

Queen's Christian Faith Marked As Longest Reign Celebrated

QUEEN Elizabeth II became the longest-reigning British monarch on 9 September 2015. The Christian Institute took a look at her steadfast faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Queen Elizabeth has often used her traditional *Christmas Message* to speak of forgiveness, Jesus' sacrificial life, the fact that no one is beyond God's love and the example that she herself takes from Jesus.

Last year the Queen said: 'For me, the life of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, whose birth we celebrate today, is an inspiration and an anchor in my life.'

A role-model of reconciliation and forgiveness, He stretched out His hands in love, acceptance and healing. Christ's example has taught me to seek to respect and value all people of whatever faith or none.'

Serve

In 2012 she highlighted that Christmas is the time of year when we remember 'that God sent His only Son "to serve, not to be served." He restored love and service to the centre of our lives in the person of Jesus Christ', she added.

Forgive

The previous year she said: 'God sent into the world a unique person – neither a philosopher nor a general (important though they are) – but a Saviour, with the power to forgive. Forgiveness lies at the heart of the Christian faith. It can heal broken families, it can restore friendships and it can reconcile divided communities. It is in forgiveness that we feel the power of God's love.'

Example

Libby Purves, writing in *The Times*, also noted the Queen's consistent comments on her faith. Purves picked up on comments she made back in 2000 when she told the Commonwealth: 'For me the teachings of Christ and my own personal accountability before God provide a framework in which I try to lead my life. God sent His only Son "to serve, not to be served". I, like so many of you, have drawn great comfort in difficult times from Christ's words and example.'

On 9 September, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II surpassed Queen Victoria as the longest reigning monarch in British history – having been on the throne for 63 years and seven months. Over that period, there have been 12 British Prime Ministers from Winston Churchill to David Cameron and 12 American Presidents, stretching back to Harry S Truman.

– *The Christian Institute*



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SRI – Soldiering On

MY wife saw an episode of *Compass* on 13 September which was extremely critical of Special Religious Instruction in schools, which she tells me contained many inaccuracies and mistruths such as the statement by Dr David Zyngier, of Monash University and Education Advisor to FIRIS ('Freedom In Religion In Schools') that 'Victoria's SRI instructors are untrained'. In reality, 41% have a range of post-secondary qualifications up to Advanced Diploma level and 49% hold Bachelor, Master or Doctoral qualifications. In fact, SRI volunteers are highly educated and extremely well trained, with ongoing systematic in-service training provided by ACCESS Ministries.

A second example is that Dr Zyngier claimed that 'all they do in SRI is colour in and join up the dots.' In fact, the ACCESS Ministries' *Explore Christianity* curriculum was submitted to, scrutinised and approved by the Victorian Department of Education. This would hardly be the case if all the children did was 'colour in and join up the dots.' Of course there's nothing wrong with some use of 'colouring in', used (at least in my teaching days) to assist young children to achieve co-ordination as they learn to write, and joining dots to help them with learning early arithmetic.

When I went to Teacher's College we were taught to believe that 'Education is the pursuit of truth.' Have things changed in that regard, at least among the experts and advisors?

The gallant band of those who through the years have gone in to state schools to teach what is now called 'Special Religious Instruction' have been in front-line ministry and have persevered against much discouragement, but they have seen young lives drawn to faith in Christ, many of them willing to testify in later years that they are Christians today because when they were young a special person came each week and taught them the faith.

Teachers of SRI deserve our whole-hearted support and encouragement as Christians and fellow workers in the Kingdom. And they deserve better from those who oppose them. It's one thing to oppose, but it's altogether something else to deride and misrepresent your opponent, especially when he or she is a person of good-will.

ACCESS Ministries and others who support and co-ordinate the teaching of SRI also deserve the strong support of all Christians. They set standards, prepare and provide curricula, provide training, encourage and raise up prospective SRI teachers, liaise with schools and governments, and co-ordinate the whole operation of SRI across the state.

Children, in the pursuit of truth, have a right to know their heritage, which in large part owes so much to Christianity and its Founder. And they have a right to know the Christian morality, ethic and worldview in choosing, out of the multitude of alternatives, which one they will follow, which one will deliver them the highest quality of life, which one will give them the greatest degree of happiness and contentment.

Surely 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers ...' So it's time to 'Put on the whole armour of God ... that having done all, we may stand.'

– Bob Thomas

THE MIDDLE EAST: Christians In Crisis

IN any conflict, explains Australian author Denis Dragovic, the wealthy are the first to flee. Then, as life becomes intolerable, the middle class flee across borders into camps where they wait in hope that the fighting will end and they will be able to return to their homes and businesses. When the fighting doesn't end, they seek alternatives, including the services of people smugglers. 'In the case of Syria ...,' says Dragovic, 'we are now in that last phase.' Lacking resources, the poor have little choice but to stay and watch their children grow up traumatised, brutalised and without stable education. When peace comes, says Dragovic, the fighters are rewarded with top jobs while the traumatised poor have little to offer, making reconstruction virtually impossible. At this point the protagonists – neo-Ottoman Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, al-Qaeda and ISIS – will doubtless fight to fill the void.

Dragovic maintains that a more sustainable solution is to 'better resource the front-line countries, Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, while putting pressure on Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States to accept asylum applications'.

