Stars Lighting Up the Sky: Stories of Contemporary Christian Heroes

By Tony Cupit

Reviewed by Darren Cronshaw

Baptists have a rich tradition of advocating for human rights. Advocacy for those who are marginalised and persecuted stems from the early experience of Baptist persecution, and convictions about the right of freedom of conscience. Historically, Baptists have stood for the right to say what we believe and for others to say and practice what they believe. Around the world, Baptists are engaged in advocacy and peacemaking in some of the toughest contexts.

Tony Cupit knows the Baptist world as much as anyone. When asked his motivation for writing, Tony reflected: "I had the unique privilege, working with the Baptist World Alliance, to meet unsung Baptist people around the world who God uses in remarkable ways. Their ministries usually remained unknown except within their own communities. Their stories would remain untold and the inspiration of their work would be denied our Baptist family unless someone exposed their stories to the light of day."

Stars Lighting up the Sky travels from Azerbaijan to Singapore, from the Congo to Chile. It celebrates theologians and peacemakers, Bible translators and evangelists, intellectuals and long-serving pastors, those serving the poorest of the poor and those counselling Presidents. There are testimonies of people saved from alcoholism, domestic violence, persecution, civil war, sickness, animism and ancestor worship. There is persevering faith in the face of persecution, imprisonment, illness, ethnic conflict, civil war, foreign occupation, militant politics, and some of the worst human rights violations in the last century.

For example, Sare Mizraiv was the first Azeri-speaking Baptist Christian, and for months could not visit the church he pastored lest his presence cause more persecution. Luaila served Baptists of Mizoram in North-East India and fostered peace between Mizos and the Indian government. Andrew Bolundo in the Congo preached a Gospel that addresses every level of life, including training people to be aware of their human rights and not to accept being ignored or violated.

These stories are of particular interest to students of mission, leadership formation and Baptist trends, but are also an terrific inspiring read in themselves.

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