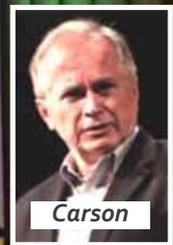


TGCA: New Ministry Launched In Grand Style

MORE than 1,000 people filled the ground floor of Brisbane's magnificent Town Hall on 23 July for the National Launch of The Gospel Coalition Australia. The launch event was the culmination of a planning process followed by the formation of a council of Christian leaders and a consultation held prior to the launch. Gary Millar, Principal, Queensland Theological College and Chair of the TGCA



Millar



Carson

TGCA Affirms:

- We pledge to work together for the glory of God through the promotion of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- We humbly recognise that we serve Christ alongside many brothers and sisters who do not share all our core convictions.
- We share an Australia-wide vision for promoting faithful, persevering, Christ-honouring, Bible-driven, Spirit-empowered, Gospel-centred ministry.
- We pray for a growing culture of mutual support, prayer and encouragement among Gospel workers across Australia.
- We are committed to working 'from the ground up' to encourage new and existing local Gospel partnerships.
- We are passionate about encouraging Christians in Australia to reach all who live here, including those whom God has brought to our shores from other nations.
- We seek to play our part in encouraging Christians in Australia to take the message of the Gospel to the ends of the Earth.

Council welcomed everyone and gave an introduction to the aims of TGCA.

TGCA: What Is It And Why Is It Needed?

TGCA is a biblically grounded and united mission which desires to champion the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with clarity, compassion, courage and joy – gladly linking hearts with fellow believers across denominational, ethnic and class lines. It invites all Christians to join in an effort to renew the contemporary church in the ancient Gospel of Christ so as to truly speak and live for Him in a way which clearly communicates to our age.

'We believe that we have reached a critical moment for the cause of the Gospel in Australia' Gary Millar says. 'Right now we are facing very specific opportunities and challenges in Australia – and we do have a responsibility to rise to meet them.'

'Here in Australia, as in much of the English speaking world, we are in the middle of a massive realignment of thinking and practice in our society, some features of which are:

- An increasingly strident rejection of Biblical morality, particularly in the area of sexuality.
- A sharp decline in church attendance.
- A loosening of traditional denominational allegiances.
- The need to 'pick up the baton' as a key generation of leaders retires.' *(Continued on Page Four)*

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Just When You Thought ...

FROM an Earthly perspective things don't seem to have been going too well for the Church lately. Persecution, even martyrdom, is the order of the day around North Africa, the Middle East, the Sub-Continent, East Asia – and the list goes on. The allure of secularism captivates so many. The Church's Standing barometer has suddenly dropped from 'Privileged' to 'Despised.' Anti-discrimination laws are being used to discriminate against Christians who make a stand on Biblical principles against a rising tide of immorality. Islam marches on, fooling great masses of people into thinking it is a 'religion of peace' while it dispenses or threatens violence wherever it has the upper hand. (Have you noticed how the neighbours of virtually all the perpetrators of terrorism describe them as 'such nice people, so polite ...?') The vast majority of people who claim to be 'Christian' are in fact 'holding the form of religion but denying its power'.

Depressed and discouraged? Not me.

At his last Proclamation Trust trustees' meeting, Dick Lucas gave an assessment of the Church today. Drawing on J.B. Phillips, Dick said that there is a great danger of the Church being like an old house which has been disconnected from the mains – it will soon fall down, and those who minister must be reconnected to the main supply. Here's his ABCD:

A – Authority. The Word of God is the power of God to create life and if we allow any kind of tradition (and there are many) to take over, then the Word of God is soon robbed of its power.

B – Boldness. Satan hates free speech and the bold proclamation of the Gospel of Christ. Anything which hinders this – inside and outside the church – comes from the pit.

C – Conviction. Pastors and preachers need to tremble at the Word of God which comes from the mouth of God. Our conviction needs to extend to all the Scriptures.

D – Delight. Dick quoted Dr Lloyd-Jones who, when travelling around, noted that many churches are so depressing! We need to be preachers who delight in Christ Himself and in His Word. That must be evident in all our preaching.

Many Christians will take heed of this analysis and seek the Lord's enabling to put Dick Lucas's solution into practice – and God will honour it to the glory of His Name and the salvation of many, and the earthly benefit of many others.

And true Christians everywhere must major on practising what they preach. Whether or not actions speak louder than words, both are necessary for effective Christian witness, and both are at their most effective when they are most in sync.

The recent formation of The Gospel Coalition Australia will give encouragement and impetus to us in doing this, but more importantly, the Sovereign Lord our God will act in His own way and according to His own time-table.

'Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take, the clouds you so much dread are big with mercy and will break with joy upon your head.' (William Cowper)

– Bob Thomas

CHINA AND LAOS: 'Remember Those In Prison ...'

CHINA and Laos are at once very alike and very different. Politically, both are Communist Party ruled and totalitarian. Geographically and economically, China is a seemingly untouchable rising giant while landlocked Laos is one of the poorest and neediest countries in the world. In China, Christians exist in significant numbers (at least 7.8% of the population) and at every level of society. Aided by numerous Chinese Christians in the West, China's persecuted Christians will never be 'invisible' or 'voiceless'. On the other hand, Christians in Laos comprise only 3.4% of the population and most are tribal. Consequently, persecuted Christians in Laos are amongst the most 'invisible' and 'voiceless' of all persecuted Christians.

