

Preparing for
the Underground
Church

by

RICHARD WURMBRAND

By the same author:

TORTURED FOR CHRIST

IN GOD'S UNDERGROUND

SERMONS IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

CHRIST ON THE JEWISH ROAD

LITTLE NOTES WHICH LIKE EACH OTHER

THE ANSWER TO MOSCOW'S BIBLE

Prepare for the Underground Church—NOW

“Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to Thy saints at Jerusalem: But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: *For I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name’s sake*”—Acts, chapter 9: verses 13, 15 and 16.

To my knowledge, there exists not one single Theological Seminary, Bible School or University in the whole world which has a Course on the Underground Church. You may learn in seminaries about Sabelianism and Apollinarianism. Five minutes after you have finished the seminary, you forget about it. You probably will never meet a Sabelian or an Apollinarian. We learn about the Coptic Church and about all kinds of small sects which we might never meet in our life. The Church underground is the Church of one third of the world. Men who had never thought before that they would have to belong to an underground Church, become members of an underground Church. While America was preoccupied with Watergate, Communists took over Somalia, Ethiopia, South Yemen and they are on their way, if God does not prevent them, to take over Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Mozambique. They have taken half of Cambodia and half of Laos.

Nobody is sure about them. Christian pastors must know what an underground Church looks like and what it does. I spoke with a Bishop in Britain for an hour or so about Underground Church work. Finally, he said, “Excuse me, but you speak of my hobby; I am very interested in church

architecture. Would you please tell me if the underground churches use Gothic styles in the building of churches?"

If I could tell you who this Bishop is, you could not bear even to imagine how a man with so great a name could put such a question.

The Underground Church is comparatively unknown. We have it right next-door, but we are not ready to join it and we are not yet trained for it. Every Christian pastor now has the whole world as his Parish and we must know this because we might pass through tragic circumstances. Even if we do not pass through these tragic circumstances we have a duty to help and to instruct those who do pass through them.

In Romania, in Russia, in Red China and so on, many believers have become victims. Many have gone into prisons and many have died in prison. We cannot be proud of this. The better thing would have been to be so well instructed on how to do underground work and not to be captured.

In a war, those who die for their fatherland are not admired as much as the heroes who make the enemy die for *their* fatherland. It is not *I* should die for *my* fatherland; *he* should die for *his*. I don't admire so much those who go to prison for Christ: I admire those who know how to work so well that they are not caught. We have to *know* the underground work.

PREPARE FOR SUFFERING

Suffering cannot be avoided in the Underground Church, whatever measures are taken, but suffering should be reduced to the minimum.

It is not possible to give a Course on the Church underground, in a short time. I would urge you to put this question before your Synod, before your denomination and to ask absolutely that Courses on the Underground Church be introduced.

What happens in a country when the Communists take over? In some countries the terror starts at once, as in Mozambique and Cambodia. In other places religious liberty follows as never before. And so it begins. The Communists come to power without *having* real power. They do not have the people on their side. They have not necessarily yet organized their police and their staff of the army, etc. In Russia, the Communists gave immediately great liberty to the Protestants in order to destroy the Orthodox. When they had destroyed the Orthodox, the turn came for the Protestants. (In Romania they gave great liberty.) The initial situation does not last long. During that time they infiltrate the churches, putting their men in leadership. They find out the weaknesses of pastors. Some might be ambitious men; some might be entrapped with the love of money. Another might have a hidden sin somewhere, wherewith he may be blackmailed. They explain that they would make it known and thus they put their men in leadership. Then, at a certain moment the great persecution begins. In Romania such a clamp-down happened on one day. All the Catholic bishops went to prison and innumerable priests, monks, nuns. Then many Protestant pastors of all denominations, etc. Many died in prison.

Jesus, our Lord, told Ananias: "Meet Saul of Tarsus. He will be My underground pastor, My underground worker." That is what St. Paul was—a pastor of an Underground Church. Jesus started a crash course for this underground pastor. He started it with the words, "I will show (him) how great things he must suffer . . ."

Preparation for underground work begins by studying sufferology, martyrology. Solzhenitsyn, in his book *GULAG ARCHIPELAGO* says that police officers in the Soviet Union have a Course on arrestology—the science of how to arrest people so that nobody around shall observe. If they have created a new name, arrestology, let us create the name of sufferology.

Later, we will look at the technical side of underground work, but first of all there must be a certain spiritual preparation for it. In a free country, to be a member of a church, it is enough to believe and to be baptized. In the Church underground it is not enough to be a member in it. You can be baptized and you can believe, but you will not be a member of the Underground Church unless you know how to suffer. You might have the mightiest faith in the world, but if you are not prepared to suffer, then you will be taken by the police. You will get two slaps and you will declare anything. So the *preparation* for suffering is one of the essentials of the preparation of underground work.

A Christian does not panic if he is put in prison. For the rank and file believer, prison is a new place to witness for Christ. For a pastor, prison is a new parish. It is a parish with no great income, but with great opportunities for work. I speak a little of this in my book, **SERMONS IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT**. In other books I mention Morse Code, which is also part of the training for the Underground Church. You know what this is—a Code by which messages are conveyed. Through this Code you can preach the Gospel to those who are to your right and to your left. The prisoners always change. The Communists take some out from the cell and they put others in. God has given to many Christians who have been in prison, the privilege to bring to Christ, through Morse Code, men whom they have never seen. Others, after many years meet these men whom they had brought to Christ through Morse Code. I have had several parishes in Common cells.

In parishes in the free world on Sunday morning you ring the bell. If any wish, they come to church—if not, they do not come. If a man does not like your sermons this Sunday or next Sunday he stays away. He does not come in any case if it rains. But where you have prison as your parish you have your parishioners with you the whole day. Free parishioners

look at their watch; "Already he has preached for thirty minutes: will he never finish?" When arrested, watches are taken away from you, you have the parishioners with you the whole week and can preach to them from morning to night! They have no choice. There have never been, in the history of the Romanian or the Russian Church, so many conversions brought about as there have been in prison. So do not fear prison. Look upon it as just a new assignment given by God. I remember that when I was arrested, my wife told me in the last words as I embraced her before going away with the policemen, "Richard, remember that it is written, 'You will be brought before rulers and kings to be a testimony unto them'." This men can accept. But they hear about terrible tortures which Communists inflict on prisoners.

