

Gold Coast Preacher Arrested For Talking About Sin

GEORGE, a Queensland street preacher with the Operation 513 group, was arrested on Friday night, 4 December, despite being authorised to assemble and preach peacefully in the Surfers Paradise Cavill Mall under the state's Peaceful Assembly Act. Operation 513 had preached in Cavill Mall on several previous occasions without any complaints.

At about 10.30pm, a police sergeant approached George and told him to 'move on' after he had mentioned some sins listed in the Bible (eg 1 Corinthians 6.9,10) – such as adultery, slander, theft, greed, swindling and homosexual conduct.

George and the group organiser Ryan Hemelaar asked for clarification. The sergeant said (in part): 'You have talked about homosexuality, offending members of the public about homosexuality. You are talking about other religions – [saying] that they aren't right, aren't God's way. Now we have members of the public here who are of other religions. Your words over this speaker are causing anxiety. A member of the public has had a go at you and this man here [George] is antagonising him by quoting [from the Bible] in the opposite of what he is trying to say.'

Ryan Hemelaar tried in vain to explain that the group had official authorisation, so that under section 45 of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act, police could not lawfully give a 'move on' order. An acting senior police sergeant and an inspector then arrived and told George to move on immediately or be arrested. George refused to move on. He was handcuffed and arrested for disobeying a police direction. He was later released and issued with a notice to appear in court later this month.

FamilyVoice Queensland Director Geoffrey Bullock is deeply concerned by the police action. 'Since when has it been an offence to discuss Bible teaching in Queensland?' he asks. 'Whatever happened to religious freedom? Are we rapidly becoming a "police state"?'



A member of Operation 513 preaching in Cavill Mall on the Gold Coast.

Hezekiah's Seal Found In Jerusalem

ARCHAEOLOGISTS have found a seal they say belonged to King Hezekiah – described in the Bible as one who 'did what was right in the eyes of the LORD'. The tiny clay piece has an inscription reading: 'Belonging to Hezekiah [son of] Ahaz King Of Judah'. The archaeologist leading the dig, Dr Eilat Mazar, described the seal as unique and explained that the location of the find was significant. Dr Mazar, from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, said the item was a 'private seal impression of King Hezekiah'. The seal measures just 1cm wide and is thought to have originally sealed a document written on papyrus. 'It is so tiny, but we can see very easily the name of King Hezekiah and the symbols he chose to put on his impression,' Dr Mazar continued. She said that the seal was found in a royal area, meaning the archaeologists had 'got as close as possible to King Hezekiah'.



The book of 2 Kings in the Bible describes how Hezekiah began to reign at 25 years old and was on the throne for almost three decades. 'He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done,' it adds, before outlining his action against pagan practices. 2 Kings 18.5-7 continues: 'Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no-one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. He held fast to the LORD and did not cease to follow Him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses. And the LORD was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook.'

– The Christian Institute

VOLUME 78 NUMBER 12

ISSUE DATE:

15 December 2015

FILE NO: NL 2015-12-15

ISSN: 1033-7903

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PUBLISHED BY:

New Life Australia Ltd

ABN: 15 005 035 138

**CONTRIBUTORS PLEASE
NOTE:**

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Time To Repair, Rebuild And Restore – 1

CHRISTIANITY today has lost the status it once held in a society which has largely spurned it and become increasingly hostile to the very principles which established it, a society which by and large, wants nothing more than the Christian voice put out of the public sphere. There has been a considerable moral shift – a revolution – over the last century which has seen what we hold to be core biblical truths discarded. God's good creation is challenged. The breakdown of marriage and the nuclear family is seen as acceptable – after all, if a person is no longer 'in love', then what's stopping them from moving on? Sexual preferences are all good, right, and acceptable – as long as they don't infringe on the 'rights' of other people.

This moral revolution is a complete reversal of what God ordained and deemed as right and very good. We live in a society which has thought itself more rational, more enlightened than its predecessors and which thinks that God is only a myth to help people cope; a God which doesn't exist despite the rich historic and scientific evidence pointing to the contrary. This is a society in which those who profess Christ are scorned, alienated, and ridiculed – whilst those who mock them are championed for their acts against those seemingly intolerant Christian bigots.

How does the Church respond to this? While many churches stand up for the unchanging truth of God's Word, many more churches do not. Instead of standing firm, churches which sense the hostility of society against them and their beliefs, relent and seek to make the words more palatable to human ears. Yet when they start amending the Bible through fancy hermeneutic footwork to what is acceptable by society's standards and sensibilities, the Gospel is lost. The exclusive claims of Christ to Salvation, the concept of Sin, the righteous Justice of God are all gone. It is as if, as Michael Horton comments, that the church 'is so obsessed with being practical, relevant, helpful, successful, and perhaps even well-liked that it merely mirrors the world itself. Aside from the packaging, there is nothing that cannot be found in most churches today that could not be satisfied by any number of secular programs and self-help groups.'

The Gospel is only the Gospel when it is preached in its entirety, and unless we stand on the complete Word of God, we are not standing on the Word of God at all – we are only standing on our own word. Even now, in many churches and Christian networks, there is an immense zeal and focus on Church Planting and Evangelism – and this is to be commended. Yet we err if we think this is the Gospel completely.

The Great Commission is as much about building up those we have in the fold – into disciples – as it is of bringing people into the fold in the first place. Evangelism, and subsequently Church-planting is a part of the Gospel, but it is not the totality of the Gospel. So we must ask: are churches equipping their individuals theologically? Are they grounding and entrenching their individuals in the richness of the Christian faith as the early believers were? In the richness of the faith that the Reformers themselves embraced with delight?

