

An Innocent Man? – CTA Easter TV Drama Looks At The Easter Story In Modern Context



Tempers fray ...

CHRISTIAN Television Australia's Easter Special, *An Innocent Man?* which will screen on the Seven Network at 3pm on Good Friday, is a dramatic recreation of the events of the first Easter.

Produced by Melbourne-based production company Australian Christian Multimedia, *An Innocent Man?* re-imagines the original Easter story in a modern-day context, bringing a sense of freshness to an old story. The events are recalled through television interviews with the story's main characters.

Allowing us access to the Government's inner sanctum, Pilate speaks candidly about his role. Pilate believes his decision to execute Jesus should have been the end of the matter. Instead, the number of crises mount, culminating in a political scandal which could potentially bring down the Government!

We also hear from other key figures, including John Caiaphas (Leader of the Opposition), Tim Matthews (Commissioner of Jerusalem Police), and self-made multimillionaire, Joseph Arimathea.

Melbourne Producer Phil Smith received special permission to film inside Victoria's Parliament House for key dramatic scenes for the program.

Australian Christian Multimedia was the winner of

CTA's Program Development Prize which was set up to encourage new producers to create compelling Christian programming.

'We had over 20 applications from producers around Australia,' said CTA's CEO, Martin Johnson. 'We chose *An Innocent Man?* because its dramatic structure was quite different to other programs CTA had produced. Re-telling the Easter story using modern-day television interview techniques really works and we are very excited at the final result,' Martin said.

Australian Christian Multimedia recruited Melbourne based actors to play the key roles and local production company Orsino Media to shoot and edit the program.

'CTA have had a great connection with Channel 7 for many, many years. I thank them for opening this opportunity up to other creative people, and essentially sharing their unique access to a commercial TV network,' said Producer Phil Smith.

An Innocent Man? will screen on the Seven Network at 3pm on Good Friday, 6 April. (Check local guides) It also airs on the Australian Christian Channel at 11am and 9.30pm on Easter Sunday, 8 April.

A short preview video clip of the program is on the CTA Web site: www.christiantelevision.org.au



Global Day Of Prayer And Fasting For North Korea

OPEN Doors is calling on all believers to come together in prayer and fasting for North Korea on 15 April, that under the leadership of Kim Jong-Un there will be an opportunity to penetrate the darkness there, with the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Between two and three million people have died of hunger and hundreds of thousands are still imprisoned in infamous labour camps, including scores of discovered Christians. So on 15 April we would like to fight on behalf of our brothers and sisters in North Korea by fasting and lifting them up in prayer and asking the Lord to intervene.

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AN EASTER MEDITATION ...

WHAT KEPT CHRIST ON THE CROSS?

WELL, what did keep Christ on the Cross? Facilely, some would say, 'The rope and the nails.' But when His enemies, the soldiers, even one of the thieves crucified beside Him, taunted and goaded Him to come down, surely His human nature could have tempted Him to use His divine powers for His own immediate benefit, so that He could have come down.

His great purpose, however, was not to save Himself but to save others. So He forgave those who mocked Him, and His forgiving heart, His ability to pray for those who persecuted Him, His determination to do His Father's will, kept Him there on the Cross. Even though the easier thing to do would have been to come down, He would stay there to the bitter end to gain the moral victory of love over hatred, of forgiveness over vengeance.

The pure soul of Jesus harboured no resentment, no anger, no lurking desire to see those who had made themselves His enemies punished; just wonderful self-forgetfulness, the miracle of a heart able and willing to forgive. The cost of our forgiveness was Christ's own willingness to forgive and to suffer and die in our place upon the Cross.

Forgiveness produces power, moral power, mighty power, and in that power He would cling to the Cross to secure our forgiveness.

It was not long before His prayer, 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do' was answered as first the dying thief who repented was assured of a place in Heaven. Soon after, the centurion praised God and said, 'Truly this was a righteous man.' A little while later, on the Day of Pentecost, some of those who had a hand in His death were converted under the preaching of Peter who himself had been forgiven and restored. Then all around the world and across the centuries 'a great multitude which no man can number' would come one by one to hear the message of the Cross, turn from their rebellion and sin, and receive God's forgiveness.

We would do well in our day to follow the example of Jesus our Lord, indeed to obey His command: 'Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you' (Luke 6.27-29). Our prayers must not be just for ourselves, not just for our persecuted fellow-believers, but for those who curse and mistreat them. The focus of the prayers of Christians all around the world at the present time should be on the peoples of Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Afghanistan, Egypt, Syria, Pakistan, India, North Korea ... that they too will call on Christ for forgiveness and through Christ will come to know the God who is love.

'After the suffering of His soul He will see the light of life and be satisfied ... For He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.'
(Isaiah 53.11,12b).

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Call On The Lord For Fellow Christians Living Under Persecution

NIGERIA Please continue to pray for the Church in Northern Nigeria after the al-Qaeda-linked terror group Boko Haram declared its intention to 'end the Christian presence' in much of Northern Nigeria by means of co-ordinated terror attacks and the kidnapping of Christian women.

SUDAN Keep praying for Sudan after President Omar al-Bashir declared that the Sudan Armed Forces would 'purge South Kordofan' of 'traitors' (ie the non-Arab, non-Muslim, predominantly Christian Nuba). According to Sudan Vision, some 80,000 Islamic volunteer paramilitary 'mujahideen' are ready to fight and die in 'defence of the country and its Islamic belief'. Sudan continues to withhold humanitarian aid from hundreds of thousands of Nuba and other non-Arabs fleeing genocide in South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Once the rainy season sets in (April-October) roads will become impassable and delivery of aid impossible. Consequently it is imperative that aid be delivered now if mass starvation is to be averted. The lack of international pressure is difficult to understand. According to reports, Khartoum has bombed the Kauda Valley through which displaced Nuba are fleeing south. Furthermore, Khartoum bombed close to the Bentiu oil fields in South Sudan's oil-rich Unity State on Tuesday 27 March. There have also been bombings and cross-border clashes at the border town of Jau (formerly held by Khartoum, but liberated by the Kauda Alliance / Sudan Revolutionary Front on 26 February. The US government is opposed to regime change in Khartoum, saying it would rather see democratic reforms. May God, who knows that the racist, Islamist regime of Omar al-Bashir is genocidal and treacherous to the core, bring peace, equity and liberty to Sudan. (Isaiah 59.15b-19)

Further to this, Easter Sunday (8 April) is the deadline for some 700,000 'Southerners' (i.e. non-Arab, non-Muslims) living in Sudan to register as citizens of Sudan. If they fail to register, they will be treated as foreigners, stripped of their citizenship rights and expelled as illegals. Consequently, thousands of 'Southerners' – many of whom were born and raised in the

north – are heading for South Sudan despite there being few jobs and limited services.

