

Arabic Symbol 'N' (For 'Nazarene') Used To Mark Out Christians In Mosul For Tax Or Death



Christians Flee Iraq's Mosul After Islamists Tell Them: Convert, Pay Or Die

IRAQI Christians streamed out of Mosul en masse on Saturday 19 July after Islamist militants threatened to kill them unless they converted to Islam or paid a 'protection tax'.

'For the first time in the history of Iraq, Mosul is now empty of Christians,' Patriarch Louis Sako lamented as hundreds of families fled ahead of a noon deadline set by Islamic State for them to submit or leave. The warning was read out in Mosul's mosques on Friday afternoon, and broadcast throughout the city on loudspeakers.

'We offer [Christians] three choices: Islam; the dhimma contract – involving payment ... If they refuse this they will have nothing but the sword,' the announcement read.

It said Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who the group has now named Caliph Ibrahim, had ordered Christians who did not want to stay and live under those terms to 'leave the borders of the Islamic Caliphate.'

On Saturday morning, Mosul residents described an exodus of hundreds of Christians walking on foot in Iraq's searing summer heat, the elderly and the disabled among them. A bishop in the neighbouring town of Tel Keif told the *Telegraph* that many of Mosul's displaced Christians had gathered in his church. 'We're providing people with shelter, food and water – people don't have anything left and they can't travel without the money to buy tickets,' said Bishop Yosip Benjamin. He said the town's Christians were fearful of suffering the same fate as those in Mosul. 'We're being threatened every day,' he said. 'Now, we don't have anything left but our faith. It's like life has stopped, and we are so tired.'

– Louisa Loveluck

Fine Young Christian Man Among MH17 Victims

REV Dr Ross Clifford, Principal of Morling College, Sydney, reports with sadness that Victor Oreshkin, who was on flight MH17, was doing the Certificate of Theology at Morling and was enrolled for this coming semester. 'Our thoughts and prayers are with his family,' says Dr Clifford. 'In Christ there is only resurrection! (Romans 8.28)'

According to his church's pastor, Mr Oreshkin was a religious man who was involved in church ministry. 'He was really loved by everyone so it was a big shock for all of us,' Mr Minchenko told AAP. 'He was a really big part of the church so we really feel for his parents as well as for Victor.'

– Morling College and AAP via WorldwidePhotos



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newlife
AUSTRALIA'S CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

Iranian Pastor's Prison Epistle Testifies To God's Faithfulness AT ALL TIMES

IMPRISONED Christian Pastor Farshid Fathi has sent a letter from Iran's notorious Evin Prison, reflecting on God's faithfulness even in difficult times. Fathi has been in Evin Prison for almost 43 months, just because of his Christian faith and ministry. He is scheduled for release in December 2016.



According to a news release from Elam Ministries, he wrote 'In each of our lives, there are nights: nights of loneliness, nights of nightmare, nights of fever and pain, endless nights of prison, nights of missing, nights of hard-breathing and some scary, unexplainable nights in our lives. These experiences are inevitable, even for those who have a close walk with Jesus Christ.

'When a child has a bad night, his father or his mother lies beside him during the night, tenderly stroking his forehead, kissing his cheeks over and over, calling his name in the most lovely voice and they keep looking at the child's face until that bad night passes over. Then the child opens his eyes and thinks his father has just come to him. He was not able to sense his father's breath while he was battling with his nightmares.

'That's the same for us, when our troubling times end. We think that God has just comes to us. But that's not so. He was not only there in the morning, but He was with us all through the dark nights of our life. So I am absolutely sure that finally "the sun of justice will rise with healing in its wings." (Malachi 4.2).'

Elam Ministries adds, 'Thank you for your faithful prayers for Farshid, who is in the midst of a dark night, and yet waits for the dawn to break. It is a great encouragement for him to know that his family around the world are still holding him up in prayer.'

Elam Ministries assists the church in the Iran region and beyond. For more information visit www.freefarshid.org

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

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

INDIA: A Test For India In Chhattisgarh

LOCATED in North India's tribal belt, the Indian State of Chhattisgarh has long been a focus of Hindu nationalists' determined effort to secure the allegiance of tribal Indians. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad is the 'cultural wing' of the Sangh Parivar, the Hindu nationalist umbrella body. Along with organising Hindu festivals and facilitating the 'safronisation' of Indian media and education, the VHP also conducts Hindutva (Hindu nationalist) missionary work amongst the tribals. This missionary work includes the 'ghar vapsi' (home-coming) campaigns in which thousands of tribal Christians are coerced and even forced to convert to Hinduism.

In early May Hindus in Sirisguda village in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region complained to the VHP that Christians had refused to donate money to the annual Hindu festival and had used 'derogatory language against the Hindu deities and customs'. The VHP pointed the Sirisguda Hindus to Section 129 (G) of the Chhattisgarh Panchayat Raj Act which facilitates rural self government by empowering 'gram sabhas' (village assemblies) to issue rulings for local implementation. Subsequently the Sirisguda gram sabha issued a ruling banning all non-Hindu religious practice in the village.

Since then, more than 50 villages in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region have followed suit and used the Act to ban non-Hindu practice. Even though the rulings are contrary to the Indian Constitution, the VHP has said it will lobby the Chief Minister Raman Singh and Governor Balramji Dass Tandon (both of whom are Hindu nationalists) to ensure the bans are imposed.

Effectively these gram sabha rulings legitimise communal hostility towards Christians; consequently serious persecution is escalating. There have been numerous reports of Christians being violently attacked, refused access to amenities (particularly water) and denied food rations. Sonuru Mandavi's family converted to Christianity in 2002. She told India's *The Hindu* that the Christians in her village have been unable to collect rations for over two months and when they tried to collect them they were physically attacked. The only alternative is to pay full price in retail stores, something these Christians cannot afford due to the systematic discrimination they have long suffered.