For decades now, Western politicians have subscribed to the belief that poor human rights are a consequence of poverty and backwardness. To this end, the West has focused almost exclusively on economic development in the belief that human rights will follow naturally. This is essentially a theological error. Human rights abuses arise not from without (poverty and backwardness) but from within: from sin (especially greed and megalomania); from the belief that human life is of little value; and from the arrogance that rejects God and boasts, 'You [God] will not call to account' (Psalm 10). Economic development has not brought rights in China, it is not bringing rights in Vietnam and it will not bring rights to Laos. As requested by the Lao Movement for Human Rights (November 2014), 'International donors should make their future aid commitments to Laos contingent upon the government's tangible progress in addressing key human rights issues.' Above all, the Church should pray.

CHINA:

As the Chinese Communist Party wields its new National Security Law, the number of human rights lawyers and Christian leaders in prison will escalate. When the CCP released Christian human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng on 7 August 2014, it was telling human rights lawyers, 'Not only are we prepared to torture and destroy you, but we are so confident of impunity that we no longer need to hide it.' Of the more than 230 prominent human rights lawyers harassed and detained over the past ten days, 13 are being held incommunicado and six have 'disappeared'. As Human Rights Watch cautions, the risk of torture is high. Some have already 'confessed' to being members of a 'criminal gang'.

Pastor Zhang Shaojie, church leader Ms Yang Rongli and Uyghur house church leader Alimujiang Yimiti are amongst numerous pastors and Christian leaders currently detained in China. They have been arrested for protesting the illegal acquisition of church land, for appealing about being labelled a 'cult', or for resisting the forced removal of crosses. On 14 July, amidst the massive nation-wide crackdown on human rights lawyers, a group of Christian human rights lawyers, led by attorney Zhang Kai, announced the formation of the 'Lawyers For Protection Of The Cross' group. According to China Aid, these lawyers have declared their willingness to pay any price for their beliefs.

LAOS:

Several church leaders are currently languishing in appalling conditions in Laotian prisons. Amongst them are pastors (Mrs) Kaithong, Puphet, Muk and Hasadee, as well as lay-leader Tiang. These church leaders had prayed with a terminally ill Christian lady who later died. The authorities then arrested the Christians and charged them with her murder. Subsequently the church leaders were found guilty of practising medicine without a licence. This ruling that equates prayer with medicine will have profound implications for the Church in Laos. After their lawyer filed an appeal in March, the prisoners' families were threatened with their loved-ones' prison time being extended. Torture is routine in Laotian prisons and prisoners are routinely held in stocks.

– Elizabeth Kendal, *International Religious Liberty Analyst And Advocate, Adjunct Research Fellow In The Centre For The Study Of Islam And Other Faiths At The Melbourne School Of Theology, Director Of Advocacy For Christian Faith And Freedom Based In Canberra, Australia.*

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- Christians and human rights lawyers imprisoned in China, where risk of torture is high; may they look to the Lord for absolutely everything they need and may God restrain violent hands and pierce hardened consciences.
- The courageous Christian human rights lawyers of the 'Lawyers For Protection Of The Cross' group, especially for Zhang Kai, its leader; may their courageous efforts not be in vain and may God bless everything they do as they put their liberty and their bodies on the line in defence of the Cross.
- Christians imprisoned in appalling conditions in Laos where torture is endemic; may they look to the Lord for absolutely everything they need and may God restrain violent hands and pierce hardened consciences.
- God the Sovereign Lord to intervene in seemingly untouchable China and desperately needy Laos; may the Lord Jesus Christ continue to build His Church and may the Holy Spirit sustain, comfort, encourage and strengthen His vulnerable, threatened and persecuted people.

What Is TGCA Going To Do?

TGCA has already launched the TGCA website (www.australia.thegospelcoalition.org), which has already seen well over 100,000 hits. And beyond that? Gary Millar says, 'This is the framework within which we seek to operate and what we will seek to do, under God:

- We pledge to work together for the glory of God through the promotion of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- We humbly recognise that we serve Christ alongside many brothers and sisters who do not share all our core convictions.
- We share an Australia-wide vision for promoting faithful, persevering, Christ-honouring, Bible-driven, Spirit-empowered, Gospel-centred ministry.
- We will pray for a growing culture of mutual support, prayer and encouragement among Gospel workers across Australia.
- We are committed to working "from the ground up" to encourage new and existing local Gospel partnerships.
- We are passionate about encouraging Christians in Australia to reach all who live here, including those whom God has brought to our shores from other nations.
- We will seek to play our part in encouraging Christians in Australia to take the message of the Gospel to the ends of the Earth.'

Three Things We Can Do:

- Use the website: bookmark it in your browser, follow TGCA on Twitter, read the articles and reviews, listen to the Australian sermons which are coming online soon, share how TGCA can continue to develop the kind of resources you need as together we seek to reach this nation for Christ.
- Pray for the TGCA Council, to be humble, discerning and rock solid in commitment to the Gospel.
- Make a fresh commitment to work together for the glory of Jesus Christ, so that His Church may work together in Gospel partnership on the ground for the glory of Jesus.