What will we do about these tortures? Will we be able to bear them? If I do not bear them I put in prison another fifty or sixty men whom I know, because that is what the Communists wish from me, to betray those around me. And here comes the great need for the role of preparation for suffering which must start now. *It is too difficult* to prepare yourself for it when the Communists have put you in prison.

I remember we had a case in Romania where a pastor had sinned with a woman. The pastors debated this question—he was a man already twenty years a pastor. It was said: "His sin has not been what he has done on that evening; the circumstances were such that he could not *resist* the temptation. His great sin was not what he had done that evening, but that twenty years before, when he was not thus tempted, he had not said to himself, 'During my pastoral life different things will happen to me. Among other things it will happen that I will be tempted to sexual sin. I will not commit it then'." You have to take the decision twenty years before and to prepare yourself beforehand for *all* eventualities. We have to *prepare* for suffering.

TRUTH ABOUT THE TRUTH

How much each one of us can suffer depends on how much he is bound up with a cause; how dear this cause is to him and how much it means for him.

In this respect we have had in Communist countries very big surprises. There have been gifted preachers and writers of Christian books who have become traitors. The composer of the best Hymnal of Romania became the composer of the best Communist Hymnal of Romania. Everything depends on whether we have remained in the sphere of words or if we are merged with the divine realities.

God is the Truth. The Bible is the truth about the Truth. Theology is the truth about the truth about the Truth. A good sermon is the truth about the truth about the truth, about the Truth. It is not *the* Truth. The Truth is God alone. Around this Truth there is a scaffolding of words, of theologies and of exposition. None of these is of any help in times of suffering. It is only the Truth Himself which is of help and we have to penetrate through sermons, through theological books, through everything which is 'words' and be bound up with the reality of God Himself.

I have told in the West how with us, Christians were tied to crosses for four days and four nights. The crosses were put on the floor and other prisoners were tortured and made to fulfil their bodily necessities upon the faces and the bodies of the crucified ones. I have since been asked: "Which Bible verse helped and strengthened you in those circumstances?" My answer is: "NO Bible verse was of any help." It is sheer cant and religious hypocrisy to say, "This Bible verse strengthens me, or that Bible verse helps me." Bible verses alone are not meant to help. We knew Psalm 23—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want . . . though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death . . ."

When you pass through suffering you realise that it was

never meant by God that Psalm 23 should strengthen you. It is the Lord who can strengthen you, not the Psalm which speaks of Him so doing. It is not enough to have the Psalm. You must have the One about whom the Psalm speaks. We also knew the verse: "My Grace is sufficient for thee." But the verse is not sufficient. It is the Grace which is sufficient and not the verse.

Pastors and zealous witnesses who are handling the Word as a calling from God are in danger of giving holy words more value than they really have. Holy words are only the means to arrive at the reality expressed by them. If you are united with the Reality, the Lord Almighty, Communism loses its power over you; it cannot break the Lord Almighty. If you only have the words of the Lord Almighty you can be very easily broken.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

The preparation for underground work is deep spiritualisation. As we peel an onion in preparation for its use, so God must 'peel' from us what are mere words, sensations of our enjoyments in religion in order to arrive at the reality of our faith. Jesus has told us "that whosoever will follow" Him will have to "take up their cross", and He showed Himself how heavy this cross can be. We have to be prepared for this.

Look at the world's way! A pornographic magazine or an advertisement inflames the imagination. In just the same way we have to inflame the imagination by having before us spiritual realities. We have to make spiritual exercises. I am very sorry that spiritual exercises are almost unknown in Protestantism. We have to revive them in the Underground Church. Spiritual exercises may have been misused by some Catholics and then the Reformation came. There exists always the movement of the pendulum. If one has fallen to one extreme, another will fall into the other extreme. If

superstitious Catholics make of the Virgin Mary a goddess, another will say that the Virgin Mary is just nothing. We pass from one extreme to the other and because some abused in false spiritual exercises, others would not make spiritual exercises at all. We have to have not only our moments of prayer in which we speak, but we should have moments of meditation and contemplation. We can read in Hebrews 11 the long list of those who were sawn asunder, burned on stakes and devoured by lions, but we must also visualise these things. Now I am before lions: I am beaten, I am in danger of being burned, etc. How do I behave in this matter?

I remember my last Confirmation Class before I left Romania, I took a group of ten to fifteen boys and girls on a Sunday morning, not to a church, but to the zoo. Before the cage of lions I told them, "Your forefathers in faith were thrown before such wild beasts for their faith. Know that you also will have to suffer. You will not be thrown before lions, but you will have to do with men who would be much worse than lions. Decide here and now if you wish to pledge allegiance to Christ." They had tears in their eyes when they said, "Yes."

We have to make the preparation now, before we are imprisoned. In prison you lose everything. You are undressed and given a prisoner's suit. No more nice furniture, nice carpets or nice curtains. You do not have a wife any more and you do not have your children. You do not have your library and you never see a flower. Nothing of what makes life pleasant remains. Nobody resists who has not renounced the pleasures of life beforehand. There is a verse in Colossians about mortifying your members which are on earth. Ignorant and zealous Catholics have imposed all kinds of penances—for instance you may walk on your knees up the steps of St. Peter's in Rome, and make all kinds of pilgrimages, etc. Because they exaggerate, Protestants have given up mortification altogether. But there exists a Christian mortification

now—a giving-up of the joys of the earth. The Christian who prepares himself for this now will not suffer the loss of them when he is in prison. You have to use the things of the world without allowing an emotional attachment.

