

15 February 2014

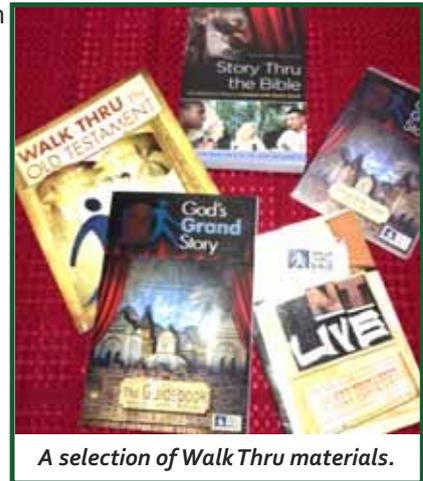
Vol 76 No 13

Free On Request: office@nlife.com.au

Walk Thru The Bible – Back, Up And Running!

MANY readers will remember the ministry of *Walk Thru The Bible*, which is now being relaunched after an absence from Australia of some years under the leadership of Pastor Al Watson as National Director. Al and his wife Judy have just returned from *Walk Thru's* global consultation in Atlanta, Georgia with the leaders of *Walk Thru* ministries in over 40 countries around the world.

The goal of *Walk Thru The Bible* is to ignite a passion for God's Word. It unpacks the Bible to enable readers to engage with it every day. 'As people's desire for God's Word grows deeper, their love for Him also grows deeper,' says Al, adding: 'Our goal for this year is to roll out the work state by state throughout Australia on the theme *God's Grand Story*. The campaign starts with an *Old Testament Live Event*, which is followed by a six-week program designed to involve the entire church community in discovering the grand story of the Bible.



A selection of Walk Thru materials.



Judy and Al Watson.

'People soon discover through the program the healthy habit of daily Bible reading and prayer. When people discover the big picture of the Bible they suddenly understand how all the parts are linked to each other and that the Bible has one great message – it's all about Jesus. The daily reading guide and notes revolve around a weekly theme and home groups provide a focus for discussion each week of the six-week program, with the pastor presenting the message on the topic for the week.' Pastor Watson says he is looking for churches to join *Walk Thru* as they roll out this exciting new campaign of building and strengthening Biblical literacy within the churches. The global roll-out is planned to start on 5 October next. To discuss with Al Watson how your church can participate, contact him at *Walk Thru The Bible*, email: biblewalk@icloud.com, phone: 0418 368 866 or by mail to PO Box 650, Dromana, Vic 3936.

TRY PRAYING – It Works

WHILE travelling through Edinburgh a bus stopped opposite another stationary bus and a woman noticed a *trypraying* advert on the side, prompting a wry smile. Three days a week she caught the bus for a long journey to the Borders to look after grandchildren. She also cared for her mother who was a stroke victim. For some time she had been hoping to move house nearer to her mother but the new set of flats to which she had applied had all been let. She was busy, tired and discouraged. Her bus moved on to the next stop where she saw it again: a *trypraying* banner on a church. She wondered if God was speaking to her. She decided to make her cry for help, 'God, I don't know where to start'.

Things began to change. Within a very short time a phone call from the letting agency said that a flat had unexpectedly become available. She moved in shortly afterwards. She decided to go back to church because although it was only a cry for help the day she prayed, she felt God had answered her prayer. When she went she was immediately greeted by someone she hadn't seen for years. She is now living in her lovely new flat, close to her mother's house, attending church, singing in the choir and helping with the children.

– *trypraying*, Scotland, <http://www.trypraying.co.uk/>

VOLUME 76
NUMBER 13

ISSUE DATE:
15 February 2014

ISSN: 1033-7903

FOUNDER:

Eric J. Daley
(1910-1992)

EDITOR:

Rev Bob Thomas
Phone: 0417 592 646
Email: editor@nlife.com.au

BUSINESS MANAGER:

Mignon Goswell
Phone: 0434 313 646
Email: office@nlife.com.au

POSTAL ADDRESS:

PO Box 457
Mitcham VIC 3132

WEB-SITE:

www.nlife.com.au

SUBSCRIPTION:

Free On Request

**ACCEPTANCE OF
ADVERTISING
DOES NOT IMPLY
ENDORSEMENT**

PUBLISHED BY:

New Life Australia Ltd

ABN: 15 005 035 138

**CONTRIBUTORS PLEASE
NOTE:**

New Life is archived by the National Library.
It is assumed that contributors agree with this arrangement and so are willing to be published on this basis.



Pray Early, Pray Often

PAKISTAN – Christians Devastated By Killing Of Preacher

FRIENDS of a popular Pakistani preacher killed by a hit-and-run driver suspect he may have been murdered because of his conversion from Islam. Rashid Mehmood, 33, came from a rich, influential Muslim family but turned to Christ in 2005. Though he trained as a lawyer, he decided to become a pastor and to preach the Gospel, despite strong opposition from his relatives.

He was riding pillion on a motorbike driven by another pastor friend on Boxing Day 2013 when a car began to chase them, then deliberately drove into Rashid. He suffered serious head injuries and died later in hospital, shortly after undergoing surgery.

Two days earlier, Rashid had preached about Jesus being the only true and living God and the embodiment of God's love, quoting from the Koran at some points. Release partners say Rashid was a role model for other Christians with a Muslim background and that his death 'broke people's hearts'.

Pray that God will comfort Rashid's church and strengthen their faith so they will continue his ministry by reaching out with boldness and love to their community. Thank God that Rashid followed Him wholeheartedly and his witness changed lives. Pray that Rashid's family will come to know Christ for themselves.

(Source: Release Partner)

For me, 2014 is going to be THE YEAR OF PRAYER FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS after reading the above and receiving this message from a highly respected friend and Christian leader in Egypt: '2013 has been a very difficult and memorable year! When President Mursi of The Muslim Brotherhood was forced to step down, Egyptians became very happy. It was a great relief. It was understood as a successful revolution of the people, supported by the army and the police! Somehow, the USA and some European countries looked upon it differently. This was beyond our comprehension. We are glad they seem to have come to understand matters better.

'The Muslim Brotherhood became very furious and very violent. No less than 20 Churches: Orthodox, Catholic and Evangelical were sacked and even burnt down. Many army and police officers and soldiers were murdered! Many people, Christian and Muslim, were killed! Riots continued stopping any country progress. 'We do need your prayers!'

There will be a world-wide *Day Of Prayer For Persecuted Christians* later in the year, but it will surely be a good thing for us to be as constant in our intercession as those in Heaven who 'triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.'

– Bob Thomas

MATTERS FOR PRAYER

Elizabeth Kendal Writes:

Participate In 'Big Picture' Issues By Prayer

THE Church is in the midst of a spiritual battle. While the decisive battle was won on the cross and victory is assured, a spiritual counter-offensive will continue until all Christ's enemies are under His feet and the Lord alone is exalted. Those who choose to sidestep this issue are not missing an optional element – they are missing the Big Picture! God is at work and the Church is the instrument of His working. As such, intercessory prayer for the persecuted Church – in prisons, labour camps, caves, safe houses and war zones – is an integral element of the spiritual battle. Therefore it should be an integral element of Church life and worship. Prayer is not passive; prayer is faith in action. [Please visit CriticalPrayerRequests.blogspot.com]

Syria, Iran And The Shi'ites

THE war in Syria is complex and multi-faceted, and a key element is Syria's strategic alliance with Iran, the arch-nemesis of Israel, the US and the Sunni Arabs. Iran is a highly strategic nation, historically, geographically, linguistically and culturally. The Islamic Revolution there has created widespread despair. Whilst drug addiction and childlessness are soaring, so too is the number of Iranian converts to Christianity. God is at work. Meanwhile, in Syria the rebels are fracturing, with some defecting to al-Qaeda and others to the government, horrified at the prospect of Syria being over-run by foreign jihadis. The Syrian Army has broken through the rebel siege of Aleppo and opened the main road into Hama. May God deliver Syria and Iran from evil and build His Church.