A Europe struggling with demographic decline might hope to benefit from an influx of skilled migrants. However, the mass inflow of an alien culture brings with it huge risks. Parallel societies will consolidate and racial-religious tensions will escalate. This will most certainly end badly. Muslims (generally) are aware of Muhammad's alleged prophesy that Islam would first conquer Constantinople, the capital of eastern/Byzantine Europe, (which it did in 1453) and then Rome (the capital of western/Latin Europe). Islamic fundamentalist ideologues and militants are certainly aware of it and doubtless are deliberately hastening it.

Australia has promised to take more refugees, specifically family groups belonging to 'persecuted minorities in camps'. On one hand, it is very exciting to hear it finally acknowledged that Christians are facing an existential threat. Muslim, human rights and Opposition groups are rejecting the policy as 'discriminatory', which is untenable as Arab Muslims are clearly not facing elimination. The policy is needs-based.

On the other hand, the Australian and UK commitment to only take refugees from camps is problematic, for, as former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey recently pointed out, the Christians are generally not in the camps. This has long been the case – the camps are simply too dangerous for religious minorities. Consequently Christians seek refuge in monasteries, churches and Christian schools. From there, most either share rental properties or are billeted out to local Christian families. Thus the local church carries the burden, not the UN.

The global Church needs to share this load and send aid to the churches that are caring for refugees, but only through recognised Christian agencies.

Whilst multitudes of Christian youths and families are understandably desperate to leave the Middle East, their pastors and priests are understandably desperate for them to stay. 'The almost communal wave of youth emigration, especially in Syria, but also in Lebanon and Iraq breaks my heart, wounding me deeply and dealing me a deadly blow,' laments Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch Gregorios III. 'Given this tsunami of emigration ... what future is left for the Church? What will become of our homeland? What will become of our parishes and institutions?' he asks as he appeals to Christians to stay.

Many Christian leaders believe the temptation to flee must be resisted, as the Christian exodus only serves to facilitate the Islamic agenda of a total religious cleansing of the Middle East. But Christians will only stay if they are secure. In Syria, Christians are only secure in the 20% of the country still under government control. Instead of taking directions from regional powers Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran – all state sponsors of terror – and the West should prioritise protecting minorities and working in their interests, so that Christians might be safe in Christianity's historic heartland. To do that, the West might need to swallow its pride and talk to Assad and to Russia. Ever since the Crimean War (in the 1850s) the Islamic powers of the Middle East have exploited their geo-strategic position and played the West off against the East to advance their own ends. Ever since the Crimean War the West has backed Muslims at the expense of persecuted Christians. Surely the time has come for the West to be astute, identify the real enemy and put an end to this ruse, for the sake of imperilled Christians.

– Elizabeth Kendal, author of

Turn Back the Battle: Isaiah Speaks To Christians Today (Deror Books, 2012).

<http://www.turnbackthebattle.com/thebook.html>

PLEASE PRAY:

- **That the Lord of Hosts will intervene on behalf of each imperilled believer in the Middle East; may those requiring rescue be rescued and those who want to stay in their homeland have sanctuary.**
- **God will intervene personally on behalf of each monastery and church sheltering and caring for Christian refugees; may the Lord raise all the necessary funds and give a voice to the voiceless.**
- **the Lord Almighty will secure justice and liberty for His precious people, and the Lord of Hosts be their defence.**
- **The Holy Spirit will flood the hearts of all pastors, priests and Christian religious workers across the Middle East that they will know His love, grace and comfort; may their faith remain strong and their hope not fade; may the Lord bless them for their faithful service.**
- **our faithful God will intervene to establish 'the work of [His] hands' – an autonomous Assyrian province in northern Iraq. And may all the glory go to Him.**

Christian Books Worldwide Answers The Call: 'Bring The Books'

CHRISTIAN Books Worldwide (www.christianbooksworldwide.org/) reports that growth of conservative evangelical Christians is over twice that of other Christians and is over twice that of other Christians in percentage terms, at 13 million new Christians per annum. From its headquarters near London, CBW is dedicated to translating and distributing classic Christian literature into languages such as Hindi, Urdu, Romanian and many others.

As an example, CBW is supporting Romanian pastor Dinu Maga in a new translation of the Bible into Romanian as well as sound books such as *Foundations of the Christian Faith* and the first volume of Ryle's *Expository Thoughts On The Gospels*. Dinu's son, Andrei, a highly qualified IT specialist, has offered his services to launch a library of e-books in English and every language in which CBW has published. There may be problems in downloading materials in less developed countries, but CBW thinks it right to start this work now. It is remarkable the rate of conversion to electronic means in otherwise poor countries.

Last year CBW published 1,000 copies of *Foundations Of The Christian Faith* in Hindi. These have all been distributed to pastors in the Madhya Pradesh region of India and CBW is looking to re-print.

Normally, CBW's focus is on the developing world, but they also have a UK ministry among ethnic people. Multi-lingual tracts are going into churches in Leicester (new), Derby, Birmingham, Hayes and Southall. A new leaflet *Why Jesus Died On A Cross* has been translated into Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi and is awaiting Gujarati.

CBW is holding a joint Open Day with their sister mission Pastor Training International on Saturday 26 September from 10am till 4pm, at East London Tabernacle (just around the corner from Mile End Station). Paul Mallard is preaching on the day.

