

They're Off! – On The Bible Society's Big Bike Ride For Bibles

THE Bible Society's *Australia Big Ride 2013* rolled out of Broome, WA, for Perth and Sydney on Sunday 30 June, covering a distance of 7231 km.

This nine week ride will possibly set a new record for *Bike For Bibles* group marathon rides as over the nine weeks the men and women involved are riding more than twice the distance of the *Tour de France!*

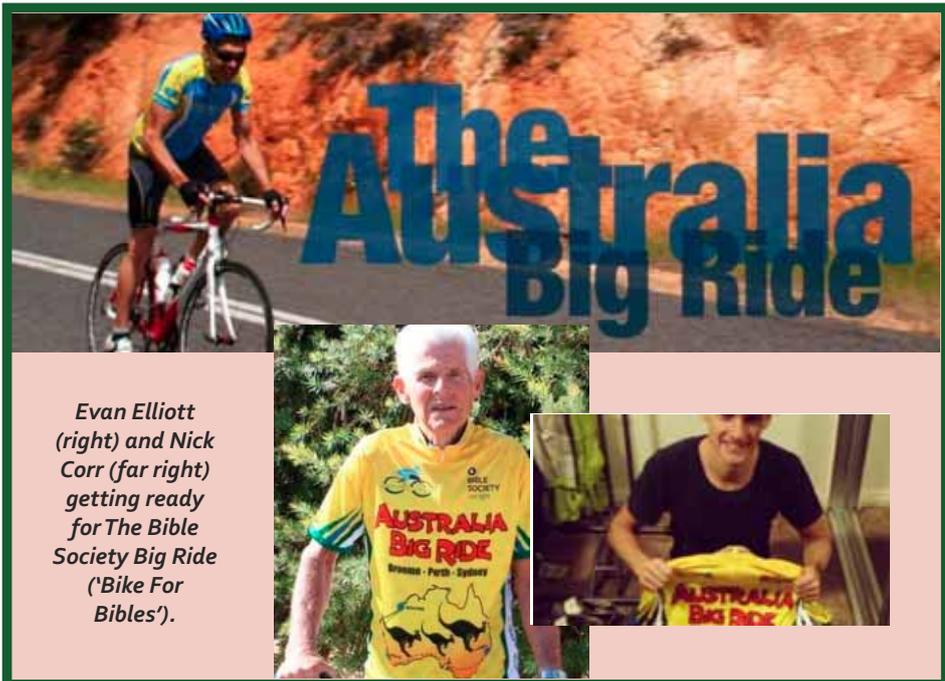
76 Year Old Set To Ride

76-year-old Evan Elliott will set out on the *Australia Big Ride* ride from Broome to Sydney. Neither the 7,200km journey nor the prospect of nine weeks on the road bothers him.

The *Bike For Bibles* group of 62 riders and crew will spend 11 out of 63 nights camped out under the heavens. The group will be in sleeping bags most nights of the ride, staying in church, school and community halls. For only 12 nights they'll have the 'luxury' of an actual bed – in 2-star-type roadhouse motels across the Nullabor, and when billeted in Angaston SA in the homes of church members.

Elliott has done other *BFB* long rides, so he knows the drill, and keeps coming back for more. He's looking forward to the camaraderie on the ride. 'Most of us are Christians, and when we're on the ride together we aim to enjoy the whole experience,' he says.

While *BFB* is a Bible-based fundraising activity, it's open to anyone who enjoys riding, and there are usually some non-Christians on each ride. Every night there's a group devotion and someone shares from the Bible. Non-Christians in the group are welcomed to join in, and



Evan Elliott (right) and Nick Corr (far right) getting ready for The Bible Society Big Ride ('Bike For Bibles').

they often do. Apart from fundraising for Bible Society projects, Evan has another desire burning in his heart – to encourage others to make Bible-reading a regular habit after the ride. 'As a Christian, I'm conscious of daily communion with the Lord, and the need to read my Bible before I do anything else. It gives me the right attitude with which to start each day.'

He's raised \$8,000 so far, and is working hard to achieve his target of \$13,500.

Nick Corr – 'It'll Be Epic'

19 year old Nick Corr invites others to 'follow' him as he fundraises. The target is \$250 per ride day on *The Big Ride*. As Nick's doing the entire Broome-Sydney distance, he's set his personal target at \$14,000-\$16,000. None of the funds raised by *BFB* participants goes towards their own costs, all going instead to Bible and literacy projects run by Bible Society Australia. Each rider has to pay \$4725 to cover expenses on the ride, plus their travel costs from wherever they are in Australia to Broome. 'Epic!' is how Nick describes it. Next year Nick Corr starts medical school, but for now all he can think about is nine whole weeks devoted to riding his bike.

Follow on <http://www.biblesociety.org.au>

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The Sin We Treat As A Virtue Is

The Most Dangerous Issue In Christ's Teaching

THE most serious problem for us in today's world is a sin that isn't regarded as a sin at all. Yet, according to Jesus Christ, it is the most subtle and serious of sins, a deadly danger at work destroying our lives, and all the while being unrecognised for what it is. Bible teacher Ward Powers explains in his new book *The Sin We Treat As A Virtue* that this, in its various aspects, is the major issue in Christ's teaching: it is the focus of two-thirds of His parables; it is prominent in every major sermon in His teaching, it is the point of a great many of His short sayings. Jesus warns about it repeatedly: 'Watch out! Beware! Be on your guard! Take care!'

Dr Powers says, 'It is so subtle that it can hold us in its grip without our being aware of it. It is so common, so "normal" in the world around us, that we don't even see it as a sin.' This sin is greed. It is the desire for more and more money, more and more possessions, more of the status and prestige that these things will bring us. Those who have a measure of worldly affluence aim to retain it and add to it; those who are poor (or see themselves as poorer than others) yearn to be richer. We are always wanting something we don't have, coveting it.

Dr Powers points out how this universal craving for more and more is even regarded as a good thing: 'This fuels the economy, it is the motivation for growth, it makes the world function. Yet Jesus taught it is so serious a sin that it hinders a person entering the Kingdom of Heaven and deprives them of eternal life. Paul said that greed is a form of idolatry, and can destroy a person. We dare not treat this matter lightly. Christ didn't. Paul didn't.'