Economic interests might also play a role. Multi-national mining corporations have interests in mineral-rich Bastar and a community at war with itself cannot make a united stand against them or the [often corrupt] government bodies with which the corporations deal. Christian leaders are concerned that tribal Christians are being bullied out of their homes and off their lands by Hindu elites and petty criminals who have conspired to seize their property so they can claim the compensation when the multi-nationals acquire the land.

Denouncing the bans as 'illegal and unconstitutional', the Chhattisgarh Christian Forum has called on the governor to intervene and uphold the law. Meanwhile, the Bastar district president of the VHP, Suresh Yadav, insists that district administration must implement the gram sabha rulings, 'otherwise we will protest'. However, CCF president Arun Pannal has denounced the bans as a blatant violation of fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution of India. 'This Act is *ultra vires* (beyond the powers) of the constitution of India, and the state government should scrap it,' he said, adding: 'We will go to court if the state government does not act on this issue.'

Numerous Christian leaders and religious liberty advocates are warning that if these rulings are allowed to stand and if impunity persists, then a new wave of Hindutva inspired, VHP incited, violent anti-Christian pogroms may be imminent. The danger is that the government will re-interpret the religious liberty provisions in the Constitution, so as to kill the spirit of the Constitution while retaining its words (and thus no need for a referendum). How this crisis is resolved will say much about the future direction, not only of Chhattisgarh, but of India under Hindu nationalist BJP rule.

– *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin* is a ministry of **Elizabeth Kendal**, author of *Turn Back the Battle: Isaiah Speaks to Christians Today* (Deror Books, Dec 2012)

PLEASE

PRAY THAT:

- *God will intervene in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region to protect and provide for poor tribal Christians who are being persecuted for their faith;*
- *sharpen the consciences of local Hindus, so they will resist the pressure to persecute their Christian neighbours;*
- *raise up voices for liberty, justice and harmony across India; may He magnify those voices in the media, the judiciary, politics, education, as they defend the spirit of the Indian Constitution and defend religious freedom;*
- *raise up voices outside India that will speak out for genuine religious freedom, security and justice inside India;*
- *may He magnify those voices, in media, international politics, diplomacy, advocacy and in the Church worldwide, as they speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.*

'Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. ... Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God.'
(Psalm 146.3,5 ESV)

STRANGERS NEXT DOOR – CMS SEMINAR –

On Migrants, Refugees And International Students

RECENT statistics have highlighted migration as a growing challenge for Australian churches, as well as an unprecedented opportunity to engage and share Jesus with Gospel-poor peoples right here in our own backyard. According to the 2011 census, over a quarter of those living in Australia were born overseas, of which a large proportion came to Australia from non-English speaking countries in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and South America. Of those who had arrived in recent years, most spoke a language other than English at home.

Sam McGeown, Church Liaison and Missionary Development Officer with CMS, says, 'My children attend a school that five years ago was represented by 40 different nationalities. Today it is 50. Sadly many of our churches are not reflecting the growing multi-ethnic communities that they find themselves in. Over 400,000 students from 190 nations currently study in Australia and between 15-34% of students at the major universities around Brisbane are made up of students from overseas. The stark reality is that many unreached people groups living here in Australia are as unreached here as they were back home. How can this be when they are surrounded by so many Christians and churches?'

This is one of the real issues that CMS seeks to help explore through its *Journey In Mission* seminars, where missiologist Rev Mike Wilson was a recent guest speaker. Previously a missionary in ●●●●●●●●, Rev Wilson has taught on ministry in multi-ethnic contexts at Sydney Missionary Bible College, Moore College and Christ College (the Presbyterian Theological College). He is now the Cross Cultural Ministry Coordinator in the Ministry and Mission Department for the Presbyterian Church of NSW.

He shared his insights on multi-ethnic ministry, highlighting five major obstacles that hinder people from being able to successfully reach those on their doorsteps. 'We all have learned behaviours. These form our cultural identity and are often the "glasses" through which we try and view other cultures, judging what is acceptable, Mike Wilson said.

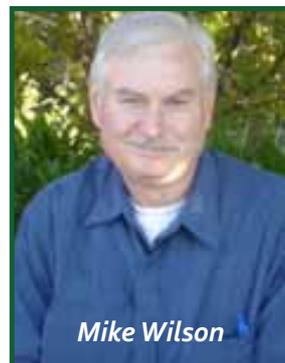
'We must not let our cultural identity predetermine who we minister to. Rather we need to have a Gospel-driven heart, intentionally planning for ministry across cultures and encouraging it in every possible way we can, through churches and others. There is often natural distance between cultures that inhibits people from making connections. We need to take special measures to make sure people of different cultures meet Christ, otherwise it continues on the same trajectory reaching only one demographic, similar to ourselves,' he said.

With the prediction that 87% of the population growth in Australia by 2056 will be through migration, Australian Christians need to be aware and deliberate about how they share the Gospel. 'Sometimes we can rubbish other people and their beliefs because they are so different from our own faith. Having a gracious, gentle and respectful attitude as we share with people from other cultures we can work to overcome this,' Mike said. 'There is often cultural misinterpretation when misunderstanding and misconceptions arise due to cultural differences. If you don't understand, assume the best rather than the worst, try to gain a general understanding of cultural differences and dynamics. Remember to ask yourself when confronted with a strange or different behaviour: is this behaviour from the individual or the culture? Usually the intention is not to be rude or awkward but to express a positive belief of the culture.

'We need to be mindful and not surprised that as we immerse in multi-ethnic ministry, we can often have the greatest resistance or hindrances from other Christians,' he said.