*(Part 2 of this article, the introductory address by **Brett Lee-Price**, Executive Director of Thinking Of God, at the Thinking Of God Conference ('TOGCON') held at Christ College, Sydney, on 25 September 2015, appears on p.4 of this issue. – Ed.)*

WHAT MIGHT THE PERSECUTED HOPE FOR THIS CHRISTMAS?

– A Call To Love, Solidarity And Action!

THIS Christmas, Christians in Nigeria will doubtless be hoping for an end to Islamic jihad and terror.

Thousands of Christian families will be tearfully hoping for the return of their captive children and with more than a million displaced, a multitude will be hoping for a return to homes, churches and communities. Across Syria and Iraq, hundreds of thousands of remnant Christians displaced by Islamic jihad will be hoping for the same. Mince tarts dusted with icing sugar will be far from their hearts and minds.

In Iran, Pakistan, China and Laos (amongst others) Christian families and local churches will be hoping for the release of loved ones imprisoned for their faith, while praying for their humane treatment. Meanwhile, prisoners like Behnam Irani (pastor, married father of two, imprisoned in Iran), Asia Bibi (Christian wife and mother of five, on death row for alleged blasphemy in Pakistan) and Zhang Kai (Christian attorney in defence of the cross, 'disappeared' into a 'black jail' for interrogation in China) will cling to life in the hope that they might be reunited with their families and friends yet again.

In India, Christians will be hoping for a reversal in the trend of Hindu nationalism.

In Burma and Papua, the Christian ethnic peoples will be hoping for an end to military violence.

Christians in North Korea and Eritrea will be quietly hoping against hope for something really big – a brand new government that respects the lives and human rights of its citizens. But with corruption and wickedness penetrating through to the core across so many institutions and at so many levels, such a thing is seemingly impossible. Our hope comes from the words the angel gave Mary: 'For nothing will be impossible for God.'

In Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, in Bangladesh and the South Asian subcontinent, in Egypt and all North Africa, in Indonesia and all South East Asia, in Uzbekistan and all Central Asia, in Sudan, Somalia and along the Swahili Coast – wherever Muslims dominate – Christians will be hoping for a special visitation of God's Holy Spirit to open Muslim eyes, awaken Muslim minds, soften Muslim hearts and break through the bulwark of Muslim fear.

For the first time in my lifetime, Christians in the largely post-Christian West may well be hoping their worship services and festivities will not be targeted by terrorists. Whether the Church hopes for it or not, the thing the Western Church most desperately needs is revival, loving the Lord her God with all her heart, soul, mind and strength, ready and able to give a reason for her hope, to love as Christ loves (with grace and sacrifice), to have courage to stand firm and walk by faith as a counter-cultural force for good in a culture that is de-civilising at a rapid rate.

More than 2000 years have passed since the birth of Jesus. So why is the world in such a mess? Did Jesus fail? No, the resurrection proved Jesus' victory. The transformation of the world has begun and what started as a little movement in Jerusalem and Antioch has spread across the whole world. The times in which we live are days of phenomenal church growth, principally in the non-Western world and due primarily to the emergence of indigenous missions. Because of this the Church's centre of gravity is shifting from the Northern Hemisphere to the Southern, from the West to the East. But this is not the end. Rather, God is doing something new: refining and sanctifying the West through judgment while raising up the East to declare His glory. What we are witnessing is an immense spiritual battle as Satan fights desperately to resist his inevitable demise.

The days might be dark, but they are still days for hope, faith and endurance. What is more, they are days for Christian love, solidarity and action. For in these dark days before the dawn, persecuted Christians need all the help they can get.

– Elizabeth Kendal, International Religious Liberty Analyst And Advocate.



PLEASE PRAY THAT:

- God will grant all suffering, anxious and grief-stricken persecuted Christians a powerful, palpable and undeniable affirmation of His presence this Christmas, so they might be comforted by the assurance that the Christ is with them and their loved ones. (Romans 8.38,39).
- God will grant revival to the Western Church, even if it be by means of the judgment coming upon the largely post-Christian West; awaken our minds to the plight of the lost (which is tragic, not just in death but in life); and soften our hearts towards the suffering of His people that we might be 'one' (John 17.20-26).
- God will refine and sanctify all His people, that we might endure our trials with dignity, grace and faith, and with boundless Christian love and courageous solidarity, 'that all the kingdoms of Earth might know that (He) alone (is) the Lord' (from the prayer of Hezekiah, Isaiah 37.14-20).

Time To Repair, Rebuild And Restore – 2

WHY is it, that when one raises the many passages about discernment, false teaching and doctrine, there seems to be some form of stigma attached? When the question as to the scriptural basis and theological honesty of those accepting

homosexuality in the clergy, for example, rather than combing through scripture and letting the words of God stand for itself, many instead say something to the effect ‘Oh, you can’t say that – that’s unloving’, usually accompanied by verses about judgment used out of context. However, the Bible stresses a paramount importance of the matter of doctrine – and getting it right. As Paul exhorts his readers in Romans 6, ‘I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.’

Doctrine matters, and it matters absolutely. It is with this landscape and backdrop in mind that *Thinking Of God* was established. Understanding that there were these issues facing Christians in Australia; with an ever increasing hostility stemming from the secularised society which surrounds us, and the degradation of Scriptural authority on the other, we wanted to provide a platform and forum on which the promotion and articulation of good, Reformed theology, could take place.