Dr Powers is an Anglican minister. His book *The Sin We Treat As A Virtue* (180 pages) examines the Bible's teaching about how God intends us to handle this world's goods, and how to live in accord with the teaching of Christ. The cost of this book is \$14.99 and it is available from St Andrew's Cathedral Bookshop (opposite Sydney Town Hall), Koorong and other bookshops; or by post from the author, Dr B. Ward Powers, phone (02) 9590-3944; 0425-227-255; or email:

ward@bwardpowers.info

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MATTERS FOR PRAYER

PAPUA (INDONESIA): From Mission Field To Killing Field

IN the 1950's, missionaries working with Mission Aviation Fellowship USA and Australia brought the Gospel to the Central Highlands of what was then Dutch New Guinea (the western part of the island of New Guinea). Since then, Indonesia has invaded, occupied, annexed, Islamised, militarised and colonised the region. Today, the indigenous, predominantly Christian Melanesians of Papua are a suffering and dying people. Like so many persecuted minorities in strategic 'swing' states, Papuans find their appalling plight being covered up and whitewashed by powerful forces engaged in 'realpolitik', the amoral politics of money and power. As long as Indonesia is a geo-strategically important nation, it will not be in any government's 'interests' to do anything for the Papuans. However, our God is a God 'who pleads the cause of His people' and acts! (See Isaiah 51.21-23; Proverbs 22.22,23; and Lamentations 3.55-58).

Selpius Bobii is the General Chairperson of Front Pepera (The United Front for the Struggle of the People of Papua). He is a political prisoner, one of the 'Jayapura Five' arrested in the violent military crackdown on the Third Papuan People's Congress in October 2011. According to Bobii, 'The main means of annihilation are overt and covert military operations carried out by the Republic of Indonesia.' The extreme ethnic and religious hatred that many Javanese Muslim soldiers have for tribal Melanesian Christians fuels the most appalling human rights abuses. On the Internet, there is video of Indonesian soldiers torturing and brutally killing Papuans they abuse as 'kaffir' (infidels). Furthermore, the introduction of strong alcohol, worm-infested pork, AIDS-infected prostitutes and compulsory 'family planning' are all hastening the decline of the dispirited, indigenous population. On top of all this, Indonesia's policy of transmigration (encouraging Javanese Muslims to settle in the Christian regions of eastern Indonesia) ensures the indigenous Papuans' demographic demise. As Bobii notes, researchers at both Yale University, USA, and Sydney University, Australia, have concluded that what is happening in Papua is genocide.

On 21 February 2013, after Indonesia refused to heed community appeals and stop building military outposts on a sacred burial site, Papua independence guerrilla fighters took up arms and resisted. Eight Indonesian Special Forces (Kopassus) soldiers and four non-Papuan civilians were killed in the clash. Thousands of Indonesian security forces subsequently flooded in to 'sweep' the communities around Puncak Jaya in the western central highlands. By 26 February at least 18 houses and five GIDI churches [Evangelical Church of Indonesia], two schools and a library in Tingginambut had been razed by the combined police and military forces. Thousands of Papuan civilians have fled into the bush.

Evidence is emerging of massacres. Dozens of Papuan civilians are reported to have been plucked from their homes, schools, gardens and churches to be raped, tortured, mutilated, dismembered and decapitated. Despite photographic evidence, the Indonesian government is dismissing the reports of killings and disappearances as 'rumours' and propaganda. Yet according to credible reports (27 May), at least 41 Papuan civilians are dead with some 30 missing. Six of the dead were village chiefs and social leaders including at least one pastor who had been invited to attend the 9 April inauguration of new Papua Governor Lukas Enembe in Jayapura. They were intercepted, tortured and killed while returning home.

Oxford-based exile and activist, Benny Wenda, laments international ignorance. 'For the last 50 years we have struggled for freedom but nobody knows that West Papua is a prison, that we are slaves to the Indonesian military and that at least 500,000 men and women have been killed in a genocide,' he told the *Daily Telegraph* (12 June 2013). Papuan Church leaders are deeply concerned about the escalating state violence.

– Elizabeth Kendal <http://rlprayerbulletin.blogspot.com>
for the Australian Evangelical Alliance
Religious Liberty Commission.

Please Pray That:

- The Lord will revive and keep the Papuan Church from losing faith; may they call out to 'God who pleads the cause of His people'. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in Him.' (Lamentations 3.24 ESV)
- The King of kings – who sees all, hears all and knows all – will take up the cause of His people and bring justice, liberty and peace to Papua. (Isaiah 59.14-19)
- The Lord of Hosts will intervene against those who have cruel intent; by frustrating their schemes (Psalm 141.10; 146.9) and by visiting them with transforming, amazing grace. (Galatians 1.23)

PRAISE POINT

Every Home In Vanuatu To Receive A Bislama Bible

OVER 1200 patients were treated in the first week of June during the Healthcare Christian Fellowship Medical outreach in Vanuatu in conjunction with the Vanuatu Ministry of Health on the Island of Vanua Lava in the most isolated Torba Province group of Islands North of Espiritu Santo ('The Southland of the Holy Spirit'). Torba Province has a population of 7,000 which was over 100,000 a century or two ago.

Several medical specialists were in the team including a paediatrician, ophthalmologist, cardiologist, physician, gynaecologist and obstetrician as well as triaging nurses, a midwife and a brilliant physiotherapist.

The dental team consisted of four treating patients, with an oral hygienist who gave oral health instruction and scaling. Over 200 were treated with as many extractions along with temporary restorations. Over 600 tooth brushes along with tooth paste were distributed including the main provincial school whose Principal is also the local Assembly of God pastor. During the outreach to the community the first of the *Bislama Bibles* to be placed in each home was presented to the Pastor's Association.

Eleven Global Recordings Network MP3 players costing over \$150 each with colourful flip charts depicting the story of the Bible from Creation To Revelation and the Gospel in their own languages were distributed. During the HCF outreach over 400 people accepted Christ or made recommitments.

Nine years ago healthcare in the province was abysmal, neglected by both the Vanuatu and other governments including Australia, but Rotary, the Fred Hollows Foundation as well as Christian yacht and plane ministries are now servicing these islands and a new YWAM Marine Reach ship will be outfitted shortly to service the region with two surgeries mainly to treat eyes and teeth.

