

! THE CHURCH PLANTER

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CPI Conducts Three Peruvian Conferences

- By Steven Shepard

Matses Leaders Convene in the Amazon Rainforest

(Nov 10-13) About 45 Matses Christian leaders came together from about 14 villages for the biannual pastors' conference, some traveling for two days in motorized dugout canoes. Cesar Soto and Tom Hopkins taught stories from Genesis, while I focused on the calling and work of the pastor. There were about 23 hours of conferencing in which the Matses also participated in workshops and dramas. The final session was a communion

service which included a foot washing. After teaching on servanthood, I proceeded to wash the feet of two of the leaders and said, "Here's the water, here are the towels; you can do it if you want." Slowly and with great sobriety, they got out of their chairs one by one until almost everyone participated. The Matses church is still going strong (over 15 churches). Most churches have services about 3 times weekly. Some have youth groups. CPI provides gasoline for the Matses mission to preach the Gospel to unreached villages in Brazil. One Matses Brazilian even made the long journey to the conference. *(Continued on p. 2)*

THE GREAT DEBATE: WHO AM I?

ARTICLE ON PAGE 2 : BY CHRISTY SHEPARD



Matses pastors participate in foot washing at November conference

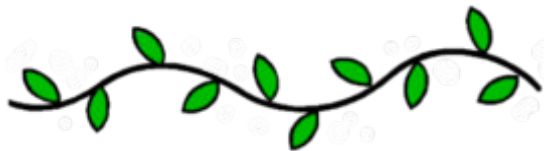
Tom Hopkins teaches a workshop



Three Peruvian Conferences *(Cont. from page 1)*

Back to Back Lima Conferences

(Nov 19-22) About 80 Christian leaders from all over Peru attended two back to back conferences **“Laying a Good Foundation”** and **“Kingdom Businesses”**. Peruvian Bible teacher, Otoniel Pardo, and I were the speakers for the first conference. We covered such subjects as the attributes of God, the Trinity, the Scriptures, sin, grace, repentance, faith, Christian love, and eternal salvation. Then three business men, Craig Kirkpatrick (San Diego, Ca), Carl Heinlein (El Paso, Tx), and Larry Trimbach (Dayton, Oh) shared how Kingdom principles relate to business and how business can be used to further God’s Kingdom. Most of the attendees are materially poor, often living on \$150 a month or less, and so do not have other opportunities to receive training. There were 19 sessions in all including a communion service. About 300 teaching books were distributed. Now after six years in Lima, Peruvian leaders have a vision to start their own Bible training center and print shop business. God is moving! It is an exciting time for all of us.



From left Steven Shepard, Craig Kirkpatrick, Carl Heinlein, conference coordinator Samuel Rios, Larry Trimbach, and Otoniel Pardo.



Larry Trimbach teaches with interpreter Alfonso.



The Great Debate: Who Am I?

- By Christy Shepard

A distinct quality of being human is our self awareness; we know we exist. The question that this self consciousness inevitably asks then is, "Who am I?" Conflicting answers to this fundamental question have sparked the great debate of human history. It continues to be front page news. How we view ourselves and others affects everything we do.

Some answer that we are only animals, fellow members of biological life caused by natural evolution. Therefore, all life forms must have equal rights. This view also expects humans to be driven by their natural instincts (self gratification and self preservation) to mate and survive as other animals do. Restraints on such behavior are claimed to be unnatural and unrealistic. Promiscuity, adultery, homosexuality, polygamy, and other sensual behaviors have no moral relevance. Being mere animals, killing human beings can also be justified if they interfere with a seemingly greater cause. Abortion and euthanasia become acceptable and even altruistic practices. Also, reacting to mankind’s dominance, some view humans as evil animal parasites who are destroying nature. There are even those who advocate the genocide of over 80% of the world's human population in order to save the planet.

In contrast, others believe human beings are "little gods." We were created by something or someone superior; an extraterrestrial being who seeded our earthly beginning, or perhaps an all encompassing universal

The Great Debate: Who Am I? *(Continued from page 2)*

intelligence that has been imparted deep within us. Regardless, if we follow the right procedures through meditations, rituals, gurus, or spirit guides, we can learn the esoteric wisdom which unlocks this divine light that dwells within our hearts. All religions are said to provide paths to this same end. And once humanity rediscovers its true divinity, it will be at peace and at one with this universal spirit, with one another, and with creation.


Combining aspects of these two answers are those who describe humanity as an evolutionary pyramidal hierarchy of biological castes, ranging from the lower animal masses to the ruling top elite of little gods. Wealth and power often are the measurements by which this elite group identifies itself. Some say humans evolved from the same root, but certain branches demonstrated their biological superiority by evolving at a faster rate up the godhood scale. Others believe that the ruling classes evolved into or always have been an advanced human species intellectually distinct from the rest of humanity. Royal blue bloods vs. commoners, priests vs. laity, masters vs. slaves, rich vs. poor, racism, and sexism, are examples of perspectives that divide humanity into inferior and superior strata. Seeing themselves as little gods, those in power often believe they have the absolute divine right to determine the fate of the vast populace under their power. Many governmental systems function under this attitude, whether openly or behind closed doors.