Myanmar's Constitution Obstructs Peace There

REPRESENTATIVES from Burma's various ethnic rebel armies came together in Myitkyina, Kachin State, on 4 November 2013 for two days of talks aimed at brokering a multilateral peace agreement with the regime. The parties have agreed in principle to sign a nationwide cease-fire and to establish a framework for political dialogue. The main obstacle to peace will be the 2008 constitution written by the military to serve the military's interests. It mandates centralisation while the long-marginalised and persecuted ethnic nations are seeking autonomy in a confederation. The army continues to wage war and commit gross human rights abuses and violence against the Christian Kachin as punishment for their resistance to Burmese-Buddhist exploitation. Talks will resume in December. Please pray for believers and that God will bring peace to Burma.

Crisis In South Sudan Could Open Door For Khartoum

THE crisis in South Sudan is no mere hiccup. The 15 December 2013 incident spiralled into widespread ethnic conflict there precisely because this crisis has its roots in decades of unresolved, festering ethnic tensions and in painful memories and wounds glossed over in the name of 'reconciliation'. Unless hostilities cease immediately, followed by honest reflection and healing, the new nation of South Sudan could disintegrate. Throughout 2013 Khartoum (Sudan) – struggling with its own economic and political crises – has been engaged in an unprecedented military build-up, clearly preparing for war. Chaos and ethnic fighting in South Sudan could open the door for Islamist Khartoum to seize control of South Sudan's oil fields. Please pray for the Church and for peace and reconciliation in South Sudan.

PLEASE PRAY THAT:

- *the Lord of Hosts will intervene to liberate Syria from those seeking to eliminate Christianity, impose Sharia Law and establish bases for terrorist operations and imperialistic Islamic jihad.*
 - *the Lord of Hosts will intervene to liberate Iran from the cleric-led regime that persecutes the Church and suppresses the hope-restoring, life-transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ.*
 - *the Lord will turn the hearts of South Sudan's leaders, changing their direction from self-interest to national interest; from personal power to peace; from revenge to healing; from personal glory to hope for the long-suffering citizens of South Sudan.*
- 'But You, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory and the lifter of my head.'* (Psalm 3:3)
- *For on-going participation in advocacy, aid and intercessory prayer, visit TurnBackTheBattle.com blogs and links.*



TURN BACK THE BATTLE: Isaiah Speaks to Christians Today.

With persecution escalating globally, **Elizabeth Kendal** calls us to revisit the prophecy of Isaiah, maintaining that Isaiah 1-39 provides an unambiguous treatise on how God's people are to respond to persecution, suffering and existential threat. For purchasing options, visit:

www.turnbackthebattle.com

'UNTO THE HILLS ...'

Greeting The New Year At Belgrave Heights Convention

IDEAL weather helped convention campers and day visitors to enjoy the modern amenities at Belgrave Heights New Year Convention. Twenty six families took advantage of the free camp-site offer for first-timers. It was encouraging to see more young people experiencing the blessings of great Bible teaching as well as warm Christian fellowship. The two speakers' messages were Spirit-filled, enthusiastic, inspiring, challenging and very thought-provoking.

Rory Shiner, with his wife Susan and four young sons travelled from WA. He is on the pastoral team at St Matthew's, Shenton Park, Perth. His Baptist parents are strong supporters of Keswick in WA. Rory commenced a BA in English and Anthropology at UWA and became involved with the Christian Union. During this time, Susan, on holidays from Sydney, stayed with Rory's parents at the Baptist camp. Twelve months later they recognized each other again, as they began training at Moore Theological College in Sydney.

Rory's great passion is to help people know the One they are rejecting because of complete ignorance. Now he is one of four pastors at a large inner-city church where many people are cynical and post-Christian. He is responsible for two congregations. The University group, with many international students, began with six students in the Shiner home. Now there are 60 attending, with lunch following the morning service. At night he ministers in the city church to young adults and city workers. He has also been ministering in the Solomon Islands as part of his involvement in Langham preaching. His series on *The Kingdom And Its King* were expositions from the book of Isaiah.

The Kingdom And Its People (Isaiah 1)

Isaiah mirrors the entire 66 books of the Bible. Chs. 1-39 predict the Assyrian army attacking Jerusalem, then withdrawing, leading up to judgment. In chs. 40-66 God's plan of salvation is revealed as well as anticipation of the new creation. New Testament theology is largely shaped by the canvas of Isaiah.

The Kingdom And Its God (Isaiah 6)

We need to beware of having too small a vision of God. Isaiah's vision of God is the heart and centre of his book. Isaiah looks at the fragile political circumstances yet sees the Ruler of all nations. Even though most of Israel will reject his message, God reveals to Isaiah that He has a plan.

The Kingdom And Its Message (Isaiah 40)

Israel is captive in Babylon. Their sins are paid for. God is comforting His people as they anticipate their return to the Promised Land along the massive straight highway that will be built across the rocky desert between Babylon and Israel. Here is a picture of John the Baptist preparing the way for the Lord. God now gives the exiles a bigger vision of His compassion, strength and power.

The Kingdom And Its servant (Isaiah 41.1-42:9)

God has gathered the nations to reason, to think and to make judgment. They have all yielded to King Cyrus. But Israel is the tiny nation God has elected to solve the problem! Israel is in exile, like a camp of refugees with no king, no land, no army. Yet Israel has God. The nations' idols are useless. They cannot predict the future or even speak to their followers. But God's Servant will bring justice to the nations.

The Kingdom And Its Competitors (Isaiah 44.1-23)

The life of faith is not an add-on, but an alternative life-style. We must choose between God and idols.

The Kingdom And Its Sin-Bearer (Isaiah 52.13-53)

Isaiah chapters 40-55 are *Servant Songs* showing there is promise and hope after exile. Blessing will come to every nation through God's Servant. The Servant's destiny was to give up all He had, so that we could have what He gave up! The Servant's path was one of pain and rejection. The Servant's purpose was to suffer for the sins of mankind. The Servant will be exalted to the highest position in Heaven because He was faithful in His suffering.

The Kingdom And Its Lifestyle (Isaiah 58.1-14)

Will this year be better than the last? Will we draw closer to God through Bible reading, quiet times, fasting, fellowship? Israel had tried all these methods and failed. They still needed to learn to live for God. Isaiah is speaking to the redeemed, the restored, the renewed and forgiven. Yet they still needed the work of sanctification in their lives. They were religious, but still rebellious. Their attitude was wrong. They needed to have compassion for the needy, to care for widows and orphans, to offer water to the thirsty ... and not to grow weary in doing good!

– Barbie Prout ('Mrs D.P.')



Left to right: Ian Hamilton (Vice Chair BHC), Rory Shiner, David Price (Chair BHC).

MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF TODAY

DON CARSON: 'Partner With Us In The Cause Of Theological Famine Relief!'

LAST August I had the privilege of speaking at a conference for pastors organized by our brother Conrad Mbewe in Zambia. Together we enjoyed a wonderful time in the Word and fellowship. I also learned that The Gospel Coalition International Outreach had arranged to send a copy of *The God Who Is There* to every pastor in attendance.

My travels during the last 15 months have reinforced four long-held convictions:

FIRST, No Language Has As Many Biblical Resources As The English Language.

The strength of its holdings is the product of many providential events. However, there is no reason for English speakers to feel proud of this bountiful inheritance; rather, to whom much has been given, much is required.

SECOND, There Are Languages That Serve Hundreds Of Millions Of People (eg Chinese, Hindi And Arabic). These languages have very few solid Christian resources.

This is even truer for less prominent trade and tribal languages. Skilled translation is greatly needed.

THIRD, The Digital Revolution Is Upon Us. It is possible to distribute excellent materials all over the world.

FOURTH, Many People Of The World Are Too Poor To Own Computers, Or Are Without Reliable Internet Access.

For the poorest, for the rural, for the least advantaged, there is no substitute for books. Our privilege at The Gospel Coalition is to deploy trustworthy English resources wherever possible to help equip the global church. We address the second point by working with a variety of translators to make more material available in more languages. There are also gifted pastors and theologians within these language groups who have risen to produce their own resources. We work to distribute these as well.

TGC is one of several ministries experiencing phenomenal growth in the digital distribution arena. Even where some countries have blocked our site, end users often smile and tell us they know how to 'climb the wall.' As global access grows, the web will continue to be a critical tool. And for those technology-deprived regions, TGC International Outreach labours to provide books in accessible languages—at no cost to the end user. God has given us all of these strategic means of spreading sound, biblical teaching around the world. I would like to invite you to partner with us in this cause of Theological Famine Relief. Please prayerfully consider sending a one-time gift, or better yet, joining with us through monthly support. I want to express my deep gratitude to our many partners and supporters around the world. Thank you for all you've done this past year to link arms with us in our joint mission to spread the Gospel to the nations.

— Don Carson, President, The Gospel Coalition, www.thegospelcoalition.org



Senior Pastor Required For Bright Church Of Christ

The Bright Church of Christ has a community of 80 regular members, meeting in its own worship building with a hall for other activities in the heart of Bright, a significant tourist town in North Eastern Victoria.

Our growing ministry to all demographic age groups, including a growing ministry to families, would suit an enthusiastic and energetic pastor with a heart for outreach.

We want to grow the church and build on our healthy nucleus of young families and youth who attend the church.

We are looking for a person with a strong call to build on the existing foundation.

The position offers a three or four day a week with the potential to grow out to full time.

Could suit a younger person currently employed as a youth pastor.

A salary with a generous allowance package is offered to the right person who hears the call of God to minister in one of the most beautiful parts of Victoria.

Expressions of interest should be made to:

John Atkins, admin@brightchurchofchrist.org.au

or for more information please call John on 0438 050 475.

Applications close 7 March 2014.

HERE TO HELP

'LIVING STILL'

'Let not Jesus be a shadow to you or your religion will be unsubstantial; let Him not be a name to you or your religion will be nominal; let Him not be a myth of history or your religion will be mere fancy; let Him be not alone a teacher or you will lack a Saviour; let Him be not alone an exemplar or you will fail to appreciate the merit of His blood; let Him be the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, the all in all of your spirits.'

- C.H Spurgeon

**WHO CAN YOU
FORWARD
NEW LIFE TO?**

New Edition Of *PWMU Cookbook* Launched

IT'S ecumenical (a joint venture of the Presbyterian and Uniting Churches, and people of all denominations and none have bought it and used it); evangelical (Rev John Wilson, Clerk of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria's General Assembly, says 'it's a practical arm of Christian mission as it's been a witness in homes all across the country since 1904'); it's probably the best-selling Australian Presbyterian publication of all time; it's now available in a thoroughly revised and revamped edition – it's the *PWMU Cookbook*!



Mrs Elizabeth Chernov (left) and Dr Mairi Harman.

Photo credit: Helen Beeby.

On Thursday 5 December 2013 Mrs Elizabeth Chernov launched the latest edition of the *PWMU Cookbook*. Over 100 people attended the special event at which the Rev John Wilson, convener of the Cookbook Committee, welcomed everyone, particularly Mrs Chernov, Rev David Palmer (Moderator, PCV), and Mr Dan Wootton (Moderator, UCA).

John Wilson said that the money raised through sales is used for the work of mission in both Presbyterian and Uniting Churches.

Mrs Chernov sees the *PWMU Cookbook* as trans-generational, as it is well used by all family members. 'Cooking is such a vital part of our culture,' she said, 'and needs to be encouraged, now that so many people opt to eat out rather than prepare food at home. The recipes are tried and tested, easy to understand and include helpful tips.'

The efforts of the hard-working Cookbook Committee were recognized, in particular those of the editor, Dr Mairi Harman, who acknowledged the help she had received from her fellow Committee members and from her husband, Very Rev Prof Alan Harman.

At the conclusion of the very enjoyable morning Mrs Chernov and Dr Harman were presented with flowers. The morning tea that was enjoyed included many items cooked from recipes in the book, and during this time most attendees took the opportunity to purchase copies of the *PWMU Cookbook* as well as *From Suet To Saffron*, a history of the *PWMU Cookbook*, by Fiona Bligh.

The *PWMU Cookbook* can be ordered from Presbyterian Church of Victoria and the Uniting Church of Australia, Victorian Synod Office.

– Susan Garner

HOW TO BUILD BRIDGES TO BUDDHISTS

Building Bridges With Buddhists On Our Doorstep

'INVITE Buddhists to your home and have a cup of tea – that's the starting point for reaching Buddhists living in Australia for Christ', said international speakers Dr Kang-San Tan and his wife Loun Ling Lee at the CMS Summer School Conference at Tamborine, Qld, last January. 'They won't be offended if you share what you believe, as long as you don't push it down their throat. Let God enter into the dialogue. As John Stott says, it needs to be a two-way conversation where I'm willing to listen and learn and share.'

Ms Lee explained that in Buddhism, sin is something a person has done that hurts another living being. It is not a violation of God's law. As a result, the consequences are not God's punishment but cause and effect, such as living as a lower being or the shame of not meeting social expectations.

'I grew up in Buddhism and rejected it. To be Thai or Burmese or Cambodian is to be Buddhist; it's unthinkable that you would deny your culture and identity,' said Dr Tan. 'My mum cried for days and days when I became a Christian. But I'm no less Thai or Chinese. 'Asian Christians especially need to develop an "insider perspective" with the confidence of the Gospel. This means engaging with the whole community instead of taking a western individualistic approach.'

Ms Lee explained that amongst modern Chinese people there is a deep need for love. 'They want to see a faith that works, demonstrated through relationships of trust,' she said. 'Openness and honesty grow with relationships: if I can trust you, I can trust your God.'

Buddhists make up approximately 400 million people or 7% of the world's population. It is the dominant religion of Australia's near neighbours in South East Asia: the national religion of Cambodia (83%), majority religion in Thailand (85%), Burma (80%), Laos (57%) and Vietnam (52%). 'However, Buddhism is not just something on the mission field,' Dr Tan says. 'Many western young people are attracted to Buddhism, so churches need to teach about it and understand what is attracting Australians to it. Some are attracted because they want to know how to live a peaceful life in a stressful world, but many of these resources are also found in the Bible.'