For more information about CBW, contact Mike Taylor (mtaylor@christianbooksworldwide.org)
phone: 01372 372983

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ACCESS Sets The Record Straight On Special Religious Instruction In Victorian Schools

'MORE and more we trust our political leaders less and less' is the response from Dawn Penney, CEO of ACCESS Ministries, the major provider of Special Religious Instruction in Victorian Schools, to comments made in the Victorian Parliament during Question Time on 1 September 2015:

WHEN asked by the Shadow Minister for Education Nick Wakeling during Question Time if there was a lack of consultation and if this change constitutes a broken promise, the Minister effectively accused Mr Wakeling of being wrong in fact. Dawn Penney disagrees, and relies on the following facts for the assertion that this unexpected policy change is in fact a broken promise:

- ♦ The fact that the Department of Education entered into a two-year agreement with SRI providers (including ACCESS ministries) that runs until 31 December 2016, another 17 months.
- ♦ The fact that DET, as recently as February this year, required ACCESS ministries to develop and submit for vetting, two full years of program material.
- ♦ The fact that when asked before the last election (less than ten months ago) about its intentions regarding SRI, the Labor party stated, in writing, that in supporting a diverse State it would make sure that 'all SRI delivered in schools complies with the Act'.
- ♦ The explicit support for SRI given by the then Opposition Leader Daniel Andrews to Ms Penney in a face to face meeting just weeks before the November 2014 election, that 'As long as parents want SRI, then I have no problem with it'.

Ms Penney commented that legal advice indicates that the announcement of this policy change, made without consultation with any stakeholders, may be in breach of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* which requires SRI to be offered only during 'the hours set aside for instruction'.

'For the Minister to blithely assert in his reply that "the views of the players are well known" and to use this as an excuse for failing to consult with stakeholders before making this ill-advised and rushed decision, shows a total disregard for the wishes of parents, school communities, school principals and the interests of 30,000 students,' Ms Penney says.

The Rising Generation Needs To Know Christian Values And Principles

I WRITE to express concern at the Victorian Labor Government's policy to diminish the work of SRI in State schools. Recently I undertook research on Melbourne's spiritual heritage in a book released early this year, *Marvellous Melbourne And Spiritual Power*. While undertaking historical research I came across references in separate biographies to Sidney Myer and Sir George Coles, perhaps the most influential merchandisers Melbourne has ever known, the businesses they founded existing nationwide today.

Not generally known, but recorded in the official biography of Sidney Myer, is that Myer, the Russian Jew, converted to Christianity largely influenced by the Christian ethics exhibited by his joint Managing Director, Edwin Lee Neil. Sidney Myer 'eventually made a careful comparison of his own trading dogmas with the prescriptions of Christian doctrine.' The two men desired to make the store as 'celebrated for its morals as for its merchandise ... staff were instructed to apply the principles of Christian ethics to the daily task of selling goods in the Myer store. Honesty, loyalty, unselfishness, justice, courtesy, kindness were required from every member of the organisation,' all of which are Christian virtues. 'Staff privileges were created ... staff training extended to embrace a wide medley of social and humanitarian interests and it was imparted during working hours ... working conditions were improved to a point excelling those of other houses ... the consequence was that the staff carried the praise of the Emporium into every part of the metropolis and into every stratum of society.' As is well known, Myer went on to become one of the most munificent benefactors Melbourne has known, giving large amounts for helpful and charitable causes.

The biographer of Sir George Coles wrote that Sir George assisted in raising considerable amounts of money for Christian Education in Schools, recognising it was necessary to build a Christian ethic and morality into the lives of children. His biographer wrote, 'This was a subject which he was particularly interested in, and devoted considerable amounts of time and money to ... he was a visionary who accepted the challenges of the future without forsaking the values of the past.'

In 1966, when asked to write an article on his philosophy of life, Sir George wrote: 'Above all else, I owe most to my parents for the grounding they gave me in the Christian religion ... the importance of Christian morality, of doing the right thing ... I have always believed that Christian principles are as applicable and should be applied in business as much as in private life. Primarily this means simple honesty and respect in one's dealings with the public and one's business associates. Fair dealing, fair profits, and truthful advertising should be the guiding principles.'

The lives of these two outstanding Melbourne businessmen illustrate the importance of instilling Christian principles into the minds of our young people. With so much crime today linked to alcohol and drugs, it is not more police or security measures that is necessary to reduce crime and improve family life, but more instruction in morality and the ethic of self-improvement through Christian teaching that will bring remarkable social rewards for all. May I respectfully urge you to assist in reversing the adverse SRI decisions made during the term of the present Government and rather encourage the teaching of the Christian faith in State Schools.

– Will F. Renshaw

FAITH AND WORK:

Integrating Faith and Work: New Partnership Between Ridley Marketplace Institute and City Bible Forum

THE Ridley Marketplace Institute exists to help students, pastors and workers to better integrate faith and everyday life. Ridley is pleased to announce a strategic partnership that will enhance this ministry and ensure its long term viability.

Andrew Laird, who has served with City Bible Forum Melbourne for the past 18 months, will be seconded part-time to Ridley from 2016. Andrew spent 13 years in journalism having worked as a news reporter for radio station 2UE and as a newsreader for WSFM in Sydney. He has completed an MDiv at Sydney Missionary and Bible College and is undertaking a research Master's degree on ethics and the marketplace. Andrew's role at Ridley will include teaching marketplace subjects and leading a cohort of students interested in marketplace ministry. He will also generate content for use in core subjects to help students relate their learning to the everyday work life of Christians.