– Graham McLennan, in National Association of Christian Leaders Newsletter (www.nacl@netwit.net.au)



Dr Padmini Gnanararahan presenting Torba Church leader with the nation's first of 40,000 Bislama Bibles for home distribution. Dr Chelliah, leader of the HCF team looks on.

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MATTERS FOR PRAYER (2)

Gospel For Asia Responds With Relief Efforts To Worst Natural Disaster In History Of India – Early Monsoon In India And Nepal Leaves More Than 180 Dead, Thousands Stranded



A woman being rescued from the floods

FLOODWATERS and landslides that claimed more than 180 lives and left thousands stranded in the northern mountainous Indian state of Uttarakhand and nearby areas and in Nepal after four days of torrential rainfall have spurred Gospel for Asia relief efforts there into action.

GFA relief personnel already are providing clean water and food and meeting basic needs of those affected in the outskirts of the disaster. They are standing by with immediate aid as soon as the government allows them to enter the worst-hit areas.

India's Worst Natural Disaster

The monsoon is being termed the worst natural disaster in India's history, with government officials calling it a 'ghastly tragedy.' Because it came earlier than usual in the season, the monsoon left the region grossly unprepared, increasing the loss of life. Houses, multi-story buildings, apartments, cars and one temple were swept away in days of gushing floodwaters that tore through towns. More than 20 bridges and dozens of roads have been washed away, leaving thousands stranded and waiting to be rescued. More than 150 are known dead in India. Hundreds of people are unaccounted for. Bodies are still being discovered among washed-out homes. The final death toll is expected to rise. Thousands have already been evacuated by the Indian government. The military has air-dropped supplies to those still cut off and has closed the area until the situation is less dangerous for relief personnel to enter.

There are 46 churches in the region of the worst flooding in India. In Uttarkashi, GFA's Bridge of Hope centre for children is standing, and the children and their families are reported safe. However, a pastor in Saharanpur reports the anguish of seeing many people weeping as they watched their houses wash away. With electricity lines down, there is no connection with GFA personnel in the worst-hit areas.

Serious Situation In Nepal

The situation is similar in western Nepal, where at least 39 are dead, and more are missing. In Bardiya, around 2,000 houses have flooded, with GFA field reports of more than 2,000 people temporarily or permanently displaced from their homes in many villages. Authorities said more than 600 families in Khairichandanpur are at great risk of flood and in need of immediate rescue.

In Nawalparasi, Nepal, as many as 12 villages located close to the Narayani River were flooded, with 12 spurs on the dam swept away. Residents living close to the dam have urged their government to coordinate with the Indian government to initiate immediate measures to resettle them to safety.

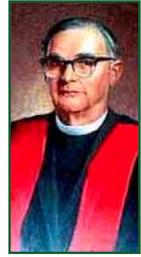
'This suffering makes our hearts ache, because we know that God loves all of us,' said K.P. Yohannan, GFA founder and president. 'We must not only feel compassion, but we must also act to relieve suffering wherever we find it. Pray for the rescue of the missing and the stranded and that God would restore good weather in this area. In our Lord's name, we must pray and respond to this situation.'

Gospel for Asia, a Christian mission organization based in Carrollton, Texas, has brought the Good News of Christ to millions in South Asia since its founding in 1978. GFA provides education, meals and healthcare to tens of thousands of South Asia's impoverished children through its Bridge of Hope program. For more information, visit www.gfa.org or on Facebook. – Gospel For Asia via ASSIST

Pray For The Muslim World

RADICAL Islam continues to fill our headlines with bad news. The GOOD news is that radical and nominal Muslims are turning to Christ throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and other parts of the world. Because prayer is essential for heart change, Mission Network News is making available the 2013 edition of *30 Days Of Prayer For The Muslim World* with a gift of support to help continue this important work, which MNN has been doing for over a decade. To donate and receive a copy of the guide while stocks last, go to: https://app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/CornerstoneUniversity_2/MNNGIVE.html .

IN FOND MEMORY ...



Paul And The Law: Keeping The Commandments Of God – Inaugural Leon Morris Memorial Lecture

BRIAN S. Rosner, Principal of Ridley Melbourne, delivered the inaugural Leon Morris Memorial Lecture on 27 June at the College, where Leon Morris had been Principal from 1964 to 1979. Fittingly, the lecture brought resolution to what some have seen as a conflict between Law and Grace – the kind of conflict which Dr Morris was so adept at sorting out and reconciling. About 100 people attended, including Leon Morris's brother Max and previous Principal Maurice Betteridge (1979-1992). The lecture is set to become an annual event, remembering the life and work of one who was arguably the greatest New Testament scholar the Lord has so far raised up in Australia.

A Critical Study

DR Rosner said that the subject of Paul and the law is critical to the study of the New Testament in that it touches on the perennial question of the relationship between the grace of God in the gift of salvation and the demand of God in the call for holy living. Misunderstanding Paul and the law leads to distortions of one or both. From the very beginning, even in Paul's day, his teaching on the law has raised hackles on one of two fronts. Either people think that the free gift of salvation has been compromised, or a solid basis for the demand of God for obedience and a holy life has been removed. If justification is not by works of the law, doesn't that lead to license? If you remove the law, isn't the result lawlessness? Don't those without the law end up outlaws? And if we are still under the law in some sense, doesn't that compromise the free gift of salvation?

A Crucial Problem

The crux of the problem is the fact that Paul's letters present both negative critique and positive approval of the law. Paul affirms that, 'the law is holy, just and good,' insists that, 'we uphold the law, quotes the law to regulate Christian conduct and asks rhetorically, 'does the law not speak entirely for our sake?' Yet the same Paul also holds that believers in Christ 'are not under the law,' believes that 'the law brings death' and 'works wrath,' and maintains that 'Christ is the end of the law.'

Paul generally deals with the law as a unity, customarily referring to Mosaic 'law,' not 'laws.' This means that, in the main, his responses to the law are not to its various parts, however we may wish to divide it, but to the law as a whole. If Paul's letters are marked by negative and positive statements about the law, the question to ask is not 'which bits' of the law is he referring to in each case, but the hermeneutical question of 'in what sense,' or 'as what?' 'In my view,' he said, 'asking the question of "the capacity in which," or "the force with which," the law meets the Christian resolves the tension between the negative and the positive material.'