Even more so, we wanted this to be an interdenominational endeavour. After all, the very same problems are facing us all; the same seismic moral shift and the same challenges for Christian ministry. We understood that while we hold differences, principally in regards to baptism, ecclesiology, and eschatology, we all share beliefs tied to the Reformed tradition, from individuals such as Calvin, Cranmer, Knox, and Keach. We are all committed to the sufficiency of Scripture as the authoritative guide for our lives and that Scripture is sufficient for all of God’s purposes in being able to convict and draw individuals as He so pleases. Rather than unity for the sake of unity, we saw that there were many things which united us – particularly the fundamentals of the Reformed Faith. Hence, we saw the beneficial possibilities of what this communication and dialogue could do for the wider church. Rather than only worrying about our own denominations, we acknowledged that it would be fruitful to tackle the issues we were all facing together.

TOGCON is logically an extension from these developments. This would be the place in which we could discuss issues and challenges in Christian ministry in this country. This would be the place that together, we could think through what it means to be actually be Reformed, and what the application of these beliefs looks like in everyday ministry. This would be the place in which, as a rallying point, all of us together could say that we believe in the Word of God, its complete and utter sufficiency; that we believe that it is just as applicable today as it was when it was written by its divinely-inspired scribes. This would be the place where we could promote Biblical theology and the totality of the Gospel. This would be the place where we could encourage and challenge pastors and local churches to think through how they could translate their beliefs into practice.

TOGCON II – God’s Sovereignty And Word

THE Thinking Of God 2015 Conference brought together Christians from a number of denominations, including Anglican, Baptist, Uniting and Presbyterian to enjoy a day of fellowship, encouragement and learning. Tim Booker, Senior Minister of Guildford with Villawood Anglican Church, was the lead speaker on *The Sufficiency Of Scripture In Church And Evangelism*. Panelists including Lionel Windsor, Matthew Oates, Michael Prodigalidad, Peter Hughes, Steve Turner, John McClean and Peter Barnes teased out these issues in a Q&A format.

Tim Booker’s talk is printed on pp8,9 of this issue. **TOGCON III will be held on 23 November 2016** on the theme: *Are We Still Protestant? Reclaiming Our Roots*, with Simon Manchester and John McClean as speakers.

To learn more about Thinking Of God, go to <http://thinkingofgod.org>



Brett Lee-Price (right) interviews Tim Booker.

It is with great excitement that I welcome you to think through how the belief in the Sufficiency of God’s Word and the Sovereignty of God look like in everyday ministry. We should not take these things lightly, but contemplate and consider how we too can take these things seriously as we go about ministering to the people whom God has entrusted to us. Our belief is only truly a belief if we act convicted of it. – Brett Lee-Price

*Mark 16.15 (ESV):
Go into all the world
and proclaim the Gospel
to the whole creation.
(Inserted by Ivan Bell)*

Super Saturday At Summer Under The Son

SUMMER Under The Son Melbourne runs from Wednesday 13 to Saturday 16 January at the Crossway Centre, East Burwood – but you don't have to come for the whole four days to get a taste of the refreshment and fellowship that draws people back year after year after year. Super Saturday offers a jam-packed day of great speakers, mission talks, fellowship, food for body and soul, and entertainment.

The day starts at 9.30am with Glenn Davies' final Bible study in 1 Peter, then after morning tea hear Greg Anderson, Bishop of the Northern Territory, describe a very different, yet authentic, Christian discipleship. Lunch on the lawn and talk with friends, then choose from five seminars on topics such as understanding other worldviews; turning a chance meeting into a chance for Christ or hear what it really means to be a Christian missionary in southeast Asia or in Europe. Meet a Missionary at 3.45pm, then the afternoon ends with drinks on the lawn and kids' activities. The Big BBQ (phone (03) 9894 4722 to book) follows at 6pm, then the final Summer Evening brings everyone together to worship, to hear again from Bishop Greg Anderson and CMS Victoria State Director Wei-Han Kuan, and to pray for each other in a new year of service to God.

Syrian Suffering Brings Blessing Of Belief

Lebanese church leaders Camille and Stefan are seeing hundreds of Syrian refugees arrive destitute on their church doorstep. But it isn't long before the refugees begin to express gratitude for their trauma – because it has enabled them to discover a God of love. Pastor Stefan says that in conversations with Syrian refugee families he regularly hears statements such as: 'We thank God that we lost our houses, we thank God that we left our country. If we hadn't done that, we wouldn't have heard about Jesus, and that God is our Father who loves us.'

For Stefan and Camille, discovering a destitute Syrian family desperately trying to shelter at the foot of the church stairs is a common occurrence. The average couple might have several children with them – and they will be grappling with sickness, financial difficulties and the pain of having lost family members. The church gives them food, clothes, mattresses, medical supplies, baby milk and nappies and tries to find them a place to live. Pastor Stephan says the common response from the Muslims who attend their church meetings is a desire for a relationship with Christ. – *Premier News*

New Vision For Japan

ASIAN Access has launched *Vision 2020 For Japan*, with an ambitious plan for one million new Christians, 1,000 new churches and 1,000 missionaries from Japan to the major cities of Asia. Following the triple disaster of 2011 – earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear-plant meltdown – huge barriers were broken down between the Church and Japanese society, as the Church helped with the relief and rebuilding. These efforts have given Japanese Christians a sense of hope that the *2020 Vision* could be within reach.