Ridley Acting Principal, Dr Tim Foster, says, 'This arrangement will ensure that Ridley students continue to be equipped to support workers integrate their faith and work and to promote this value in the College. This partnership will enable CBF to impact future ministers while Ridley will gain more exposure to the marketplace.'

The Marketplace Institute has operated for three years. Dr Foster says, 'As we move into the next phase we need to ensure the sustainability of this ministry by harnessing the synergies that now exist between Ridley and CBF.' Melbourne Director of the City Bible Forum, Robert Martin, anticipates that 'this will be an important partnership which will enable God's people to be better trained in their theological thinking and practice in the arena of work by a highly capable practitioner who inhabits the worlds of both college and city.'

Andrew Laird also sees great potential in this arrangement. 'I've admired the concept of the Marketplace Institute since it began, in particular its aim to help shape future church leaders to minister to those in their congregations who are in the workplace. I'm really looking forward to being involved in this important part of Ridley in 2016.'



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ACL Welcomes Government Response To Syrian Crisis

THE Australian Christian Lobby welcomes the Federal Government's response to the Syrian refugee crisis with the allocation of 12,000 additional places for asylum seekers. ACL Managing Director Lyle Shelton applauded the Government for acting in response to the humanitarian crisis. 'This is an appropriate initial response but we hope more can be done in the future given the scale of the disaster, the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II.

'This announcement comes as a great encouragement to the more than 20,000 ACL supporters who one year ago signed a petition urging the government to increase the refugee intake.' Mr Shelton said the Government was right to focus on persecuted religious minorities, something ACL has long called for. 'Sadly Christians are bearing the brunt of persecution in the Middle East with a form of religious genocide occurring in Syria where Christians have lived for 2,000 years.

'ACL believes that assistance should be based on human suffering. Naturally the most needy groups are religious minorities like Christians, Yazidis, Mandeans and others. We support including these groups in the allocation, not merely because of their religion, but because of their need,' Mr Shelton said.

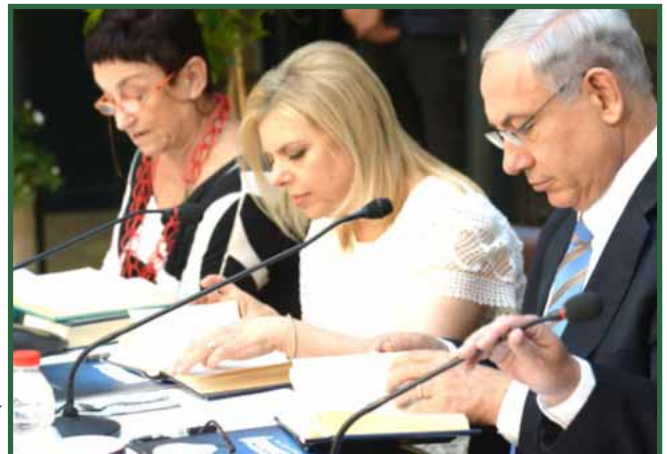
Most Israelis Own A Bible

A SURVEY conducted late in August revealed that nearly all Israeli Jews own a Bible, that most revere it as the holy Word of God, and that nearly half the Jewish population still reads from the Scriptures at least on occasion.

The poll was conducted in the run-up to the *Opening the Tanakh* conference at the Herzog Academic College, which was attended by 7,000 Israelis and foreign visitors who were treated to a wide range of lectures and workshops dealing with the Bible and its place in modern society, especially Israeli Jewish society.

The results, originally published in Israel's largest daily newspaper *Yediot Ahronot*, showed that no fewer than 95% of all Israeli Jews have a Bible in their home.

A full 68% of respondents said they revere the Bible as a 'holy book,' and nearly half (42%) said they read the Scriptures at least infrequently. Only 15% of Israeli Jews said they never read the Bible, and just 9% said they have no connection to the Word of God.



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hosting a Bible study at his official residence in Jerusalem last year. (Flash90)

- National Association of Christian Leaders

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How To Help In Cambodia:

THE Founder and Director of Cambodian Care Koy Chhim, who has a heart to educate his own people in his own country, has established three 'Light of Future Schools', two in Phonm Penh and one in Kratie Province and they are bringing the love of Jesus to the poorest of the poor with Sunday services and Bible studies on Saturdays.

Cambodia has suffered from the Khmer Rouge, one of the most violent and deadliest regimes in the history of the world. As a result, Koy has youth, determination, a love of God and a heart for children of his country.

Financial charitable contributions towards the day to day expenses for these schools and for teacher's salaries are much needed. To get the best rate, your contribution can be deposited directly into the Australian Account of Cambodian Care: Capital Healing Rooms Inc. NAB. BSB 082 968. Account 5679 49612.

Please inform Judith Bond of your deposit and a receipt will be forwarded. Her email address is: jbondjet@hotmail.com and her mobile number is: 0432 411 593.



Koy Chhim distributing aid.