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'STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL'

Personal Reflections On The Gospel Coalition Australia Consultation And Launch

John McClean, Lecturer, Christ College, Sydney:

TGCA Consultation and Launch was a spiritually refreshing time in Brisbane. The aim of the consultation was to engage national leaders in a conversation about the beginnings of a Gospel Coalition in Australia and what would be the best way forward. TGCA had already started a few months back, with a website producing articles from different bloggers and writers in Australia, and the formation of a Council consisting of leaders from different denominations and backgrounds. They are all pastors or have had pastoral experience. You can check out who they are at:

<http://australia.thegospelcoalition.org/about/council>

Don Carson spoke at the Launch and on the first night of the Consultation. He was around for the Wednesday and Thursday, but was mostly in the background, not wanting TGCA to be seen as a carbon copy or branch of TGC in America.

Some of the things God challenged me on are: the Prayer Times. One of the most moving times was at the first night when we broke off into small groups and prayed for our nation. It deeply challenged me to ask the question how often do I do that personally, co-operatively in my church and also in the networks I am involved in? There is usually personal prayer but how often do I pray state by state and in particular for the continuing advancement of the Gospel in Australia. I was challenged and moved. God stirred my heart afresh and I was heavily burdened for our nation.

I loved the servant hearts and friendly smiles of the students and staff of QTC as they served us. Check the college out here: <http://www.qtc.edu.au/>

Peter Adam's sermon deeply impacted me. All of those who preached spoke from *Philippians*. Through Peter's sermon God convicted me to think through where I have been moved to competitiveness in ministry rather than seeking to glorify God in my Gospel relationships, reminding me of the cost of following Jesus, that there are other faithful men and women serving Jesus for His glory, and I should pray for them and with them because when they fall or when I snicker behind their backs I am actually not helping the cause of the Gospel. I was deeply reminded again of God's heart for Melbourne and Australia. I was moved to surrender again to the call to serve Jesus not part-time or when it suits me, but full time; moved to think through, under God's hand and grace how to keep pointing my kids to Jesus so they know Him and follow Him, but also to disciple them to be effective ambassadors of Christ.

I deeply need to be reminded of the Gospel, often personally. The Gospel of Jesus Christ keeps me humble, moves me to be generous and not competitive. If I focused more on Jesus and His glory, this moves me to help pray urgently and helps me disciple people for heart change not just will change.



Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

Acts 4:12 NIV

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CDP Calls For Teaching Of 'Queer Sex' To Cease

THE Christian Democratic party is calling on the Federal Government to immediately exclude the teaching of 'queer sex' to primary school students, which is being federally funded via the *Safe Schools Program*. 'This is an absolute injustice to the majority of parents in Australia that are not aware of the details of these teachings. No child at school should be taught about the physical "queer" acts of sex. This is outrageous and must be addressed immediately,' stated Rev Fred Nile, Leader of the Christian Democratic Party.

The Clerk of the House of the Queensland Parliament recently banned the *Safe Schools* queer sex component from the parliament's website.

'The queer sex details of the program was banned from the Queensland parliamentary website, yet, ludicrously, it's still being taught to school children,' Rev Fred Nile said. 'The *Safe Schools Program* was implemented as an anti-bullying program. According to research and reports, there are many causes of bullying including body image, socio status, ethnicity which make up 99.5% of the cases. Homosexuality and queer bullying is less than half a percent of the cause of bullying cases in high schools and it's even lower (non-existent in majority of schools) in primary schools.

'When and if parents decide to teach their child about homosexuality, pansexuality, transgender issues and the associated issues, it must be on their terms, their discretion and based on their values. These teachings should not be via the school system. The homosexual agenda is deceptively infiltrating our school system and it's preying on the vulnerable, the children. This is simply an injustice to parents and their children.'

A recent Galaxy Poll found that 64% of the Australian Public are opposed to the teaching of GLBTI (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex) issue in kindergartens and schools.

'I urge the Government to immediately ban the teaching of queer sex in Australian schools and to ensure that the *Safe Schools Program* is aimed to prevent the predominant causes of bullying,' stated Rev Fred Nile.

(Quotes from the material in question have been deleted from this report. While the material is disturbing and fully justifies the response of Mr Nile and the CDP, it is also disgusting and not fit for publication in *New Life*. – Ed)

RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE
A Colloquium organised by the Presbyterian Church of Victoria

| | | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| The 'Good' of Work | Christians and the Law | Marriage Matters | Religious Liberty | Persecuted Church |
| Islam | Church Meets State | Apologetics | Ethical Dilemmas | |

Speakers
2015 Religion in the Public Square Colloquium Speakers

Keynote Speaker: Dr Scott B. Rae is Professor of Christian Ethics at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University and Chair of the Department of Philosophy at Talbot. He has a BS in Economics from Southern Methodist University, a Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. from the University of Southern California. His primary interests are in bioethics and business ethics. He is the author of 11 books and has had articles published in various journals. He is married with three sons.

Other Speakers: Dr David van Gend > Dr Stuart Robinson > Dr Ryan Messmore > Dr John McClean > Elizabeth Kendal > Campbell Markham > Ben Saunders > Fleur Letcher.

When?
Friday 7th – Sat 8th
August 7-8, 2015.

Where?
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Enquiries?
Rev. Daniel Cambridge
03 5272 2433
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Register online at
www.yourcan.org.au

'STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL'

Personal Reflections On The Gospel Coalition Australia Consultation And Launch

Marcus Reeves, Senior Pastor, Crossroads Christian Church Canberra: 'It was a privilege to be there. I felt energised by the expression of a positive vision for our country. I feel like the timing is right for something like this. There's a great need for Gospel clarity but also Gospel action.'