JIM seminars are run every six to eight weeks and are designed to further educate people about biblical mission to make disciples of all nations, about the real issues facing mission and what mission looks like in practice. They are also streamed live to people across Australia and the world. To view the full seminar *Strangers Next Door – Migrants, Refugees And International Students*, visit cms.org.au/jim

For further information about Journey In Mission events or about mission through CMS contact qld@cms.org.au, telephone (07) 3112 6530 or visit cms.org.au



THE WORD GOES OUT ...

Katoomba Christian Convention Now Has An App!

Katoomba Christian Convention has developed an app with which you can:

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- Read news and updates from KCC's ministry.



Good News

Best of all, the app is free! It is available for Android, iOS and Windows Phones. Also, in preparation for KCC's Oxygen conference, 4-7 August, a special tab has been developed with information and opportunities to interact throughout the conference. Go to <http://get.theapp.co/489f> to download.

Good Response For MemoryLink As Word Gets Around

TOM Treseder, Founder and President of MegaVoice International reports a good response to the recent development of *MemoryLink* (see NL 2014-06-15, p.4). With developer Fenton Sharpe and Fenton's wife, Tom participated in a conference for those interested in ministering to the ageing, which 200 attended.

They mounted a display and had a table as well as providing an attractive brochure with a response form to each participant. In that workshop Fenton and Tom had opportunity to speak.

They also had some excellent conversations with individuals at the table, with seven *MemoryLinks* purchased on the spot. However many others took the brochure back to their church or agency and expect to be ordering. To say there was warm, positive and affirming interest is a fair appraisal of time spent.

There is also a steady flow of orders coming from the Christian newspapers *New Life* and *Eternity*.

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'STILL THE BATTLE RAGES'

UZBEKISTAN: Another Jailing, Large Fines For Meeting, More Confiscations

IGOR Kulyada, a Baptist from Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent, was jailed for three days from 3-6 July, Forum 18 News Service has learned.

His offence was to put up in public leaflets with verses from the Bible. Some of his property was ordered to be destroyed and a fine was also imposed on him.

Asked why she had done this, Judge Nilufar Dadabayeva told Forum 18 (www.forum18.org) that 'I need to ask my superiors before I can give you information.'

According to Mushfig Bayram, writing for Forum 18, 'In Syrdarya Region four Baptists have been fined 50 times the minimum monthly salary, four Baptists 20 times the minimum monthly salary and one Baptist has been fined 10 times the minimum monthly salary.'

'The "offence" of all nine was to meet together to worship and share a meal on Palm Sunday. Protestants in the central city of Kashi have complained of an illegal raid and house search against one of their co-believers and intrusive questioning of relatives about her.' Bayram added that local police officer Olim Gulomov put his phone down as soon as he heard Forum 18's name. And, he said, 'State confiscations of the property of Baptists in Samarkand continue to be carried out.'

– Dan Wooding, Founder of ASSIST Ministries. See all ASSIST News articles at www.assistnews.net



Baptists meeting in Tashkent

Please Pray For Sudan And Nigeria

– Open Doors

WE praise God that Meriam Ibrahim and her family were finally allowed to leave Sudan, and arrived safely in Italy on 24 July. Meriam's lawyer, Elshareef Ali Mohammed, told the *Telegraph* that she had very little time to prepare for leaving the country and that the family hadn't even known where they were going when they left. He added that the charges against her in Sudan had not been dropped. The family are now en-route to the United States, where Meriam's husband Daniel Wani has a home in New Hampshire.

It must come as a great relief to Meriam and her family to know that this horrific ordeal is behind them. But we must continue to keep others who are going through persecution in our prayers, like the families of the kidnapped schoolgirls of Chibok in Nigeria where reports from 23 July indicate up to 11 parents of the girls have now died. Despite various causes being widely reported by international news agencies, an Open Doors source says many of the parents have died from stress-related conditions – and that reports of fathers being killed during an attack in a nearby village appear to be untrue. Regardless, any further loss of life in Chibok is a tragedy for a community already under incredible stress. One source adds, 'I must say that Chibok is not safe for now - the inhabitants of Chibok need to vacate the area any moment because the insurgents are attacking towns and villages.'

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OM AUSTRALIA

Geoff Blackburn Called Home

THE Rev Dr Geoffrey Herbert Blackburn finished his course on 13 July 2014, aged 99 years and four months. On 18 July a Thanksgiving Service for Geoff, one of Australia's greatest and most loved Baptist ministers, was held in Syndal Baptist Church, Melbourne, where he had ministered for many years.

At the service, tributes to Geoff were given by sons Keith and Alan and grandson Steve Blackburn; Daniel Bullock, Director of Mission and Ministries, Baptist Union of Victoria; and Rev Douglas Robertson, Senior Minister of Scots Church, Melbourne.

Senior Pastor of Syndal Baptist, Dr Bill Brown, told first of other tributes paid by people Geoff had pastored: 'He was a man of grace ... a legend ... had a huge impact on my family ... a special gift for remembering names ... Geoff visited my daughter in hospital every week and helped her rekindle her faith in Jesus. And from former colleagues: 'Geoff was one of the most authentic human beings I have been privileged to know ... the quintessential Baptist Minister and leader ... clear-thinking, self-effacing, thoughtful, with a keen sense of humour and a true spirituality ... Geoff was a role model to me, and I suspect to countless other ministers ... we loved Geoff and he loved us!'

Bill Brown's Tribute

For me Geoff Blackburn was a wonderful mentor and friend for over 40 years. Let me tell you why. On Monday, 7 February 1977, the day after I was inducted as Youth Pastor, Geoff and I were sweeping out the back hall after it had been left in not a great state the day before. As we were sweeping, Geoff said, 'Bill, this is what ministry is all about.' It could have been a basin and a towel, but for us it was a broom! Geoff was a servant of God and of His people.