I personally use an exercise. I live in the United States of America. Can you imagine what an American Supermarket looks like? You find there many beauties and dainties. I look at everything there and say to myself, "I can go without this thing, and that thing: this thing is very nice, but I can go without: the third thing I can go without, too." I visited the whole Supermarket and did not spend one dollar. I had the joy of seeing many beautiful things, and the second joy to know that I can go without.

We also had liberal modernist theologians. None of them resisted any torture. "Why should I die for a dead God and a problematic Bible? If the stories of Adam and Eve are not true, if Joshua did not stop the sun; the prophecies were written many years after they were fulfilled; if Jesus was not born of a Virgin and He did not rise bodily from the dead—then there are more lies in the Bible than in 'Pravda.' Why should I go to death for what is not true, or at least remains problematic?"

DOUBT MAKES TRAITORS

I am Jewish. In Hebrew, the language which Jesus Himself spoke and in which the first revelation has been given, the word "doubt" does not exist. To doubt is as wrong for a man as it would be for him to walk on four legs—he is not meant to walk on four legs. A man walks erect, he is not a beast. To doubt is sub-human.

To every one of us doubts come, but do not allow doubts about essential doctrines of the Bible such as the existence of God, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, or the existence of eternal life, to make a nest in your mind. Every theological

or philosophical doubt makes you a potential traitor. You can allow yourself doubts while you have a nice study and you prepare sermons, and you eat well—or you write a book. Then you can allow yourself all kinds of daring ideas and doubts. When you are tortured these doubts are changed into treason because you have to decide to live or to die for this faith.

One of the most important things about the spiritual preparation of an underground worker is the solution of his doubts. In mathematics, if you do not find the solution you may have made a mistake somewhere, so you continue until you find out. Don't live with doubts, but seek their solution.

Now to come to the very moment of torture. Torture is sometimes very painful. They use red-hot irons. Sometimes it is a simple beating. We have all been spanked as children and beating is just another spanking. A simple beating is very easy to take. Jesus has said we should come to Him like children, which is rather like candidates for spanking!

TEST OF TORTURE

A doctor came to me and said, "What should I do? I think about throwing myself through the window. They call me again and again and wish to make me an informer on the Underground Church. They threaten me that they will beat me if I don't accept it. What should I do? It is terrible to think that they will beat me. I can't take it. I have the alternative to become an informer, or to throw myself through the window." I said, "You have another solution. Give a stick into your husband's hand and tell him to give you a good beating and you will see how you can bear it." Don't be afraid of a beating.

However, Communists did not stop at beatings—they use very refined tortures. Now torture, you must know, can work both ways. It can harden you and strengthen your decision

not to tell the police anything. There are thieves who resist any torture and would not betray those with whom they have co-operated in theft. The more you beat them the more obstinate they become. Or, torture can just break your will. Now I will tell you of one very interesting case which has been published by the Czech Communist press. You will know that under Dubcek there was a period of relaxation and then they could publish certain things in Czechoslovakia. An article appeared at that time. Novotany, who was the predecessor of Dubcek and who was a Communist dictator, had arrested one of his intimate comrades, a Communist leader, a convinced atheist and a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. (Not only Christians, Jews or Patriots are in prison. One Communist arrests another and tortures him just as they would do to anybody else.) They arrested this Communist leader and put him in a prison cell alone. Electromagnetic rays which disturb the mind passed through this cell. A loudspeaker repeated day and night: "Is your name Joseph or not Joseph?" His name was not Joseph. "Think it well over. Are you Joseph or are you not Joseph? The biggest criminal of America has been Dillinger but you are a bigger criminal than Dillinger. What is your first name? Is it Joseph or is it not Joseph? You are counter-revolutionist, you are a spy, but are you Joseph or not Joseph?" They tried to drive him mad. Day and night. He felt that he would lose his mind. At a certain moment he got an illumination. "I have now met unmitigated evil. If Communists torture a Christian, it is not absolutely evil because Communists believe that they will construct an earthly paradise. Christians hinder them, so it is right to torture Christians. There is some idea of right in this. But when a Communist tortures a Communist it is torture for torture's sake. There is absolutely no justification for it. But wait a little bit. Every coin has two sides, every electric cable has two poles. If there is an unmitigated evil, against whom does

this unmitigated evil fight? There must be an unmitigated good. This is God, and against Him they fight.”

When he was called to the interrogator, he entered smiling into the room and told him that he could switch off the loud-speaker now because it had attained its result. “I have become a Christian.” The officer asked him, “How did it happen?” He told him the whole story. The officer said, “Wait a little bit.” He called a few of his comrades and said, “Please repeat the story before my comrades.” He repeated the story and the Captain told the other police officer, “I told you that this method will not work. You have overdone it.”

The Devil is not all-mighty and all-wise like God. He makes mistakes. Communist torture is an excess which can be used very well spiritually.

MOMENT OF CRISIS

Torture is such an explosion of moment and the torturer waits for this critical moment. Learn how to conquer doubt and to think thoroughly. There is always one moment of crisis when you are ready to sign, or to pronounce the name of your accomplice in the underground work, or to say where the secret printing shop is, or something of that kind. You have been so much tortured, nothing counts any more. If nothing counts any more, my survival doesn't count, either. If nothing counts any more, the fact that I should not have pain also does not count. Draw this last conclusion at the stage at which you have arrived and you will see that you will overcome this moment of crisis. If you have overcome this one moment of crisis, it gives you an intense inner joy. You feel that Christ has been with you in that decisive moment. The Communists are now trained and refined—aware that there is a moment of crisis. If they cannot get anything from you in that moment, then they abandon torturing: they know its continuation to be useless.

I have been told, since I was a very young Christian, to read every day and so I did also with my son, Mihai, since he was three or four, reading a page of the Bible and a life of a saint or martyr. I read Fox's Book of Martyrs; read it to your children.