Asian Access says that already more churches have been planted, more quickly, than they ever could have imagined. Now, Dan Amos, CEO of Aflac Insurance, has issued a challenge to financially support *Vision 2020*. Mr Amos says his family Foundation will offer a matching challenge of \$250,000 by the end of December to help reach Japan for Christ. – *Source: MNN*

Bibles Flooding Into East Africa

FIVE shipments of Bibles and Christian books sent by Christian Resources International recently

arrived in Kenya, Mozambique, Ghana, and India. The literature has been unloaded and is now being distributed. Each of the five sea containers contained about half a million dollars' worth of free Bibles and Christian books. CRI Executive Director Jason Woolford says the shipment includes materials suitable for people without faith, and for new Christians, as well as books encouraging Christian growth, and for church leaders. This was the first time CRI has sent shipment to Kenya, and their goal is to send \$1,000,000 worth of free Bibles and Christian books annually, to the new distribution centre there. – *Source: MNN*

Record Broken In The Philippines

A GOSPEL choir in the Philippines has broken the record for the largest Gospel Choir performance. *Christian Today* reports that Church of God International in Manila formed a chorus of 8,688 singers, which sang God's praises in their 15-minute performance, nearly doubled the old record which was 4,745 singers. The Guinness World Records adjudicator was so overwhelmed that she was brought to tears.

I. Howard Marshall Called Home

I. HOWARD Marshall, Emeritus Professor of New Testament at the University of Aberdeen, has passed away, a month before his 82nd birthday. He had been admitted to the hospital recently and diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

Dr Marshall was quite a man, who will continue to have a great impact not only through his voluminous writings but through the quiet, steady, humble, faithful way he lived and mentored. Many give thanks to God for the privilege of knowing and studying with him. He will be dearly missed, even as his influence continues.

First-Rate Scholar

Many saw Howard Marshall as the 'Dean of New Testament evangelical interpretation,' the heir of his mentor, F.F. Bruce. With his prodigious writing – at least 38 books and over 120 essays and articles – Marshall had a significant impact both on Biblical scholarship and the Church. In addition to his writing he served widely in fellowships and societies fostering evangelical scholarship.

He taught New Testament at the University of Aberdeen since 1964 and because of him, Aberdeen was for decades a primary destination for postgraduate study for evangelical students from around the world. Among Marshall's students are many of the leading evangelical New Testament scholars today as well as many lesser known people who play key roles in majority world churches and schools. Postgrads in Aberdeen used to joke that only the oil companies rivaled Marshall for bringing the most internationals to Aberdeen.

His words concerning F.F. Bruce can be aptly used of him as well: (He) will obviously be remembered first of all for his highly distinguished academic career as a university teacher and a prolific writer who did more than anybody else in the 20th Century to develop and encourage conservative evangelical scholarship. Possessed of outstanding intellectual ability, a phenomenal memory, and encyclopedic knowledge, a colossal capacity for work, and a limpid style, he produced a remarkable output of books and essays which will continue to be read for years to come, and he trained directly or indirectly many younger scholars now working in all parts of the world.'

Marshall produced first-rate technical scholarship which gained the respect of more critical scholars, even when they disagreed. He also wrote for pastors and lay people. He was not among those who disparage popular writing as something beneath a true scholar.



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The Sufficiency Of Scripture

I'M normally a fairly calm customer, it takes a lot to frazzle me, but I must say that right now I'm feeling more rattled as a Christian than I think I've ever felt. Here are some of the reasons why:

- **The world's second largest religion, Islam, the greatest persecutor of Christians on the planet,** claims that Jesus didn't die on a Cross, that the Bible is full of errors, and that Jesus is just a prophet, and yet we're continually told that they're a valid religion who really, at their core, are a religion dedicated to truth and peace.

- **Then, wherever I go, I get same-sex marriage forced down my throat.** And it's not just from the pagan world calling me a hater for opposing same-sex marriage. Many alleged Christian ministers are out there claiming that the Bible doesn't condemn homosexuality; they say the Bible's old and needs to be re-interpreted by our brilliant 21st Century liberal minds. 'Jesus had two fathers,' they say, 'and He turned out all right.' How can you argue with that brilliant logic? The Bible must be wrong!

- **Then I flick on the ABC and get bombarded with atheists** telling me how cruel and false the Bible and its God is, to quote Stephen Fry when he was asked what he'd say to God if he met Him, 'How dare you create a world in which there is so much misery that is not our fault. It's not right, it's utterly evil. You are capricious, mean-minded and stupid, a monstrous maniac.' Someone didn't take his Valium that day!

- **And then to top it off, we have these seemingly never-ending debates within the church** about issues that the Bible is pretty clear on; women preaching to mixed congregations (you hate women if you don't support it), the uniqueness of Christ (you hate people of other religions if you do support it), penal substitutionary atonement (you teach divine child-abuse if you support that), the ordination of homosexuals (you hate gay people if you don't support that). My own denomination is tearing itself apart over the Bible's clear teaching on these issues.

What's going on? The Bible is coming under a co-ordinated, sustained attack and its authority is continually being undermined in order that no-one will ever trust it again. And the attack is coming from both within the church, and outside of it. As Christians we know it to be the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct, but we live in a world that doesn't. And now, not for the first time, the world and the devil are taking the fight to us. So, today, my aim is to make you strong for the fight.

Now, to do that, we're going to look at what we call the Sufficiency of Scripture, but in order to understand sufficiency, we must first take a step back and look at the authority that lies behind God's Word.