LAOS, where Christians continue to suffer serious persecution at the hands of Communist officials and animist villagers. On Sunday 25 March five Lao Christians from various villages in Palansai District, Savannakhet Province, were arrested while worshipping with believers in Boukham village, Ad-Sapangthong District. The arrested Christians have been charged with 'leading a religious movement without official approval'. According to Human Rights Watch for Lao Religious Freedom the arrests are part of a wider crackdown against the spread of Christianity in Savannakhet Province. Pray for these believers and for all Christians in Laos for whom the cost of faith can be very high.

MIDDLE EAST, where the region's Christian minorities, from Iran through Iraq and Syria to Lebanon, face the prospect of being trampled by Islamic blocs battling for regional hegemony and Islamic supremacy. Pray for the Christians of the Middle East.

CHINA: BELIEVERS ARRESTED IN XINJIANG. On Sunday 18 March police raided a house church in China's far west Xinjiang Province, arresting more than 70 Christians. The church in Aksu prefecture, which has been meeting regularly for nearly 20 years, was gathered for worship in the home of Pastor He Enjun when more than 10 police and Domestic Security Protection agents stormed in. Each believer was photographed before being taken away for interrogation. Some believers were held for two days. Everyone's Christian materials were confiscated, without receipts (ie they were stolen – pray that God will put them to good use!). Pastor He Enjun and his wife were threatened and ordered to stop holding 'illegal' meetings.

Last Christmas the battle between the CCP and Beijing's large, unregistered Shouwang Church intensified as church leaders sought premises in which to hold Christmas services. While several landlords were initially willing to lease their premises, CCP pressure ensured they eventually backed out. *(Continued p.7)*

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Pray In Love For Muslims

– *Pastor Daniel Nalliah of Catch The Fire Ministries challenges Christians to remember the command of the Lord Jesus: 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you'.*

IN the last few weeks, as I have been thinking very much of our dear Muslims friends, the Lord has given me a real burden to start praying for their protection. I know we all want to see them be born again, but we need to really ask a very serious question: Do we really love them and if we love them, do we have a motive behind our love?

Unconditional Love

As Christians, we really need to check our hearts, whether we talk the talk and also walk the walk. If we only love them because we want to win them to Jesus, although this is good and very important, our motive is wrong. Can we love all people, simply because we love them, or do we love them because we have an agenda?

Many years ago when the Lord took me into Saudi Arabia I was really challenged. I asked the Lord: How can I love these people when they don't even let me pray in my house or have a Bible and they treat me so badly? At once I was reminded of the Scripture, 'Bless those who persecute you, and do not curse them. But pray for them.' In the heart of Islam, right in Saudi Arabia, I received a real love for the Muslim people.

While watching the news I have been deeply sad to see the number of Muslims who are getting killed all throughout the Islamic world. I believe that hundreds of Muslims are dying every day due to war and natural disasters. This includes men, women and children. Have we prayed for their protection? Do we realise that they were also created in the image of God.

Does this mean that we need to embrace Islamic teachings and practices? No, of course not, but that doesn't stop us from praying for the Muslim world and for God's protection over these dear Muslim people. In the last few nights I watched on news as to how many civilians were getting killed in Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Egypt, Libya, Palestine, Yemen. It is so sad to see so many small Muslim children so badly wounded and some dead.

No Hard Feelings

When the Islamic Council of Victoria took me to court, while we were right in the middle of the court battle, I was driving my car in Melbourne and it was raining very heavily. At the traffic lights I saw three

Muslim women stuck in their car, as their car was not starting. They were all covered in black. I passed them, then made a U-turn and came back and helped them start their car by pushing it in the pouring rain. Then I got into my car and suddenly realised, 'Thank God I don't hate them, I actually love them.' Even though I was going through the court battle (praise God we won this battle for Freedom of Speech), still the love of Jesus came out of me, and so I thank the Lord.

A Funny Thing Happened ...

Then one day the Islamic Council's President had sprained his ankle and came to court on a pair of crutches. When I saw him out of the court room, I felt so sorry for him and gave him a big hug. He was very surprised. The next day the *Age* newspaper had an article, 'Enemy's hug each other outside court.' I thought it was very funny.

A few months ago I met with 15 Muslims who had just come out of the detention centre on Christmas Island. They came to Australia on the Tampa. All of them were from Iran and Afghanistan. We had a wonderful time together over a cup of tea and some biscuits. I was able to find some of them jobs and also find some furniture for their homes. Jesus told us to feed and clothe those who were in need. And as we do it for them, He said that we have done it unto Him.

Just because you stand your ground for what you believe in doesn't mean that you hate people. When Jesus went into the temple and saw what was happening, He took a whip and chased them all out and turned the tables over. Does this mean Jesus hated those people? NO, not at all. Jesus loves all people, even those who crucified Him.

So let me end by saying: Please love and pray for the Muslims and all others because you love them, not because you want to win them. If your heart is truthful, God will draw them into His presence. Does this mean we should not talk about Jesus? Not at all. Please talk about Jesus at all times as the Holy Spirit leads you, but love them just because you love them. Then you will never walk away from your friend, even if they do not respond to the message of Jesus.