There are a few more points in connection with torture. It is an old religious wickedness—wickedness for wickedness' sake—so that if you have the right spiritual preparation it might strengthen you in faith. It is very important to understand what Jesus said: "Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for itself." I have had fourteen years of prison. Brother Hrapov had twenty-six, Wang-Min-Da had twenty-eight. It seems impossible to bear long years of Communist prison. You are not asked to bear it all at once. Do not bear even one day at a time—bear an hour at a time. One hour of pain everybody can bear. We have had a terrible toothache, a car accident—passing, perhaps, through untold anguish. You are not meant to bear pain more than this one present minute. What amplifies pain is the memory that I have been beaten and tortured so many times and that tomorrow they will take me again, and the day after tomorrow. Tomorrow, I might not be alive—or they might not be alive. Tomorrow, there can be an overthrow, as in Chile. Yesterday's beating has passed: tomorrow's torture has not come yet.

I am a professor in Torturology. At first, torture is a terrible shock and a terrible pain. It does not continue to be so. Cardinal Mindszenty was not allowed to sleep for twenty-nine days and nights. After this he declared whatever they asked from him. Now what happened? After a few days and nights and lack of sleep, or after a few days of intensive physical torture comes a moment when nothing counts for you any more. You forget about duties toward your wife and toward your children, toward your own good name and toward God. You become absolutely indifferent to everything. This is the critical moment when the need to breathe rightly is a reality.

Practise breathing aright.

The art of breathing means much in the Hindu and Buddhist religion in their exercises of Yoga. Read now about different kinds of breathing in the Bible. Jesus "breathed" upon the apostles. It is said that Jesus breathed upon them the Holy Spirit. So there is a certain manner of breathing which conveys the Holy Spirit. In the Orthodox Church at a baptism, the priest and the godparents breathe three times upon the child. When Jesus breathed, He breathed the Holy Spirit. It is written in Acts 9 that Saul breathed out "threatenings and slaughter". There are murderers who breathe crime. It is written in the Book of Jeremiah of some "who neigh after other men's wives". It is the breathing of an adulterer. There is one breathing in high emotions. Try once to quarrel with somebody while breathing quietly, rhythmically and deeply. You will find you cannot quarrel.

Right breathing is one of the means of resisting torture. Betrayal means rupture with the whole part. You are a Christian in whom God and so many men trust. You have been entrusted with the secrets of the Underground Church. To betray would be a powerful emotion. You know what it is like in moments of very *great stress*: you cannot quarrel with somebody and shout at them while you breathe rhythmically and deeply. Neither can you pass through the deep emotion of betrayal. Under torture, breathe as a traitor cannot breathe. Breathe rhythmically, quietly—very deep to the heel.

First of all, the oxygenation gives a resistance to the whole body which balances your reactions and gives you a poised attitude.

Another thing which an underground worker must know, not with his head only, but in his fingertips: he should know that he belongs to the body of Christ. He belongs to a body which has been flogged for nearly 2,000 years. It has always been flogged, not only on Golgotha, but under the Roman

Emperors and by so many persecutions. It has been flogged under the Nazis and has been flogged in Russia for nearly sixty years. When converted I have *consciously* become part of a body that is a flogged body, a mocked body, a body spat upon, crowned with a crown of thorns and with nails driven into hands and into the feet. I accept this as my possible future fate. I will never think upon Jesus Christ as only having been crucified 2,000 years ago. The sufferings of Jesus in His mystical body must become a reality for me. The Bible teaches some words very hard to take. "Whosoever does not hate father, mother, child, brother, sister—cannot be My disciple." These words mean almost nothing in a free country.

LOVE SUPREME

You probably know from C.M.C.W. literature that thousands of children have been taken away from their parents in the Soviet Union because they were taught about Christ. You must love Christ more than your family. There, you are before a court and the judge tells you that if you deny Christ you may keep your children. If not, this will be the last time you will see them. Your heart may break, but your answer should be, "I love God."

Nadia Sloboda left her house for four years of prison. Her children were taken away from her, but she left her house singing. The children, for whom the police waited with a truck to take them as she left, told their singing mother, "Don't worry about us. Wherever they put us we will not give up our faith." They did not.

When Jesus was on the Cross He not only suffered physically; He had His mother in front of Him, suffering. His mother had the Son suffering. They loved each other, but the glory of God was at stake and here any human sentiment must be secondary. Only if we take this attitude once and for all can we prepare for underground work.

Only Christ, the great sufferer, the Man of Sorrows, must live in us. There have been cases in Communist countries when Communist torturers threw away their rubber truncheons with which they beat a Christian and asked, "What is this halo which you have around your head? How is it that your face shines? I cannot beat you any more." It is said of Stephen, in the Bible, that "his face shone." We have known cases of Communist torturers who told the prisoner, "Shout loudly, cry loudly as if I would beat you so that my comrades will know that I torture you. But I cannot beat you." Thus, you would shout without anything happening to you. There are other cases when prisoners really are tortured, sometimes to death. You have to choose between dying with Christ and for Christ or becoming a traitor. What is the worth of continuing to live when you will be ashamed to look into the mirror, knowing that the mirror will show you the face of a traitor?

To think in this manner is the first requisite for being an underground worker, especially an underground pastor—and what is even more important, an underground pastor's wife. She plays an exceptional role. She has to strengthen him; she has to give him courage to do all things. If she asks him for movies and for casual enjoyments of life he cannot be an underground fighter. She has to push him to work and to fight and to sacrifice himself.

LEARN TO BE SILENT

Another thing which we have to learn in the Underground Church is to be silent. Pastors by their very profession are loquacious people, people who speak. Now a pastor is not meant to speak the whole time. Nobody can preach well unless he listens well. When I look back to my dealing with souls I have won more souls by listening to them than by speaking to them. People have so many burdens on their

heart and there is nobody who has patience to listen to them. Even your own husband has no patience, or your wife, your children. The latter are young and wish to go away somewhere. There is nobody to listen to you. If somebody finds a man who listens he is won—without much talk. In the Underground Church, silence is one of the first rules. Every superfluous word you speak can put somebody in prison. A friend of mine, a great Christian composer, went to prison because Christians had the habit of saying, "How beautiful is this song composed by Brother _____." They praised him and for this, he got fifteen years of prison. Sing the song, but do not mention the name of the one who has written it.