James Litzow, Student, University Of Queensland And Member of Grace Bible Church, Brisbane: 'I loved the zeal they showed, and the way Don Carson presented – with clarity, insight and beauty.'

Amy Stopher, Women's Minister, Providence Church, Western Australia: 'I really enjoyed it. It was great to pray for Australia specifically, and great that prayer was such a big part of the evening.'



Don West, Principal, Trinity Theological College, Perth, Western Australia: 'Brisbane rose to the occasion with great enthusiasm. I spoke to someone who expressed that this was a significant occasion for the Gospel in Brisbane. Perhaps there are some Christians in Brisbane are now thinking, "I didn't know there were that many people who believed the Gospel like I believe the Gospel".'

Alistair Bain, Minister, St John's Presbyterian Church, Hobart: 'The singing alone was incredible.'

Read: *The Christian Sabbath Or The Jewish Sabbath, Which Should I Follow?*

by David Holden, www.defenceofthefaith.org



Friends of Indian Evangelical Mission Australia
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- We have the opportunity of listening to **Rev P John Wesley**, the General Secretary of IEM, who will be sharing first hand what Indian missions looks like today, with emphasis on IEM as they celebrate 50 years of service.

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152 Harold Rd, Noble Park VIC 3174 | (Mel:89C5)

Rest of John's speaking Itinerary in Melbourne:

Sun, 16th Aug 2015, 10am - St Andrew's Clayton Presbyterian Church
Corner Clayton Road and Shandeanu Avenue, Clayton VIC 3168

Sun, 16th Aug 2015, 3pm - St Jude's in Parkville, missions spot
Ridley College, 170 The Avenue, Parkville VIC 3052

Sat, 22nd Aug 2015, 10am - Mrs. Merle Watkins IEM Prayer Meeting
14 Ardgour St, Balwyn North VIC 3104

Sun, 23rd Aug 2015, 10.30am - Frankston Presbyterian Church, after service
36 Radiata Street, Frankston North VIC 3200

Sun, 23rd Aug 2015, 5pm - Canterbury Presbyterian Church
146 Canterbury Road, Canterbury VIC 3126



For further information contact:

Charles Wesley: 0449 103 077 | johncharleswesley@gmail.com
Noel Greig: 8555 3151 (0425 771 043) | noelen1936@yahoo.com.au

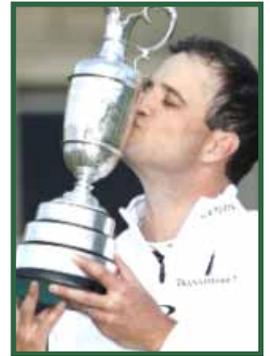
Zach Johnson: Reading Scripture During Open Victory

CHAMPION US golfer Zach Johnson says his surprise win in the recent British Open Golf tournament was partly inspired by his devotion to prayer and the Bible. The 39-year-old American was a rank outsider, but saw off the threat of emerging superstar Jordan Spieth to win the second Major of his career at St Andrews. A committed Christian, he told reporters that he'd been reading verses of Scripture in order to stay focused throughout the tournament.

'I was reading bits of Scripture to myself,' he told reporters. 'I've been reading them all week. I thank God for the talent He's given me, and I take it seriously.' In a TV interview, he suggested that these verses had helped to give him focus during difficult conditions. 'I had some Scripture going in my head and I thank the Lord,' he said.

Johnson's words in victory echoed his response to winning his previous Major, the US Masters, in 2007. After that win, he told the assembled media: 'I felt regardless of what happened today, my responsibility was to glorify God, and hopefully He thinks I did.' He has always been upfront about his faith. In a testimony article on the FCA (Fellowship Of Christian Athletes) website, Johnson says that after growing up in a Catholic household and then heading off in a more worldly direction as a student, he became a Christian after meeting the woman he would go on to marry, and for whom marrying a non-Christian would be a 'deal-breaker'. He agreed to explore the faith again. 'I discovered what it meant to live for Christ,' he says, 'and that it honestly was something I wanted to do. The facts were there, and I could sense the Holy Spirit at work. Early in the winter of 2002, I gave my life to the Lord. Before I was one,' he says, 'I always thought being a Christian would be boring. In reality, it has been the complete opposite.' But Johnson now says his faith is 'all that matters.' The British Open victory, and the attached £1.15 million prize, are presumably just a huge bonus.

– Martin Saunders,
Contributing Editor for Christian Today and the Deputy CEO of Youthscape.



Leading Scottish Minister Visits Sydney

WILLIAM PHILIP, Senior Minister of the Tron Church, Glasgow, since August 2004, Chair of Cornhill Scotland and formerly Director of Ministry with The Proclamation Trust, is speaking at Christ College, Sydney, on 21 August. From 11am-12pm he will speak on *The Preacher Who Does Not Lose Heart*, followed at 12-1pm with a public talk on *The Church In Scotland Today*. He will then engage in conversation over lunch from 1-2pm. Registration by 14 August is essential for lunch. Phone Susan Finlay: (02) 9744 1977; email:

admin@christcollege.edu.au

Australian Scholars Feature Among NIV Study Bible Contributors

SIX Australian academics have contributed to the highly anticipated new *NIV Study Bible* to be released in September. Based on the NIV translation, it also includes all new Bible study notes, a number of short articles on key topics from the Bible, maps, and charts. Sixty six different contributors from around the world have written the study notes and articles. The six Australians among them are: Dr Anthony Petterson from Morling College, Dr Colin Kruse from Melbourne School of Theology, Dr Graham Cole from Beeson Divinity School, Dr David Peterson and Dr Paul

