Hindus let the Christians alone, but that did not help. In order to quell the community strife the police in April arrested three women from each side. This meant three Christian women had to spend two days locked in jail for the sake of Christ. The first week of May a brother was beaten up. K. M. Peter and other well known gospel preachers went there and tried to make peace, but to no avail. The authorities put two patrolmen in the area to protect the Christians. All is not dismal about this story for in spite of the persecution for over two years the church has continued to grow. There are now more than 25 who have confessed the name of Jesus and put him on in baptism. The powerful influence of the gospel in this community in other ways is being manifest also.

A priest, who is one of three ringleaders in opposition to the church of our Lord, has a granddaughter who is a little over one year old. Around the first of May this child became very sick and was even having convulsions. The family was deeply concerned. The priest prayed for the child and called on his god for help, but she did not get any better. Finally the man's daughter-in-law insisted that the Christians be called to pray for her baby. They were sent for and the first thing they did was to have the mother take the symbol of idols, called "thayath," off the little girl. This is a small metal "token" on a string about the neck and/or a black string on the wrist. Then the Christian's prayed and the Lord heard their pray. The little girl got well. The mother was greatly relieved, but not the grandfather. He is continuing his fight against the congregation. In order to have peace the brothers have moved the location of the church to another house on a different street, but still they are harassed. Brother Thangaraj asked me shortly before I left to ask American Christians to pray for the believers in Kolikkal Nathan that they will be delivered from this abuse. We need also to pray for the grandfather and all those opposing Christ and His church that they might come to repentance.

## ESTHER

On Sunday April 23 J. W. Samson, C Aruldass, a number of the students and I went in the school van to a place called Edyripalayam, which is in a suburb of Coimbatore and about 12 miles from the school. Here I preached for a new congregation which has been recently started by brother Samson. They have built their own meeting shed of corrugated roofing sheets, cement posts and coconut tree boards. It is 12' X 10' in size and is on a small piece of land donated for use by a Hindu woman. There is no floor and the congregation sat on grass mats as I preached on the kingdom starting with Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2 and ending up in Acts 2. After the Lord's supper and the closing prayer we were served cookies and Pepsi. Then we began a Bible study. The study was opened by asking if anyone had any questions. A woman of nineteen named V. Esther asked if it was necessary for her to be baptized to become a member of the church of Christ. We asked her to tell about her "conversion." She began by telling about her life over the past year. She said until January this year she and all her family

were Hindu, but last year her Hindu neighbors started doing things against her family. One thing they were doing was pretending to cast a spell on Esther and her family. While this was going on Esther's mother died and in ignorance Esther ran with fear to the local temple. Here she stood before the idol and said to it if you are a god show me a sign. She continued in this worried state for several days and in the meantime she met a girl friend who told her about Jesus and said that she had joined the Pentecostal church. Immediately Esther who is a well educated and articulate young woman scolded her for leaving the faith of her fathers. Shortly after this Esther had a dream and in the dream she saw a girl being converted to Christ. After that she started going with the friend to the Pentecostal church and in January was baptized.

Last year brother Samson had started a weekly Bible study in the same area and soon a dozen people had obeyed the gospel and the church was begun. During the several months Samson was working the neighborhood and teaching from house to house a young man about seventeen started going door to door with him. He is Esther's brother and after she went into the Pentecostal church he started telling her the things Samson was teaching about the true church. That is why she came to our service on the 23rd. She had in fact attended the Pentecostal church at 8:30 the same morning and came to our meeting about half way through the sermon.

After she had completed her story and Aruldass had repeated it to me with his help I began to answer her question about baptism. In doing this we first explained that we must not depend on dreams or visions because God does not speak to us today in that manner. We had several scriptures read on the subject including Hebrews 1:1-2 and 2 Timothy 3:16-27. An older woman in the back of the group, who is a member of the Pentecostal church, asked a question. She said if we are not to go by dreams why did you use the dream of Nebuchadnezzar from Daniel and what about Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams. I complimented her question and then said let us read Hebrews 1:1-2 again, which says, "God ... in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son." Then we explained to Esther that the Pentecostal church is a manmade organization which we cannot read about in the Bible and showed her that denominational baptism has no value. At the end of the study I asked Aruldass to ask her if she were ready to be baptized. She sat silently and did not answer. We then asked openly if there was anyone who wanted to be baptized. Esther's brother came to the front and made the good confession that Jesus Christ is the son of God. We loaded the van and started back to the school to baptize him. In all six people who had been in the Bible study came with us. Among these were Esther, the Pentecostal woman and another young man.

Once at the school we waited while the students carried buckets of water to fill the tank. When this was done we asked if there was anyone else ready to make the good confession. Esther and the young man who had come with us answered in the affirmative and brother K. A. Krishnan immersed all three into Christ. The students sang several songs of praise and thanksgivings. Esther two weeks later decided to quit her job and to attend the women's Bible Institute that meets on the property known as Angie Greene. The new classes begin in June.

### **GRADUATIONS, GRADUATIONS, GRADUATIONS**

On the 29th of April graduation exercises were held for the two Bible Institutes for young men and young women. There were 37 women whose average age is 18.5 that received their diploma in Bible. There were 34 young men to receive the same. These young people must spend a minimum of 1800 hours studying the Bible over two years to earn this honor. Brother James Rajkumar of Chennai a gospel preacher from the state capital, Chennai, three hundred miles north came to speak for the young people. On the following Saturday (May 6th) 41 men received their diploma in Bible from the three year school of preaching at Dindigul. Brother M. Thangvel, who is the instructor in Bible in the Polarai school of preaching and one of the oldest gospel preachers in the state spoke on that occasion. There were about 750 present for the graduation.

### **A BEAUTIFUL "CHRISTIAN" MARRIAGE**

On the same day at 5:30 two of our staff members were married. These were Kanarukaran and Rujumal. These two young Christians have worked for many years with the schools. He came to work at age 18 as purchaser for the school in Dindigul. She has been a teacher at the women's school since 1994. Both had to defy their unbelieving relatives to marry. Their parents and siblings were insistent that they must not marry out of their caste, but after many days of patience and frustration with the relatives the two put their foot down and said we are marrying a Christian. The families therefore refused to help with the wedding expenses. Fortunately for all our school staff we have a savings program and the two used a portion of this to pay for their expenses.

Laura met me at the Atlanta airport on the 10th of May after I had been away just over eight weeks in India and Nepal. Thanks be to God for His help in all these things. And thanks to Him and His beloved Son for your hearts that are tender toward this effort to bring as many as possible to the knowledge of the truth.

In Christian love,

Jim E. Waldron