You cannot learn to be silent the very moment the country is taken over by the Communists. You have to learn to be silent from the moment of your conversion. A Christian is a man who speaks little and with great weight. He thinks if he should speak a word, whether it can harm or not. In the Underground Church every superfluous word can do harm.

Solzhenitsyn, the Nobel Prize winner, said in an interview that the one who had been his greatest persecutor—the one who denounced him, was his own former wife. It is written in the book of Ecclesiastes not to tell the secrets of your heart even to your wife. This is the Word of God. God knew that we would have an Underground Church and He knew that at a certain moment a wife might become angry against you over some question. The secretary to Solzhenitsyn was put under such pressure by the Communists (and she had been denounced by Solzhenitsyn's wife) that she finished by hanging herself. If Solzhenitsyn had kept silent this would not have happened.

Another question which is very important: I thank God for the years which I passed in solitary confinement. I was, for three years, thirty feet beneath the earth. I never heard a word: I never spoke a word. There were no books. The outward voices ceased. The guards had felt-soled shoes; you

did not hear their approach. Then, with time, the inner voices ceased. We were drugged, we were beaten. I forgot my whole theology. I forgot the whole Bible. One day I observed that I had forgotten the "Our Father"; I could not say it any more. I knew that it began with "Our Father . . ."; I did not know the continuation. I just kept happy and said "Our Father, I have forgotten the prayer, but you surely know it by heart. You hear it so many thousand times a day, so you put an angel to say it for me, and I will just keep quiet." For a time, my prayer was, "Jesus, I love You." And then after a little time again, "Jesus, I love You." and then, after a little time, "Jesus, I love You. Jesus, I love You." Then it became too difficult even to say this because we were doped with drugs which would destroy our minds. We were very hungry. We had times when we had one slice of bread a week. There were the beatings and the tortures and the lack of light, and other things. It was impossible to concentrate my mind to say so much as "Jesus, I love You." I abandoned it because I knew that it was not necessary. The highest form of prayer which I know is the quiet beating of a heart which loves Him. Jesus should just hear "tick-a-tock, tick-a-tock" and He would know that every heartbeat is for Him.

When I came out from solitary confinement and was with other prisoners and I heard them speaking, I wondered why they spoke! So much of our speech is useless. Men become acquainted with each other and one would say, "How do you do?" and the other answer, "How do you do?" What is the use of this? Then one will say, "Don't you think that the weather is fine?" and the other thinks, and says, "Yes, I think it is fine." Why do we have to speak on whether the weather is fine? We do not take earnestly the word of Jesus Who says that men will be judged not for every bad word, but for every useless one. So it is written in the Bible. Useless talking in a Communist country means prison and death for your brother. A word of praise about your brother, if it is not necessary,

may mean catastrophe. For example, somebody comes to visit you and you say, "Oh! I'm sorry you were not here before—brother W. has just left." The visitor could be an informer of the secret police. Now she will know that brother W. is in town! Keep your mouth shut. Learn to do this now.

PERMISSIBLE STRATAGEMS

You cannot do underground work without using stratagems. I know of one case in Russia. The Communists suspected that the Christians were gathering somewhere and they surveyed a street. They knew that the meeting must be there somewhere. They saw a young boy going toward the house where they supposed the meeting would be. They stopped the boy and the police asked him, "Where do you go?" He, with a sad face said, "My oldest brother died and now we gather, the whole family to read His testament." The Police Officer was so impressed that he patted the boy and said, "Just go." The boy had not told a lie.

A brother had been taken to the Police and was asked, "Do you still gather at meetings?" He answered, "Comrade captain, prayer meetings are forbidden now." "Well, it is good that you conform with this. Just go." He had not said that he conformed, he had not said that he did not go to meetings.

A courier of the C.M.C.W. went to a Communist country. He was stopped at the border and was asked, "What books do you have with you?" He said, "I have the works of Shakespeare and the works of Jehovah." The Police Officer did not wish to show that he is ignorant. Jehovah might be some other great British poet and to say he had not heard of Jehovah would put him to shame. He said, "O.K., O.K., just pass through." There are permissible stratagems.

If angels exist as fairy tales to be told to children, I do not need them. Angels are a reality; we each have a guardian

angel. Where Christians gather there are always devils, also. We have to rely on angels and upon the Holy Spirit. We are not obliged to tell an atheist tyrant the truth. We are not obliged to tell him what we are doing. It is indecent from his side to put me questions, an impertinence.

If I would simply put to you the question, "How much money do you have in the bank?" or, "How much do you earn a month?" would it not be impertinent? Such questions should not be asked. You are not meant to ask a girl, "Do you have a boy-friend, or not? Are you already in love with somebody?" She might not wish to tell me something like this. So a man is not meant to press me about my religious activity if I do not wish to tell it to him. It is mixing in my private affairs. The atheistic State has no right to put such questions and we are not meant to answer them.

At interrogation, they put to you all kinds of questions. The Communists told me: "You are a Christian and you are a pastor. You are meant to speak the truth. Now tell us, who are the leaders of the Underground Church? Where do you gather? Who do you meet? Who are the leaders in the different towns?" If I had revealed the truth, there would have been innumerable arrests of men who, in their turn, would have declared the truth, etc. This must be resisted. Where the results of resisting are beatings and tortures you have to take them upon yourself, even if you die.

I know a pastor who has today pains as great as I had when I was beaten, because he played rugby. Something happened to his foot and it gives him terrible pains. For rugby, I can take upon myself pains and when the pain disappears will again play rugby, knowing that some other accident might happen. So we take upon ourselves physical pains for rugby which is a sport, a pleasure and healthy for the body. In the same way you take the physical pains of torture upon yourself to protect your brethren from being arrested. The worst thing which might happen because of this is that you will die

under tortures. But to die is the most natural thing in the world.