– *Your Bro In Christ, Pr Daniel Nalliah*

Easter Events At Wesley Signal New Dawn And Hope

WESLEY Mission, Sydney, will host a series of powerful Easter events, re-enactments and more than 25 worship services during Holy Week 2012. For more than 50 years Wesley Mission has taken the story of Easter into the public space giving people the opportunity to hear and share in the message of Easter. Wesley Mission Superintendent Keith Garner says Easter is a reminder that during periods of darkness there is always hope at the coming of a new dawn.

'Since the early days of the Christian community, Easter and Holy Week have been observed as a special time to focus on Jesus Christ and His message of grace, forgiveness and new life,' Dr Garner said. 'This message is timely as many people around the world seek political freedom or struggle to survive in the face of famine and disaster. By joining with others and taking part in the dramatic and engaging events of Holy Week, we can let that message of love and forgiveness penetrate our lives.'

Wesley Mission Easter 2012 Events Include:

Palm Sunday, 1 April, 1 pm, Procession and Open Air Service. The procession begins at 1 pm near Phillip Street, Circular Quay and proceeds to First Fleet Park.

Tuesday, 3 April, 12.30pm, Easter Luncheon, Wes-

ley Centre, hosted by Mrs Carol Garner. Keith Garner will speak on: *Through Darkness To Light*.

Wednesday, 4 April, 7.15 for 7.30am – 8.30am, Easter Breakfast for corporate and community leaders, Wesley Centre, 220 Pitt St, Sydney. Keith Garner speaks on *Suffering And Hope*. Dr Garner will reflect upon this year's international events as many people around the world seek political freedom or struggle to survive in the face of famine and disaster. Easter's message of hope in Christ is more relevant than ever.

Good Friday, 6 April, Way of the Cross procession through Sydney CBD from 2 – 2.30 pm, beginning at Martin Place and travelling to the Wesley Centre, 220 Pitt Street, Sydney, followed by Good Friday Service at 2.30 pm. The worship service is a time to remember the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice. Television: Channel 9: 2 am

Wesley Impact TV special Good Friday broadcast **Sunday, 8 April, 6 am,** Easter Sunday Sunrise Service at Sydney Opera House. As the sun rises on Easter Day, songs of praise from the Opera House will echo across Sydney Harbour. Hundreds of people from all walks of life will join together to celebrate the power of Jesus' resurrection. The Easter Sunrise Service will be broadcast live on Channel 9.

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John Piper's Successor Named

BETHLEHEM Baptist Church in Minneapolis is one step closer to the commissioning of internationally known and respected speaker and author John Piper from the local church pastorate to greater involvement with Bethlehem College and Seminary and to a wider ministry nationally and internationally through *Desiring God*.

The Bethlehem elders are announcing to the congregation their candidate for Associate Pastor for Preaching and Vision and, God willing, John Piper's eventual successor as the church's senior pastor.

Jason Meyer, 36-year-old Assistant Professor of New Testament for Bethlehem College and Seminary, is the elders' recommendation for congregational consideration and vote at a special 20 May all-church meeting. Meyer is scheduled to preach three consecutive weekends — 29 April, 6 May, and 13 May — and answer questions in several venues before the 20 May decision.

With approval and confirmation, he would begin the position on 1 August and overlap with Piper at Bethlehem for a yet-to-be-specified period of time. Then there would be a 'second vote' to affirm Meyer's transition to the role of senior pastor and commission Piper to the wider ministry.

Result Of 'Antioch Moment'

This new development is one of the ongoing effects of Bethlehem's 'Antioch Moment,' announced by Piper less than a year ago. On 9 April 2011, Piper called the church to six weeks of focused prayer regarding his succession and the church's structure and long-term funding. Meyer's candidacy is a major piece in addressing these difficult questions posed during this important season in the life of the church.

'Setting Apart' Piper For Wider Ministry

One effect of such a transition is that the church is setting apart Piper (to use the language of Acts 13.2 and the 'Antioch Moment') from the heavy demands of pastoring a large multi-site church for more engagement in wider ministry through writing and speaking. Piper is anticipating that his involvement with Bethlehem College and Seminary and his broader ministry nationally and internationally will not decrease after the transition, but increase, perhaps considerably.



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Turning A Blind Eye To The War On Christians In The Islamic World

FOR the past year, Christians in northern Nigeria have been the victims of murder and ethnic cleansing by an al Qaeda-affiliated group named Boko Haram. The group, whose name means 'book learning is forbidden,' has pledged to kill every Nigerian Christian in its effort to impose sharia on Africa's most populous nation.

Recent attacks on the group by Nigerian security forces dealt Boko Haram a deadly setback, but not before more than 500 Christians were killed by the group. These Christians joined countless of the brethren worldwide as victims of radical Islamic intolerance – an intolerance the Western media seems uninterested in.

That's what Ayaan Hirsi Ali wrote in a recent cover story of *Newsweek*. Ali, a native of Somalia, is best known for the film *Submission*, which denounced the mistreatment of women in Islamic societies. As a result, her collaborator, Theo Van Gogh, was murdered, and Ali went into hiding.

While Ali is a controversial figure, nothing in her article should be. The level of suffering inflicted on Christians in the name of Islam is well-documented and should be familiar to *BreakPoint* listeners.

In addition to what's going on in Nigeria, Ali cites the genocidal war waged by the Sudanese Government against the Christians of South Sudan. Long before the world ever heard of Darfur, Sudanese Christians were brutally persecuted by the Islamic regime in Khartoum.

In Egypt, the 'Arab Spring' has given way to a brutal winter for Coptic Christians. Hardly a week goes by without another report of murderous violence against that country's Christian minority.

Sometimes the perpetrators are Islamic radicals and other times it's the Egyptian army itself. But in

both cases, the message is the same: the Copts, whose presence in Egypt long predates Islam, are no longer safe in their country.

There are many other examples of what *Newsweek* calls the 'global war on Christians in the Islamic world.' Ali is right when she calls it 'a major and underreported problem.' The question is: 'why is it so underreported?'

If Nina Shea, whom Ali quotes, is right when she says that since Christians in many Muslim societies have 'lost the protection of their societies,' why don't we hear more about it in the mainstream Western media? After all, these outlets covered the 'Arab Spring' and its aftermath in depth. Why not the attacks on Christians?