At the age of 70, Geoff started a Doctor of Ministry at the same time as a number of others and finished ahead of us. Geoff was a wise man and many of his 'one-liners' expressed truth for living that still stick with me today: 'People are down on what they are not up on!' ... 'In essentials unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, charity.' ... 'Keep the main thing the main thing!' ... 'Don't use the pulpit to scold your people'.

Geoff was like Barnabas, a great encourager to me and to many others. He modelled out what it meant to follow Jesus. He was very generous. He never paraded his achievements. He didn't mind who got the glory. He never introduced me as his assistant but always as his colleague. He sponsored me into ministry opportunities and in numerous ways invested in the next generations. He saw evidence of the grace of God wherever he went. Where others may see things about which they could be critical, Geoff looked for evidence of the grace of God. He had a missional heart and wanted to share the Gospel wherever he went. He loved people of all ages (he would bend down to speak to a child), stages, backgrounds. He took risks with people, gave them a second chance, was with them in their time of need, welcomed them into his home. He was a great team man – he and Jessie made an awesome team – and Geoff loved to work in teams.

Geoff preached the whole counsel of God but I reckon one of Geoff's favourite verses in all of the Bible and the secret to his life is found in Galatians 2.20 'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.'

Geoffrey Herbert Blackburn was a good man but he would not want this service to be all about him nor to finish without a challenge to every one of us about whether we have tapped into the secret of his life – a vital, moment by moment growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Geoff gave up his small ambitions to live with and for Jesus and His cause, a cause that he knew was way bigger than Geoff Blackburn.

We are reminded in *Hebrews* that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses – women and men of faith who have gone before. Geoff is now one of those and the writer puts it this way, 'Let us therefore throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.' That's the way Geoff ran and now he would remind us that it is still our turn in the arena of life.

Are you in the race? How are you running?



VIEWPOINT

A Prayer To Martin Dixon: Please End The School Prayer Ban!

'VICTORIA is increasingly looking like something out of a George Orwell novel,' FamilyVoice Victoria state officer Peter Stevens says. A new *Ministerial Direction 141 And Policy Guide*, issued by Victorian Education Minister Martin Dixon, bans any adult-assisted non-SRI religious activity in public schools from 14 July 2014. Informal lunch time student prayer or Bible reading is prohibited if a teacher, chaplain, parent or school visitor is also involved.

'We used to joke about US school prayer bans, but now Victoria is going down the same path,' Peter Stevens said. 'Imagine, for example, a school tragedy where students seek comfort from a school chaplain. Under these rules, the chaplain cannot pray with them, nor can he or she point them to helpful Bible passages. In every court room and parliament of this nation, the Bible is placed in a position of honour – and rightly so. Its Ten Commandments were the forerunner of our laws. Yet under the new ministerial policy, a chaplain cannot give Bibles to students who request them.

'Freedom of speech and religion are fundamental human rights in this state – but not, it seems, in our public schools. I call on the Minister to rescind this unjust and unwarranted order,' Pastor Stevens said.

Archbishop Calls For An End To Iraqi Persecution

THE Archbishop of Sydney, Dr Glenn Davies, has joined calls for prayer and international assistance for Iraqi Christians facing severe persecution, even death, for their faith.

'It is an outrage that a community established in the early centuries of the Christian era should face expulsion from their own land, simply for their faith,' Dr Davies said.

In Mosul, near the ruins of the ancient city of Nineveh, the militant Islamic group ISIS gave Christians an ultimatum: convert to Islam, pay a 'protection tax' or face death. Churches have been looted, burned or occupied. Christian homes have been marked with the Arabic letter 'N' (for the word 'Nasrani' which translates to 'Nazarene', a follower of Jesus). This has been followed by a social media movement among Christians in the west trying to highlight the persecution. Thousands of Christian families have been driven out.

'In the same area where God sent the prophet Jonah to turn back the people of Nineveh from their evil ways, we pray for a turning back of the evil which has come upon the Christians of Mosul, stripped of their livelihood, property and possessions,' Dr Davies said. 'The Australian government, the international community and the UN must not stand by while such persecution continues unabated.'

Archbishop Davies called on churches to pray for peace and justice in Iraq and also for Palestinian Christians caught in the conflict on the West Bank and the Gaza. 'We have entered a period of significant suffering for Christians around the world: from Iraq to Syria and from Egypt to Sudan,' he said. 'While the Cross is the symbol of suffering for all who are followers of Jesus of Nazareth, we have a responsibility to stand with our brothers and sisters in the face of such unmitigated persecution.'

– Russell Powell

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TURN BACK THE BATTLE: Isaiah Speaks to Christians Today.

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POINTS TO PONDER ...

Ronaldo's Mum Says She Wanted To Abort Him

CRISTIANO Ronaldo was named world's greatest footballer for the second time this year. 'I tried to abort him' says Cristiano Ronaldo's mum in candid confession (express.co.uk, 17 July 2014) In her biography entitled *Mother Courage*, Dolores Aveiro revealed that she asked for an abortion, but the doctor 'didn't support' her decision.

Speaking at the launch of the book, Aveiro said that Ronaldo knows she wanted to have an abortion. She said: 'He told me when he found out, "Look mum, you wanted to abort and now I'm the one who's pulling the purse-strings in the house".' Cristiano Ronaldo recently played for Portugal in the 2014 World Cup, and is currently part of the Real Madrid team.



Justin Bieber's Mother

Last year, it emerged that pop star Justin Bieber's mother had resisted pressure to have an abortion when she became pregnant with her son at the age of 17. Pattie Mallette said: 'I just knew I had to keep him. I didn't know how I was going to do it. But I just knew that I couldn't abort. I had to do my best, and I was determined to do whatever it took.' Pattie Mallette's relationship with her son's father broke down, and she largely raised Bieber with the help of her parents.