Williamson from Moore College and Dr Brian Rosner from Ridley College. See more at:

<http://www.biblesociety.org.au/news/australian-scholars-feature-among-niv-study-bible-contributors>

Top Global Speaker To Address H.I. 'Excellence In Leadership' Event

TOP international speaker George Eby Mathew will present an address on excellence in leadership and evangelism in Brisbane on 8 August this year. Mr Mathew, a distinguished member of the Haggai Institute international Faculty, heads up the Australia and NZ enterprise mobility practice for global technology giant Infosys. Through the Haggai Institute, he uses his passion for missions and evangelism to motivate high-level third world leaders to set personal goals for kingdom building. Haggai Institute is one of the oldest and most effective missions organizations in the world, having since its foundation in 1969 trained some 98,000 highly credentialed leaders in 188 countries in advanced leadership across the developing world. The Brisbane event is free and open to the public. It will be held 2-3.30 pm on Saturday 8 August at Citipointe Church Auditorium 2/322 Wecker Road, Carindale. RSVP to Kay Waddle or register online at www.haggai-institute.com.au

The End Of Tribalism

BRISBANE was a fantastic choice for the launch of The Gospel Coalition Australia. The reason for visiting the city of the Lions was to join others in gathering around the banner of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Thursday evening saw the public launch of The Gospel Coalition Australia at the Brisbane Town Hall, with over 1,000 people in attendance. During the same week, 110 Christian leaders from around Australia gathered for a three day consultation to consider the potential role and shape that a Gospel Coalition might have in Australia.

Evangelicals are renowned for being tribal. Tribalism suggests competitiveness, factions, and even hostility. While it is necessary to defend our churches against theological liberalism, it must surely grieve God when Christians take aim at one another. I know that I have been guilty of such sin. Tribalism has for far too long existed between denominations, within denominations, between evangelicals, and against particular cities and colleges.

Could it be that for the first time in Australia's history, Evangelicals have loosened their pride and myopic visions for the sake of strengthening the work of the Gospel across our land? Of course, our history has examples where small pockets of Evangelicals have bound together and expressed Gospel generosity. During the Billy Graham Crusades of 1959 and 1969 many churches worked together for a short period of time, but never before have we witnessed at a national level, leaders from so many denominations, churches and organisations, aligning for the sake of the Gospel.

I can offer four remarks which both describe the timbre of the consultation and reason why I believe TGCA may prove to be pivotal in rallying people together in the cause of Christ:

1. Gospel Unity: True Christian unity is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There were no five-minute devotions or stories as I so often experience in Christian gatherings. Every day we listened to an hour-long exposition from God's Word, and we spent much time in prayer together, and many hours talking about Gospel work in our own patch and throughout the country. It was a wonderful expression of Ephesians 4.1-3.

2. Gospel Conviction: Hard conversations were had. There was, however, no need to fear these conversations, because where the Gospel is laid we can build trust and love. We often fear difficult conversations, but I am thankful to the Gospel Coalition Council for navigating us through several important discussions.

3. Gospel Clarity: A murky gospel may have broad appeal, but that's not what Australian Christianity needs today, and nor is it desirable according to the Scriptures. The Gospel isn't anything, it is a particular message about a particular person who has accomplished for us a particular salvation by His specific actions.

4. Gospel Character: The Holy Spirit trumps voracious personalities! Put 100 pastors, preachers and theologians in a room for three days can be one crazy zoo. Instead, what we experienced was again Ephesians 4 - 'humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, and eagerness to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'

It was a tremendous joy to share these three days with my brothers and sisters. At the moment The Gospel Coalition is foremost a website, providing excellent material for Aussie Christians. What shape it will take over the next few years and what kind of influence it may have remains known only to God and for us to discover.

– Rev Murray Campbell, Minister of Mentone Baptist Church, Melbourne

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MEET ...

RICHMOND WANDERA – A Child Of The Slums, A Man In Christ

RAISED in a Ugandan slum, Richmond Wandera has a unique perspective on life, faith and leadership. It's this perspective—and his passion for fighting injustice and poverty—that has seen the senior pastor of Kampala's New Life Baptist Church become an internationally sought-after speaker.

Today, Richmond is a university graduate, preacher and founder of the Pastors Discipleship Network, which is training more than 4,000 pastors in East Africa. He lives in Kampala, Uganda, with his wife, Rosette. The church he pastors is the very same one that hosted the Compassion child sponsorship program that changed his life.

A Challenging Childhood

Richmond's childhood was challenging and painful. When Richmond was just six years old, his father was murdered during a botched robbery at their home. The loss of his dad brought more than overwhelming grief—it meant the loss of the family's livelihood and home. Suddenly struggling to survive, the family found themselves living in Naguru, Kampala's largest slum. In Naguru's sea of tin shanties, the Wandera's new home was a 12 x 12 metre room. The roof had holes so large that when it rained, they spent many a sleepless night standing against the wall, waiting for it to pass.