Recognised as the fastest-growing religion in the western world, Buddhism now has 529,000 affiliates in Australia with many more people 'dipping into' Buddhism through books, meditation classes, and public lectures by visiting monks. This presents great Gospel opportunities and challenges for Christians and churches in Australia. As Dr Tan said, 'Mission is on our doorstep.'



Loun Ling Lee, Kang-San Tan with Rev Jeremy Gehrman, General Secretary of CMS Qld with Northern NSW.

**Do You Still Enjoy Reading
Hard Copy Books?
Try Browsing At:**

**New Life Books & Archaeology,
44 Dublin Road,
Ringwood East.**

**Monday–Saturday, 10am–2pm
Thursdays, 9am–4pm**

'Pre-Loved Christian Literature'

Dr Kang-San Tan is the Executive Director for AsiaCMS. He was previously Head of Mission Studies at Redcliffe College, UK, and held leadership positions in OMF for 15 years. He is a consultant for World Evangelical Alliance and the Lausanne Movement on interfaith issues and has written extensively on indigenous Asian mission movements, Asian theology, Islam and Buddhism.

Loun Ling Lee serves as the Training Director of AsiaCMS. She was formerly a lecturer and director of Asian Studies at Redcliffe College, UK. Prior to that she spent five years as a pastor at Grace Singapore Chinese Church and 19 years with OMF as a mission mobiliser and trainer.

For more resources and information from CMS about engaging with Buddhists, visit www.cms.org.au/buddhism or contact qld@cms.org.au or (07) 3112 6530. For information about AsiaCMS, visit www.asiacms.net

WITH CHRIST ... BETTER BY FAR



Best-Selling Artist Of All Time Leaves Lasting Legacy For The Bible.

ANNIE VALLOTTON, illustrator of the iconic images in American Bible Society's *Good News Bible*, died in France on 28 December 2013 at the age of 98. The publisher HarperCollins has identified Vallotton as the best-selling artist of all time, thanks largely to the success of the *Good News Bible*, of which more than 225 million copies have been distributed since its release as *Good News For Modern Man* in 1966.

Vallotton, who was born in Lausanne, Switzerland, dedicated her life to finding ways to share the Bible's message in a clear, simple way. In addition to the *Good News Bible*, Vallotton illustrated other Christian books, including *Who Are You Jesus?* and *From The Apple To The Moon*.

'I did some of the drawings [for the *Good News Bible*] 80-90 times before I achieved the one I wanted,' Vallotton said in a 2008 interview. 'I wanted to get to the truth ... the most important thing.' Her artwork is still featured in American Bible Society's *Good News Bible*.

FREDERICK JOHN RIDLEY SMITH. Well-known Sydney architect Ridley Smith was called Home on 22 December 2013. During the course of a career that has spanned ten countries, Ridley Smith has designed prisons, hospitals, schools, universities, courthouses and hundreds of churches. He designed the governor's suite (now heritage-listed) in the Reserve Bank Head Office in Sydney, and he turned Royal Randwick Racecourse, Sydney, into 'a cathedral' for the Billy Graham Crusade in 1979, when 300,000 Australians flocked to hear the claims of Christ. Several of Ridley's projects have received prestigious awards, and tributes about his work in Third World countries continue to pour in. Yet he had an especially intriguing connection with a now historic project that was completed 29 years ago in Sydney Square.



The first link to that project came when Ridley was at Sydney University and attended St Barnabas' Church, Broadway. He clearly remembers a short, unimpressive-looking man speaking powerfully. The man was Arthur Stace, whose one-word message, 'Eternity', would later be incorporated into Sydney's history. Ridley had no inkling then that he would be instrumental in literally setting that message in stone—a powerful legacy for any architect.

About the time of Arthur Stace's death, the area between Sydney's St Andrew's Cathedral and the Town Hall was about to be redeveloped and Ridley Smith was the appointed architect. He wanted to incorporate a cast inscription of the word Eternity in the paving at the bottom of the wall of water which he had included in his plans for the sunken terrace area of what would be known as Sydney Square. The Sydney City Council approved his idea.

Ridley Smith's cast aluminium inscription of the word, 'Eternity', was installed at the foot of the wall of water in Sydney Square in 1976, and with deep satisfaction he photographed it. Despite changes in Sydney Square, the plaque remains and is a powerful physical and spiritual reminder of our heritage.

— Irene Voysey

Minister's Library Available For Free

REV Wally Johnson has recently retired as minister of Balranald (NSW) Presbyterian Church and has moved into his own home at Balranald. He asks if anyone knows any Mission Group which could use the library. The books will be packed. All that is needed is to come and get them, the only cost being petrol – Balranald is 500 km from Melbourne, Sydney or Adelaide. Mr Johnson's email address is: johnsonsrus29we@gmail.com

ENGAGING YOUTH FOR GOSPEL TEACHING

Engage '14 Youth Leaders Conference – 'Practical, Helpful And Real'

THE second ever *Engage Youth Leaders Conference* was held at Belgrave Heights Convention Centre over the Australia Day weekend, when 110 conference delegates from Anglican, Presbyterian and Baptist churches in Tasmania and Victoria joined together for three days to hear the Bible taught and learn how to teach the Bible better themselves.

Shane Rogerson, Minister at St Matthews Anglican Church in Prahran delivered four talks from the *Book Of Psalms*. Everyone appreciated his honesty and openness as he talked – addressing the excitement, satisfaction, but also the realities and challenges of the Christian walk. Through Psalm 42 for instance, Shane explored 'spiritual dryness' and how God works in a believer's life during these times. Through Psalm 73, Shane spoke about the reality that even as Christians, we still doubt what we know to be true about God. We looked at the experience of the psalmist – an inspired writer – who still struggled in his faith. He took us through this Psalm to reach an understanding of the reality of God and how He can work through doubt to enable us to grow in our faith.

The *Engage* conference featured three main parts: strand groups, workshops and Bible talks. The talks not only teach about God, but they model for us how to teach the Bible well. The real heart of *Engage*, however, is the strand groups where we learnt how to teach the Gospel to others. Strand groups run on a three-year cycle. In strand one, we learn how to prepare and present a New Testament Bible study, in strand two, an Old Testament Bible Study, and in strand three, a topical Bible Study.

Being my second year, I took part in strand two and spent four sessions reading, learning and talking about Psalm 2. This Psalm speaks of a king who will rule over the whole world. Over the three days we delved into the themes of Old Testament kingship and grappled with what this Psalm might mean for believers and non-believers today living in the time after Jesus' life, death and resurrection. At the end of the three days, we presented individual Bible studies on the Psalm tailored to the particular audience we would work with in our own youth ministry settings.

I walked away from *Engage* refreshed and encouraged in my walk with Christ because each aspect of *Engage* models how to make Christ known in a real and helpful way – from the talks and even through to song-leading. *Engage* is a conference where the good news of Jesus is preached and it is exciting to see the way it is innovating and changing the face of leadership training for churches in Australia. One delegate's comments summed up the conference well: 'This conference has been practical, helpful and real. Bring on *Engage '15!*'

– Katherine Goswell



Participants in Engage '14, Shane Rogerson lower left.