A Complex Character

Paul responds to the law in three ways. First, he repudiates the law as law-covenant, for the law is a failed path to life and righteousness, and God has intervened with a tsunami wave of grace and mercy. Secondly, he replaces it, for Christians are not under the Law of Moses, but under the law of Christ, the law of faith and the law of the Spirit, and participate in newness of life, the new life of the Spirit, and the one new humanity. But thirdly, he re-appropriates it as prophecy (of Christ and the Gospel) and as wisdom (for living).



This understanding of Paul and the law embraces without reservation both the negative and positive things that Paul says about and does with the law. It also takes seriously the complex character of the five-volume, multi-genre work that is the Law of Moses, giving due weight to its seminal prophetic and wisdom elements, along with its legal material. And most importantly, it retains at full strength his twin emphases on the free gift of salvation and the demand of God for holy living: we are not under the Law of Moses, but under the law of Christ. See book notice at: <http://www.ivpbooks.com/9781844748914>

ACL Welcomes Calls For Marriage Referendum

THE Australian Christian Lobby has welcomed news for a referendum on marriage being defined as between a man and a woman in the Australian Constitution.

Acting Managing Director Nick Overton said a circuit breaker was needed to deal with the issue and believed Senator John Madigan's decision to introduce the bill would help resolve the issue.

'Despite the Australian Parliament's resounding rejection of redefining marriage last September, proponents continue to use parliamentary time to debate the issue,' he said. 'While this is their right in a democracy, it seems clear that the best way forward is to let the people decide and end the fatigue the electorate feels about this issue. Any referendum campaign will allow a fair and balanced debate, with arguments for the unique benefits of marriage to children and society to be brought into the discourse.'

Alcohol Abuse – Time To Act!

ALCOHOL continues to be the major drug of choice in our community, and no one wants prohibition. But in light of the continued rise in binge drinking and alcohol-related violence, it is becoming increasingly clear that the NSW Government needs to consider harm minimisation measures such as restricting the advertising of alcohol and raising the legal drinking age in NSW, the President of the NSW Council of Churches, the Rev Dr Ross Clifford, says. He noted that there appears to be a direct relationship between the alcohol industry, sport, politicians, and young people drinking to excess.

'The community is sick and tired of lame duck excuses for abusive behaviour caused by alcohol consumption that we hear of every day. It's time to put in place significant measures to curb alcohol abuse,' Dr Clifford said. 'Those that ought to at least be trialed include restricting alcohol advertising, stopping the endorsement of alcoholic beverages by sportspeople, raising the minimum legal age for alcohol consumption, reducing the number and concentration of alcohol retail outlets, raising the cost of alcohol through higher taxes, and extending the Newcastle trial in certain places,' he said.

'Trials in Newcastle demonstrate that earlier pub closing times, lock-outs, and restrictions on the sale of high-alcohol content drinks can significantly reduce alcohol-related violence. We need to see these trials extended, and consider a range of other measures in the interest of public health.'

ACL Urges Tasmanian Government To Reject Proposed Changes To Adoption Laws

AMENDMENTS to adoption laws in Tasmania would deny children the right to be raised by a mother and a father, according to the Australian Christian Lobby. Proposed changes to the Adoption Act 1988 would allow those registered with a significant relationship, including unmarried and same-sex couples, to adopt an unknown child.

ACL's Tasmanian Director Mark Brown has urged the government to reject the changes in order to protect the rights of vulnerable children. 'Children's interests are best met, where possible, in the stability of a married relationship with the complementary love of a mum and dad,' he said. 'Every child should have the right to be raised by both a mother and a father – each parent differently and subsequently providing a diversity and balance in a child's development.'

'Under current law, only heterosexual couples married for more than three years are eligible to adopt. Governments who are considering the "rights" of same-sex couples wanting to adopt should first and foremost consider whether allowing them to do so will serve the best interests of children. A large number of heterosexual couples have waited years for the opportunity to adopt, so it is difficult to understand how placing an adopted child in a home where they will be denied the benefit of having a mother and a father could ever be in a child's best interest,' Mr Brown said.

**Read 'What Is Hell Like?' by David Holden.
Free at www.defenceofthefaitth.org**

MEET ...

Chris Wigram, International Director of European Christian Mission



FOUR things impress on first meeting Chris Wigram, International Director of European Christian Mission: his heart for God, his love for the lost, his knowledge of his portfolio and his 'can-do' attitude to the magnitude of one part of the task facing the Church today, namely regaining lost ground for Christ. Nowhere is this loss more evident than in the West, particularly in much of Europe, and ECM under Chris's leadership is setting about the task of reversing it with a will.

ECM presently operates in Spain, the Balkans, Albania, France, Italy and Germany as well as Belgium where ECM is taking more seriously its ministry to Muslims, Spain where drug rehabilitation is a pressing need, and Romania where work is taking place among handicapped children.

Chris doesn't shy away from initiating works of mercy. 'They help build credibility for Gospel work,' he says. So church planting is done over the top of discerning and meeting different needs in different places and is multi-directional, reaching out to everyone everywhere and enabling people to get to know the real Jesus in a rapidly changing world due to globalisation, multiculturalism, new ways of living, a growing sense of unease and the economic downturn.

Chris recognises that there are clear differences between past, present and rising generations, with the rise of a global youth culture, continual developments in technology and increasing dependence upon it. So as International Director he seeks his task as to bring together a worldwide mobilization of theologically orthodox and suitably gifted workers, prepared to research the way in which the Gospel meets the needs of the world today within the Biblical framework. He aims especially to mentor church planters to plant through local people.

And what are the main needs of ECM to enable it to bring the Gospel back to Europe today? Chris asks the Lord's people to pray, to be informed in their praying, to know the issues confronting Gospel work and Kingdom (re)building. There is a great need for committed people willing to go long term to the field.

'The privileges and challenges are so demanding, full of opportunity,' he says, 'that it is well worth investing your life in this work. And remember, that God uses our earlier life experiences to prepare us for later ministries.'