With every dollar going towards rent, Richmond and his six siblings had to drop out of school, spending their days scavenging for food. Their harsh living conditions meant the family's health suffered. As a child, Richmond battled life-threatening malaria almost a dozen times. But for Richmond, the worst thing about living in poverty was not the hunger pains, the sickness, or the squalid living conditions—it was the hopelessness it brought. 'I thought I was nothing,' says Richmond. 'I didn't matter. Nobody cared even to know my name.'

A Joyful Change

Richmond's life changed when, at eight years old, he was sponsored through Compassion international aid and development organisation. 'I cannot find the words to describe the joy that filled our home when we got the news [that I was sponsored]', says Richmond. 'We're Africans. There was dancing.' As Richmond began attending Compassion's child development centre at a local church, the healthcare, education and love he received from Compassion staff and his sponsor, Heather, changed his life dramatically. 'To hear words like, "Richmond, I love you" and "Richmond, I'm praying for you", they began to bring healing into places that were destroyed by voices and poverty and self-image,' says Richmond. '[Heather] loved me even though she had never seen me.'

As his hope grew, Richmond began excelling in school. After graduating, Compassion supported him to attend university, where he became passionate about inspiring change in individuals, communities and nations to fight injustice and poverty.

Richmond returns to Australia this August for his *I Am Not Forgotten* tour, where he will share his inspiring story of overcoming poverty. To find out where you can hear Richmond's story, visit www.compassion.com.au/richmond

Compassion is Australia's second largest child sponsorship organisation and is part of a global network of both funding countries and 26 developing countries that is Compassion International, which is committed to working in partnership with local churches to foster the development of 1.7 million children living in extreme poverty. More than 100,000 of these children are currently supported by over 75,000 Australian sponsors.



Richmond sharing Christ's love and compassion with the kids back home.

Praise God And Keep Praying! Pakistan Court Overturns Asia Bibi's Death Sentence

ASIA Bibi, the Pakistani Christian mother sentenced to hang to death for 'blasphemy,' will not be executed. The Pakistani Supreme Court's three-judge panel has overturned the death sentence, previously issued by two lower courts.

Bibi was convicted of blasphemy in November 2010 for telling fellow workers on a berry farm, 'Our Christ sacrificed His life on the cross for our sins,' and 'Our Christ is alive.' She has languished in prison for more than six years and is reportedly in ill health.

'The Supreme Court of Pakistan has stayed the execution of Asia Bibi on blasphemy charges,' *Christian Today* quoted Naveed Aziz, of the British Pakistani Christian Association. 'I am pleased with this decision,' she said. 'It is obvious that international pressure led to this amazing decision, and I thank all people who have called for her freedom. Sister Asia will have to spend more time in jail, but her freedom is now a real possibility and only a matter of time.'

A new hearing has yet to be scheduled for Bibi's case. In the meantime, she remains incarcerated.

– www.christiantoday.com



UK – Denying Refuge To Christians Fleeing Islamic State, Say Church Leaders

'WITH the rise of Islamic State we are seeing what looks set to become a "genocide" of Christians in the Middle East, yet the UK has its doors firmly closed,' said Dr Patrick Sookhdeo, the Barnabas Fund's international director, in an article published by *The Telegraph* on 18 July. The Polish government has agreed to give visas to Syrian Christian families so they can resettle in Poland, but so far the UK government is unwilling to do the same. Barnabas Fund has also found that Christians are underrepresented in the number of Syrian refugees who have been admitted into the US over the course of the Syria conflict, despite the fact that Christians are considered the most vulnerable and in need of resettlement.

Although Christians made up around 10% of Syria's pre-conflict population, only 5% of the

Syrian refugees admitted into the US are Christian.

SUDAN – Pray For South Sudanese Pastors

PLEASE pray for South Sudanese pastors Rev Yat Michael and Rev Peter Yein Reith, whose final court hearing before a verdict has been held. The pastors face serious criminal charges because of their links with a persecuted church in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan. The defence challenged the prosecution evidence and asked the court to uphold the constitutional principles of a fair trial. The charges, some of which carry a potential death sentence, include undermining the constitutional system and espionage. At the next hearing, scheduled for 5 August, the judge is expected to deliver his verdict and sentence, if he finds the pastors guilty. Please pray that the pastors will be found not guilty and their case dismissed.

– *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*

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CALLING ALL MEN

Hop Into BASECAMP: City

MORE than 1200 men are expected to attend *BASECAMP: City*, at the Australian Technology Park in Redfern, Sydney, on 8 August.

A feature of the conference will be six 12 minute talks sharing practical wisdom for living as a Christian man.

Build Up is an exciting new event format from Katoomba Christian Convention. As part of its re-launched men's ministry, *Build Up* will adopt a similar style to the renowned *TED Talks*, as men share personal stories with practical wisdom for living as a Christian man.

In the morning of *BASECAMP: City*, men will hear short 12-minute talks as men share their experiences and practical wisdom for living as a Christian man. Six men will share their stories in this session, with time included for questions. Topics include:

- *Two Big C's*, where Leigh Hatcher will share lessons of faith and life from more than two years of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, and the past two years with Prostate Cancer.
- *What Persecuted Christians In The Middle East Taught Me About Hope*, where Carlos Aguilera will share what he learned about hope as he spent time with persecuted Christians in the Middle East.

For more details or to register, go to:
<http://basecampmen.com/buildup>

Quotable Quote:

*"The Bible says"
is one of the most important
phrases in the English language'*
- Gordon Cheng.