Melbourne Muslim Mission Vindicated

A MUSLIM man who has been harassing street stall outreach team in Melbourne CBD finally came to the Magistrates Court last week. His lawyer and the outreach ministry's lawyer bargained hard for nearly six hours. He wanted them to remove some of the pamphlets from the stall but they refused. Facing a long and expensive legal process, he eventually gave in. He gave an undertaking that he would not come near the stall, or photograph or post on the internet about it. The magistrate gave him a talk about allowing free speech and not endangering others. He was not very happy about it. But this was a landmark case to show that Christians will not be intimidated while on the streets sharing about Jesus. Members of the outreach team are praising God for this positive outcome and are thankful to those who donated so generously to this important case. With the removal of the Muslim man who has been bothering the group and who wanted to close the stall down, things should be more peaceful on Saturdays and even more continuing significant spiritual conversations with Muslims and others is expected. Ring Richard on 0407 061 574 if you want to join in on any Saturday.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

You're Invited ...

Conference On Muslim Women

MEN and women are warmly welcomed to meet with experienced practitioners and scholars from around the world for a training day on understanding more richly and engaging more deeply with some more hidden members of the Muslim community. This conference will inform Christians about the issues facing Muslim women. It will be held in Parkville, Vic, on Monday 28 September from 9am to 5.30pm. The cost of \$30 includes lunch. For registration email Kornelius at admin2@whenwomenspeak.net Please include the following details in the email: your name, your contact phone number, your Pastor's name and Pastor's contact phone number.

In His Presence Youth Rally

A YOUTH Rally night, *IN HIS PRESENCE*, for Young People Praying For Sydney, will be held at Newtown Mission Chapel, 280A King Street Newtown, NSW, on 19 September at 6pm. For more information contact Newtown Mission, PO Box 60 Newtown 2042. Phone: (02) 9519 9000 or email: www.newtownmission.org.au

... To Pray For Africa Inland Mission

• Pray for Africa's unreached people and the ministry of Africa Inland Mission. Today could you

please pray for the effect of some recent events and events this weekend.

• Praise God for the August conference events. About 200 people in four Australian states received training and encouragement to share Jesus with Muslims through guest speaker Fouad Masri. About 90 people have undertaken Bridges training through AIM since November to help connect with Muslims. Pray for positive connections and sharing with Muslims in Australia.

• Pray for the *Pacific2Nations* event in Auckland this weekend. A capacity audience of 2,500 is expected at the Vodafone Events Centre. This event is aimed at mobilising Pacific Islanders into mission. More than 300,000 islanders live in Auckland. Pray the Lord of the Harvest will indeed raise up workers for His Harvest field, including Africa!

• Pray for the ReachOut Missions Conference event at Taree on Saturday. Pray for Nita Finger representing AIM. Pray God will use this regional event to inspire the church and raise up workers.

Who Can YOU Forward New Life To?

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'Syrian Refugee Intake Must Not Jeopardise Australian's Safety' – Fred Nile

THE Leader of the Christian Democratic Party Rev Fred Nile has commended the Abbott Government for the announcement declaring the intake of 12,000 refugee families which will be predominately from 'very persecuted minorities' under our extended humanitarian program.

'It's reassuring that the Abbott government has declared to adopt a stringent process guided by strategic policies to ensure the safety of our nation. Although our society appears to be sheltered from immediate terrorist threat, we must bear in mind that ASIO is currently investigating over 400 terrorist threats. There is evidently a comprehensive level of anti-terror measures which have been adopted accordingly. The reality is, there is also a risk to Australian security concerning the proposed 12,000 refugee intake announced this week,' stated Rev Nile.

Some victims of the Syrian conflict who have already made it to Australia have warned that our government must be very careful about who we approve under our humanitarian program. Katia Alsommoh and her husband, Syrian Orthodox Christians, have stated that they fled their home in Syria last year and have been fortunate to have been granted humanitarian visas and now live in Western Sydney. Ms Alsommoh warned of the risks involved in the refugee intake and indicated that there were men who were evidently on Facebook and the internet who were with ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra who were in Germany and Sweden claiming refugee status.

'Europe is experiencing an influx of people, predominately men, 72% in fact are men. We've seen thousands of men forcing through the European borders, on boats, on rafts relocating thousands of men daily who are entering via the shores of Europe. One must pose the question: Why are only 28% of refugees women and children? What are the factors causing millions of young, fit men to take desperate measures without their family, sisters and mothers? One predominant factor to consider is Syria's compulsory conscription into the military, which currently is fighting the war against IS. This is one factor which poses many concerns and also questions the legitimacy of those claiming to be refugees.'