Further information about ECM, including their excellent brochure *The Way Ahead* may be obtained from Ray Busuttil, Director of ECM Australia And New Zealand, phone 02 9747 5446, website:

<http://www.ecmi.org>

Talking Bibles International Urges Churches To Hold A Talking Bible Sunday



TALKING Bibles International says a Talking Bible Sunday helps churches become aware of the millions who do not read, and the new possibilities to give non-readers access to their translated Scriptures via Talking Bibles. On a TB Sunday, an entire congregation learns how people are coming to a saving relationship with Christ because of their hearing a Talking Bible speaking to them in their own language.

On a Talking Bible Sunday, an entire congregation gets involved. Attendees are encouraged to pray for the audio Bible movement, and there's also a special offering. The church can designate its offering to provide Talking Bibles in a language for people in which its members may have a special interest, or they can make their donation available to provide Talking Bibles wherever they are needed most. Every church holding a Talking Bible Sunday makes an essential difference for those still waiting to receive their Talking Bible. For more information [visit www.talkingbibles.org](http://www.talkingbibles.org)

New Bible Translation For West Africa

BIBLICA Africa has just given birth ... to the Yoruba translation of the Bible. Yoruba is spoken by nearly 30 million people in Nigeria, Benin, and Togo. Until now, one of the few Bibles available was a hard-to-understand translation that was first published in 1868. The Yoruba Bible is one of roughly 30 Bible translation and revision projects underway at Biblica. In West Africa, anticipation is high for an accurate, readable Bible in the Yoruba language. Will you add to the prayer cover of this new translation?

What About YOU? (Read Romans 2.1-16)

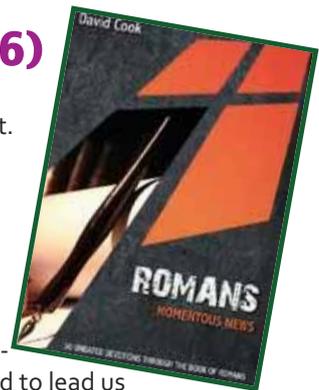
IN these verses, Paul shifts attention from the pagan idolater to the good living moralist. He shows that passing judgment on others does not exempt a person from God's wrath (1.1-3). Passing judgment is mentioned five times.

God is generally kind, tolerant and patient. Yet, if the moralist interprets this as approval of his or her lifestyle, that attitude builds up cardiac sclerosis, a hardening of the heart (1.5). God's kindness and patience are designed to lead the unrepentant to repentance (1.4). Peter echoes this thought (2 Peter 3.9).

The Lord also makes it clear (Luke 13.1-5) that calamities remind us we are living in rebellion against God in a post-Garden of Eden environment. Calamities, too, are designed to lead us to repentance. Thus, God speaks one message to the world: when things are good, repent; when things are disastrously bad, repent. Repentance involves a complete change of attitude and action. It means turning away from rebelling against, or ignoring, God's claim upon us; and instead recognising that claim and, in reverence, serving Him.

This is precisely what the self-righteous moralist does not do. He or she has nothing to repent about. He or she is storing up God's wrath for the day it will be revealed (1.5). We are lost because God's justice dispenses punishment

on the basis of our sinful acts. Verses 1.7-11 are the most difficult verses of the letter. This is because they appear to contradict its central message: that we are justified, not by works, but through faith. But Paul does not contradict himself. Neither does he speak hypothetically. Paul is clear that God does not have one standard for the Jew and a different one for the Gentile. God does not play favourites (1.11). Paul gives the following affirmation: judgment is based on works, it is universal, and it is individual. There is one standard and only one. God will not be fooled by the hypocritical judgements made by self-righteous people on others. God will not be swayed by our moralising, or by our condemnation of others. God is interested in what we do (1.6) as the key to what we are.



FOR REFLECTION:

WHERE do *you* stand in the light of moral judgment on others? Do *you* think too highly of yourself? At the end of Chapter 1, did you think that you would never do the things listed there?

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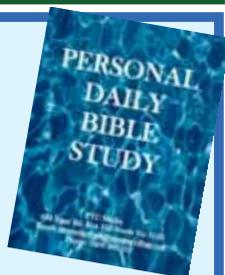
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'...We...know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of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

PERSECUTION WATCH

Six Christian Converts Convicted While Attention Was On Presidential Election

WITH so much attention focused on Iran's presidential election, there was minimal media coverage of the recent conviction of six Christian believers. According to *Mohabat Iranian Christian News Agency*, the Revolutionary Court in Shiraz convicted Mojtaba Seyyed-Alaedin Hossein, Mohammad-Reza Partoei (Koorosh), Vahid Hakkani and Homayoun Shokouhi., who were found guilty of attending a house church, spreading Christianity, having contact with foreign ministries, propaganda against the regime and disrupting national security. Each was sentenced to three years and eight months in prison. In addition, *Mohabat News* reported, Homayoun Shokouhi and Mojtaba Seyyed-Alaedin Hossein were sentenced to eight more months in prison. Fariba Nazemina and her 17 year old son, Nima Shokouhi, each received a two year suspended prison sentence.

Mohabat News said the sentence these individuals received is what is known as an 'initial' one, meaning they have 20 days to appeal the ruling if they wish. *Mohabat News* said after this ruling was made, all contact with these individuals was lost and that the sentences were handed down while headlines focused on the Iranian presidential election. *Mohabat News* commented, 'It seems that the Iranian Intelligence organizations have been actively pursuing their intentions during the past one and a half months of presidential election activities to pressure non-Muslim Iranians (in) the most severe form possible. With people and media so much engaged in elections, this time is a golden opportunity for Iran's Islamic regime to resume religious minority cases.'

In another story of persecution, *Mohabat News* said the agency earlier published a story about the critical health condition of another Christian prisoner, Vahid Hakkani. He has internal bleeding in his digestive system and reports indicate that the judicial authorities of Fars province have not taken action to alleviate the problem, with Hakkani's situation worsening.