Susan Boyle's Mother – 'Unthinkable'

In 2010, international singer Susan Boyle revealed that she could have been aborted had her mother followed doctors' advice. Writing in her autobiography, Boyle said doctors had told her mother, then a 45-year-old mother of eight, that having another baby could kill her.

But as she was a devout Roman Catholic, an abortion was unthinkable and she went through with the pregnancy.

Boyle said when she was born, doctors commented she would 'never be anything' and she has been 'trying all my life to prove them wrong.'

– The Christian Institute

We're Encouraged!

One Of Australia's Major Mission Agencies has advised us they send each edition of *New Life* around to everyone in the office and to the members of their National Council.

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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)



www.designministries.com.au

GOOD NEWS FROM ABROAD

Haggai Institute Helps Reach The World

DR Aldo Fontao of Argentina says Haggai Institute training is a new way to reach the world for Christ. The old way of doing it was to recruit western Christians, send them to training, teach them the language, then support their work. Today, there's a different model. The Haggai Institute trains nationals. Dr Aldo Fontao is a Haggai Institute trained cardiologist from Argentina. He is a very influential doctor who has cared for four presidents in his country. Fontao says, 'I attended training on how to evangelize your own people.' The goal is to take influential Christian leaders in hard-to-reach areas and train them for 25 days. Fontao says, 'It's a new way of doing missions.'

Why Is It Needed?

'Most of the countries most in need of evangelism – like in the Middle East and Asia – are closed to foreign missionaries. If foreign workers are able to get in, they have to go there, learn the culture and the language, get into the community. That takes not less than 10 years. And how much does that cost? With that, you could train 100 locals.'

Why Train Key National Christian Leaders?

'They have the language, they don't need a visa, and they can do a much better job from the very beginning,' says Fontao. 'And you don't have to support them.' Haggai Institute has trained royalty from Africa, vice-presidents,

Baptism By Fire In Azerbaijan

The name 'Azerbaijan' is related to the Persian word for fire, and depending on who is telling the story, it can mean 'The Guardians of the Fire' or 'The Land of Holy Fire.' Audio Bible listening programs are introducing the people of this ancient land to the real Holy Fire. Azeri believers are being disciplined as they hear the pure Word of God, and they are not afraid to use their network of friends to invite others to discover the hope, peace, and freedom they have in Christ.

– Faith Comes By Hearing

political candidates and professionals—people who already have influence within their culture. The training costs a fraction of what a first-world missionary is paid over a lifetime. And this training is duplicating itself. 'Each of the trainees commit themselves to training 100 others. In these 27 years with Haggai Institute, I have trained more than 30,000 people.' That's an incredible return on investment!

The training Haggai Institute provides isn't theoretical; it's practical, hands on, one-on-one training. 'We teach people how to reach the new generations and how to reach special groups – how to deal with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam – all that stuff which can be a real challenge in how you defend your faith.' The training gives them principles that they can put into practice as soon as leaders return. – mnnonline.org

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PERSECUTION WATCH

Dramatic Escape From Sudan – ‘I Trusted God From The First Instant’ – Meriam Ibrahim

‘I HAVE always wanted, and only wanted, my faith’ said Meriam Ibrahim after her escape from Sudan. Now that Meriam Ibrahim is truly free from her life of persecution in Sudan, new reports are surfacing about what happened after her release and her family’s plans for the future. According to a report in the *Daily Mail*, Meriam’s first words upon arriving in Italy were, ‘Thanks to God we are all fine. I trusted God from the first instant. I knew that He would not abandon me. When they condemned me to death, I never thought of renouncing my religion.’

When asked what she was going to do now that she was free by Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*, Meriam replied, ‘I will put my trust in God as I always have done. We will start a new life [in America].’

Religion News Service reports that their new life will be lived in New Hampshire and that Meriam and her family are scheduled to depart for the US soon.

– *Breaking Christian News*



Meriam and Baby arrive in Rome.

Christian Mother Killed In Gaza

‘CHRISTIANS caught in the crossfire’ is becoming a sad cliché as violence increases throughout the Middle East. Mrs Jalila Ayyad was killed last weekend during an Israeli bombing raid on Gaza, the first person from the tiny Christian community to die in the most recent violence. Her son was seriously injured.

Mrs Ayyad was a member of Gaza Baptist Church, the only evangelical church among 1.6 million Sunni Muslims. ‘The situation is much worse than during any other conflict before,’ Dr Hanna Massad says. Massad is former pastor of Gaza Baptist Church and president of Christian Mission to Gaza, a nongovernment organization that brings humanitarian relief to both Christians and Muslims.

– Ron Brackin, ASSIST News Service

UKRAINE: Christians Caught In The Crossfire

EXPLODING shells are destroying homes and churches in the Donetsk region, where Ukrainian security forces and pro-Russian rebels have been battling for control since March. Senseless violence in embattled eastern Ukraine took on added ramifications with the downing of a Malaysian commercial airliner near the Russian border. As that investigation begins, new reports are surfacing of additional casualties of war: this time, Christians who are caught in the crossfire. Christian Aid Mission has received word from ministry sources inside Ukraine that church leaders are being targeted by terrorists in the Donetsk region.

A pastor, his two adult sons, and an elder have been missing since 8 June, when they were kidnapped from an evangelical church in the city of Slovyansk. Six weeks later, the ministry finally learned what happened to the four men. Witnesses revealed that on the night of 8 June, terrorists abused and tortured them, and in the morning they let the men go. The elder deacon was driving the car. Once they left the city, the terrorists reappeared, chasing after them in a vehicle. They started shooting at the deacon’s car. The pastor and his sons jumped out of the car to try to escape. They were shot to death immediately. The driver was also killed, and his body was burned when they set the car on fire. On the second day, fighters took the bodies and buried them with other victims in the same grave.