Christianity teaches that human beings are neither animals nor little gods. God created us, both male and female, in His own image and commanded us to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it, and to have dominion over the plants and animals. Humans, as unique spiritual creatures, were able to commune with God. Unfortunately, this ability was soon lost when our first parents chose to distrust God's goodness and to disobey Him by eating the forbidden fruit that Satan promised would make them into gods. This first sin brought death to the earth and spiritual darkness; irreparably corrupting the human heart towards deceitfulness and evil. The result: every human being is born a slave to sin, hostile towards God, as walking dead, without hope, and cut off from Him.

The Gospel further explains that Jesus Christ, God incarnate, came into this world in order to save sinners. Jesus lived a sinless life among humans, performing many miracles so that we might believe His words. Yet, more essential than the revelations He imparted was the substitutionary atonement that Jesus offered up by taking our punishment upon Himself. Christ paid the penalty for our sins with His own death on the cross. Three days later, Jesus rose from the dead and, after appearing to hundreds of eyewitnesses, ascended into heaven where He remains until His second coming. It is through this same resurrection power that chosen people are born again by God's Spirit with a new nature formed within their hearts; a nature which is willing to commune with God, to trust in His goodness, and to believe what He says is true. Through faith in Jesus Christ, humans are forgiven their sins and become children of God. It is God who intervenes to redeem humans from sin and death. Since all have sinned, it is only by God's grace that any are saved. Humanity is leveled, being made equal both in sin and salvation. Therefore no one can boast, except in the Lord. The human race is thus divided into only two groups, the saved and the unsaved. However, God alone can know the human heart and is the sole judge of who belongs in each group.

Animals and little gods do not sin and therefore do not need a savior. This is why those who hold these views have no real use for Jesus Christ or for Christianity. Jesus makes a lousy spiritual teacher and prophet if humanity doesn't really need saving. However, only blind ideology can claim with a straight face that humans are no different than other animals. Our vast superiority in building civilizations, technologies, languages, music, the arts, etc. is simply overwhelming. We are biological, but we are more... we are intelligent, spiritual beings made in the image of God. Every human life is sacred. Furthermore, we were created to rule this world. It was made for us to populate and to enjoy. God would not have commanded humanity to multiply and fill the earth without having also provided the renewable resources necessary to maintain such a population. The desire to commit worldwide genocide is demonic.

What lowers us to act even worse than beasts is our fallen sin nature. That evil exists within the human heart is obvious. Why else would we spend so much of our lives trying to cleanse, heal, fix, and improve ourselves? Explain also why we need external restraints to keep human society from devouring itself. Good government puts checks and restrictions on its leaders just because it knows humans are sinners and power easily corrupts. God will hold people accountable for our evil as well; whether cruelty to animals, willfully devastating our environment, murdering, stealing, abusing, and treating humans as mere animals ... justice will come.

If we are already little gods then why did Adam and Eve not know this? Humans were never gods and never will be. Only darkness and deception are found deep within the human heart. Because of our finite limitations, we are incapable of knowing ourselves without outside illumination. Jesus alone is the light that resurrects us and enables us to see ourselves as we really are and to know and commune with the only true God. 

CPI 2008 Ministry Summary

*Thank you to all who are working
with us by giving and praying!*

CPI works with more than 50 native Christian workers who reach out to numerous unreached and needy communities in Mexico and Peru.

- **Huichol:** Native Huichol church planter Domingo was supported to work in a large unreached Huichol community in west-central Mexico. A church has been established. CPI began support of Venezuelan missionary Martin Vargas to the unreached community of Cienega del Mango. Distribution started of the “megavoices” containing the audio recording of the N. Testament in Huichol. Many units have reached the remote mountain communities where there is a great hunger for the spoken Word.
- **Yaminahuas:** Cesar Soto and his team were sent three times on extended missions to the Yaminahua tribe in the Peruvian rainforest. The church in San Pablo is being established and outreaches are conducted to other villages. Steven and Jonathan Shepard, and Gary Schmidt visited the Yamis with Cesar Soto in August.
- **Matses:** Two training conferences were held for Matses Christian leaders in the Peruvian rainforest. Matses leaders continue to go to the unreached villages in Brazil.
- **Lima pastors:** Two conferences were held in Lima, Peru, “Laying a Good Foundation” and “Kingdom Businesses”. About 300 quality teaching books were distributed. CPI is partnering to establish a pastors’ training center and print shop business in Lima.
- **Short-term missions:** Eighty-five people on four teams worked with churches, orphanages, and villages; in evangelism, helping the needy, two church constructions, medical, and children’s ministries. Musical instruments and sound equipment were provided for a jungle church.
- **CPI missionary Tom Hopkins** worked with our short-term teams and also taught word processing, spreadsheets, email, scanning, and the use of digital cameras to leaders in MINAP, a native run mission’s agency in Peru. MINAP sends out about 20 tribal missionaries into the Amazon Rainforest of Peru.
- **Ministries of compassion:** We constructed a floor for a village school and a floor and two roofs for the needy. We also provided 200 glasses, medicine, and food for about 300 families. \$24,000 was given to *The Emmanuel Children’s Home* in Juarez, Mexico, thanks to supporters from Century Marketing.



Steven Shepard teaching at Lima conference.

***Join With Us in
2009!***

***Take the Gospel to the
unreached, train leaders,
help the needy, & plant
native churches.***