A beggar stopped once at the house of a rich man and said, "Could I please sleep one night here? I do not have a place to sleep." The rich man said, "Go away from here, beggar. This is not a hotel." The poor man said, "I apologise; I will go further." Then he said, "But would you first please answer me a question. I looked to this house. I found it so beautiful. Who has made this house?" Now the rich man felt flattered somehow and said, "This is the house built by my grandfather." "And where is your grandfather now?" "He died a long time ago." "Who lived in the house after your grandfather?" "Well, my father." "Is he still alive?" "No, he also died." "And who lives in the house now?" "I." "And will you also die?" "Yes." "And who will live in the house after you die?" "Well, I hope my children." Then the beggar said, "Why do you shout at me? You said that this is not a hotel. It is a hotel. It changes its inhabitants every time just like a hotel room. You pack your things, somebody else comes." Your mortality is obvious; take it as your view of life in general. If God wishes me to die today He does not need a Communist torturer. I can die by a heart attack without a Communist torturer. So the torturer can never shorten my life by one day. Never can the best restaurant with the finest dainties, prolong my life one day. I die when I am called by God.

TREACHEROUS QUARRELLING

Not the slightest quarrel is permitted in the Underground Church. Every quarrel in the Underground Church means arrests, beatings and perhaps death. The Communists watch and listen. They have their informers in the Underground Church. Whenever there is a quarrel, there are reciprocal accusations. The one would say to the other, "When you were with Brother Smith, you did this, etc." So the Police get Smith.

Use covering names. Quarrels always bring up names and bring out facts. Therefore, the word is written in the Bible, "Do not quarrel whilst walking on your way." I know in one town in Romania, there was a terrible quarrel between two congregations. The one was Baptist and the other was Exclusive Brethren. There was such a terrible quarrel and it resulted in the arrest of the leaders of both congregations.

I know that I can only enter into Heaven if I am holy. Then it would be better to start today to be a saint. It will be too late to start to be holy when you go to heaven! You will not know how to start it. You have to start it now. If, then, in the case of a Communist take-over it would be better not to quarrel—the best thing is not to quarrel now.

Sadly there are quarrels among organizations which work behind the Iron Curtain. It has already had dramatic results. As far as possible they should be avoided. Even a family quarrel in a Communist country can mean death. I was in the same prison cell with a man who had a certain girl friend. As it happens at a young age, he met another girl whom he preferred to the first girl. But to that girl he had told different secrets and the girl informed the Secret Police. He got life-long prison. He went mad in jail.

The preparation for underground work is basic to the preparation for a normal Christian worker, only it is much deeper and it has to become much more real—a part of life. I know countries where many congregations are destroyed by a quarrel between two pastors or two elders of the Church. It happens everywhere, but in a Communist country it means imprisonment, and perhaps death.

One of the greatest methods of the Communists is not only physical torture, it is brainwashing. We have to know how to resist brainwashing. Brainwashing exists in the free world, too. The Press, Radio and Television brainwash us. There exists no motive in the world to drink Coca-Cola. You drink it because you are brainwashed. Water is surely better than

Coca-Cola. But nobody advertises, "Drink water, drink water." If water were advertised, we would drink water.

RESIST BRAINWASHING

Communists have driven this technique of brainwashing to its extreme. The methods vary, but brainwashing in Communist prisons consists essentially of this, in that you have to sit seventeen hours on a form which gives no possibility to lean and you are not allowed to close your eyes. For seventeen hours a day you have to hear, "Communism is good, Communism is good, Communism is good, etc; Christianity is dead, Christianity is dead, Christianity is dead, etc.; Give up, give up, etc." You are bored after one minute of this but you have to hear it the whole seventeen hours for weeks, months, years even, without any interruption. I can assure you it is not easy. It is one of the worst tortures. Much worse than physical torture. But Christ has forseen all things because with Him there is no time. Future, past, present are one and the same: He knows all things from the beginning. Communists invented brainwashing too late! Christ had already invented the opposite to brainwashing—Heartwashing. He has said: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

Stephen, the first martyr for Christ, had around him hundreds with big stones in their hands to throw at him. He said: "I see." And the wife of Stephen probably thought he saw the danger he was in and would run away. But he said: "I see JESUS standing at the right hand of God." Perhaps she said (it is not recorded), "Don't you see all the mob around you ready to throw stones at you?" "O Yes! I see some little ants there below not worth mentioning. I look to JESUS." He did not look to those who wished to kill him. Blessed are the pure in heart.

The simple fact is to resist brainwashing. I have passed through brainwashing for over two years. Now the Com-

munists would say that my brain is still dirty. In the same rhythm in which they said, "Christianity is dead," I and others repeated to ourselves: "Christ also has been dead, Christ also has been dead." But we know He rose from the dead. We remembered that we lived in the communion of the saints.

We usually believe that the saints who have passed to the Lord are somewhere in the skies about the stars. The Bible tells us where they are. "Seeing then that you are encompassed about by a great cloud of witnesses"—Hebrews 12 v. 1. Why should they sit on the stars? They are here where the real fighters and sufferers are. In the world of the Spirit there exists no here and there. The notions of space and time do not exist in the world of the Spirit. We were localised in prison, but they were around us. We felt the presence of the martyrs of all times. I personally had very much the feeling of the presence of St. Mary Magdalene. I thought during the brainwashing, "What are they telling me, that Christianity is dead? Supposing they are right, what difference does it make? Supposing there is not one single Christian in the world except me? What difference would it make? Mary Magdalene just loved Jesus. If Jesus was dead, she loved a dead Jesus. She stayed near the tomb of the dead Jesus who could do nothing for her. He could not lift a finger for her; He could do no miracle for her; He could not speak to her a word of comfort. He could not wipe away a tear—nothing. He was dead. She loved the Saviour, living or dead. He was the Saviour. So, what if you tell me He is dead? I love Him just as much as if He would be alive. If the whole Church had died or had lost its faith it is no motive for me to lose my faith."