Two Finnish Christian Aid Workers Killed In Afghanistan

TWO Finnish women working for a Christian aid charity have been killed by gunmen in Herat, Afghanistan; both had worked in Afghanistan for 16 years, having arrived there together in March 1997. Two men, travelling by motorcycle, shot two women, who worked for the International Assistance Mission while they were in a taxi. No group has immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. Herat is the major city in north-west Afghanistan, and has escaped much of the violence of Kabul, Helmand and the south-east close to Pakistan in recent years. The IAM has worked continuously in Afghanistan for nearly 50 years, since 1966. The organisation is well known there as an openly Christian aid organisation that works to capacity building healthcare and socio-economic development.

CSW To Indonesian President-Elect Joko Widodo: Address Rising Religious Intolerance

CHRISTIAN Solidarity Worldwide has called on Indonesian President-elect Joko Widodo and his new government to make it a priority to address rising religious intolerance in Indonesia, which has become a nationwide concern affecting all communities. Indonesia’s election commission officially announced the results of the presidential election on 22 July, declaring that Joko Widodo, Governor of Indonesia’s capital Jakarta, had won 53.15% of the vote, while his rival, former General Prabowo Subianto, secured 46.85%. Subianto, son-in-law of ex-dictator Suharto, said that he refused to accept the result, withdrew from the race and has launched a legal challenge. President-elect Widodo called for national reconciliation in his victory speech saying: ‘

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE ...

David and Traci Mitchell On The Move

FROM the start of October, David and Traci Mitchell will move from Karatha, where they have been working with Bush Church Aid, to take up a new position as an evangelist/church-planter in the new and expanding southern part of Geraldton, WA.

This region has grown dramatically in the last decade and continues to expand. The present population in the south is approaching 10,000 people and there are no churches and very little church presence in that area. The Mitchells hope to change that by looking to connect with Christians, evangelise non-Christians and potentially start church meetings in that area after determining the shape of the ministry by determining needs after getting to know the people, their needs and how best to bring the Word of Life to them.



Samaritan's Purse Doctor Serving In Liberia, West Africa, Tests Positive For Ebola – PLEASE PRAY!

DR Kent Brantly, Medical Director for the Samaritan's Purse Ebola Consolidated Case Management Centre in Monrovia, Liberia, has tested positive for the Ebola virus. He is currently undergoing treatment at a Samaritan's Purse isolation centre at ELWA Hospital. Samaritan's Purse is continuing medical operations at their Ebola Case Management Centres in co-operation with the Centres for Disease Control, the World Health Organization, the Liberia Ministry of Health, and other global health authorities. Dr Brantly is married with two children. Samaritan's Purse is committed to doing everything possible to help him during this time of crisis, and asks everyone to please pray for him and his family.

Choices Of Life Appoints Graeme Mitchell Presenter

GRAEME Mitchel, who has a pro-life message for schools and churches, has been appointed as a presenter by *Choices Of Life*. Graeme says: 'It is my privilege to have been appointed as *Choices Of Life* presenter from July 2014. While my professional career has been in natural resource management and conservation, I changed direction a few years ago when I accepted a position with a ministry that seeks to bring a Christian perspective into the world of government and politics. Now I hope to use the skills and experience I developed there to advance the pro-life cause in this nation. My wife Anne and I have been married for 43 years and we live in Sydney. We have been blessed with four adult children and eight grandchildren. For interested schools or churches, my home phone number is 02 96246421 and my mobile number is 0435 837 675.



The website is www.choicesoflife.com.au

email: gamitchell50@gmail.com

OMF Celebrates 150 Years

2014 marks the 125th anniversary of the China Inland Mission's Australasian Council, which was formed in 1889 following an upsurge of concern for China among Christians in Melbourne. It all began with three young

ministers there who began meeting together to pray for the Chinese people. There was so much interest that CIM leader and founder, James Hudson Taylor made a tour of Australia. When he returned to Hong Kong, he was accompanied by 12 Australian candidates, approved for missionary work. Since that time, China Inland Mission has changed its name, becoming the Overseas Missionary Fellowship in 1953, when the focus broadened to the whole area of East Asia. Today it is known simply as OMF International.

Over the decades, hundreds of Australians have been among those Christian workers sent out by CIM/OMF to East Asian countries to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Today OMF International has over 1400 workers, with many of them now being sent from countries which formerly only received missionaries, such as Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Thailand and Taiwan.

To celebrate the 150th anniversary of CIM/OMF's formation, a weekend conference will be held on 29-31 August at Collaroy, Sydney. Everyone with a heart for reaching out to East Asian people in the name of Jesus is welcome to come along. The main speaker will be Dr Patrick Fung, the General Director of OMF International, who became a believer in Jesus while he studied medicine in Sydney.

For more details, including how to register, please go to: www.omf.org/australia

Victorian Indigenous Prayer Network

VIPN warmly invites interested friends to their August prayer evening for our Aboriginal brothers and sisters in Christ who are making a difference through their vital ministries to communities in 2014. The meeting will be held on Wednesday 6 August, 7.30-8.30pm @ 17 Daniel St Burwood, Vic. Phone Anne Green on (03) 98889873 or 0437 127 366 for further details.

ARV Appoints New Director Of Mission

THE Rev Andrew Nixon has been appointed the new Director of Mission for Anglican Retirement Villages. He replaces Chris Edwards who is now Bishop of North Sydney. Mr Nixon is best known as the Executive Director of Sydney Diocese's *Connect 09* campaign.

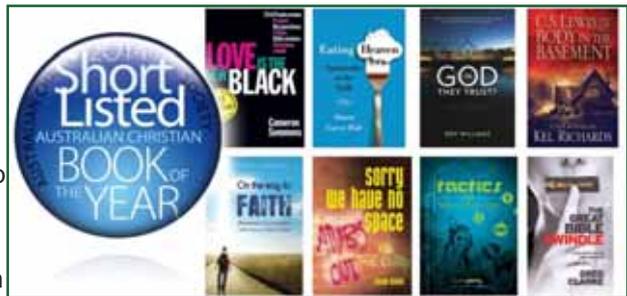
FROM ALL QUARTERS ...