— *Jeremy Reynolds, Senior Correspondent for ASSIST News Service*



Alarm At More Violence In Tanzania

A SPIKE in the persecution of Christians could jeopardize Tanzania's reputation as a country 'free of religious violence.' Voice of the Martyrs reports that a large group of radical Muslims attacked two pastors in the northeastern town of Geita. Both survived. VOM contacts are providing aid and support to these pastors and other Christians. Pray for protection over Christians and that they will have courage to share God's love with Muslims. Full story:

<http://www.MNNonline.org/article/18655>

Country In Identity Crisis Gets Baskets

DO you know where Abkhazia is? It might be hard to find on a map. Abkhazia is nestled between Russia and Georgia and struggles with an international identity crisis. Basically, the Slavic nation of Georgia wants to claim Abkhazia as one of their regions. Abkhazia wants to be their own country but isn't formally recognized yet by the UN. Dick Page, with SOAR International Mission, says in Abkhazia's push for independence there's been a lot of fighting: 'Just a totally war-torn country. The entire infrastructure was pretty much destroyed, and people

are living basically in poverty there.' Out of 4,000,000 people in Abkhazia, there are only 300 Christians. A team with SOAR recently went to Abkhazia to give out Baskets of Hope. 'We give sponsored gift baskets to needy children in orphanages, street kids, and kids in really poor families, and combine those with a children's Bible. We use that as an opening for sharing the Gospel.' Full story:

<http://www.MNNonline.org/article/18658>

Gunmen Open Fire on Church in Baghdad

GUNMEN opened fire on St Mary Assyrian Church on 25 June, wounding two security guards. According to a story by the Assyrian International News Agency, a source in the interior ministry said the gunmen were traveling in a civilian car when they fired a barrage of bullets at the church, located in the Ameen Thania neighbourhood in eastern Baghdad. AINA said the guards were taken to Al Kindi hospital, where one is listed in serious condition. According to AINA, 73 churches have been attacked or bombed since June 2004. Forty five of the churches attacked were in Baghdad, 19 in Mosul, eight in Kirkuk and one in Ramadi. — *ASSIST*

MAF Wants Second Plane For Timor Leste

EARLY in June Mission Aviation Fellowship was given a rare opportunity to buy some planes at a reduced rate for their work internationally. The decision was made to buy a second plane for use in Timor Leste. At the end of 2012 the UN and Australian Army

pulled out of Timor-Leste, leaving just one fixed-wing aircraft in the whole country to service 30 organisations: MAF's GA8 Airvan. With the increased demand on the program a second family moved to Timor Leste to help out, but there is only so much one plane could achieve.

The plane they have purchased is a GA8 Airvan, just like the one already flying there. It needs work to fit it out for service, but once it is flying it can double their effectiveness, double the resources to needy people, and save more lives. Timor-Leste is Asia's poorest country with over half a million people who struggle to survive on less than \$1 a day. Child mortality is 11 times worse than in Australia, and this country has the world's worst incidence of underweight babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers. 20% of babies are born malnourished. MAF is believing for \$500,000 to cover the cost of the plane and to prepare it for service, \$200,000 less than the price of a new plane. If you are led to help, visit their website: www.maf.org.au



New Church To Open In Alice Springs

PRESBYTERIAN Inland Mission reports that a new church is being planted in Alice Springs. Rev Keith and Jenny Bell have commenced ministry there, and an official commencement service will be held on Sunday 21 July 2013. The service will be held at 20 Parke Cres, Alice Springs at 5 pm. Anyone in Alice Springs or nearby is most welcome. PIM Convener Rob Duncanson says: 'Please pray for Keith and Jenny and the work of the Gospel in Alice Springs.' Keith and Jenny can be contacted on 0438 719 956 or keith.jenny.bell@gmail.com

Christianityworks Expands In India

BERNI Dymet, CEO of Christianityworks, recently returned from a visit to India rejoicing in the possibilities opening up in that land. While there he recorded a series of interviews for a cable TV channel that reaches across India, and the Southern India Operations Director of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries had arranged for him to speak at many meetings in both secular and Christian organisations. One such opportunity involved speaking at the headquarters of an organisation of some 3,000 employees in the IT sector. As well as almost 200 management and staff in attendance at the Hyderabad office, they carried a live video feed of the presentation to their offices in Bangalore and Pune, as well as Guangzhou and Shanghai in China. During Berni's visit the decision was made to launch a weekly TV program called, not surprisingly, *Christianityworks*, across India within the next six months. Also a door for a very significant strategic

partnership has opened quite unexpectedly. CW is trusting that this partnership will eventuate, greatly accelerating the spread of the Gospel.

Bible Society Help For Mozambique

CENTURIES of colonisation, a 20-year civil war and multiple natural disasters have ravaged life in general in Mozambique where 80% of Mozambicans live a subsistence lifestyle, trapped in a cycle of poverty. Many have little or no access to electricity, sanitation or running water. With 44% of the population illiterate, education for more than a million children is but a dream. Even after 17 years of peace, illiteracy remains one of the nation's great challenges and Mozambique is still among the world's poorest nations, placed 185th out of 186 on the UN's Human Development Index report. Together with local churches the Bible Society is using Bible-based literacy materials to help children and adults learn to read and write. Teachers also help them learn to count and learn more about health and agriculture. By helping them acquire vital life skills, Mozambicans are gaining greater confidence and hope for the future. These tools for a better life are changing not just individuals, but entire communities as well. — *The Sower* (Continued p.12)

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www.barbarafurman.com

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE ... *With Barbara Furman*

(Continued from p.11)

Global Mission At Ridley

GLOBAL mission is a hot topic at Ridley Melbourne, and since Charlie Fletcher was appointed Dean of the Global Mission Learning Community in 2011 there has been more space for students to engage with it. This year Mike Raiter from the Centre For Biblical Preaching has given a series of talks to the Learning Community on cross-cultural communication, drawing on his experience in Pakistan. The group is also hosting visiting missionaries from Pioneers and the Church Missionary Society variously involved in theological education, business as mission, leadership development and evangelism in Muslim, Buddhist and animistic contexts in Africa and South-East Asia.

Global Mission Week was held to highlight global mission to the Ridley student community. During the week students were encouraged to think about and engage with various aspects of world mission. They had the opportunity to talk to visiting mission organisation representatives and missionaries at morning tea and lunch time. Discussion topics were also provided to spark discussion and stimulate thinking about missions around the lunch table. During chapel services, preachers drew out the cross cultural implications of the Bible readings and there were interviews with people involved in all kinds of mission, including short term missions, cross cultural mission in Melbourne and Bible translation. Further info: www.ridley.edu.au

Marriages In India

IT has always been on the heart of Empart workers to touch lives with compassion and to help the helpless. Performing mass marriages is another way they have been able to bless and assist the people of India where the cost of marriage usually excludes the poor people in the local church from fulfilling their vows to God and each other.