Ali suggests that this 'reticence' is due to a variety of factors. One of them is a fear of 'provoking additional violence,' which, if correct, is perverse: it's like telling a person being mugged that you would like to help, but you are afraid that his attacker will only get even angrier.

Another is fear of being accused of 'Islamophobia.' This is even more perverse. Now we respect the majority of Muslims who want to live at peace, but what's at play here are radical groups spreading terror in the name of Islam. And Islamic nations should join us in denouncing the violence.

The sad fact is that the West along with many Muslim states has turned a blind eye to what is happening to Christian minorities in the Islamic world.

Hirsi Ali and *Newsweek* have reminded us that what's going on here isn't reticence but the most shameful kind of submission that only creates more victims.

– Charles Colson, *Breakpoint*

(From p.3) **Matters For Prayer:**

EGYPT: ISLAMISTS TO DOMINATE CONSTITUTION PANEL. On Saturday 24 March Egypt's democratically elected Islamist-dominated parliament appointed a 100-member panel to write Egypt's new constitution. The panel's clear majority of 60 Islamists will ensure that Christian and secularist voices will be inconsequential. Several Christian and secularist members have already resigned from the panel, denouncing it as a farce designed only to legitimise the drafting of an Islamist constitution.

EGYPT: SLIDING INTO A DARK AGE When Pope Shenouda III (88), the head of Egypt's Coptic Orthodox Church, died on 17 March, Salafi Muslim clerics

responded with a barrage of hateful, offensive and even slanderous insults. Their rejoicing over the death of the 'head of the infidels' has shocked Christians, compounding their sense of vulnerability. Meanwhile, serious anti-Christian violence is escalating. On Sunday 4 March some 1500 armed Muslim villagers in Abu Al-Reesh village, Aswan Province, Upper Egypt, launched a pogrom against the local Notre Dame Language School. They were responding to calls emanating from local mosques to attack this privately run public school, falsely claiming that a church was being built there. The entire property was ransacked and looted.

– Elizabeth Kendal, for *EA Religious Liberty C'sion*



FROM ALL QUARTERS ...

Anglican Leaders Work Towards Visionary Future

MORE than 200 delegates from 30 Provinces of the Anglican Communion will gather in London in April to build on the work of the GAFCON conference in Jerusalem and 'to help turn the present crisis moment into a visionary future'.

'We are committed to building networks and partnerships of orthodox Anglicans, strong in their witness to Jesus Christ and the transforming power of His Spirit, to face the challenge of mission around the world' said the Most Rev Eliud Wabukala, Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Kenya and Chairman of the GAFCON Primates Council.

The gathering is the first leadership conference since the landmark GAFCON meeting in Jerusalem in 2008.

The General Secretary of the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, Archbishop Peter Jensen, says, 'Many more leaders will be included in leadership gatherings and another larger GAFCON meeting, but we are praying that this will lay a good platform for the future of the movement. The aim of the conference is to unite us behind the goals of FCA and equip us to fulfil them. It is vital that we understand the nature of the Gospel and the nature of the church and so the theme is the uniqueness and suf-

ficiency of Christ, the One who is the heart of the Gospel and the Head of His church.'

Out Of Africa

AFRICAN Enterprise, the organisation dedicated to 'evangelising the cities of Africa by word and by deed', which was started by Michael Cassidy over 50 years ago, is hosting a visit to Australia by Stephen Lungu.

Stephen is the president of African Enterprise today. As a young man he was a member of a street gang, and has a remarkable testimony. His story is told in the book *Out Of The Black Shadows* and the banner on his website reads 'From Bomber To Believer'.

Stephen's Melbourne Itinerary Is:

18 May: Supporter's Dinner, Golden Sands Reception Centre, East Burwood, 7 pm. Cost: \$50 p/h.

19 May: St Mary's Anglican Church, Sunbury, 1.30-3 pm

20 May: Trinity Presbyterian Church, Camberwell, 10 am

Later in the year, in October, Songe Chibambo, another evangelist from AE who is a Presbyterian from Malawi, will be in Melbourne.

African Enterprise's Australian website is located at: <http://www.aeinternational.org/australia/>

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Australian Director of MECO Australia

(Middle East Christian Outreach).

Richard has travelled extensively in the Middle East for the past

21 years and is an adjunct lecturer in Early Church History

at Melbourne School of Theology



Shocking Figures From A Silent War

ON Anzac day 2009, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd reminded us of a sad fact: 100,000 is the number of people who fill the Melbourne Cricket Ground at times for sporting and other events, and it is also the number of Australians who have lost their lives in wars over the last 100 years or so. That's an average of 1,000 war deaths per year – a sad tragedy over which we mourn. On that occasion a previous Governor General suggested that after we'd gone to an Anzac Day service to pay our respects to these heroes, we should then go to a bar and raise a glass in salute!

But we need to be reminded of a more tragic fact: over 3,000 of our citizens die each year from injury and disease caused by the drinking of our worst drug, alcohol. And that's only a small part of the extreme harm in the community caused directly by this drug. How can we salute our lost war heroes by drinking the drug which causes three times more deaths than did all the wars? Such an idea is mind-boggling!

But it gets worse! We mourn that so many people were lost in war - and it is certainly a great tragedy! But most of them had the option of not going to war. We also mourn that so many die because of the use of alcohol. And mostly, they too had the option not to die.

Yet why do we not mourn for another 100,000 people who die in another more terrible war, despite the fact that they are not in a dangerous battlefield? They are people whose lives are snuffed out – not in defence of our country, but by legally sanctioned abortion. 100,000 Australians are killed every year in what should be the safest place available – in the wombs of their mothers. But these babies have no option – other people choose to kill them. May God help us!

Yes, let's fight against the warlords; let's fight against drugs, especially the worst one – alcohol. But, for God's sake, let's fight against the murder of defenceless young lives!

– Bruce Rayment.

Compassion Reports: Australians Reach For 100,000

AUSTRALIA is set to be just the second country in the world to consecutively support over 100,000 children, babies and students living in poverty through Compassion.

