



## **SLAVERY TODAY AND THE BATTLE OVER HISTORY**

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When I was invited to lecture on: *“Slavery – The Rest of the Story”* at three university campuses in Minnesota, I expected that it would engender some opposition. What I could not have foreseen was the intensity of hostility and emotion that would be whipped up by some radical students against myself and those who had invited me.

Karl Marx declared: *“The first battlefield is the rewriting of history.”* Evidently, many of Marx’s disciples have been very busy on the university campuses rewriting history, rearranging reality and brainwashing students.

The University of Minnesota has 37,000 students, including over 2,900 international students from more than 130 countries, including China, India, Korea, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan and many others.

I have been invited to lecture at the university campus before, on the persecution of Christians in Sudan. Those presentations received some opposition, but nothing like what we received on this occasion.

Muslim students from Somalia, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia expressed great hostility, anger and emotion in opposition to my presentations on *Slavery – The Rest of the Story*. At one of the lunch time presentations in a university auditorium, the questions and answers and discussion went on for over 3-and-a-half hours after the end of the presentation. One Somalian stood up and made a long and vitriolic speech against “*President Bush’s war of aggression against the people of Iraq,*” and attacked me for not dealing with this. In response I pointed out that I was not an American citizen, that I had never worked in Iraq, that I am an African, and the subject that I had been invited to speak on was: “*Slavery – The Rest of the Story.*” I had spoken on what I had personally witnessed and researched in Sudan, but I could not speak with any authority on Iraq, as I had never even visited that country.

However, I did point out that I was not aware that America was waging “*a war of aggression against the Iraqi people.*” It was my impression that the Allied forces had freed the people of Iraq from one of the most brutal dictatorships in the Middle East. In fact, I asked, didn’t Iraq now have the first elected government in its history? So, perhaps it would be more accurate to refer to the conflict in Iraq as a civil war where the US forces are assisting the first elected government in Iraq’s history against local insurgents?

A woman, who identified herself as coming from Saudi Arabia, was most agitated. She declared that it was false to give the impression that women were oppressed in Islam. Women were “*completely free and equal.*” It was wrong to suggest that Muhammad had owned slaves, she claimed, he never mistreated anybody, and Islam is a peaceful and tolerant religion of brotherhood.

I had to remind this lady that both the Quran and the Hadith confirm that Muhammad was a slave owner and a slave trader. Muhammad gave detailed instructions concerning the treatment of slaves, including that Muslim slave masters could lawfully “*enjoy*” their female slaves sexually or even hire them out as prostitutes. “*How many women can a Muslim man marry?*” I asked. “*Four*” she replied. “*And how many men can a Muslim woman marry?*” “*What’s that got to do with it?*” She responded angrily. I pointed out that this indicates that there is no equality for women in Islam.

*“Are you, as a Muslim woman, allowed to vote in Saudi Arabia?” “Of course not!” she responded angrily. “Can you, as a Muslim woman, drive a car in Saudi Arabia?” “No, but Saudi Arabia is the land of Muhammad!” “But you can drive a car here in America? Why is it that you have so many more rights and freedoms in America than you would have in your home country of Saudi Arabia?”* In response, this woman expressed very hostile views of America and its government, prompting me to ask why she had come to study in such a horrible country, under such terrible conditions, when she could be enjoying such perfect freedom back in Saudi Arabia?

One student, apparently from Pakistan, declared that I did not deserve to live, and I should not be allowed to remain on this planet! When I asked where he would suggest I go, he exploded: *“To hell!”* In response to this I said: *“I’m sorry, but the Lord Jesus has already dealt with that, so I will not be able to join you.”*

One of the most surprising aspects of my visit to the university campuses in Minnesota was the hostility of many university lecturers against Christianity and America. As a missionary who has spent almost 25 years ministering to restricted access areas in Africa, I expect opposition from Muslims and Marxists. However, as experienced during these campus outreaches in Minnesota, some of the most fervent opposition we received came from nominal Christians who seem either infatuated with, or in fear of, Islam. They seemed most antagonistic towards Biblical Christianity and even hostile to the Christian civilisation, which they benefit from.

One university professor stood up during the question and answer time and declared that he was most disappointed with my presentation. It was *“the most bigoted, narrow-minded lecture”* he had ever heard in his life. He had brought his students from his history class to hear me, expecting that I would speak about the American involvement in the slave trade. He didn’t understand why I would have dealt with such *“hurtful”* and *“offensive”* material as the Muslim involvement in the slave trade. Why hadn’t I given more time and attention to America’s involvement?

To this I had to respond that surely the advertised title of my presentations: *Slavery – The Rest of the Story* should have made it abundantly clear that it was not my purpose to come to America to repeat again what most Americans are so familiar with, and what ended over 150 years ago. As an African missionary, who had witnessed the ongoing slave trade in Sudan today, I had undertaken a research project into the history of slavery in Africa and the result

was the book: *Slavery, Terrorism and Islam – The Historical Roots and Contemporary Threat* – on which these lectures had been based.