Conducting mass marriages in different parts of India is a significant effort that Empart has undertaken to challenge the dowry system and caste discrimination in India. The entire expense of the marriage is raised by Empart and friends of the happy couples.

Recently, around 150 people gathered to witness the union of nine couples. The place became full of relatives and there was rejoicing and ecstatic thank you's from many of the couples as their long-awaited prayers were answered. Each couple was blessed further with basic yet essential household

goods to help build up their home: a fan, mixer, grinder, wooden cots, mattresses, linen, mosquito nets, clothes, plastic chairs and tables and other kitchen utensils essential to start a new life.

Go to: www.empart.org for more info.

Helping Broken Children Heal

IN January 1998 a new private children's home called Transformation was opened in Kazakhstan for the purpose of raising orphan children under loving Christian discipleship. It all began through the visionary leadership of a caring Central Asian pastor and his wife. They started with only seven children. Since then 156 orphans have called Transformation their home.

The pastor said the burden from the Lord to help children grew steadily in their hearts over time. But how many children can one couple adopt into their already large family? 'We couldn't take them all so we decided to establish a Christian children's home. We obtained a broken down, two-storey building that was a former kindergarten. The building was terribly run down and we basically had to rebuilt it.' The first orphans who came into the new home were quiet and withdrawn with demeanours like hunted animals. They had to learn so many things like basic hygiene, good manners and how to treat others. Eventually the day comes when the children reach 18 and must leave the home. But the orphanage workers are still involved, helping to get the young people established on their own. Old apartments have been purchased and remodelled for them to live in while they study and become licensed to work.

— *Slavic Gospel News*

Strengthening The Ranks Of The Fellowship Of Congregational Churches

AN Induction Service for Rev Roy Waters at Gresford (NSW) Congregational Church has been planned for Saturday 13 July at 2.30 pm. This will be followed by afternoon tea. The Induction of Rev Phill Graham to the ministry at Kurri Kurri (NSW) Congregational Church (corner Rawson and Hampden Streets, Kurri Kurri) will, God willing, take place at 2pm on Saturday, 20 July. Special guests include Rev Dr Peter Back, FCC Pastoral Relations Officer, and Pastor Don McMurray, Founding Pastor and Elder of Grace Evangelical Church, Newcastle. Afternoon tea will follow in the church hall. All are invited to attend. For catering, please RSVP by 17 July to Mr Jon Van Vorst, phone (02) 4937 3970 or email: sjdp@bigpond.com

— *Congregational Communications*

EVENTS FOR THE DIARY

Vishal Mangalwadi – A Prophet For Our Times

VISHAL grew up in India, surrounded by a culture steeped in Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim traditions. His family was among the small Christian minority, but he did not adopt their faith as his own – until the day came when the young teenager acknowledged his own failures.



'I was a habitual thief and liar,' he said. 'I was ashamed of my behaviour and realised that I could not control it. I asked Jesus to be my Lord and Saviour. He changed me.' Vishal later studied at two of India's greatest universities, where his young faith was severely tested.

He studied Indian philosophers, Buddhist teaching and the Quran. He also spent time at the feet of a guru in a Hindu ashram. But he came to the conclusion that the Bible alone was the revelation of God.

His first book, *The World Of Gurus*, was serialised in a popular Indian newspaper and became a university text. It looks at the claims of prominent Hindu gurus (spiritual teachers) through the criterion of truth – and concluded that Jesus is the only true guru. Vishal also studied under the late Dr Francis Schaeffer in Switzerland. In 1977 he turned down attractive US job offers in order to return to India with his wife Ruth. They lived on his father's rural prop-

erty and ministered to the surrounding villagers – encountering abject poverty, infanticide of baby girls and endemic corruption. Vishal was thrown into jail for holding a prayer meeting! He later formed an organisation to reform the feudal caste system still endemic in rural India and oppose recent efforts to revive sati – the Hindu custom of burning widows on their husband's funeral pyre.

While he was in jail Vishal first began to wonder about the qualities that made some nations prosper and others remain mired in poverty and corruption. The more he inquired, the more he came to realise that the worldviews of these nations were worlds apart. Those that flourished were Western cultures, based on a biblical understanding.

Vishal's recent best-seller, *The Book That Made Your World*, explores these issues in depth. He has been in demand as an international speaker, as Western elites are rapidly discarding biblical principles.

Must the sun set on the West? Or is there another way forward? Vishal, a dynamic and engaging speaker, enjoys simplifying complex ideas and inspiring despairing hearts with hope. He will share his insights at *FamilyVoice Australia* forums and seminars in capital cities in August. For more information, go to www.fava.org.au/events

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WHEN THE MESSAGE IS THE MEDIUM ...

Operation Christmas Child Follow-Up Program Leads To Four New Churches In Fiji – 500 Discipled In 18 Months



The Greatest Journey Graduation Service

FOUR new churches have been started on the Fijian Island of Vanua Levu, as a direct result of *The Greatest Journey*, the discipleship program that follows *Operation Christmas Child*. *The Greatest Journey* is a course we offer as a follow-up to *Operation Christmas Child*,’ said Jorge Rodrigues, Executive Director for Samaritan’s Purse Australia and New Zealand. ‘With their parents’ permission, many of those who received a gift-filled shoe box enrolled in *The Greatest Journey*.’

The 12-lesson discipleship program introduces the youngsters to salvation through faith in Christ, helps them gain an understanding of what it means to have a relationship with Christ and encourages them to share their faith. ‘After each class, the children went home and shared with their parents the Bible stories they were learning. The parents became curious and started attending the classes as observers,’ Jorge said. ‘As a result hundreds of children and parents have become Christians, leading to the planting of four new churches.’

Samaritan’s Purse recently funded the construction of a church building in a village near Labasa for one of the new congregations. Land is being acquired in three other villages to construct another three church buildings which Samaritan’s Purse also plans to fund. Most of the converts are Fijian Indians from a range of religious backgrounds. The new congregations are meeting in temporary shelters and in people’s homes until the churches are built.

