

The Gospel Coalition Australia

-Building Up God's Kingdom Builders



Richard Coekin addressing the gathering. Photo credit: Christian Tirtha

A get together for Victorian friends of The Gospel Coalition Australia, featuring a Bible talk and Q&A from Richard Coekin (Senior Pastor, Dundonald Church, London, and author of *Ephesians For You*) was held at Scots' Church, Melbourne, on Tuesday 26 July. Richard Coekin gave a great exposition of Acts 20, which was followed by an inspiring and down-to-earth panel session, in which four Melbourne pastors shared their challenges and excitement of being in Gospel ministry. This was followed by a wonderful time of corporate prayer for ourselves and the city of Melbourne.

Expounding on Paul's farewell address to the elders at Ephesus, Richard Coekin urged the pastors to be sure to teach within Scriptural boundaries in order to protect the truth; to call out error so that by contrasting it with truth the people will be able to grasp the truth; to be prepared to give warning to the people, but always as shepherds with pastoral care for their flocks; to remember that pastoral ministry is always being redemptive. He summarised aspects of pastoral ministry as being searching for, rescuing and gathering the flock; feeding, resting and healing their wounds; governing, allocating resources fairly and protecting them from error.

Practical aspects of pastoral ministry, Coekin said, were to be a 'giver', not a 'getter'. Give the Word, the whole counsel of God. Pray so as to encompass everything. Train others to themselves be trainers. Raise funds for Gospel ministry but not for ourselves.

Fellowship over lunch followed by a seminar for church planters brought the day to its conclusion. *(See Peter Adam's Vision For TGC AUS, p.7)*

THE GOSPEL
COALITION
AUSTRALIA

TGC AU

THE GOSPEL:
POWER OF GOD
FOR SALVATION
TO ALL WHO
BELIEVE

VOLUME 79 NUMBER 3

ISSUE DATE:

1 August 2016

FILE NO: NL 2016-08-01

ISSN: 1033-7903

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(1910-1992)

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SUBSCRIPTION:

Free On Request

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PUBLISHED BY:

New Life Australia Ltd

ABN: 15 005 035 138

CONTRIBUTORS PLEASE
NOTE:

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'All The Vain Things That Charm Me Most, I Sacrifice Them To His Blood.'

From time to time at The Faith Factory we sing *O Happy Day That Fixed My Choice On You, My Saviour And My God ...* and when we do I ask the congregation to think, as we sing, of their own 'Happy Day', and I challenge them, that if they can't remember such a day, could this be the day when the Lord might move their hearts to accept His 'exceeding great and precious promises' and surrender their lives to Him. My secret prayer is that the Lord will indeed speak to the hearts of any present who could need some such Divine prompting, perhaps through the praise, prayer or preaching of His Word.

Isaac Watts, so well known for his hymns, most notably *When I Survey The Wondrous Cross*, was also noteworthy for his prayers and preaching. This extract from his book *A Guide To Prayer* appeared recently on the Banner Of Truth website, www.banneroftruth.org :

'Lord, I confirm all my former dedications of myself to Thee; and may all my covenantings be forever ratified. Or if I did never yet sincerely give myself up to Thee, Lord, I do it now with the greatest solemnity, and from the bottom of my heart. I commit my guilty soul into the hands of Jesus my Redeemer, that He may sprinkle it with His atoning blood, that He may clothe it with His justifying righteousness and make me, a vile sinner, accepted in the presence of a just and holy God.

'I appear, O Father, in the presence of Thy justice and holiness, clothed in the garments of Thine own Son, and I trust Thou beholdest not iniquity in me to punish it. I give my soul, that has much corruption in it by nature, and much of the remaining power of sin, into the hands of my almighty Saviour, that by His grace He may form all my powers anew; that He may subdue every irregular appetite and root out every disorderly passion; that He may frame me after His own image, fill me with His own grace, and fit me for His own glory.