At the end of February, over 71,000 Australians were supporting 97,571 children, babies and students in developing countries through Compassion Australia, a Christian child advocacy organisation that is part of a global network of both funding countries and 26 developing countries that is Compassion International.

Globally, Compassion supports over 1.3 million children, babies and students living in poverty, with the United States office supporting the most, Australia second, and the UK third. So hopefully in the next few months, when Compassion Australia grows to 100,000, we will be just the second country in the world to reach this significant milestone.

According to the 2011 *World Giving Index*, 71% of Australia's population donates to charities, ranking it third in the world behind the United States and Ireland. And when it comes to how Australians give of their money, research has recently shown that child sponsorship through Compassion is a good choice.

An article by Dr Bruce Wydick in the United States February 2012 edition of *Christianity Today*

took a rigorous look at the effectiveness of international development efforts and noted that 'of all the long-term development interventions, child sponsorship received the highest rating.'

Dr Wydick explains, 'Many development economists today favour interventions like child sponsorship that remove practical constraints to education while building a child's self-esteem, aspirations, and goals.'

'In adulthood, formerly sponsored children were far more likely to complete secondary school with a much higher chance of having a white-collar job. They married and had children later in life, were more likely to be church and community leaders, were less likely to live in a home with a dirt floor and more likely to live in a home with electricity.'

As Australians grow closer and closer to making this significant, long-term difference in the lives of 100,000 children, babies and students, Compassion Australia would like to say thank you—to past, present and future supporters. Reaching this 100,000 milestone says a lot about the generosity of Australians, and for their generosity, children's lives are being transformed around the world.

For more information about Compassion Australia's Child Sponsorship Program, visit:

www.compassion.com.au

Back To Academia For Archbishop of Canterbury

THE Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, announced on 16 March that he will step down from the post at the end of 2012 and has accepted the position of Master of Magdalene College at Cambridge University. Williams, 61, was appointed in 2002 and will take up the academic post as of January, 2013. He will continue to carry out all the duties and responsibilities of his office until year end.

Rowan Williams' decision to resign the post of Archbishop of Canterbury and accept the position at Cambridge University represents a departure from Anglican Communion controversies and a return to an academic environment that has embraced him as a noted theologian, scholar and poet. Williams is a scholar of the early church theologians (the Church Fathers) and on the history of Christian spirituality.

His doctoral studies focused on Vladimir Lossky, a prominent 20th Century Russian Orthodox theologian. Williams has expressed liberal views on social issues, participating in anti-nuclear demonstrations and expressing progressive opinions on homosexuality and the Bible, while holding orthodox views on other aspects of Christianity.

Pope Shenouda III, Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Called Home.

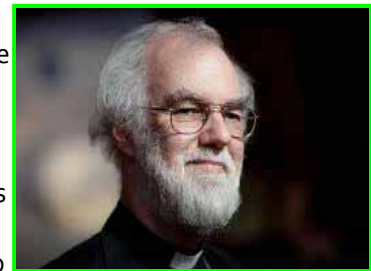


POPE Shenouda passed away on Saturday 17 March aged 89 and 41 years after his enthronement as the 117th Patriarch of Alexandria. Pope Shenouda was a Bishop committed to teaching his people regularly. Every Wednesday for the last 41 years he met with his people

(between 5,000 and 6,000 each week) to answer their questions and teach from the Bible. He wrote many books, which were translated into several languages.

Pope Shenouda had a great missionary vision. He consecrated two missionary bishops in Africa, and planted churches and monasteries in all of the continents of the world. He gave special care to all of

● Peter Wooding, of ASSIST News Service reports that General Synod member and Christian Concern CEO Andrea Williams has called for the Church of England to



move decisively in choosing Williams' successor, saying: 'There are many issues confronting our nation at the moment, which have raised the question of the place of Christian faith in British society. This is, therefore, a crucial time for the established Church in this country to provide leadership, clarity and direction, as many people want. For too long the Church's voice has been muddled, indecisive and confusing to the public on the critical issues of our time, especially the protection of life, the re-defining of marriage and the place of Jesus Christ in the public square. We need a Church leader who will contend for biblical truth in every area of life, commend Jesus Christ as foundational to addressing these many issues, providing direction for our society and a point of unity for the Anglican Church.'

the Copts in the diaspora. Pope Shenouda had a warm heart for ministry to the poor, holding a special meeting with them every Thursday, where he supported them through funds, counselling and prayer.

During the time of Pope Shenouda, the Coptic Orthodox church grew tremendously. He gave special attention to theological education, opening several new seminaries. He also cared for the youth of his church and consecrated two bishops mainly for ministry to youth.

He was well known for defending the rights of Christians, and because of this he was put under house arrest by President Anwar Sadat. He was released after the death of Sadat. In spite of this he continued to love Egypt and often said, 'Egypt is not the country in which we live but the country which lives in our hearts.' Pope Shenouda will always be remembered as a great leader and teacher.

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Burma Army Ransacks Church In Bhamo District

ON 13 March the Burma Army ransacked Sin Lum Pang Mu Baptist Church in Pang Mu village, located in Bhamo District.

According to Rev Jangmaw Gam Maw, pastor of Pang Mu Church, soldiers from the 33rd battalion of the Burma Army's 88th Infantry Division burned Bibles, destroyed church property, and stole a video player, loudspeakers and villagers' belongings. The soldiers claimed that the property belonged to a Kachin Independence Army outpost. They also took money from the church donation boxes.

The pastor and over 1,000 church members from Pang Mu village had abandoned the village for Mai Ja Yang IDP camp on 19 November 2011. On 10 March, Burma Army soldiers disrupted a Christian conference and threatened a Member of Parliament at gunpoint in western Burma's Chin State, according to the Chin Human Rights Organisation.

More than 1,000 delegates from 80 local branches of the Mara (Chin) Evangelical Church at Sabawngte village, in a remote area of Matupi township, southern Chin State, had gathered for the conference, which had official permission.