A few weeks ago 500 village children from Vanua Levu gathered at a large church (see photo above) in Labasa to receive their certificates and Bibles on graduating from *The Greatest Journey*. Local Fijian pastor, Waisea, who is responsible for the rollout of *The Greatest Journey* on Vanua Levu said, ‘God has clearly shown me that there is no, “No” in planting a church anywhere on Earth for me when using *The Greatest Journey*, and I personally think that I can plant at least another five churches in this region.’

Pastor Sharda, from a church on the same island, had two children attending her Kids’ Club and this grew to 35 when she introduced *The Greatest Journey*. The 33 new children are all new converts. Many of the children’s parents also came to faith in Christ as a result of the program.

Jorge expressed his gratitude to Bible League International for providing the funds to print Samaritan’s Purse’s materials for *The Greatest Journey*. For more information: <http://www.samaritanspurse.org.au>

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or alternatively send your CV to Mr. Eden Law at PO Box 7091, Wattle Park 3128 by 29 July 2013.

HERE TO HELP

Suicide Prevention Is A Personal Cause For Dedicated Former PM

MORE than 150 business, community leaders and Wesley Mission volunteers gathered at Sydney's Four Seasons Hotel on 27 June to hear former Prime Minister John Howard call on the Australian community to maintain its commitment to the prevention of suicide and to support the vital cause. Mr Howard, a lifelong and active supporter of suicide prevention services, said he had first dealt with the issue of suicide as a local member of parliament. He described sitting in his suburban lounge room consoling parents experiencing a 'terrible emptiness' after the loss of a child. These formative years gave a young MP the political impetus to put suicide prevention on the public agenda later in life. As Prime Minister he met regularly with young people who were concerned about the growing incidence of peer suicide.

Mr Howard said he had enjoyed working with previous Wesley Mission Superintendents and paid particular tribute to the leadership and ministry of the current Superintendent of Wesley Mission the Rev Dr Keith Garner and Mrs Carol Garner. He also acknowledged the ministry of the late Rev Dr Sir Alan Walker in founding Lifeline which has spread across Australia and the globe.

Wesley Mission Superintendent the Rev Dr Keith Garner paid tribute to Mr Howard's commitment to suicide prevention and his practical support of the issue through funding and enabling legislation.

The former PM said he had great admiration for Wesley Mission's suicide prevention work: Lifeline Sydney and Sutherland which answers more than 23,000 calls a year, Wesley LifeForce suicide prevention program which has trained over 15,000 Australians in suicide prevention while also helping to establish dozens of practical, community-based, suicide prevention networks across Australia.

The breakfast raised \$35,000 in much needed funds for Wesley Mission's suicide prevention services.

Lifeline can be reached by phone on 13 14 11, or go to their website: www.lifeline.org.au/



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BOOKS WORTH READING

THE GOD WHO BECAME HUMAN: A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF INCARNATION, Graham A. Cole, NSBT 30, Nottingham: Apollos, 2013

GRAHAM Cole, Anglican Professor of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Alabama, is a respected Australian evangelical scholar, well-known to many *New Life* readers in his earlier teaching ministries as lecturer at Moore College and Principal of Ridley Melbourne. Though Dr Cole concludes that the doctrine of the Incarnation is not, as such, part of the Old Testament hope, he shows that the Old Testament provides essential preparation for the wondrous event of God joining the human race. I believe that Cole strikes the right balance, neither trying to get more out of the Old Testament than what is really there, nor thinking most of the Bible is largely irrelevant to the Christian doctrine of the God-man, Jesus Christ.



Cole outlines a carefully argued biblical theology, with the incarnation 'as the quintessential expression of divine presence in the midst of God's people' (p.22). The Old Testament describes a God who speaks, acts and feels as if He was embodied, though the Old Testament theophanies (appearances of God) do not amount to incarnation. Drawing on Norman Pittenger, Cole finds in the early chapters of *Genesis* the picture of God alongside His creatures (divine concomitance), such as His walk in the garden in *Genesis* 3.

In line with recent scholarship, Cole sees God in *Genesis* 1-2 building a cosmic temple, with the aim that humanity may dwell in His presence. That could suggest (but does not prove) that the Incarnation was part of God's plan from the beginning, whether or not sin arose to spoil creation. The Old Testament theophanies include Abraham's three visitors (*Genesis* 18), the figure who wrestled with Jacob (*Genesis* 32), Moses seeing God's 'back' (*Exodus* 32), Gideon's encounter with the 'angel of the Lord' (*Judges* 6), God's appearance to young Samuel (*1 Samuel* 3), and Isaiah's vision in the temple (*Isaiah* 6). None of these, however, are pre-incarnate appearances of Christ (Christophanies), though that approach has been championed by some Christians.

The Old Testament saints looked forward to the coming of God and the coming of the Messiah, but Cole is wise to resist the temptation of merging these two hopes, for no Old Testament text is explicit about a 'divine Messiah'. The truth of the Incarnation is a 'mystery' (the Apostle Paul's language) too stupendous to reveal until Jesus Himself came, He being the personal presence of God in human flesh (*1 Timothy* 3.16). The Old Testament provided essential background and preparation, making the incarnation intelligible when it occurred, but without itself containing the idea of incarnation. The persons of the Trinity are not individually discernible in the Old Testament, so we are not to find Jesus turning up in its pages, for this might undermine the uniqueness of the birth of the incarnate Son of God.

Cole provides a full and wide-ranging discussion of what the New Testament says in answer to the question: Why did God become a man? To be the ultimate and final revelation of God the Father, the perfect model of every human virtue, to die as substitute for sinners, to defeat humanity's great spiritual enemy, Satan, and to represent us as high priest – only the God-man could do these things.

Here, then, is a piece of sustained theological thinking on the most mysterious and most wonderful truth contained in Holy Scripture. Lest we fail to recognise the importance of this doctrine, Dr Cole shows that God's visit to our planet in the person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, shapes how we do theology, determining our view of God and His purposes for this world. The fact of the incarnation affirms that the created order is redeemable and speaks of the value of human beings as worth redeeming. It makes Christianity an exclusive religion and rules out of court any other religion as a way to God.

The problem of evil is addressed (but not solved) by the truth that God in Christ chose to suffer with and for the human race. The truth of the Incarnation, namely that God became human and did so in order to suffer and die, is the greatest demonstration and proof of God's love and goodness, leading to wonder, love and praise. We are grateful to Dr Cole for helping us to see this more clearly.

– Greg Goswell

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