'I hope in Thee, my God, for Thou art my refuge, my strength, and my salvation. I love Thee above all things, and I know I love Thee. "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? And there is none upon Earth that I desire in comparison of Thee." I desire Thee with my strongest affections, and I delight in Thee above all delights. My soul stands in awe and fears before Thee; and I rejoice to love such a God who is almighty and the object of my highest reverence.'

What a powerful confession of faith this is – and what a challenge to us. We might not be wordsmiths in the same order as Isaac Watts, but we can all know what it is to respond in humility and faith to the Gospel call – 'Repent, and believe the Gospel' – and know the calm of sin forgiven, the empowering of the Holy Spirit and the hope of Heaven.

By the way, my own 'happy day' was on the last day of the 1959 Billy Graham Crusade in Sydney when as an extremely shy 15 year old I plucked up all my courage and went forward during the singing of the last verse of *Just As I Am* and was counselled for salvation by a godly old Methodist minister.

*Just as I am, without one plea, but that Your blood was shed for me,
and that You bid me: 'Come to Me!' O Lamb of God, I come.*

*Just as I am! Of that free love the breadth, length, depth and height to prove,
here for a season, then above, O Lamb of God, I come.*

It's good for us to remember our 'happy day' from time to time so that we can give thanks to the Lord for His grace and mercy to us, and rededicate ourselves afresh to Him and His service.

– Bob Thomas.

TURKEY: Christians Face Elevated Threat

Shortly before midnight on Friday 15 July a faction within the Turkish military and gendarmerie seized control of strategic locations in Istanbul and Ankara. Subsequently, Turkish fighter jets fired at the National Intelligence Organisation, the Presidential Palace and the National Assembly. Soldiers seized control of the national broadcaster, forcing the presenter to read a declaration that the Committee for National Peace had taken charge to prevent any further erosion of democratic and secular values. However, what the faction failed to do was seize control of President Erdogan who was holidaying in the resort town of Marmaris.

At 12:30am on 16 July Erdogan issued a live statement via the smartphone app FaceTime, calling his supporters out onto the streets. Islamic religious leaders and mosques loyal to Erdogan's Justice and Development Party amplified the call, with mosques repeating the call to prayer throughout the night to encourage people to join the counter-coup. By 2am the coup was falling apart; by morning it was over and the elected government was back in control.

The details of this coup get murkier the deeper you dig and it may be some time before the truth becomes clear. Whilst it is not the place of the *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin* to examine murky details and intrigues [watch the *Religious Liberty Monitoring* blog for that], it suffices to say that the failed coup seems not to have been a 'Kemalist'/secularist coup as claimed. This is relatively unsurprising as Erdogan – who is a pro-Muslim Brotherhood conservative Islamist – had already purged the military of powerful secularists. Rather, it seems the coup leaders are indeed linked to the influential Gulen movement, a liberal Islamist movement that once supported Erdogan – even facilitating his rise to power – but is now essentially at war with him and the AKP. Nobody doubts that President Erdogan will use this crisis to tighten his grip on power, advance his personality cult and even further his dangerous Islamo-Turkic nationalism.

As soon as he regained control, President Erdogan set about purging the 'virus' (as he called it) from society; he has signalled he is ready to re-instate the death penalty. By Tuesday night 19 July the number of military personnel arrested had risen to some 6,000 (including at least 34 generals), along with nearly 3,000 judges. Furthermore, nearly 9,000 police have been sacked, as have some 1,500 civil servants in the finance ministry

and 492 from the Religious Affairs Directorate. More than 1,500 university deans have been ordered to resign and the licences of 21,000 teachers working at private institutions revoked. Twenty-four radio and TV channels have also had their licences cancelled

Middle East Concern reports that two churches were attacked by Muslim mobs during the counter-coup. At the Catholic church of Santa Maria in Trabzon on the Black Sea coast, windows were smashed before the church's Muslim neighbours repelled the perpetrators and contacted the priest. Likewise, windows and glass door panels were smashed at the Malatya Protestant Church in south-east Turkey.