The American involvement in the slave trade lasted for less than 3 centuries; however, the Muslim involvement in the slave trade has continued for 14 centuries and is still continuing to this day. Considering that 95% of the African slaves who were transported across the Atlantic went to South and Central America, mainly to Portuguese, Spanish and French possessions, and that less than 5% of the slaves who crossed the Atlantic went to the United States, it was remarkable that the vast majority of academic research, films, books and articles concerning the slave trade concentrated only on the American involvement, as though slavery was a uniquely American aberration. The vastly great involvement of Portugal, Spain and France seems to be largely ignored. Even more so the far greater and longer running Islamic slave trade into the Middle East has been so ignored as to make it one of history's best-kept secrets.

Now, I pointed out, if I had concentrated on the American slave trade, that would have been ignorant, bigoted and prejudiced.

Numerous Sudanese university students stood up to confirm the truth of my presentations, that there was indeed slavery continuing in Sudan today. *"It is a fact! No one can deny it! The facts and the documentation are there, for anyone to see. We ourselves have seen and experienced it. The Americans are very honest and admit their involvement in slavery over 150 years ago. Why can't you Muslims be honest and admit what is going on in your own countries, and deal with it?"* challenged one student from Sudan.

Another man from Mexico spoke up: *"My ancestors were the Aztecs. We were the biggest slave traders, and the slaves were used for human sacrifice - to make the sun rise each day! Our Aztec priests ripped out the beating hearts from living slaves who were sacrificed in our temples. Men were enslaved and sacrificed like that. I don't like it. I am not proud of it, but it is a fact. It is part of our history. We have to face up to it. And the slavery and human sacrifice in Mexico only stopped when Christianity came and brought it to an end. That is the fact of history. When are the Arabs going to face up to the facts of their own history, and to what is going on in many Muslim countries today? When are they going to rise up like the Christians to bring this slavery in their own countries to an end?"*

The atmosphere in the university auditorium was electric, as various students and some lecturers took part in the very vigorous question and answer time, and debating, arguing and discussing these volatile topics.

At one of the university campus meetings, I was still surrounded by about 10 students, including some from Somalia, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, 4 and a half hours after the beginning of the presentation. Suddenly I realised that all the discussion had stopped and everyone was silent. They were all listening to me. After hours of shouting and argument, it was an eerie experience as I related the parables of Christ, particularly of the two men who went up to the Temple to pray: the one was a religious leader, a Pharisee; and the other was a tax collector – a sinner. I related the contrast between these two men. The one self-righteous, convinced of his own goodness and moral superiority, and the other man humbled and repentant only crying out: *“Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner!”* Then I asked them which of these two men were justified in God’s sight? Whose prayer did the Lord find acceptable? The Muslim students remained silent as one of the Christians responded: *“The tax collector, because he was repentant.”* This seemed to shock the Muslims as they would have thought that the religious leader, with his fasting, was the righteous one.

I also had the opportunity to share the Gospel in the story of Abraham being willing to sacrifice his son and how God Himself provided the lamb. I pointed them to Jesus, who is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). He died in our place, the Just for the unjust.

After all the heated emotions, anger and shouting, it was an extraordinary experience to be able to communicate calmly and clearly the Gospel presentation to these Muslims who had been so emotive and hostile for so many hours.

My respect was greatly increased for the campus ministries that have to work in such volatile and hostile environments on a daily basis. Campus ministries, such as Maranatha, are laying a foundation for righteousness for future generations. On a daily basis they are seeking to evangelise in dorm rooms, class rooms and offices throughout the university community. With guest speakers like myself, and through men’s and women’s Bible studies, prayer meetings, contact tables and outreaches, they are challenging the present politically correct propaganda of Humanism and the New Age Movement with the life changing power of the Gospel of Salvation and Jesus Christ alone.

My host, Rev. Bruce Harpel, who founded Maranatha Christian Fellowship over 25 years ago, explains: *“In the classroom, students are indoctrinated to think that truth is relative, that there are no absolutes, and what is right and wrong are determined by the individual and society.”*

*“Drinking, drugs, sexual immorality, and lack of accountability lead some students to self destruction. The student usually exits college much more wounded and addicted to sin than when he/she entered. Many times students who were raised in Christian homes abandon their beliefs as they are challenged by opposing worldviews. When these students return to their respective towns, cities, and countries, this bondage to sin is transfused into the bloodstream of society. We see more white-collar crime, violence, sexually transmitted diseases, abortions, suicide, divorce, depression and despair in society than ever before. The University is truly a mission field and that is why we are here. To ignore campus ministry is to surrender the culture to the enemy .”*

*“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” 2 Corinthians 3:17*

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