COMING TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA?

Come to Scots Church, Fremantle,
90 South Terrace
(next to Fremantle Markets)
Reformed and Evangelical
10am and 5pm Sundays
12:30 pm Wednesday Lunch Time
Worship

Also at Southern River,
Bletchley Park Primary School,
Balfour Road
9am Sunday
Rev Stuart Bonnington
08 9398 1304
melbonn@bigpond.com

**If You Search For
Second-Hand Books Online,
Try: www.newlifebooks.info**

GOOD NEWS FROM ABROAD

'Christians Stalwart Amid Deadly Violence' – SAT-7

EVEN in peril, Christians continue to grow in the image of Christ. A small filming crew from SAT-7 Egypt, a Christian satellite television ministry to the Middle East and North Africa, went to great personal risk when they stepped off the plane in Baghdad a few months ago. Public safety has deteriorated so much in Iraq that only priests and diplomats are allowed to meet arrivals at the airport. There are cement blocks in front of churches, schools, police stations, and hospitals to prevent car bombers from driving into them. Still, millions of Iraqi Christians remain in their homeland, known in the Bible as Babylon. The witness Christians provide amid this deadly violence is outstanding. The SAT-7 crew captured footage of street life in Baghdad, local Christians sharing testimony, and a worship service at Unity Church. Their goal was to show how Iraqi Christians live in the midst of dire circumstances.

Powerful Testimonies

A minister was driving the church bus alone after taking members home from worship service. Suddenly an assailant in another car pulled alongside him and detonated a bomb. The explosion sent burnt pieces of the bus flying. Miraculously, the only part of the bus that survived was the driver's seat where the minister was seated. He had a few minor scratches, but was otherwise unharmed. Another Iraqi believer testified that he and his brother were feuding for seven years. After noticing many explosions happening around the country, he came to Christ and forgave his brother. At a family wedding, the two restored their broken relationship. These testimonies model faith and obedience for the millions watching SAT-7 in Iraq and throughout the Middle East.

Filming conditions in Baghdad were challenging. Because Iraqi police are routinely targeted by insurgents in violent attacks, it is illegal to photograph police or checkpoints. But many police respect the Church and are willing to protect them. One group of policemen even asked the filming crew to pray with them. The filming crew and the police prayed together right there in the street.

SAT-7 is well respected in Iraq. The filming crew asked people in the street if they watch SAT-7 and found that many do. SAT-7 is on the television screen at many restaurants. Research reveals that one in three Iraqi children is watching *SAT-7 KIDS*. Some Iraqi viewers have shared that TV is a critical source of biblical teaching and encouragement when it is unsafe to venture outside the home. This filming experience will hopefully lead to more opportunities for SAT-7 to minister to Iraqis. Pray that God will strengthen and bless the Church in Iraq. – Julie Oosterhouse



We're Counting On YOU! YOUR Donations Keep Us Going!

Going on-line has breathed new life Into *New Life*.
Being able to send it free on request by email has opened
our ministry up to everyone, everywhere, who wants to receive it.

BUT We **DO** have expenses **AND**

The generous donations of members of the *New Life* family
DO make the difference between the red ink and the black!

PLEASE CONSIDER MAKING A DONATION:

By Cheque To: New Life, PO Box 457, Mitcham 3132 Vic.

By Direct Deposit To: Account Name: New Life Australia Ltd.

Bank: Westpac. BSB: 033-112. Account Number: 16-8239.

(Please send an email to office@nlife.com.au when you direct deposit).

By Email: using the *Make A Donation* button
on our website (www.nlife.com.au)

PERSECUTION WATCH

Islamic Extremists Likely Killed Pastor In Mombasa, Kenya, For Christian Activities

SUSPECTED Islamic extremists likely killed a church leader in Mombasa last week for sharing his faith near a mosque and alerting authorities to security threats, sources said. According to *Morning Star News*, in the Majengo area of the coastal city where leaders at the Masjid Musa Mosque were suspected of training violent jihadists, the suspects on the night of 2 February killed 59-year-old Lawrence Kazungu Kadenge, an assistant pastor at Glory of God Ministries Church.

Area Christians believe hard-line Muslims were upset at Kadenge for evangelizing near the mosque and for informing authorities about security threats. Police said gunfire from the mosque was directed at them before they fired live rounds and tear gas in the assault on the site. Some youths reportedly raised the black flag of Somalia-based terrorist organization Al Shabaab at the mosque that day.

'We as the pastors in Mombasa are living in fear because pastors are being eliminated one by one,' said a Christian leader, speaking on condition of anonymity for security reasons. 'We need prayers that the church will survive these attacks as we are being targeted by the radical Muslims.'

A Mombasa police official, Henry Ondieki, reportedly said Muslim youths had distributed leaflets on jihad at the mosque, long suspected of being a recruitment site for terrorist organizations. 'This is not a mosque for prayers but a base for recruiting Muslim youths to engage in terrorist activities,' *Morning Star News* reported Ondieki told the *Daily Nation*. On Oct. 19, suspected Islamic extremists in Mombasa killed Pastor Charles "Patrick" Matole of Vikwanti Redeemed Gospel Church following riots associated with the same mosque. Matole had received death threats.

The murder came a few weeks after rioting in Mombasa by Muslims enraged at the killing of Sheikh Ibrahim Omar and three others on a road near Mombasa.

– *Jeremy Reynolds, ASSIST News Service*

Slaughter In Sudan

SCORES of female church workers were massacred last month as they sought refuge at a church in the central South Sudanese town of Bor. The women, several of whom were elderly, had fled rebel attacks to hide in St Andrew's Episcopal Church compound when rebels descended on them, raping several of them before shooting them at close range. Five of the women worked as pastors in the church. Since the conflict erupted, several churches have been attacked and looted, and pastors harassed.

In Malakal, the St Francis Catholic Church compound was attacked and looted in mid-January, and the priest robbed. The local Anglican and Evangelical churches were also looted. The most affected areas are the north-eastern states of Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile. Bor, the headquarters of Jonglei State, was totally destroyed, with houses, food stores, shops, banks and churches burnt down and looted.

Syria Crisis Becoming Generational

THE plight of children caught in the crossfire of the Syrian civil war makes for hard stories. What it amounts to is thousands of stolen childhoods. Without intervention, these refugees will suffer for a lifetime. Kids Alive International is standing in the gap in Lebanon.

'Mass Exodus' Of Ethnic Christians Amid Warnings Of Genocide In Nigeria

A REPORT from Nigeria tells of a 'mass exodus' of a mainly Christian ethnic group. Stefanos Foundation reported that the Attakar people are moving en masse after security forces told them they could not guarantee their safety. The Attakar live in the border areas straddling Kaduna and Plateau states in central Nigeria and have suffered intense persecution at the hands of Fulani militants. Stefanos is calling on the Government to intervene in a situation which it fears might lead to 'genocide'.

– *Stefanos Foundation, Morning Star News*

Who Can YOU
Forward
New Life To?

WANTED

Robinvale Church of Christ

is seeking a Part Time Minister.
Robinvale is a vibrant multicultural community on the Murray River surrounded by a broad range of horticultural industries.

'The harvest truly is plenteous but the labourers are few.' (Matthew 9.37)

Accommodation is available.