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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)

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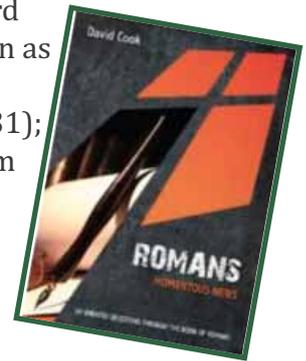
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Good Ambitions Make For Good Works – Romans 15.14-33

PAUL urges the Romans to literally ‘co-agonise’ with him in prayer (v30). The word he uses describes a soldier who joins in the defensive line. Such is prayer; it is seen as part of a battle, a struggle for the Gospel. The Romans are to pray:

- That Paul will be rescued from the belligerent unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem (v31);
- That the collection among the Gentile churches will be accepted by the Jerusalem church and thus provide a seal of approval on Paul’s Gentile ministry;
- That Paul will then be free to come and join them in Rome for further refreshment. He has already referred to this in 1.11-13.



Paul probably wrote *Romans* during his 18 month stay in Corinth (see Acts 18.11). Luke’s record in *Acts* therefore tells us how these prayers were answered.

The collection was accepted by the Jerusalem church and Paul was delivered from the unbelievers, according to Acts 21. His deliverance comes from the unbelieving Roman garrison (Acts 21.30-32), a most unexpected source.

Did he make it to Rome? Yes, but it was not easy. He came via court appearance, storm, shipwreck, snake bite and under chains as the guest of the Roman government. He had appealed to Caesar and so the Romans brought him, under arrest, to Rome.

We don’t know if Paul ever made it to Spain.

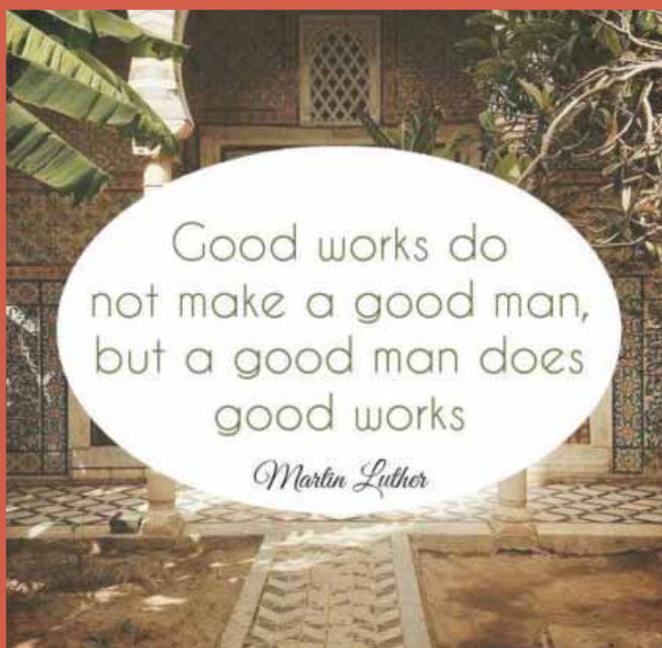
God hears and answers the prayers of His people but often in unexpected ways. You may be praying about an issue now. Be sure that God hears your prayer and in one way or another will answer. His answer may well be unexpected, as it was in the case of Paul. Paul follows his benediction about hope in 15.13 with a further benediction about peace in 15.33.

Traditionally, letters of the first century wished for their readers peace and prosperity; Paul changed that in Romans 1.7 to ‘grace and peace’. Having made it clear in Romans 5.1,2 that peace and hope are direct results of God’s provision of righteousness, it is fitting that Paul should conclude this section of his letter by focusing on these two qualities. Justification reminds us that God’s wrath has been spent and that He is at peace with us, and that what God has begun, in providing us with a righteous standing, He will complete in our glorification; that is our hope.

FOR REFLECTION:
 How important to your daily life is Christian hope?
 How important is it to you to know that God is at peace with you? Why?

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

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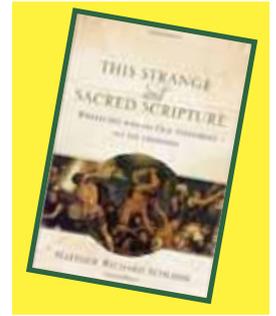
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BOOKS WORTH READING

THE STRANGE AND SACRED SCRIPTURE: Wrestling With The Old Testament And Its Oddities, Matthew Richard Schlimm, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015. ISBN 978-0-8010-3979-9.

MATTHEW Schlimm is assistant Professor of Old Testament at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. He sees himself as taking the difficult middle road, refusing to give up either his acceptance of the Old Testament as Sacred Scripture or his moral sense of right and wrong. He faces head-on the puzzles and (at first) repellent things that happen in the OT. This, at least, is a more honest approach than what happens in too many churches (and pulpits) where the OT is largely ignored (apart from our favourite psalms).



Schlimm contends that despite all its perplexing issues, the OT is still the friend of faith, but friendship requires time, effort and patience – and that is the case if we are going to deepen our understanding and appreciation of the OT. On the other hand, I am not satisfied with many of Schlimm's suggested solutions to the perceived problems. This is a book only for pastors and theological students who will not be swayed from their evangelical convictions. Part of the problem is that Schlimm limits himself to referring to the sacred character of Scripture; he does not speak about its inspiration.