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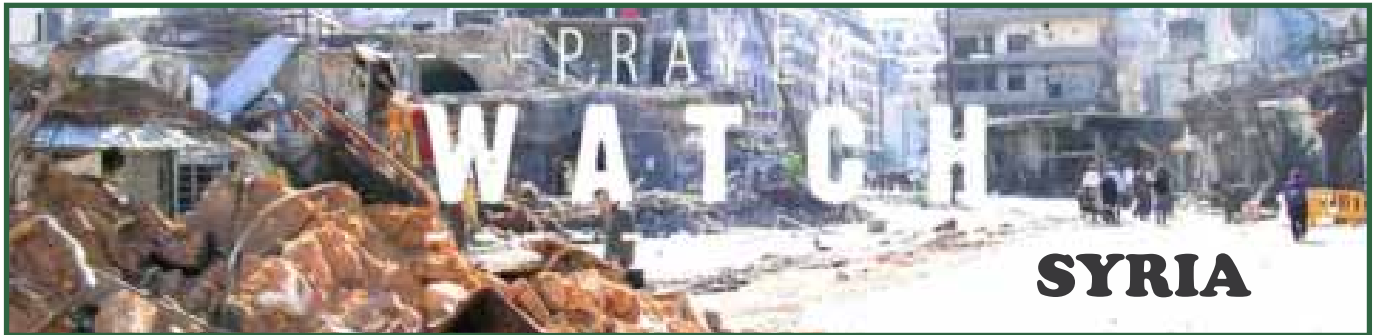
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AS followers of Jesus, we are called to be experts in the love of Christ. We are ecstatic about the government's response to the Syria crisis, and we urge believers across Australia to welcome these 12,000 refugees with open arms. Open Doors is working with the local church in Syria, and we know that a crisis of this scale needs a similar sized response.

You have probably seen the heartbreaking image of Aylan from Syria, who tragically drowned whilst trying to seek safety with his family. This image has quickly become the defining human image of the crisis unfolding in Syria. He is one of 3.9 million refugees who have fled Syria because of the conflict.

There is also an enormous need for the 7.6 million internally displaced Syrians, who currently do not have the opportunity to leave. It means that 1 in 5 of the worlds displaced people are Syrian.

NIGERIA: Kidnapped Bishop's Car Found

ANGLICAN Communion reports that the car that was being used by Bishop Moses Tabwaye when he was kidnapped was found on Friday evening 4 September. The Bishop of Gwagwalada in the Province of Nigeria has been kidnapped and is being held for ransom, according to news reports.

LAOS: Two Christians Arrested For 'Spreading The Faith'

TWO Christians in central Laos have been detained on charges of 'spreading the faith'. Bountheung Phetsomphone, 43, and Neuy, 40, who are both married with three children each, are being held in jail in Khounkham in Khammouane Province. They were arrested on 2 September during a lunch visit to a family in Nong-hang village. Five police agents raided the home, apparently after a tip-off from local officials. Local sources say that police in Khounkham have been monitoring Christian activities closely for several years, due to concerns over the church growth. Bountheung and Neuy are reported to have brought hundreds of people to Christ through their witness.

Christians make up just 2% of the population in this communist country. Please pray for the immediate release of Bountheung and Neuy. Praise God for their powerful witness and for the way He has worked through them to bring many Lao people to Christ. Pray for local officials who oppose Christians in this area of Central Laos. Pray that they too will be touched by the

Open Doors, through the local church, is working in Syria, supporting the needs of 9,000 families. We are committed to staying, as while many have become refugees - even more people are displaced. This is the need that the church and Open Doors are committed to, showing the love of Christ in action. If you can, now is the time to please give to the ministry of Open Doors in the Middle East.

Please Pray With Us

- Praise God that many have been able to find homes in new countries.
- Pray for those who feel trapped having fled violence and are now caught inside Syria needing assistance.
- Pray for the believers God has called to stay in Syria, these are regular men and women who tire and seek to serve God. Pray for strength and protection as they do this.

– odaustralia@od.org

Holy Spirit in the same way that Saul was (Acts 9).

– *AsiaNews.*

ETHIOPIA: Charges Against Ethiopian Christians Dropped

FOUR church members and three leaders were arrested at an Ethiopian church this past spring. But on 11 May, they were released after the judge ruled there was insufficient evidence to convict them. All charges were dropped on 26 August. Can you pray for continued safety and courage for these believers? – *MNN*

INDIA: Police And Hindu Radicals Insult And Attack Christians Visiting Elderly Believer In India

A GROUP of local police officers, led by the inspector, as well as a mob of around 40 Hindu radicals, stormed the home of a 70-year-old Christian man in Kanheipur village, in India's Odisha (formerly Orissa) state, insulting and attacking all 17 Christians in the house, on 23 August.

– barnabasfund.org

BURKINA FASO: Masked Gunmen Hunt Christians

SUSPECTED Islamist militants searching for Christians stormed a police station in Oursi, in northern Burkina Faso, close to the Malian border, on 24 August, injuring at least two people.

– barnabasfund.org

IRAQ: Gov't To Monitor Christian Persecution

OPEN Doors USA says the Iraqi government has been talking a long time, but they've finally set up a committee to document Christian persecution. The committee will focus on the two main sources of persecution: Islamic extremism and organized corruption.

And Finally ...

Romans 16:21-27

PAUL now concludes this great letter with particular greetings from his close coworker Timothy (v21). His secretary who wrote down the letter at Paul's dictation, Tertius (v22), sends his own personal greeting and Paul sends greetings from his host Gaius (v23). Once again we have this glimpse of Paul, not the unapproachable, cold, orthodox apostle, but the man engaged in warm relationships with the churches, and we can't help but be impressed by the warmth of his widespread greetings.

He has offered blessings at 15.13, 15.33 and 16.20, but now he comes to his final benediction which is the longest of all his letters. These are memorable last words, 'the God who is able to establish you by the Gospel, hidden for a long time but now revealed through the prophets so that Jews and Gentiles of all nations might come to the obedience which springs from faith, in Jesus Christ, to this God who is all-wise be glory forever through Christ.'