For further information and enquiry contact:

Josh Boram: 0409 977 636

End Of An Era—MAF Retires Cessna 206 Workhorse

FOR over 46 years, MAF Cessna 206's have served the remote people of PNG taking in medical and education staff to isolated communities, performing medical evacuations, transporting building materials where no roads go, and taking out produce from market gardens and other cash crops. That era came to an end as MAF pilots Brad Ballin, Harold Hall and Rick Velvin did a commemorative fly-by over the airport then Mt Hagen town before heading south to Australia.



MAF purchased their first Cessna 206 in 1967. It had two main advantages over the Cessna 185's they replaced: they were turbocharged, which made a huge difference in carrying capacity and safety in Highlands operations, and they were a lot easier to load with their big side cargo door.

Larry Nicholson, MAF's Chief Engineer, reported: 'In 1987 MAF reached our maximum number of 206's at one time with 15 aircraft. Several of our 206's have done 20,000 hours of flying in PNG. These aircraft have served the missions and churches well for many years and are now being withdrawn from service in PNG, mainly due to maintenance issues with the aging aircraft. Many prayers followed the planes as the three were tracked during the day on MAF's satellite tracker, 'IndigoTrack'.

It was a sad day for the pilots, the many passengers who had spent time in the old workhorses, and the whole MAF family, but a significant one in the history of MAF-PNG. 'Although they are only chunks of metal', Rick Velvin prayed before take-off, 'they have been tools given to us by the Lord for His work, and He has blessed them for His Kingdom. His work has not finished, so we pick up different tools and keep going.' MAF-PNG now has a different workhorse in the form of the Gippsland Aviation GA8 Airvan, so a new episode begins, but definitely this was the end of an era.

— *Flying For Life*

2014 Christian Media Australia (CMA) Awards

ARE you involved in Christian Media or know someone who is? Look at these awards: *CMA CONNECT Awards*. Nominations are open until 28 February for these three new awards for broadcasters being introduced this year as part of a new initiative of CMA Connect: *Outstanding Newcomer*, *Most Valuable Person* and *Best Program*. For more information go to: <http://christianmedia.org.au/cma-connect-awards-2014/>

Australia Day Honours

THE former Principal of Deaconess House in Sydney, Ms Margaret Rodgers was made a Member of the Order Of Australia (AM) for 'significant service to the Anglican Church of Australia through governance and representational roles, and to ecumenical affairs'.

Ms Rodgers was the Principal of Deaconess House, Newtown between 1976 and 1985. She later served as the CEO of Anglican Media and Archbishop's media officer. She was also a regular commentator for the NSW Council of Churches on Radio 2CH.

Dr Tim Hawkes, Headmaster of The Kings School (Sydney) was

awarded the Medal of the Order Of Australia (OAM) for 'service to education, and to professional organisations'.

— www.sydneyanglicans.net

Bibles For Victims Of Philippines Typhoon

BIBLE League International is working in partnership with Action International Ministries to provide 5,000 Tagalog New Testaments and 25,000 Cebuano New Testaments to be distributed through local churches to those who have lost their Bibles in the typhoon and to anyone who would like a copy of the Scriptures.

In dark and difficult times it is only the Word of God that can bring true inner peace and hope. The cost of providing the 30,000 New Testaments is \$27,500. If you would like to donate to this ministry of the Bible League, phone 1800 800 937 or go to their website: www.bl.org.au

Prestige Pianos & Organs

35
YEARS
Since 1973

102 Bell Street, Preston, Victoria 3072 (MELWAY REF 31 B2)

- The largest range of new and reconditioned pianos, organs, keyboards and digital pianos
- The best advice in selecting your next instrument

Phone: (03) 9480 6777

www.prestigepianos.com.au



HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE ... *With Mignon Goswell*

Changes At Brisbane School Of Theology

BRISBANE School of Theology recently appointed Rev Dr Richard Gibson to the position of Principal. Dr Gibson brings 20 years of theological teaching experience, lecturing at Moore College, Sydney, in New Testament and Church History. Dr Gibson will commence in his new role as Principal on 1 July 2014. In another change at BST the Rothwell Campus will no longer be a campus for BST from this year. BST is grateful for the three years of good relationship they have had with everyone at the Rothwell Campus. bst.qld.edu.au

TEAR Fund Helps Women Lift Health Standards

THE Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund is helping women in Kenya to bring about change after being involved with a project by TEAR's partner Anglican Development Services North Rift in Kenya. With training, they have built their own latrines, and are putting into practice their learning about other important sanitation issues, including hand washing, to help reduce disease and keep their families healthy. Lynne Knight from TEAR's partner Family Impact in Zimbabwe, will travel to Australia to speak at *For Tomorrow* launches around the country next month. www.tear.org.au

Music! Music! Music! At Cong's Youth Camp

THE English Congregation at Padstow Chinese Congregational Church held its second NEXUS Summer

Youth Conference from Thursday 2 January to Saturday 4 January. The speaker was Trevor Hodge (Music Pastor at Kirkplace Presbyterian Church, Kogarah) and the theme was: *Worship*. Trevor presented three talks: *What Is Worship?/Worship As All Of Life*, *What Should Happen When We Meet Together?* and *The Importance And Function Of Music In Worship*. He also led a practical music workshop that provided guidance for instrumentalists, song leaders and congregational members.

– *Fellowship Of Congregational Churches*

New Building Launch For Christ College, Sydney:

New Name, New Building, Same College, Same Story
THE Presbyterian Theological Centre in



Sydney has a new name to go with the new buildings at 1 Clarence St, Burwood. Christ College will be officially opening its new facilities on Friday 21 February at 7pm for an official start, with tours from 6.30pm. To assist with event management you can register for this launch on the Christ College website: www.christcollege.edu.au

96threeFM

Today's Christian Music, Inspiring Talk
www.96three.com.au
Phone: 03 5241 6550
Email: listen@96three.com.au

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 contacting Ramon Williams,
e-mail: rlgmedia@ozemail.com.au

YOU CAN ADVERTISE HERE.

BOOK-BROWSING THERAPY IS OUR SPECIALTY!

All Categories Of Christian Books!
44 Dublin Road, Ringwood East
Mon-Sat, 10-2; Thursdays, 9-4
www.newlifebooks.info

Knowing God's Plan

(Read Romans 6.1-14)

FOR REFLECTION:
What does it mean for you to have eternal life (6.10)? See John 17.3. How does this section help you resist temptation?

PAUL anticipates the big question: Since grace increases to cover sin (5.20), why not sin more so that God's grace increases even more? If God sees us perfect because of the work of Jesus, why worry about sin?

Paul responds to any thinking that encourages a slack attitude to sin with 'By no means!' (v.2). He goes on to tell us why we are to be holy.

We are to be holy because we died with Christ. His death was a proxy death for us. We were with Him on the cross, with Him in the tomb, and with Him in His resurrection (vv.3,4). When Christ died for sin, we died to sin. Baptism, Paul says, is a constant reminder of our participation in Christ's death and resurrection. Union with Jesus is the key to our justification and holiness.

When we died with Christ, we died to sin. Sin did not die; rather our physical body, which sin used as its instrument, was taken out of gear (v.6).

Conversely, we have been raised with Christ to a new life (vv.4,5,8). This new life is never ending (v.9). Qualitatively, it is a life lived in knowledge of God and in reverence for Him (v.10).