In interpreting the opening chapters of Genesis, Schlimm raises the question of genre – what kind of literature is it? His stress is on symbolism and poetic features. It needs to be remembered that he is writing for the North American situation where science and religion are often polarized. He sees Genesis One as consistent with theistic evolution and stresses the theological truths of the chapter. He then turns to the Bible's morally questionable stories (eg Jacob's treachery, David's adultery), noting that 'the OT provides no biographies of saints' (p48). Instead, we see people making poor life choices, and we learn from their mistakes (and hopefully avoid these faults in our own lives).

The Bible describes a violent world because the world is a violent place (even today!), not because God approves every act of violence. As well, we are not in a position to morally evaluate God's acts of judgment (often violent). We are taught to trust in God, not weapons, and the command to eradicate the Canaanites is not one for later times. Schlimm is right in saying that many OT texts correct and prevent an extreme patriarchal reading and ethic. There are OT laws that seem bizarre, and in a helpful chapter, Schlimm shows that closer study reveals their rationale. They constantly remind us of God's holiness and purity. He shows that the OT law is flexible (within moral limits) and needs to be applied with thought and imagination.

His connecting the lavish construction of the tabernacle (and later temple) with modern church buildings is misplaced and weird. The book of Haggai is not relevant to church building programs. This section of Schlimm's book should have been omitted. Schlimm is right in defending the OT against the charge of being riddled with contradictions, and he prefers to speak of its many voices and diverse perspectives held in artful tension, so that there is in its pages an ongoing dialogue of complex truths. The upshot is that we need to give every Bible text its due. We need to compare Scripture with Scripture to discover the balance of God's truth. Life is complex and we need the complex truth of Scripture to throw light on it and to guide our path.

We are challenged to view David's laments and Job's cries as expressions of faith and resources that can strengthen our faith in times of great stress. Schlimm notes that the God of wrath is not limited to the OT. The cross cannot be properly understood without it, as the place where God's wrath and love meet. The overall lesson is that though we may sometimes wish that the OT was a little different than it is – explaining (but not excusing) the comparative neglect of the OT by many Christians – we would be the poorer if the OT was any different than it is. God knows what we need better than we do ourselves!

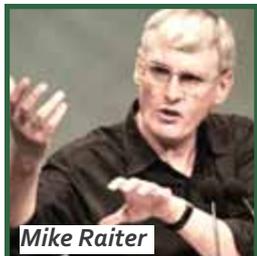
What is useful in this volume is that Schlimm does not try to tone down, deny or explain away the awkward features of the OT. There is, however, no need to accept all Schlimm's evaluations and judgments. The best thing about the book is his use of the metaphor of the OT as an ever-present friend and companion on life's journey of faith. As said above, this is not a book for the average churchgoer.

– Greg Goswell

BOOKS WORTH READING

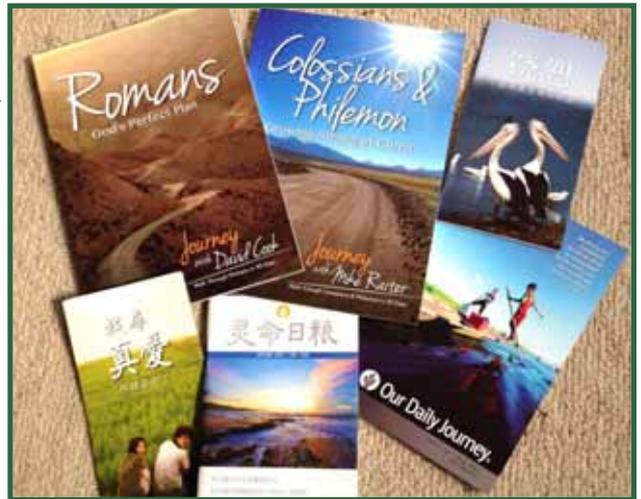
Our Daily Bread Ministries — New Name For Radio Bible Class

MIKE Raiter was the speaker in Albury, NSW, on 25 July at the launch of RBC's renaming to Our Daily Bread Ministries – appropriate as their best known publication is the well-liked and widely-used *Our Daily Bread* Bible study notes. ODB Ministry's Australian Director,



Mike Raiter

Terry Shearer, introducing the night's proceedings, said that the aim of the ministry is to make the life-changing wisdom of the Bible understandable and accessible to all so as to help people grow in their relationship with God by growing in their Biblical knowledge.



Mike Raiter, formerly Principal of Melbourne College Of Theology, now Director, Centre for Biblical Preaching, spoke on *Praying ('Let's Pray')* and *Praising ('Let's Sing')* from Colossians 1.1-14 and 3.16 respectively. He spoke of the power of prayer as exemplified by Dr Helen Roseveare during her service in Congo and identified with Luther's view that 'After theology I give the greatest place and highest honour to singing.'

Under the imprint of *Discovery House Publishers*, a series of Bible study books is coming to publication by ODB Ministries. Now available is *Romans – God's Perfect Plan* by David Cook (serialised in *New Life* but now revised, and *Colossians & Philemon – Growing Strong In Christ* by Mike Raiter. These attractively produced books are ideal for personal or adult group Bible study.

For further details about these and other resources, go to: ourdailybread.org/

Worth Sharing:

'WHEN we rely upon organisation we get what organisation can do; when we rely upon education, we get what education can do; when we rely upon eloquence, we get what eloquence can do; but when we rely upon prayer, we get what God can do.' (A. C. Dixon)
– Posted on Facebook by Guy Mason, Lead Pastor, 'City On a Hill', Melbourne.

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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:

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