Invite To The 2014 SparkLit Awards

YOU'RE invited to the 2014 SparkLit Awards event at 7.30pm for an 8pm start on Thursday 14 August at St Alfred's Anglican Church, Blackburn North, Vic, corner of Springfield Road and Koonung Road. The cost is \$20 per guest, \$60 per family. Tickets can be obtained on-line at admin@SparkLit.org or call 1300 13 7725.

Come and celebrate the power of words with Simon Smart of the Centre for Public Christianity and performance poet Jessica Santosa.

The 2014 Australian Christian Book of the Year, Young Australian Christian Writer and Teen Writer awards will be announced and prizes presented during supper. You can follow the Australian Christian Literature Awards on Facebook.



What Are You Doing On Saturday?

AUSTRALIAN Christians advise of two important events coming up:

Tomorrow, Saturday 2 August in Federation Square at 1.30pm there will be *The March Of Solidarity For The Persecuted Christians Of Iraq*. Australia's Iraqi Christian Community have organised the rally. Vickie Janson, AC's Victorian State Director, and ACL's Managing Director Lyle Shelton will be two of several speakers.

Christians in Iraq are being forced to convert to Islam or face death if they refuse to pay the Jizya religious tax. Hundreds of thousands have fled as their properties are confiscated and churches ransacked. According to news reports, the Islamic State, which controls large parts of northern Iraq and Syria, is carrying out atrocities against Christians and other minorities.

Then, on Tuesday 19 August at AC's Croydon Office at 7.30pm there will be a public meeting on *Democratic Freedoms And The 2014 State Election*. Special Guest Speaker will be Terri Kelleher, President of Australian Family Association, who will join Ray Moran (AC's National Director) Vickie Janson (AC Victorian State Director) and the expanding team of AC candidates.

President Of South Sudan Warns Of Coming Famine

SOUTH Sudan faces the double scourge of famine and war. Over a million people have been displaced by the fighting. If the ceasefire doesn't hold, crops won't get planted, and the resulting food shortage could eclipse the Ethiopian famine of the 80's. The world's newest nation will barely be three years old and already is on the brink of catastrophe, a combination of drought, poor crops, man-made conflict.

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VISITING MELBOURNE?

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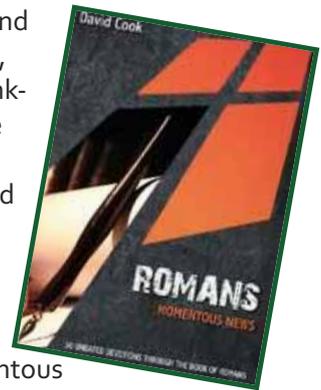
God's Sovereignty And Man's Responsibility

FOR REFLECTION:

- *What is the logic behind each of the steps Paul mentions in verses 11-15?*
- *How can you encourage preachers and evangelists today?*

SINCE faith in Jesus is the way of righteousness and since God is sovereign in the choosing of His elect, how does God call His elect to Himself? Paul's thinking is very structured at this point. Notice what he says:

- All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved
- How can they call without belief? (v14)
- How can they believe without hearing? (v14)
- How can they hear without preaching? (v14)
- How can they preach unless they are sent? (v16)
- Even the feet of those who preach such a momentous message are beautiful.



Not all who hear automatically believe, not all will be saved, but God is actively calling out His people through the hearing of the Gospel. (v16-17). The *Heidelberg Catechism*, question 65, asks, 'It is by faith alone that we share in Christ and all his blessings: where then does that faith come from?' Answer 65 responds, 'The Holy Spirit produces it in our hearts through the preaching of the Holy Gospel ...'

Didn't Israel hear? (v18) Certainly they did, the apostles took very seriously their responsibility of taking the Gospel to the Jew first.

Didn't they understand? (v19-21) They understood grace well enough to make them jealous of others' reception of it (v19). God is sovereign in this process (v20) but Israel is personally responsible for her disobedience and obstinacy (v21).

Paul makes it clear that God's election does not render the believer paralysed at the point of evangelism. Rather, says Paul (v1, 17), God's election of His believing people provides the greatest motivation for evangelism. We are not to be put off by people's resistance. Our confidence in evangelism does not rest on our ability to explain the Gospel or people's ability to understand it. It all rests on God's mercy. That is why prayer must accompany the clear, widespread presentation of the Gospel, that the sovereign God will do His work as the Gospel is proclaimed.

Is the preaching of verse 15 a calling? Not strictly speaking, but the preacher needs to know that he is sent, commissioned by God. (See Matthew 9.38 for a similar emphasis).

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Feel Like An Adventure Holiday? Don't Miss TLMA's Adventure Tours!

TREK For Treatment, Nepal, 25 Oct to 10 Nov, 2014. Cost: \$3,750 per person, ex-Melbourne. Raise much-needed funds for the valuable work of TLMA while visiting one of the most beautiful places in the world!

Xtreme Schoolies, Thailand, 30 Nov to 9 Dec, 2014. Cost: \$2,000 per person, ex-Melbourne. Looking for something different for your end-of-Year-12 'Schoolies' experience? Interested in more than just a fun trip somewhere? Keen to experience something beyond your own worldview? Then this is the trip for you!

Contact The Leprosy Mission Australia's office for more information or to secure your place on one of their exciting fundraising tours. For more information visit leprosymission.org.au/TLM/AdventureTours

DR DALLAS CLARNETTE Announces New Book On Dr Francis Nigel Lee

A NEW publication: *For Christ And His Kingdom*, by Dr Dallas Clarnette, about one of Australia's pre-eminent theologians, Francis Nigel Lee, who died in December 2011, is now available.