We have to arrive at a certitude of faith. I have told you that the words 'to doubt' do not exist in Hebrew. This phrase does not exist in the Old Testament. May I point out to you another word which does not exist in Hebrew? I have very often been accused by leaders of the World Council of Churches. They have written against me. They have written

always: "Wurmbrand paints the situation behind the Iron Curtain in white and black. It is not so. There exists the grey." I reply that I accept this if they show me from the whole of the New Testament, the word "grey". There exist in the New Testament many colours—"grey", a mixture, does not exist. A thing is true or untrue; it is right or it is wrong. It is white or it is black. You have to go with the world or you have to go with Christ. As the Old Testament, the Hebrew, does not have the words, "to doubt", we must be sure in these problems of faith as we are sure about the table of addition or multiplication. Two and two are four. This is true. If my family is alive or has been killed, if I have enough or if I starve; if I am free or if I am in prison; if I am beaten or if I am caressed, the truth of mathematics does not change. Two plus two caresses are four caresses, and two and two beatings make four beatings. The certainty of Truth and a love like that of St. Mary Magdalene enable you to resist brainwashing. Resist to the extreme.

I do not wish to pose as a hero. I am a man, and as every man, I have my flaws and my weaknesses. Therefore, we exist as a Church to encourage each other in moments of weakness. Under this terrible pressure I, at a certain moment, whispered to a brother near me—a Presbyterian minister and a very good Christian—"Brother, I believe that I have lost my faith. I don't think I am any more a believer." He, with a smile which never left him, asked me, "But did you ever believe?" I said, "Yes, surely I did." He said, "Then remember one verse of the Bible. When the Virgin Mary came to Elizabeth, Elizabeth told her, 'Blessed is the one (she) that *believed*.' It is the past tense. If you have *believed* in the past, you are blessed. Live on this blessedness." I cannot tell you what these words have meant for me under those circumstances. I do not know how sound the theology is, but we did not live on theology at that time. We lived on past memories there. Therefore, the Bible teaches us that we

should bless the Lord and not forget His past blessings. Remember the past blessings even if you pass through a dark night of the soul.

OVERCOMING SOLITUDE

One of the greatest problems for an underground fighter is to know how to fill out his solitude. (I was lucky, I met a prisoner who was seventeen years in solitary confinement.) We had absolutely no books. Not only no Bible, but no books, no scrap of paper and no pencil. We never heard a noise and there was absolutely nothing to distract our attention. You looked at the walls, that was all. Now normally a mind under such circumstances becomes mad. Read great books about prison life—PAPILLON and other such books which are very valuable to be read for a future underground worker, just to catch the atmosphere of prison as much as a free man can catch it. You will see the maddening influence of being alone for years, with nothing to distract the mind. I can tell you from my own experience how I avoided becoming mad, but this again has to be prepared by a life of spiritual exercise beforehand. How much can you be alone without the Bible? How much can you bear it to be with yourself without switching on the radio, or a record player, etc.?

I, and many other prisoners did it like this. We never slept during the night. We slept during the day. The whole night we were awake. You know that a Psalm says, “. . . bless you the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord.” One prayer at night is worth ten prayers during the day.

All great sins and crimes are committed during the night. The great robberies, drunkenness, revelling, adultery—this whole life of sin is a night life. During the day everyone has to work, in a factory, college or somewhere. The demonic forces are forces of the night and therefore, it is so important

to oppose them during the night. Vigils are very important. In the free world, vigils are largely unknown. In my country, even before the Communist take-over we had vigils. My son, Mihai, when he was three or four years of age knew of vigils. The whole night we would pass in prayer. Little children of three and four, while we would pray, would also pray a little bit; then they would kick each other—we would spank them a little bit, then they would pray again a little and then they would fall asleep under some tables. That is how they were brought up with vigils.

In solitary confinement we awoke when the other prisoners went to bed. (I use the first person but I speak also of the experience of other prisoners.) We filled our time with a programme which was so heavy that we could not fulfil it. We started with a prayer, a prayer in which we travelled through the whole world. We prayed for each country where we knew the names of towns, of men, and we prayed for great preachers. It took a good hour or two to come back. We prayed for pilots and for those on the sea, and for those who are in prisons. The Bible tells us about one of the great joys we can have, even in a Communist cell: "Rejoice with those that rejoice." I rejoiced that there were somewhere families who gathered with their children, read the Bible together and said jokes to each other and were so happy with each other. There is a boy who loves a young girl and dates her; I can be happy about them. There, they have a Prayer Meeting, and there is somebody who studies; and there is somebody who enjoys good food, etc. We could rejoice with those who rejoiced.

After having travelled through the whole world, I read the Bible from memory. To memorise the Bible is very important for an underground worker.

Just to make us laugh also a little bit I will tell you one thing which happened. Once while I lay on the few planks which were my bed, I read from memory the Sermon on the Mount, according to Luke. I arrived at the part where it is said,

“... for the Son of man’s sake, rejoice you, in that day and leap for joy...” You will remember that it is written like this. I said, “How could I commit such a sin of neglect? Christ has said that we have to do two different things. One to rejoice, this I have done. The second, to ‘leap for joy’, this I have not done.” So I jumped. I came down from my bed and I began to jump around. In prison, the door of a cell has a peep hole through which the warder looks into the cell. He happened to look in while I jumped around. So he believed that I had become mad. They had an order to behave very well with madmen so that their shouting and banging on the wall should not disturb the order of the prison. The guard immediately entered, quietened me down and said, “You will be released; you can see everything will be all right. Just remain quiet. I will bring you something.” He brought me a big loaf of bread. Our portion was one slice of bread a week and now I had a whole loaf, plus cheese. It was white. Never just eat cheese, first of all admire its whiteness. It is beautiful to look upon. He brought me also sugar. He spoke a few nice words again and locked the door and left. I said, “I will eat these things after having finished my chapter from St. Luke.” I lay down again and tried to remember where I had left off. “Yes, at ‘when you are persecuted for My Name’s sake, rejoice... and leap for joy’.” I knew what followed! I looked at the loaf of bread and the cheese. Really, the reward *was* great.