CHRO reports that several Burma Army soldiers disrupted the meeting and rebuked the village headman for not reporting the event to the army camp. When Pu Van Cin, an MP from the Ethnic National Development Party, saw the soldiers confronting the village headman and tried to intervene, he was threatened at gunpoint.

Benedict Rogers, East Asia Team Leader at Chris-

tian Solidarity Worldwide, said, 'These incidents illustrate that there is still a very long way to go in Burma's reform process, and for that reason, the international community should be cautious about lifting too many sanctions too quickly. We have seen progress in Burma at some levels in recent months, but the Burma Army continues to perpetrate grave violations of human rights in the ethnic areas, which include religious discrimination and persecution of minorities. Religious freedom is a fundamental value in any democratic society, and so if the Burmese government is serious about reform, it must protect religious freedom.'

'We urge the international community to monitor the situation closely. While it is right to ease some sanctions in recognition of the progress made, we urge the European Union, the United States and others to do so gradually, step by step, in proportion to developments on the ground, and to retain some measures until further genuine change is secured. In Rangoon and the urban areas there is atmospheric change, but not yet substantial institutional, legislative and constitutional change that will make reform irreversible. In the ethnic areas, crimes against humanity continue. We call upon the Burmese government to take action to end the military's abuses, and to protect human rights, including religious freedom, for all.'

– *Christian Solidarity Worldwide is a Christian organisation working for religious freedom through advocacy and human rights in the pursuit of justice.*

Ministry 'refutes' Magazine Article As Twitter Campaign To Free Iranian Pastor Goes Global

RECENTLY a well-known publication wrote an article stating that Iranian authorities claim that Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani will not be executed. Jason DeMars of Present Truth Ministries (www.present-truthmn.com), which has been following Nadarkhani's case, says, 'While this appears to be great news, we cannot trust it. We have documented many instances that Iranian media and government authorities have lied about this case to the public. They have recently acknowledged that he is charged with Christian activities but continue to deny that he has been convicted of apostasy. We have copies of his written verdict that can easily be found online stating that his only charge is apostasy. In addition, his attorney, Mr Mohammed Dadkhah, has clearly stated that the only charges levied against his client are apostasy. Iran wants Youcef's case to disappear from the news so that they can do as they wish with him, but we will not forget and we will keep praying and working until he is released.' DeMars also said there have been rumours circulating once again that Youcef was executed. He added: 'These rumours are completely false. We are thankful to be able to confirm that as of 16 March, Youcef was still alive. Keep praying and spreading the word to everyone you know; ask your friends and your pastors to do the same.'

Meanwhile, a Twitter campaign on behalf of Pastor Nadarkhani has reached one million people worldwide, according to www.christianpost.com

Pastor Nadarkhani, who is currently imprisoned in Iran for apostasy, preached to a congregation of 400 before he was arrested by authorities in October 2009.

– *Michael Ireland, ASSIST News Service*

Community Transformed Through Audio Bibles

THE royal Garasia tribe lived in Rajasthan, India, for hundreds of years without Christ. But in the last 20 years, a missionary brought them the Gospel and translated the New Testament for them. The problem is: literacy is below 2% among the Garasias. Last year, Audio Scripture Ministries began recording an audio Bible for them. Now, a year later, ASM has finally finished and distributed some audio Bibles. JP Sundararajan explains, 'So far, all that they have understood about Jesus, about God, has come through the mouths of their pastors and local evangelists. But now with audio Bibles in their communities, it's like we've just unleashed 150 new missionaries who speak nothing but God's Word in people's heart language.' The thirst is incredible. A missionary to the Garacias is asking for 100 more immediately. After hundreds of years, the Gospel is finally gaining ground among the Garasias.



Go to: <http://www.MNNonline.org/article/17005> for full story.

Open Doors Reports Explosive Church Growth In Iran

OPEN Doors staff members recently reported explosive church growth in Iran. They say government leaders view Christianity as a Western religion now, but Iranians are seeking for truth. Over the last 40 years, the church has grown from 200 believers to 370,000. Due to ongoing persecution, house churches have had to break into smaller groups, and certain services have been cancelled. But many are still proudly vocal about the Gospel. Pray for safety and boldness.



World Evangelical Alliance To Host South Sudan Tribal Peace Conference 1-3 April

UNDER the sponsorship of the World Evangelical Alliance, Bishop Elias Taban of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Sudan proposes a tribal Peace Conference between the Murle, Lou Nuer and Dinka Bor tribes to be held in Yei, South Sudan on 1-3 April 1-3.

In the last six months, fighting between these tribes in the state of Jonglei has resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and resulted in thousands of injuries. Fighting between the Murle and Luo pastoral tribal groups has reportedly escalated since the country gained independence from Sudan in July 2011. Ethnic tensions in the region have flared as tribes fight over grazing lands and water rights, leading to cattle raids and the abduction of women and children, local media report.

'We propose to invite 100 people in total from these three tribes and from Republic of South Sudan governmental officials. We believe this conflict can only be solved by bringing in elders from the grassroots of these tribes,' said Deborah Fikes, WEA Representative to the UN.

Even though the capital city of the Republic of South Sudan is Juba, the attendees of the conference will be brought further west to Yei, South Sudan for this peace conference, in order to prevent them from being influenced by people who have other motives in this tribal violence.

Bishop Taban has successfully been able to line up the Southern Sudanese Governor Kual Manyang of Jongolei State to attend the Peace Conference. Governor Manyang will be a key person to involve for follow through and credibility with the tribes.

Those attending will be Dr Geoff Tunnicliffe, Secretary General of the WEA, Dr Brian Stiller, Global Ambassador of the WEA, Stephen Tollestrup, Executive Director of the WEA Peace and Reconciliation Initiative as well as Rev Aiah Foday-Khabenje, General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa.

Bible Contest To Be Held In Ukraine

ON 29-30 March, the National University of Ostroh Academy, under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and Science, Youth and Sports of Ukraine, and the Ukrainian Bible Society, held a national contest titled *Young Experts On The Bible*.