(Continued on p.9)

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The Sufficiency Of Scripture (Continued from p.8)

The Authority Of God's Word

SO we begin by asking, why does the Bible have authority? The simple answer is because these words come from God himself, they're His words, they aren't made up by a long-series of misogynists whose aim in life was to bring power to them and pain to everyone else. No group of people, regardless of how brilliant or well organised they were, could have organised themselves over a 1,400 year period to write a collection of 66 books that has such unity and continuity to it, and that tells such an epic story of God's redemption of the world driven by His love. You couldn't make this up. This is God's inspired word to us, from Himself.

The reason for this is that He is truly unique. He's the one true living God who is the source of all authority; there's nothing outside of Him on which His authority is founded. This is why at the beginning there is nothing and it's only when God speaks that creation comes into existence. That is why, when He made his promise to Abraham, He pledged His own name because there was no-one greater by whom to swear. He is the all-authoritative one and His Words have that same powerful, life-giving authority.

Here's the twist though: we only know this because the one true living God has spoken to us. It is only in God's revelation of Himself to us that God can be known. Revelation is therefore the key to God's authority, so that the revelation and authority are two sides of the same reality. In revelation, God declares His authority.

The Old Testament prophets knew this. In speaking God's message they were clear that they were declaring God's authoritative will for His people. 'Thus says the Lord' they would say. They weren't speaking their own words, but God's. Psalm 115 points to God as being radically different from the idols who, 'have mouths but cannot speak'. Jeremiah mocks these useless, silent idols with these words in 10.5, 'Like a scarecrow in a melon patch, their idols cannot speak, they must be carried because they cannot walk.'

The God of the Bible, on the other hand, speaks powerfully: Psalm 33, 'By the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made, their starry host by the breath of His mouth ... for He spoke and it came to be; He commanded and it stood firm.' God's words have authority.

But wait, there's more. God doesn't just speak powerfully, He speaks the truth. In 1 Thessalonians 1, God is described as the 'true and living God'. He's not only true in that He actually exists, but He's also true in his character and nature. There are two things our God can't do: tell lies, and disown Himself. He only speaks what is right and true. Finally, we know that these words have the very authority and truthfulness of God because they always achieve God's purposes for them, they never fail. When He speaks, creation comes into existence, just the way He wants it. In them we see that He is perfectly faithful to His covenant promises, bringing forgiveness for sins and reconciliation between God and man, and bringing his Son, our Saviour into the world to achieve it all – just as He promised He would.

(Continued on p.15)

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When Realism Grants Us Wriggle Room

Sing to the LORD! Give praise to the LORD! He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked. Cursed be the day I was born! May the day my mother bore me not be blessed!

– *Jeremiah 20.13,14*

WHAT complex creatures we are! We are made in the image of God and therefore find our greatest joy in loving, thanking, praising and depending on Him for all our needs. But we are also part of a broken, messed-up world, and even if we have been rescued from it by faith in a mighty Saviour, we are still affected, both internally and externally, by the effects of its brokenness – often to a far greater extent than we're prepared to admit.

Jeremiah, a faithful, godly prophet, is no different from us. This chapter, and in fact his whole book, is therefore something we can relate to as we struggle with the tension between the vestiges of our God-likeness on the one hand and the reality of our fallen state on the other.

Jeremiah was being opposed, physically abused and ridiculed at every turn, even by those whom he might have thought were friends (20.7,8).

This was because he had the courage to defend God's truth when everyone else was fitting comfortably into the surrounding humanistic, man-centred, man-pleasing culture. It is very hard to stand alone and be ostracised in such circumstances!

He was sorely tempted to give up and just 'go with the flow', but the burning of God's truth in his heart would not allow him this 'luxury' (9).

In the midst of all this he was very conscious of God's sustaining power; how natural it was for his heart to respond in enthusiastic songs of praise.

Sometimes this is what keeps us going – all that keeps us going. But strangely we can, with Jeremiah, at one and the same time, despair of our earthly life and cry out to our God that He might mercifully take it from us because the pain of it is unbearable.

This great man of God gives us permission to be gripped by these opposite, almost contradictory, emotions together, even when this dichotomy defies human logic.

What complex creatures we are indeed!

– *Bruce Christian, Chaplain, Sutherland Shire Christian School, Sydney*

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200 Churches Attacked Every Day Worldwide Says European Parliament

RESEARCH by the European Parliament has found 200 churches or Christian places of worship are attacked every day across the world. The figures were revealed at a special gathering at European Parliament in Brussels aiming to tackle the persecution of Christians.

Members of European Parliament attending the conference included the President and Vice-President of the European Parliament, as well as Christian leaders and victims of persecution.

The Persecution Of Christians In The World: A Call For Action saw the head of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the UK, Bishop Angaelos, and the President of the Council of European Churches, Rt Revd Christopher Hill, both make speeches.

The plight of victims was also heard, with Eritrean gospel singer Helen Berhane telling the story of how she was arrested and imprisoned in a lorry shipping container after refusing to renounce her faith in Jesus. Ms Berhane was rescued with the help of Amnesty International and now lives in Europe.

The European Parliament Vice-President Antonio Tajani, who led the conference, said: 'Persecution is happening outside the EU but we can't afford to ignore it. All of us, particularly in the EP, are aware that dialogue and mutual respect are needed. Fundamental rights are under great threat today and persecution of a religion is a breach of fundamental rights.'

'Every month at least 200 churches or places of worship are attacked. Every day, in every region of our planet, we register new cases of systematic violence and persecution against Christians. No other religious community is faced with such hatred, violence and aggression as is the Christian community.'