Paul ends as he had begun in Romans 1.1-5. There, the emphasis on the Gospel, promised through the prophet, to the effect that the Gentiles might be called to the obedience which comes from faith. Paul never moves far from the Gospel, he never forgets his persecuting past and God's grace in allowing him to come to Christ.



FOR REFLECTION:

Write out a prayer to God in response to the truth of *Romans*.
 What is 'the obedience which springs from faith'?
 What does such an experience teach us about faith?

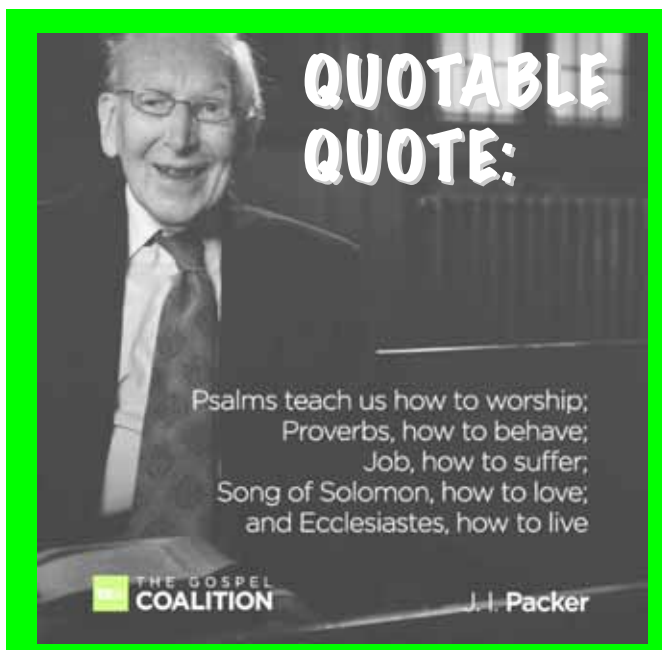
Gospel transforms us and he commits those who have been powerfully saved by the Gospel to the God 'who is able to establish you by my Gospel' (v25) – the apostolic Gospel of God's provision of righteousness in Christ, expounded in this letter.

At his final address to the elders at Ephesus (Acts 20.32) Paul shows similar confidence in God's ability; he appointed elders in each church and 'committed them to the Lord in whom they had put their trust' (Acts 14.23).

God holds, protects and establishes us through the Gospel, which declares them who are in Christ to have an eternally unchanging righteous status with God.

(Our thanks to David Cook for permission to serialise and reprint his study book on Romans. In the next issue we begin his studies in Acts – God's Work Done In God's Way. – Ed)

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



Seen On Facebook:

'ENEMIES seek to destroy faith and produce doubt. They seek to destroy hope and produce despair. They seek to destroy humility and produce pride. They seek to destroy peace and produce bitterness and malice. They seek to prevent our enjoyment of heavenly things by getting us unduly occupied with earthly things. Their attack is not upon the body, but upon the soul.'

- Arthur Pink, *Practical Christianity*
 - *The Christians' Armour*

BOOKS WORTH READING

RIGHT WITH GOD, John Blanchard, Banner Of Truth, Edinburgh, 2014. ISBN 978 0 85151 045 3

JOHN Blanchard lays his cards on the table right at the beginning. 'This book is written for seekers – for people who want to give sensible and honest thought to the whole question of their relationship to God ... It is a plain, straightforward book showing how a person who is honestly seeking for God can find Him. This book is written for *you!*'

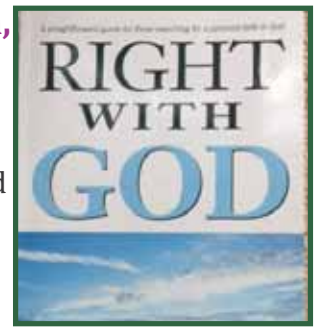
John Blanchard has travelled widely, written extensively and broadcast frequently on both radio and television. He is an evangelist, Bible teacher and Christian apologist, telling the old, old story but in an interesting and gripping way.

Right With God is a challenging book, even confrontational at times, but throughout it, John Blanchard never swerves from his aim. He writes in an easy-to-read, conversational style, raising and dealing with questions he knows his readers will be asking. The book is peppered with a generous number of quotes and illustrations, but some of the vocabulary might be unfamiliar to those who have not yet made much progress along the pilgrim way.

Nevertheless Blanchard takes his readers along a well-travelled path: *The Truth, The Problem, The Failure, The Answer, The Need, The Way Ahead*, giving among other things an enlarged concept of God and a strong defence of Scripture.

First printed in 1971 and having gone through 17 revisions or reprints, this latest, revised edition, is testimony to the book's enduring usefulness. It might not be the first book to place in an enquirer's hands, but it would be a worthy second.

– Bob Thomas



World's Most-Read Book Helps Thousands Learn To Read

ON 8 September next year, Chikanta Rhoida of Zambia will have reason to celebrate International Literacy Day for herself. This December, she'll be one of the first in her community to benefit from literacy classes using materials based on the Bible.

Why The Bible?

'It's not an accidental part of education; the Bible has been an integral part of education in many countries around the world,' says Dr Greg Clarke, CEO of Bible Society Australia. 'It's also fair to say that the Bible is the one truly international book. It's often the only reason some languages around the world are written down, because Bible translators have been active in helping people get access to the Scriptures. So we see it as entirely appropriate for this book, which has already travelled so far, to be one of the sources of becoming literate.'