- Rarely do men have one or two doctorates. Lee had ten!
- Rarely do men meet their father's murderer. Lee did, and led him in repentance toward God and faith in Christ.
- From South Africa to USA and then to Australia, came Lee, whose last 30 years were spent in Queensland as Professor of Theology at the Presbyterian Theological College.

Order from Rev Dr Dallas Clarnette at dallasbooks@bigpond.com

NEW LIFE ADVERTISING

PASTORAL VACANCY:

Pastor wanted for non denominational, evangelical, independent local church of about 25 people in the WA town of Esperance.

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For more details email jbarlow@wn.com.au

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New Life Website:
www.nlife.com.au

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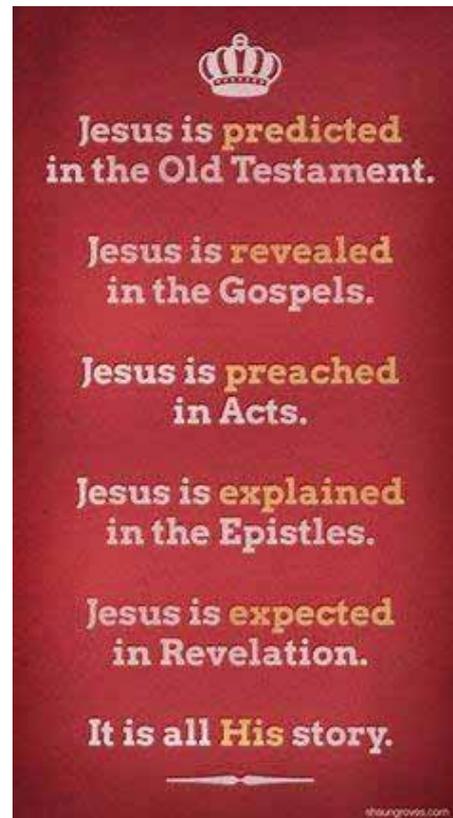
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BOOKS WORTH READING

THE QUESTION OF CANON: CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO IN THE NEW TESTAMENT DEBATE, Michael J. Kruger, Nottingham: Apollos, 2013. ISBN 978-1-78359-004-9

MICHAEL Kruger is Professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, North Carolina, who holds a high view of Scripture. He aims to unsettle the scholarly consensus that the New Testament canon came into being due to external forces (eg church needs, the threat of heresy). According to this theory, in treating these books as authoritative for all time, we are imposing on them a purpose for which they were never intended, because they are really only occasional writings. Not so, according to Kruger. Each of the five chapters of this book addresses and critiques one of the main tenets of that extrinsic model. Kruger argues that the idea of canon is innate to the early Christian movement and its theological convictions, and not something which developed later.

Kruger shows that the ideas of Scripture and of canon are not to be sharply differentiated, for 'canon' does not need to be reserved for the final, closed list of books because canonicity depends on a book's function (providing a doctrinal and ethical standard) and ontology (given by God). Kruger, therefore, wants a multidimensional approach to the definition of canon, with extrinsic, functional and ontological aspects needing each other to give a total picture.

He shows that the earliest Christians held a number of beliefs that naturally led to the rise of a corpus of sacred books. For example, the Old Testament is a story without an ending, for the expectations of the prophets had not yet been fulfilled. That story finds its completion in the coming of Christ, and what would be more natural than to have new documents written to finish the story of God's dealings with His people. The pattern set by the Old Testament of strong links between the covenants and of written documentation continues under the New Covenant inaugurated by Jesus. As well, the New Testament as canon is the natural outworking of the special role and authority of the apostles of Christ. This discussion could have been extended a little further with a fruitful comparison of the apostles with the Old Testament prophets.

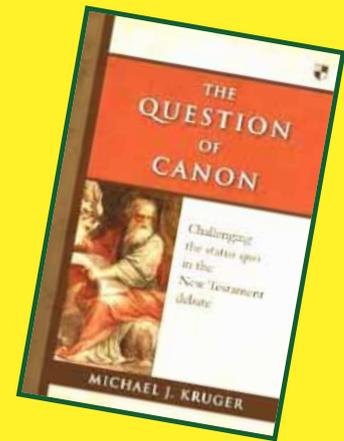
Kruger next critically examines the common argument that the early Christians were averse to writing and favoured oral culture. Low rates of literacy do not mean that sacred texts were not valued. Most early Christians depended on texts being read out loud to them in worship meetings. As well, from the beginning, they were students of the Old Testament. They were committed to the codex (book) form rather than the scroll, because of ease of reference and its usefulness in collating various documents together (eg Paul's letters). Their hope for the speedy return of Christ was no reason not to write down the teachings of Jesus.

The New Testament writers sensed their apostolic authority and insisted that Christians conform to their teachings (read Galatians 1). What is obviously the case for the New Testament letters also applies to the Gospels and Acts, which continue the story of salvation history where the Old Testament leaves off, so that the authors knew that they were writing Scripture.

Kruger disputes the common assertion that we must wait till the end of the Second Century before the New Testament documents was recognised as Scripture, for Irenaeus of Lyon was no innovator in his extensive use of the New Testament. Kruger provides evidence that Christians long before Irenaeus viewed these writings as Bible.

The upshot of all this is that the idea of a New Testament canon is early and indeed goes back to the earliest days of Christianity, because it is intrinsic to that faith, or, as Kruger himself expresses it, 'the idea of canon was built into the DNA of the Christian religion' (page 210). This book is one of the best explanations I have read as to why there is a New Testament at all.

– Greg Goswell



'The idea of a New Testament canon is early and indeed goes back to the earliest days of Christianity, because it is intrinsic to that faith, or, as Kruger himself expresses it: "the idea of canon was built into the DNA of the Christian religion".'