Bishop Angaelos said: 'This was an effective gathering of people who are very active and committed to working for the persecuted and vulnerable around the world. What is clear however, is that we need to continue finding ways to collaborate without losing the individuality of organisations, but in such a way as to maximise the impact of our combined efforts.'

Rt Revd Christopher Hill told Premier's News Hour: 'There will be different levels of attack. There's blowing them up and burning them down and massacring the Christian congregations, but there's also harassment and daubing slogans and things like that. In my speech I also touched on ... Christians in some of the states in Malaysia, where churches are not allowed to advertise or have names up, and they have to have shop churches, not specially built churches. And in Maidiguri province [in Nigeria] Christians have either fled or been murdered. My prayer following this meeting would be that the nations of Europe ... can take more seriously this issue so that international opinion does something about it. I pray for those who are victims, my fellow sisters and brothers in Christ all over the world, but I'm also praying for practical action.'



CUBA – Neighbourhood Churches Targeted For Demolition

PLEASE pray for our brothers and sisters in the city of Santiago de Cuba where government officials have reportedly issued demolition orders to all churches in one neighbourhood. Pastors and families living in the church properties targeted in the Abel Santa María area of the city have been told they are to be evicted. At least three churches are known to be under threat in Santiago, plus two more in Las Tunas province. Scores of churches across Cuba have reportedly come under pressure since new legislation was introduced in January giving officials discretionary powers to confiscate property. In some cases, religious groups have been given the option to stay – but only in return for paying high rent to the Government and submitting to Communist Party monitoring; most have rejected this option.

CHINA: Prayer Needed For Detainees

RELEASE International asks for prayer for Christian Zhang Kai (pictured), a Beijing lawyer, and his assistant Liu Peng, who are serving a six-month extrajudicial sentence over their involvement with persecuted churches in Zhejiang. Wenzhou Public Security Bureau has reportedly issued a notice saying that Zhang and Liu have dismissed their own lawyers: Zhang Lei and Li Baiguang respectively. The detainees' legal team later received photocopied dismissal papers on PSB-headed paper, with their clients' fingerprints beside their names. It's feared the dismissals were coerced or falsified. Zhang Lei and Li Baiguang have called for government action against the Wenzhou PSB.



– Source: China Aid

When Opportunity Knocks ...

ACTS 2.14-41

WHENEVER a crowd gathers in *Acts*, a believer takes the opportunity of preaching to it. Here is Peter, who a little earlier had denied Christ, now fearlessly and with crystal clarity preaching the Gospel. The Day of Pentecost is the day in the church calendar when there is preaching on the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit is not the focus of Peter’s address. Rather, Jesus is. Peter speaks only of the Spirit in relation to Jesus.

The big idea of this Pentecostal sermon is that Jesus was crucified, was raised to life and is now exalted to God’s right hand, and that Peter and the others are eyewitnesses of these events. Jesus was accredited by God (2.22) according to the set purpose of God, was crucified (2.23), and was raised



FOR REFLECTION:

THINK about the twin blessings of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit in your life and be thankful.

In v 40, Luke describes Peter as warning the crowd. Are we serious enough in sharing the Gospel with others? When was the last time you were warned not to neglect the Gospel’s promises and warnings? The apostles could say, ‘We are witnesses’ of the resurrection and the ascension.’ What can we say today?

from the dead. Death had no claim on Him because He had no sin (2.24). The proof that He is exalted to God’s right hand is that He now pours out the Holy Spirit (2.32,33). The summary is found in 2.36.

Peter’s audience was Jewish. Therefore, he wants them to know they should not be surprised at these events because they fulfill what Joel predicted for the last days, 2.17–21. In 2.25–28, Peter quotes David in Psalm 16. Acts 2.27 are extravagant words – Peter says David did not use these words of himself but of one greater than David who ‘will not be abandoned to the grave’. The Old Testament is Peter’s reference point for the Jewish audience.

Notice also that Peter does not hesitate to be direct. In 2.23,24, he makes the clearest contrast between what they did to the Son in God’s name – ‘put Him to death’ – and what God Himself did – ‘raised Him from the dead’. The response to this sermon was deep conviction (2.37). Peter tells them they are to repent and give public witness to their repentance through baptism (2.38). The Christian Gospel involves take and give (2.38). God takes our sin and deals with it and then gives us His Holy Spirit. This is the ongoing offer to all those who repent and turn to Christ.

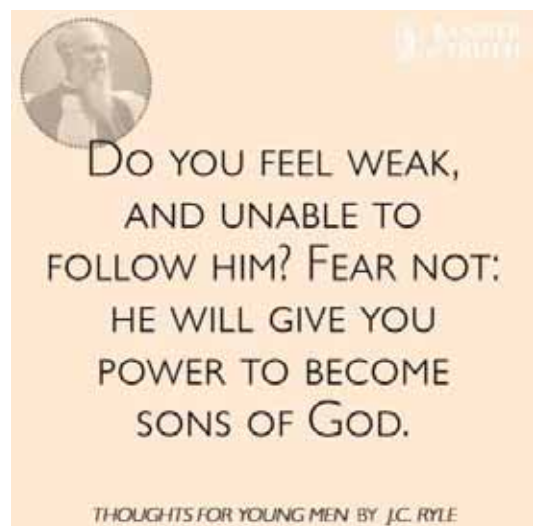
That day 3,000 accepted the message (2.41).