Students of all grades that study courses such as *Ethics, Fundamentals Of Christian Ethics, Christian Ethics In Ukrainian Culture, Ethics: Spiritual Basis*, have been invited to participate in the contest. The National University of Ostroh Academy is a Ukrainian self-governed research university that was reopened in 1994. The modern university was opened in place of the historical Ostroh Academy that was founded in 1576 in Ostroh by a Ruthenian nobleman Konstanty Wasyl Ostrogski.

– Victoria Uzunova of the Christian Telegraph, Special to ASSIST News Service

Upholding The Lord's Priorities

THE 60th anniversary of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II has aroused memories of the days of the British Raj – an era when India was known as 'The brightest jewel in the Empire's crown'. It was also an era when the crown's representatives abroad were not ashamed to publicly profess the faith that Queen Elizabeth herself has continued to profess throughout her reign.

One of my step-uncles who was a Church of England minister in India from 1928-1948 has left a legacy of fascinating stories about that era. Two of my favourite stories tell of the humility under God of the man who had been invested by King George V with the power to rule the whole Indian sub-continent.

Creating A Stir At Easter

The newly-appointed Viceroy and Governor-General of India, Lord Irwin, created quite a stir at home and in India on the very day of his arrival in Bombay, 3 April 1926. The P & O vessel on which the Viceroy designate and his wife were travelling to India was a day ahead of schedule – unheard of at the time, but true. Despite this, an impressive assembly waited to greet them. There were British and Indian regiments, formal guards of honour in full dress uniform, brass bands and bagpipes, Field Marshals in plumed helmets, the Indian Civil Service in grey top hats and morning dress (as at Royal Ascot) and Provincial Governors and their wives. The Royal Horse Artillery was there, alert for the moment the Vice-regal feet stepped onto Indian soil and the order was given to fire a salute. But the salute never came.

The explanation was simple but, by today's protocols, stunning.

After the Governor of Bombay and other high-ranking officials had gone on board and welcomed the Viceroy-designate to India, Lord Irwin asked the official party what time the church services in the nearest Church of England were to be held that day.

Lord Irwin reminded his surprised new subjects that it was Good Friday. He also reminded them that according to the King's Regulations this was a public holiday – therefore the various commanders should immediately dismiss the assembled troops, policemen, and others waiting on shore.

Church newspapers of all denominations in Britain applauded the stand taken by the new Viceroy of India. But honouring God then, as now, brought opposition. One editorial in a Yorkshire newspaper stated the opinion that any Viceroy who creeps away to say his prayers was not the proper person to govern His Majesty's subjects in India.

'Creeping away' or even turning his back on God altogether may have been what a lesser man would have done, but although Lord Irwin was born with a withered left arm and hand, it had not disabled his strong Christian witness.

...And At Christmas

The second story about Lord Irwin's service in India relates to Christmas. According to custom, the Viceroy of India spent Christmas in Calcutta where the weather could be cooler when the winds blew from the snow-covered Himalayas. Belvedere, the Viceroy's residence in Calcutta, was surrounded by spacious grounds with beautifully landscaped gardens, tennis courts, a miniature golf course, croquet greens, and sheltered garden seats to relax on and watch the grazing deer that had been specially shipped from Scotland.

Lord Irwin soon learned that Belvedere stood within the suburban parish of St Stephen's, Kiddepore, so he enquired about the service times on Christmas Day. Ignoring the provision of their chauffeur-driven limousine, Lord and Lady Irwin walked to church on Christmas Day with their teenage children.

Neither the priest nor the congregation was aware that the Viceroy and his family were looking for four vacant seats in the crowded church that Christmas morning. Eventually a church warden found seats for them, and there they sat: the Governor and the governed.

It was probably on the whispered word of the warden that the message sped around the congregation that the Viceroy and his family were in church. This soon posed a problem. In the traditional Church of England Communion service, the Minister invites the congregation to come forward to receive the bread and the wine with the words, 'Draw near with faith and take this holy sacrament...' The invitation was given as usual that Christmas morning, but the faithful did not draw near, they held back, believing that 'their Excellencies' would be ushered to the front first.

As a former church warden, I venture to suggest that never has such a challenging decision been faced by any church warden, particularly when the Viceroy and his family remained kneeling, with heads bowed.

I don't know whether it was a genuine understanding of the Christmas story or the Anglican Church's dedication to 'order' that finally prevailed. Lord Irwin and his family were allowed to remain in prayer until their turn came to join the queue going forward to take the bread and drink the wine from the common cup.

There were many lessons for the people gathered in church on that memorable Christmas day. From Scripture itself and before their very eyes the Lord's priorities were made plain. In the words of my Uncle, 'They were all in the House of the Lord, where all rank and order of precedence lies abandoned.'

– Irene Voysey. A Christian freelance writer,
Irene was once Editor of the Bible Society
magazine *the Sower*.



Helpful Easter Booklet

CITY Bible Forum has come up with a new way to share the Easter Story. It was piloted last year by the City Bible Forum in Adelaide and has now been co-produced with Bible Society Australia.

This 28 page A5 booklet has 11 key events in the Easter story as Jesus heads to Jerusalem, to the Cross and to Heaven. Each event has the testimony of a person who has become a Christian as an adult with their reflections on a portion of *Luke* which is printed in the booklet. The booklet also contains some words on the historicity of Luke's gospel and how Easter has shaped the world.

Find out more at: citybibleforum.org/theweek
At this page you can download a sample of the booklet. Order copies from David at: info@citybibleforum.org or by calling (02) 9232 8700. They are being sold 10 for \$20 + postage.

Need Help With Password Security? Bishop Says The Bible Can Help!

THE Bishop of Rochester in Kent, UK, is suggesting his congregation use Bible quotations to help them remember their website passwords.

The Right Reverend James Langstaff says, 'The Bible offers a life-long source of new passwords, that can include both upper and lower case letters and numbers to help create memorable, secure passwords.'

He suggests that users choose their favourite passage from the Bible, take the first letter from each word in the quote, and then append the chapter and verse reference. For instance, 'Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.' (Luke 23.46) creates a password of: FiyhlcmsL23V46

(Trouble is, you need to keep your favourite verse(s) to yourself and NOT give them out to internet enquirers – Ed.)