Supporting literacy is one way that Christians show their concern for the whole of the human person. This mission – which is open to anyone wanting to learn, not just Christians – provides a platform for people on which they can build the rest of their lives, both in terms of their self-respect, their ability to look after themselves, find work, and their spiritual understanding. This year alone, a targeted 500,000 people will benefit from Bible-based literacy projects in 50 languages worldwide. The projects are supported by an international network of Bible Societies, and officially recognised by UNESCO, the UN agency responsible for education.

In 2015, Bible Society Australia has committed almost \$1 million for literacy projects in nine countries: China, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Egypt, Pakistan and Zambia. Right now they are fundraising to start the December literacy classes for five Zambian communities, and in one of those classes, Chikanta Rhoida will take her first steps towards a lifetime of literacy. (For programme details see:

<http://www.biblesociety.org.au/zambia>).

'We're thrilled for Chikanta and her community, but with over 780 million adults still illiterate, there's still plenty of work to be done,' says Dr Clarke. International Literacy Day is celebrated on 8 September, calling attention to the need to eradicate illiteracy, one of UNESCO's primary concerns.



BOOKS WORTH READING

RUTH, L. Daniel Hawk, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, Nottingham: Apollos, 2015. ISBN 978-1-78359-307-1

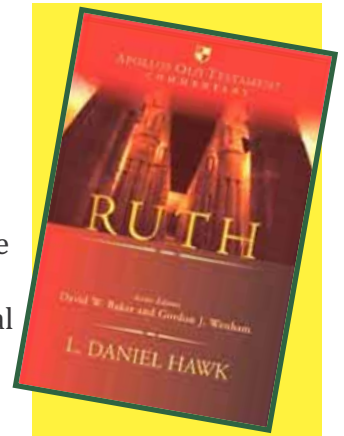
DR Daniel Hawk, Professor of Old Testament at Ashland Theological Seminary, Ohio, opens his commentary by reviewing the different perspectives on the story of Ruth when this narrative is read in conversation with other Bible texts (eg the similarities of Rahab and Ruth). The heroine's Moabite descent is repeatedly referred to in the book, so Hawk sees the question of ethnicity and the issue of who may join the covenant community of Israel as key concerns. Indeed, the biblical book provides an extreme case, given the negative portrayal of Moabites elsewhere in the Old Testament. Moabites were blood relatives of Israel and viewed as a threat to Israelite identity. The reader of *Ruth* is shown that 'Israel' is defined, not by ethnic origin, but by devotion to the God of the covenant, with Ruth herself a leading example of such devotion. No greater endorsement of the need for and propriety of receiving the outsider could be imagined, for Ruth in fact becomes the ancestress of great King David (and of greater King Jesus).

Hawk attributes a late (post-exilic) dating to the book, placing it in the context of the Ezra-Nehemiah reforms that saw intermarriage with foreigners as a major danger to the integrity of Israel that risked the judgment of God. I cannot, however, follow Hawk when he sees *Ruth* as recording dissent to these reforms, for the reforms were not, as far as I can see, opposing marriage to foreign women like Ruth, namely women who had left their foreign gods behind and embraced the Israelite faith. It is just not true that Ezra and Nehemiah wanted 'to redefine Israel along lines of genetic purity' (p. 36). Hawk fails to note references to the acceptance of proselytes in Ezra 6.21 and Nehemiah 10.28. We are in danger of turning one part of the Bible against another if we say, as Hawk does, that the author of *Ruth* is 'writing in opposition to the cleansing program of Ezra and Nehemiah' (p. 39).

Hawk, however, is a careful student of the biblical text and painstakingly works his way through *Ruth* section by section, showing its intricate patterns, themes and presentation of characters. He is right in not rushing to condemn Elimelech for taking his family to Moab. The book never says or implies that his death and the deaths of his two sons were a punishment for 'the crime' of leaving the Promised Land. Ruth's heroic decision to leave Moab and return with Naomi (1.16,17) shows that membership of God's people is not based on genealogy but a decision to devote oneself to God and His people. Hawk is right to view Naomi's accusations against God as an expression of faith (1.20,21), for she is attributing her suffering to God (though not understanding why she suffers). The commentary focusses on the reconfiguration of social identities that takes place as Ruth step-by-step is incorporated into the Israelite community. It is Boaz's generosity and the courage and initiative of Ruth herself that facilitate her entry into the covenant community of Israel. Surely there is application here for us, since surprising acts of hospitality to the foreigner and stranger are part of the Christian counter-cultural ethic of love and grace. 'Boaz personifies the hospitality of a welcoming community' (p. 91), in that he embodies and is a vehicle for God's kindness.

Hawk affirms the final genealogy leading to David as integral to the canonical book, making the story of Ruth a precursor to all that God would do through David in the providential ordering of the history of salvation. The David connection provides God's stamp of approval on the marriage of Boaz and Ruth, in the words of the author, 'If not a match made in Heaven, it is certainly one that leads to extraordinary heights' (p. 137).

– Greg Goswell



'Hawk affirms the final genealogy leading to David as integral to the canonical book, making the story of Ruth a precursor to all that God would do through David in the providential ordering of the history of salvation.'