So the next thing we did was to think of the Bible and to meditate upon it. Every night, I composed a sermon beginning with “Dear brethren, and sisters” and finishing with “Amen”. After I composed it I delivered it. I put them afterwards in very short rhymes so that I could remember them. My books, **SERMONS IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT** and **IF PRISON WALLS COULD SPEAK** contain some of these sermons. I have memorised three hundred and fifty of them. When I came out from prison I wrote some of them down. I cannot find a publisher who will publish three hundred and

fifty sermons, but some fifty of them have been published in two books. They were sermons which I just uttered to God and to the angels. Angels have wings and they take the thoughts to somebody else. Now these sermons are published in many languages and are used. We filled our time like this. I composed books and poems. I thought about my wife and my children. Every night I told myself jokes, but always new jokes which I had not known before so that I might be able to laugh. Now, as I remember those jokes they were all optimistic. They show how I felt then. One of the jokes was: A woman says to her husband, "Peter, what should I do? I sat on my false teeth, and I broke them." The husband says, "Be happy, imagine how it would be if you had sat on your natural teeth." So I saw the good side of things.

Out of bread I made chessmen, some of them whitened with a little bit of chalk and others grey. I played chess with myself. Never believe that Bob Fischer is the greatest chess master of the world. He won in the last match with Spassky. He won eight games and lost two. I, in three years never lost a game; I always won either with white or grey!

I have told you all these things because they belong to the secrets of the underground worker when he suffers. Never allow your mind to become distressed because then the Communists have you entirely in their hands. Your mind must be continually exercised. It must be alert, it must think. It must, everyone according to his abilities, compose different things, etc.

TRUE IDENTITY

The Underground Church is not something new. After having worked so many years in the Church underground I read the New Testament with new eyes. I read in the Acts of the Apostles examples of *soi-disant* (sobriquet), where apostles and disciples bore "other" names than formerly,

and there are many examples of this throughout the New Testament (Revelation 2:17 being a sublime example).

- BARNABAS:** “and **JOSES** was surnamed **Bar-NABAS** (the son of consolation)” Acts: 4 Verse 36
- JUSTUS:** “and **JESUS**, which is called **JUSTUS**” Col: 4 Verse 11
- MANAEN:** “. . . and **MANAEN**, which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch” Acts: 13 Verse 1b
- SIMEON:** “. . . and **SIMEON** that was called **NIGER**” Acts: 13 Verse 1b
- JUSTUS:** “And they appointed two, **JOSEPH** called **BarSABUS**, who was surnamed **JUSTUS**” Acts: 1 Verse 23
- JOSES:** “And **JOSES**, who by the apostles was surnamed **Bar-NABAS**” Acts: 4 Verse 36
- BARSABUS:** “. . . chosen men of their own company to Antioch with **PAUL** and **BarNABAS**, namely, **JUDAS** surnamed **BarSABAS**” Acts: 15 Verse 22

Why should James and John be termed “sons of thunder” and a Simon be called Peter? I had never known an explanation of this. We find so many names changed in the New Testament. Now that is exactly what happens in the Church underground. I had many names. When I went into a town or village they would never say that Brother Wurmbrand had come. In one town it was Vasile, in another it was Georghescu, in another it was Ruben, etc. When I was arrested, I was Richard Wurmbrand, called so-and-so.

I believe in the literal inspiration of the Bible, not only in the verbal inspiration. Why then does it contain seemingly

“useless” words? It is written in Luke, “Jesus prayed in a certain place”. Nobody sees sense in these words. You cannot pray otherwise than “in a certain place”. You have to be somewhere when you pray. Then why these words—“in a certain place?” It is written, “He came to a certain city”. Every city is a certain city. You have said nothing when you say “In a certain city”. This is exactly the language of the Underground Church. When I came back from a journey I would tell my wife, “I was in a certain city and a certain place where I met a certain brother. We decided that at a certain hour we would meet in a certain house”.

Jesus wished to have supper with His disciples—Luke:22 verses 7 - 13; again, the language of the Church underground. Now, the normal thing for Him would have been to say, “Go on to that-and-that street at number so-and-so, ask about Mr. XYZ and there prepare a supper”. Instead of this He says, “When you are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in”. (It would be a rare thing at that time for a man to “bear a pitcher of water”, since women were those who went to the well). This is exactly how we do it, when we have a Prayer Meeting we do not give an address because we do not know who is the informer. We say, “Stand at the corner of ‘that’ street, or you sit there in a public park and you will see passing a man with a blue necktie, or other sign. Go after him”. If anybody asks the other, “What is your name?” then we know he is an informer of the Secret Police.

The Underground Church is something which existed already, in the time of the writing of the New Testament. We have critics who say that what we do is unlawful before God, because a Church should not work underground. We have to obey the authorities. The World Council of Churches accuse us, but they give money to guerillas which do not obey the authorities. In the Bible it is written of what authority is;

it is a ruler who punishes evil and rewards good. An authority which forbids the Word of God puts itself outside of any human sphere. No Bible verse applies to it. Every authority has its laws and has its injustices and abuses because no government consists of saints. It consists of sinners. Every authority does right and wrong things. The principal thing is that they should not hinder a caterpillar from becoming a butterfly. They should not hinder a bud from becoming a flower; they should not hinder a sinner from becoming a saint. As long as they allow me this, I do not expect from them to be saints dropped from heaven. I expect from them that they do some good things and should sometimes have wrong laws which they can change after two or three years. I will respect them as an authority. But if they take away the very sense of my life, which is to prepare myself for a more beautiful existence in Heaven, I do not feel any duty towards this authority. Our Mission just continues its underground work to help this UNDERGROUND CHURCH in Communist countries.

I have given you just a glimpse of the problems which this UNDERGROUND CHURCH has, so that you might have somehow, an image of what it looks like.

May God bless you.

Donations to help late Reverend Richard Wurmbrand missionary work may be sent to:

The Richard Wurmbrand Foundation
PO Box 4124 Torrance, CA 90510, USA
<http://richardwurmbrandfoundation.com>

or to: Help For Refugees
PO Box 5161, Torrance, CA 90510, USA
<http://helpforrefugees.com>