Something For The Tech Heads

FROM the USA comes news of an online magazine for those who use computers in their ministry (which is probably most of us these days). Go to: <http://community.ccmag.com/Home/> to find out more and download a free issue.



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'...We...know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.' (Galatians 2.16)

Ramon A Williams – Worldwide Photos – WANT TO SEE MORE?

'New Life' can only publish a small selection of photos, but you can see more of those attributed to Worldwide Photos by going to:
http://community.webshots.com/user/ramon_williams
e-mail: rlgmedia@ozemail.com.au

BOOKS WORTH READING ...

CHRIST-CENTRED BIBLICAL THEOLOGY: Hermeneutical Foundations And Principles, Graeme Goldsworthy, Nottingham: Apollos, 2012

THIS book was written to repay a debt – the debt of gratitude owed to Donald Robinson, who as a lecturer in Old Testament at Moore College in the 1950's had a huge influence upon the author. Goldsworthy spells out the scheme of biblical theology taught to him by his old teacher. It was Robinson who introduced biblical theology into the teaching curriculum at Moore and made it part of the ethos of the college.

Goldsworthy is right to point out the importance of discerning a pattern and unity amidst the (at times) confusing diversity of content in Holy Scripture. He explains and defends his three-stage 'big picture' of what the Bible is about. It is pleasing to find that he allows exemplary preaching, using Old Testament saints as ethical models, for too often his followers have severely underutilised the Old Testament ethically, for fear of falling into legalism. In the current evangelical climate, it is the opposite tendency that is the greater danger: antinomianism, namely the present easy-believism that does not demand a changed life.

The author outlines the evangelical presuppositions that stand behind the discipline of biblical theology. Goldsworthy insists that Christ is the centre of the Scriptures, Old and New (basing his argument on texts like John 5.46), though he comes close to a kind of Christ-monism (aka Karl Barth), as if it is illegitimate to find any other message in the Bible except for Jesus Christ. He sees a salvation history timeline running through the whole Bible, and the historical recitals found in Joshua 24, Psalm 105, Nehemiah 9, and Acts 7 and 13 are enough to justify this.

Goldsworthy surveys and interacts with other recent attempts to explain biblical theology, including the efforts of Vos, Clowney, VanGemeren, Dumbrell and Greidanus, pointing out what he views as the strengths and weaknesses of each. As for his own approach, he sees the Solomonic period as the first great highpoint in salvation history. It must be noted, however, that outside 1 Kings 1-12, Solomon is seldom spoken about or alluded to. Goldsworthy makes Solomon's apostasy the watershed of the decline plotted in the Old Testament (p.134). This does not sit easily with his own criterion for a convincing biblical theology, namely how the biblical writers themselves saw the structure of revelation unfolding (p.114). It is proper for Goldsworthy to insist that the New Testament interpretation of the Old Testament is normative for us, but he has to admit that Solomon is all but ignored in the New Testament.

Finally, Goldsworthy gives us the arguments and explanations needed to properly evaluate his own proposal for a structured biblical theology of both testaments. It has, however, obvious problems. He

favours a Tetrateuch over a Pentateuch (p.122) and downplays the many indications of the importance of the death and removal of Moses as a major juncture in this history of God's dealings with His people. He consistently rejects the Mosaic age as a separate dispensation or epoch of revelation. Certainly, the many references to 'Moses and the prophets' (or something similar) in the Bible suggest that the new era that begins in Joshua 1 is fundamental to the structuring of the Old Testament, both in terms of history and theology. The Mosaic covenant is largely subsumed by Goldsworthy under the Abrahamic, but he avoids the mistake of setting the two covenants at loggerheads or viewing the Sinai legislation as legalistic.

On the other hand, to be fair to Goldsworthy, what he says could be seen as fitting the Matthean genealogy of Christ that structures the biblical history in three sections, ending in turn with David, the exile and Christ. Goldsworthy sets his scheme (inherited from Robinson) in contrast to the Vos-Clowney scheme that views the three stages as Adam-Moses-Christ, perhaps, as he says, under the influence of the Westminster Confession.

Goldsworthy links what he has been saying to a typology in three stages, wherein there are key events, persons and places in history from Abraham to David/Solomon (types), the prophetic anticipation of corresponding but heightened events, persons and places in the future (antitypes in prospect), and the greater fulfilment found in Christ (the true antitype). Building on the work of Donald Robinson, he emphasises the 'big picture' approach to a unified biblical theology of the whole Bible and surveys Robinson's thinking in the areas such as Israel and the church, eschatology, and baptism, all of which are expounded in a way that reflects his three-stage scheme. His debt to and appreciation of Robinson is plain and openly acknowledged.

A final chapter tries to predict the promise and possibilities of biblical theology. Let us hope and pray that it has a bright future, for Christians need to grasp the meaning of the Bible as a whole if they are to properly understand and apply its parts.

– Greg Goswell



HOUSE OF SECRETS, Tracie Peterson, Bethany House Publishers.

TRACIE Peterson is a well-known author of historical and romantic Christian fiction. She has written over 80 novels; all with charm, style and a distinctive christian emphasis.

House Of Secrets tells the story of three sisters and the precarious path they tread as they unravel the dark secrets of their childhood. With skill and understanding the author tackles the difficult subject of schizophrenia and shows the devastating effect this problem can have on innocent children. The characters come alive as the reader identifies with the emotional turmoil the sisters experience when confronted with the past.

When the eldest girl, Bailee Cooper, finds new life in Christ, she also discovers a new understanding of the troubles that haunted her youth. Christian compassion and forgiveness are major themes in this very unusual story of mental illness and family misunderstandings. Bailee finally learns to trust Jesus and this helps her trust others ... especially the hero, Mark Delahunt.

At the conclusion of the book there are eight insightful questions that could be used individually or in a group discussion on the increasing problems of mental illness in today's society.

House Of Secrets is not a deep medical or theological discourse, but a warm-hearted, delightful story that reveals some of the traumas of modern family life while retaining the romance and beauty of love. Highly recommended. – Barbara Prout ('Mrs DP')