Significantly, to this point in the letter, Paul has not given one command. When it comes to justification, we have no contribution to make, so nothing can be commanded of us. But in vv. 11-14, he gives a number of orders.

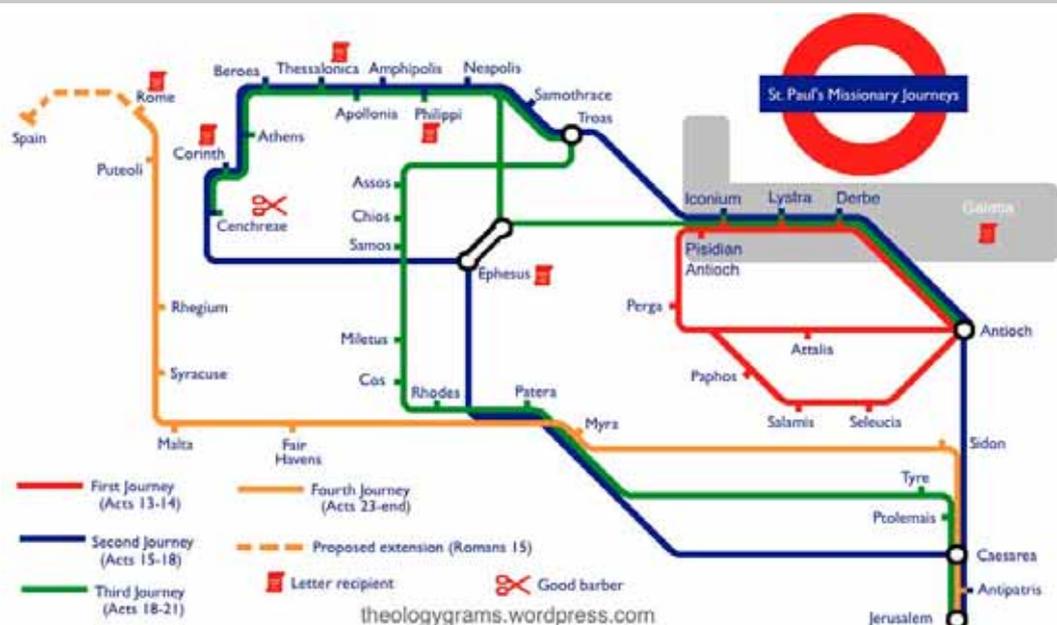
The first (v.11), is attitudinal. We are to make the same calculation about ourselves as God has made about us; that is, that we are dead to sin and alive to God. As God sees us, so we are to see ourselves. Then (v.12), we do not let sin reign over us. Next (v.13), we do not keep going to sin's temple to make offerings there. Rather (v.13), we commit ourselves once and for all to God's lordship. The reason for this is that we live in a relationship not ruled by observing law, or by earning merit. We live in an unconditional, undeserved relationship of grace.

The key to holiness is to recognise our solidarity with Christ and to stop sinning. As we resist temptation, God will help us to resist it (see Philippians 2.12,13).

Content taken from 'Romans: Momentous News' by David Cook, published by 10Publishing, used with permission.

SEEN ON FACEBOOK:

WHERE were our modern-day transport designers when Paul needed them?



VIEWPOINT ...

Senate Rejects Greens' Push To Dump Lord's Prayer From Federal Parliament

THE Australian Christian Lobby has welcomed the Senate's decision to reject the Green's push to dump the Lord's Prayer from parliament. ACL's Managing Director Lyle Shelton said the motion by Senator Richard Di Natale was rejected in the Senate on 13 February. Mr Shelton said the opening of each parliamentary day with the Lord's Prayer recognised Australia's cultural heritage.

'The Christian ethos underpinning western civilisation has fostered free and prosperous societies, including our liberal democracy,' he said. 'It's disappointing that Senator Di Natale wanted to take away something of Australia's cultural heritage'. Mr Shelton rejected comments by Senator Di Natale that faith should be a private matter. 'Every day people bring ideas to the workplace, charities, hospitals and even parliament, formed by their values and beliefs,' he said. 'The ideas emanating from the Christian faith – including those of what it means to promote human flourishing – are an important contribution in debating how best to order society. Our democracy would be poorer if ideas emanating from any particular faith were suddenly excluded from the contest of ideas.'

Why I Love An Evening Service – challies.com

'Of all the casualties the Church has suffered in recent decades, I wonder if many will have longer-lasting consequences than the loss of the evening service. There was a time, not so long ago, when many or even most ...

RECENTLY I posted a link to the above blog-site in Facebook. I was glad to see a number of 'Likes' to this link, and I'll tell you why. Despite low attendance, we persist with an evening service at The Faith Factory (aka St Kilda Presbyterian Church). A few weeks ago a man drove from one of the far western suburbs of Melbourne to attend our 7pm service – a lonely soul who sat at the back but later said he was greatly encouraged for having come. Why did he come to TFF? Because he could find no other church with an evening service.

Next Sunday was a 'Melbourne Stinker' at 39°. With several regulars on holidays or telling me they wouldn't be there at 7pm because of the heat, and my own propensity to turn to melted butter above 33.3°, I had been tempted to cancel the evening service. But as I've said over and over again, as sure as you cancel a service, someone turns up from afar or who hasn't been before etc, etc. So we began – all six of us (well down from our usual 10 or 12). And – you guessed it – just as we finished the first hymn, in walked my man of the previous week from afar. Sat further forward this week, listened intently, talked a while longer afterward, thanked us profusely for giving him a Bible the week before, told us he'd begun to read it, took a copy of RBC *Daily Bread* and promised to come back next week. Same story last week: a 'Melbourne Stinker', many away etc – but there he was again. Sat nearer the front, drank it all in, stayed for supper, engaged in long conversation lamenting not only the scarcity of evening services but the lack of sound Biblical teaching in the Church today.

That's the second reason why I have an evening service: for every ninety and nine who safely lay watching television, there is one needing to be found by the Good Shepherd; the first reason, of course, is that such a Great God as ours who has done so much for us deserves to be praised in the morning and in the evening of the day. Oh, and before anyone who doesn't have an evening service thinks: 'Only seven at the St Kilda evening service', I hate to be unkind, but it's seven more than weren't at the evening service you didn't have (to paraphrase D.L. Moody). To those whose evening services are better attended: God bless you. To everyone: YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A CHURCH GROWTH EXPERT FOR YOUR CHURCH TO GROW; JUST HOLD AN EVENING SERVICE. PLEASE. – *Bob Thomas*

VISITING MELBOURNE?

You're welcome at *The Faith Factory*: St Kilda Presbyterian Church,
Cnr Alma Rd/Barkly St. Every Sunday 11am & 7pm;
Living Stones Korean Presbyterian Church. Every Sunday 12.30pm;
St Margaret's, Balaclava, Cnr Hotham St/Denman Rd. Every Sunday 9.30am.
Minister: Rev Bob Thomas 0417 592 646

You're Welcome At The Faith Factory
– A Friendly, Caring, Bible-Believing Christian Fellowship –



BOOKS WORTH READING

JOHN CALVIN, SERMONS ON GENESIS 1-11, Trans: Rob Roy McGregor, Edinburgh, Banner Of Truth, 2009, ISBN 978-1-84871-038-2.