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Quotable Quote:

‘There is nothing more fatal than for the natural man to think that he can take the Beatitudes and try to put them into practice ... Only a new man can live this new life.’ – ‘Studies in the Sermon on the Mount’ – Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones

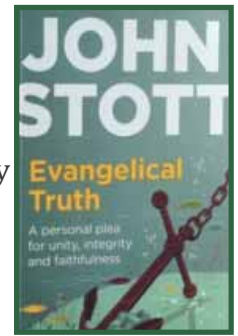
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BOOKS WORTH READING

EVANGELICAL TRUTH: A Personal Plea For Unity, Integrity And Faithfulness, John Stott, Inter Varsity Press Nottingham, Reprinted 2015.

IVP, working with the Langham Partnership, have re-issued a number of John Stott's books in recent years. These books deserve to be read by a new audience as the content is still relevant. This book outlines the fundamentals of evangelical belief in a way that is succinct and readable – both hallmarks of the writings of John Stott. After discussing some misconceptions of what is an evangelical and some introductory comments on what is the Gospel, Stott concentrates on three doctrines that are fundamental to evangelicalism, emphasising the Trinitarian nature of evangelical belief. These doctrines are the Revelation of God, the Cross of Christ and the Ministry of the Holy Spirit.



Stott knows that misconceptions abound about these fundamental doctrines, both within the Church and outside. In these chapters, Stott explains the basics of these doctrines and gives applications for the Christian life. There are references to fuller works on each of these doctrines, including, of course, Stott's larger work, *The Cross Of Christ*.

Having outlined the essentials of the evangelical belief in its Trinitarian context, Stott's concluding chapters remind us that doctrine is not an end in itself but is meant to lead us to live in the way that the doctrine indicates. He briefly raises the issue of what are essential doctrines to evangelicals and what are issues that have various interpretations among branches of evangelicalism.

Stott's plea is that we be firm on essentials but have Christian grace on non-essentials. Finally, Stott concludes with what is a recurrent theme in his writing: humility should be a characteristic of evangelicals. We sing in our hymns, we believe in our theology that our salvation is from God and 'nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling', yet so often we do not show humility in our words and actions to our brothers and sisters.

If you are looking for an explanation of evangelical truth, here is the book for you. It also provides a springboard to larger works on particular doctrines.

– Mignon Goswell

MARTYN LLOYD-JONES: His Life And Relevance For The 21st Century, Christopher Catherwood, IVP, Nottingham, 2015. ISBN 978-1-78359-383-5.

QUITE an industry has grown up out of the life and ministry of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones (not that I'm complaining). Arguably the greatest preacher of the 20th Century exerted such an influence in his own day and generation that it can truly be said of him: 'He, being dead, yet speaketh.' How eagerly we devoured Volume One of Iain Murray's official biography of him; how impatiently we waited for Volume Two while Mr Murray sifted through mountains of material, marrying the results with his own recollections of his close association with the Doctor and wide-ranging consultation with his family and others who knew him.

In this book our interest takes a more personal turn, as Christopher Catherwood is Dr Lloyd-Jones's grandson, and we see the Doctor through his eyes. A figure who might have otherwise seemed rather stern and remote is fleshed out for us as a very caring man who dearly loved his family and friends, and felt so deeply for a world in need, that while he was compelled to confront it with the bad news, the Good News followed close behind. And a family man whose interests and influences ranged widely across 'the family and household of faith' emerges from these pages as one whose strict Biblical methodology in ministry was not only relevant for the time in which he lived but continues relevant in our day, for as Christopher Catherwood says: 'Sin is the same as it always was, and the answer in Jesus Christ is the same as well. So why not use God's pattern of "doing church"? For otherwise we deny the role of God in conversion and the ability of the Holy Spirit to convict and convert. It is not our *felt* needs that matter, but our *objective* need of repentance, since otherwise Christianity is no different from all the postmodern mush so prevalent in our world today.' (p.145)

So what was the secret of the Doctor's effectiveness in ministry, and why is it still so relevant today and such a good model for us to follow? Well, like Another, 'he spoke with authority', an authority not his own, but an authority thoroughly grounded in the Word of God – as Dr Catherwood shows so well.

– Bob Thomas

BOOKS WORTH READING

CALVINIST HUNGARIANS IN AUSTRALIA: The First 60 Years Of Hungarian Speaking Congregations 1950-2010, Géza A. Kósa, Acta Historica Hungarica Turiciensia Vol. XXX No 3, Melbourne: Academia Press, 2015.

PROBABLY most people know little of the history of Hungary, and so the opening chapter of this new book by Dr Géza Kósa helpfully outlines the long and difficult story of the Hungarian people, who several times have faced near extinction through war, genocide, forced conversion and deportation. Today, Calvinistic Hungarians make up about 7% of the Hungarian population in Australia.

Dr Kósa is well-equipped to write the history of Hungarian Reformed witness in Australia. It is a story worth telling and it is a story well told. Dr Kósa was born in Hungary and came to Australia in 1957 as a young man. During his career he has held a number of academic posts in Tasmania and Victoria. Since 1986 he has been the chief elder at the Free Hungarian Reformed Church, Wantirna in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

The first attempt to organise a Hungarian-speaking Calvinist congregation was in 1949 in Melbourne, with establishing a congregation in North Fitzroy. This work aimed to meet the spiritual and social needs of lonely and isolated (mostly highly-educated) Hungarian immigrants in a strange and new environment. Another significant wave of Hungarian migrants came to Australia in the wake of the Hungarian Uprising in 1956. We hear of the important pioneering ministry of Rev Ferenc Antal in Victoria and beyond. In 1973 the Hungarian Reformed Church of Australia (Victorian District) was incorporated by an act of state parliament.