IT is Calvin's faithful preaching of sin, judgment, fear and repentance that Rob Roy McGregor singles out for special mention in his *Preface* to Calvin's 49 sermons on the early chapters of Genesis. However, behind this stern message, the translator finds a proclamation of the love of God, for God warns of judgment because He wants sinners to flee judgment and find the refuge He has provided in Jesus Christ. In line with this, Professor John de Witt in his *Introduction* describes Calvin as 'a preacher who spent himself utterly in the work of summoning his people to repentance, faith and holiness'.

Due to the nightly labours of Rob Roy McGregor, the weekday sermons delivered in French in autumn and winter 1559 and 1560, taken down in shorthand, transcribed but unedited and long-forgotten, now find a new audience, who will be as grateful as Calvin's original hearers. In preaching on the opening verses of *Genesis*, Calvin outlines a doctrine of revelation, with the Bible likened to spectacles that enable us to properly read the testimony of creation that points to God the Creator. We need to read the Bible in order to be able to read 'the Book of Nature'. When we do so, we discover that the natural world is 'a theatre to contemplate His glory' (p.6).

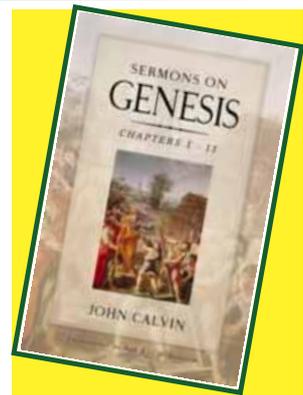
What was God doing before He created the world? Calvin's tongue-in-cheek answer is that He was making hell for the curious, who pry into things they should not and are led astray into vain speculation! Calvin regularly warns of the danger of questioning God and of failing to see the wisdom and goodness of all that He does. He resolutely avoids speculative views and always seeks to adhere to what he calls 'the simplicity' of Scripture. His restraint explains in part why he is a master exegete. He sticks to the text of Scripture. This is why, at the present time, Calvin is being read and appreciated by people from many different church traditions. If you haven't discovered Calvin, his *Sermons On Genesis* are a good place to start!

Calvin also stresses the fragility of human life and our total dependence on God for our preservation from flood, earthquake, disease and all forms of harm. According to Calvin, if God declared all that He made to be good, it is not for foolish humanity to question His goodness or His ways. Calvin sees the account in Genesis 1 as designed to show God's fatherly care of humanity, and despite the ruination caused by sin, God's care for us shines through in various ways. It might surprise us that Calvin argues that humans from the beginning were free to eat meat, his proof being the fact of animal sacrifice and the mention of people clothed in animal skins (p.110).

Calvin sees God's rest on the Seventh Day as an example to us, with this day established to encourage us to reflect on God and His works. He insists that the Garden of Eden was a real terrestrial paradise located in Mesopotamia. He interprets the two trees in the garden as signs (sacraments) and again one lesson is that we are not to try to know more than God has given us to know. Calvin uses the serpent's attempt to question God's command as a lesson to us not to question or find fault with what God says in His Word, just because God does not always provide an explanation for what He commands or because what He says does not conform to our puny powers of reasoning. What Calvin fears most is that Christians may seek to go beyond what God has given in His Word. In other words, Calvin believes in the sufficiency of Scripture. We must know the limits of true knowledge and keep within the God-ordained limits of revealed knowledge, for that is where our father Adam and mother Eve went wrong.

Reading the sermons of Calvin shows that we do him an injustice if we picture him interested in speculative theology or wanting to create a 'Calvinistic system' of doctrine. Rather, he was a humble student of Scripture, who only ever strove to understand, explain and apply what God said in His Word. Here, then, in Calvin's *Sermons On Genesis* is a model for how preachers today should handle Scripture. These are his weekday sermons on the Old Testament (Monday-Saturday), for on Sundays he preached on the New Testament. Yes, at this stage in his ministry, Calvin was preaching every day of the week, so that the industry of this man of God is truly amazing.

– Greg Goswell



'Calvin resolutely avoids speculative views and always seeks to adhere to what he calls 'the simplicity' of Scripture. His restraint explains in part why he is a master exegete. He sticks to the text of Scripture. This is why, at the present time, Calvin is being read and appreciated by people from many different church traditions.'

BOOKS WORTH READING

TELL IT LIKE IT IS – Six Studies In The Book Of Lamentations, Elizabeth Kendal.

WHEN did you last read *Lamentations*? What did you gain from it? Does the book of *Lamentations* have anything to offer the 21st Century Christian? It certainly does.

Illumination

Lamentations provides us with eye-witness accounts and personal testimonies of survivors struggling to endure and make sense of military invasion, occupation, siege, massacre, famine and violent persecution. While *Lamentations* presents us with a portrait of Jerusalem in the wake of its fall to Babylonian forces in 586 BC, the scene of utter devastation, like the cry of utter despair, is one that would be familiar to multitudes of contemporary Christians. Think of Christian colonies and villages razed to the ground in anti-Christian pogroms in Pakistan, Egypt and India. When you read in *Lamentations* of terror, pursuit and famine, think of the Christians facing genocide in Sudan's Nuba Mountains at the hands of a regime that routinely uses starvation as a weapon of mass destruction. Think of the Church North Korea that lives not only with perpetual hunger, but with the threat of incarceration and execution as well. When you read of tears and loss and sickening grief, think of the Christians of Pakistan – from All Saints Peshawar (bombed by the Taliban) to Joseph Colony (razed by local Muslims). Think of the church in Somalia, where news rarely consists of anything but martyrdom. Think of Christians in Syria and Iraq where members of the oldest Christian communities in the world are faced with the end of life as they have known it. When you read of the killing of priests and prophets, and of the humiliation, torture and execution of leaders, think of the church in Iran and Eritrea where leading Christians are routinely incarcerated.

Confrontation

Rather than hide or deny it, *Lamentations* confronts the raging inner conflict and desperate spiritual struggle of the sufferer who cries, 'Why Lord?' or 'How long, O Lord?' or who pleads, 'Don't ignore me Lord' or 'Don't forget me Lord' while clinging to faith by their fingernails. *Lamentations* confronts the dilemma of what to do when we are so confused, hurt and angry with God that we feel we are no longer on speaking terms with Him.

Comfort And Healing

For those who are devastated and for whom no comforter is in sight, *Lamentations* says: Pray! Talk to your faithful God, even if all you can do is lament and complain – that's ok, just tell it like it is. Don't let confusion or anger stop you. Don't let tears hold you back and don't hold back your tears – pour out your heart like water before the Lord (Lamentations 2.19). Remember who God is: He is Yahweh, your faithful sovereign God (Isaiah 40.1,27-31). Remember who you are: you are the beloved of His soul, redeemed at great price. Cling to His promises – and pray, just pray – and let the healing begin.

Relevance

Is *Lamentations* relevant to the 21st Century Church? Absolutely! And the more persecution and insecurity escalate, the more relevant it will be.

This series of six studies on the book of *Lamentations* can now be found on Elizabeth Kendal's website www.turnbackthebattle.com (under Bible Studies and Reflections). These studies, which can be freely downloaded, may be used to aid personal contemplation and small group Bible study, as well as teaching and preaching. Consider making use of them in 2014, not only to improve understanding of the remarkable yet long-neglected and disregarded book of *Lamentations*, but to foster empathy with believers who suffer to provide you with insight and wisdom as you become their comforters and advocates.

– ASSIST, www.assistnews.net



www.designministries.com.au