In 1986 a congregation was started at Wantirna, with Dr Kósa as its foundation chief elder. Soon an ecumenical church building was built for three Hungarian congregations to share. From 1982-2012 there was another congregation in Kew. There is also a struggling aged congregation in Springvale. From 1956-2007 there was a church in Geelong, but again the cause of its decline and closure was a lack of young people to replenish those removed by death. This has been the pattern in a number of Hungarian congregations around the country.

We learn of the tireless and energetic ministry of Rev L. Beaske in Sydney and NSW in the 1950s. Briefer accounts are provided of the work in other states of Australia, mostly the capital cities. The lesson Dr Kósa draws from the experience of Hungarians in Canberra is a valuable one and might apply to any church, namely that 'even a small congregation can survive for many decades if it has a competent and dedicated leadership' (page 120). This book is available from the author.

– Greg Goswell



'Even a small congregation can survive for many decades if it has a competent and dedicated leadership'

PLEASE NOTE: With this issue, NL 2015-12-15, New Life enters into its annual recess. New Life will return on 15 February 2016 with the issue dated NL 2016-02-16. Would contributors please send their material to us from 7 February onwards?

VISITING MELBOURNE?

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The Sufficiency Of Scripture (Continued from p.9)

God's Word is powerful and personal, authoritative and accurate, because God is. And His Word not only rules the world because it is God's authoritative Word, it also reveals God to the world. And it is through this revelation of Himself to us that God relates to us and calls us to come to the truth. In these words He not only makes Himself known, but through them He also regenerates us. Romans 10.17 says, 'faith comes through hearing the Word of God.' The preaching of the Gospel, Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, is used by God to give us the knowledge of God necessary for salvation. No other book does that. The Gospel alone is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes. By the word of God we come to know God Himself. John 1.1 says, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.'

So why does the Bible have authority? Because of its author, who is God Himself. The one true living God has spoken through the prophets and in His Son, and has revealed Himself authoritatively and truthfully. In these words we meet God Himself. So to reject the Word of God is to reject God Himself. There's just one thing we need to be aware of – what we've just stated is that the authority of the Bible is established by its own claims: the Bible proves the Bible! Which can sound like a circular argument. But if I said to you, 'Actually, the books of Josephus and Mormon prove the Bible', what would your next question be? What authority do they have? It's a bit like the question, who made God? If I answer, Zeus made God, the next question is? Who made Zeus? What we've done here is work our way back to the source of everything, that is God.

So His words have to be proved by themselves because they are His words, there is nothing outside of Him that can prove their authority. If there was, then we'd have a rival claim to authority in matters of faith and conduct. That's why the Bible is established by its own claims, it is the Word of God. If they have God's authority then they must be good for something, but what exactly? The question we want to ask now is this: What are they sufficient for?

THE SUFFICIENCY OF GOD'S WORD

Wayne Grudem gives a good definition: 'The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God He intended His people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly' (*Systematic Theology*, p.127). *The Westminster Confession Of Faith*, concerning sufficiency it states, "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed' (1.6).

To summarise, the doctrine of sufficiency argues that the Bible is everything God wishes to say to human beings concerning Himself, salvation and life. These are His preserved, written words to us and in them we have sufficient revelation to show us that salvation can be found in Jesus alone, by grace alone, through faith alone. We don't need any further revelation or interpretation to make it complete. In the Bible we have sufficient information to understand God's revelation to us – it is self-interpreting, Scripture will explain Scripture.

From this doctrine it follows that Gospel ministry is to focus on explaining, preaching, and applying the word of God so that people may be converted, built up in their faith and equipped for every good work. Clearly nothing else will do that.

And that's the point of 2 Timothy 3.16,17. After reminding Timothy that the Scriptures are able to make him wise for salvation (v.15), Paul then speaks about the nature of Scripture (it is breathed out by God) and is useful for 'teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness' (v.16). However, it is the next part that is the key. The main goal of Scripture is that the person of God be 'complete, having been thoroughly equipped for every good work' (v.17).

– Tim Booker

One day in Melbourne

Evangelicals online (conference)



Whose leaf shall not wither - Psalm 1

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from 10.00am - cuppa, meet and greet
 11.00am - Online: Sophia Sinclair, editor Press Service International
 (Social Media extravaganza)
 12.30pm - lunch provided
 1.30pm - Panel
 Design - David Goodwin
 - Salvation Army former editor On Fire
 Blogging - Dr Rowland Croucher
 - The Pastor's Pastor, John Mark Ministries
 Editing - Sheelagh Wegman
 - Editor, Tasmanian Anglican
 Platforms - Dr Bruce Redman
 - Salvation Army Head of Media
 * each 14 min / breakout 4 groups
 3.30pm - afternoon tea
 4.00pm - Vision — Bob Thomas
 4.20pm - Mark T — Planning for 2017 - 4.30pm close

Fly in, after 4.30pm early dinner with an associate / family - fly home last flight!

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Sheelagh Wegman is a freelance editor dealing with a variety of publications including production of the Tasmanian Anglican magazine.



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Bruce



Rowland



David



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Mark

Venue

Salvation Army Headquarters
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Date

Saturday 16 April 2016
11.00am start - 4.30pm finish

Email RSVP

Tuesday 12 April 2016

Name, State, Publication,
Blog, Interest

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Enquiries - 0419 917 713

Rev Bob Thomas editor New Life and Dr Mark Tronson chair Well-Being Australia met in August 2015 to ponder a day to offer evangelicals the latest in "online" - the result is "One Day in Melbourne—Evangelicals Online" The day is industrial, the philosophy is gospel.