It is of greater concern that the coup and counter-coup have fuelled a dramatic escalation in Islamic zeal and Islamo-Turkic nationalism. Responding to the call to remain in the streets, Erdogan's supporters are out in full force dressed in Islamic (not Western) garb, chanting Islamic slogans in Arabic. This will elevate the threat facing Turkey's non-Sunni Muslims (particularly the Alevis, who are already reporting pressure) and all non-Muslims (Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks as well as Muslim converts).

Furthermore, because the leader of the Gulen Movement, Fethullah Gulen (77), lives in the USA and because Erdogan believes the Gulen Movement provides a front for the CIA (American intelligence) activities abroad, Erdogan and the AKP have accused the US of being 'behind the coup'. Whether this is true or not, the accusation alone will elevate the threat facing Turkey's Gulenists, Kemalists/secularists, Kurds and Christians, and any foreigners

PLEASE PRAY THAT GOD WILL:

- grace Turkey's Christians with holy wisdom in abundance as they seek to navigate the difficult and dangerous days ahead.
- intervene to restore peace to Turkey so the Church will be secure; may the Church's Muslim neighbours reject every attempt to incite violence against Christians and resist every temptation to exploit the situation to their own advantage.
- will redeem this crisis, subverting and defeating the enemies of the Gospel and sanctifying the Church that the Kingdom of God might grow in grace and number throughout Turkey.

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Elizabeth Kendal is the author of *Turn Back The Battle: Isaiah Speaks To Christians Today* (Deror Books, Melbourne, Australia, Dec 2012) which offers a Biblical response to persecution and existential threat; and *After Saturday Comes Sunday: Understanding The Christian Crisis In The Middle East* (Wipf and Stock, Eugene, OR, USA, June 2016). See www.ElizabethKendal.com

World-Wide Bible Reading Event

Anne Graham Lotz, daughter of evangelist Billy Graham, is inviting people from all nations and languages to join together in the reading of the Bible to stir a worldwide revival. The global reading event, called *888: God Speaking*, will take place in the first eight days of August, which is the eighth month of the year. It will include eight hours of Bible listening to be broken down into one hour each day. The event is in partnership with the organisation *Faith Comes By Hearing*.

Anne Graham Lotz asks: 'In these days of chaos and confusion, hopelessness and helplessness, what would happen if everyone hit life's pause button and made time to listen to what God has to say? Let's find out,' she says.

Participants can sign-up at the websites Bible.is or YouVersion to hear the Word of God read in one of 900 languages. Participating radio stations will also be broadcasting the Bible readings and all listeners will hear the same passages, regardless of their location across the globe or their language.

– CBN Christian World News



TWR Extends Its Reach

There are many places throughout the Caribbean that may have had the Gospel in the past, but where new generations have grown up not hearing the Christian message. So when Trans World Radio upgrades their signal from 100 to 450 thousand watts, it's going to make the Gospel available to so many people who have never had it before.

Boosting their signal will allow TWR to become more than ten times stronger than the strongest AM radio station in the US, and they'll be able to reach places like the western side of Cuba that at present has no Christian radio.

And Cuba isn't the only target that will be affected. Parts of Latin America, the Caribbean islands, and even South America as far as Brazil will be able to hear the hope of the Gospel on the air. TWR says the financial challenge of \$3.8 million has been daunting, but the end is in sight. – *Mission Network News*

DOORS OPEN FOR OPEN DOORS

The Open Doors organisation, ministering to the persecuted church in over 60 countries, is planning to soon send several thousand bibles to Syria and surrounding areas. Open Doors says in spite of the horrendous persecution, people in distress are calling out to God, and they are asking Christians to help them receive Bibles in their language. They say many people in Islamic-controlled countries are coming to know Jesus Christ, and every new Christian is in need of a Bible.

In nearly all Islamic countries it is illegal to be a Christian, and or to convert to Christianity, and persecution has included beatings, physical torture, confinement, isolation, rape, severe punishment, imprisonment, slavery, discrimination in education and employment, and death.

– *National Religious Broadcasters*

BGEA RAPID RESPONSE BACK IN FRANCE

An international coalition of crisis-trained chaplains with the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team are returning to France to offer emotional and spir-

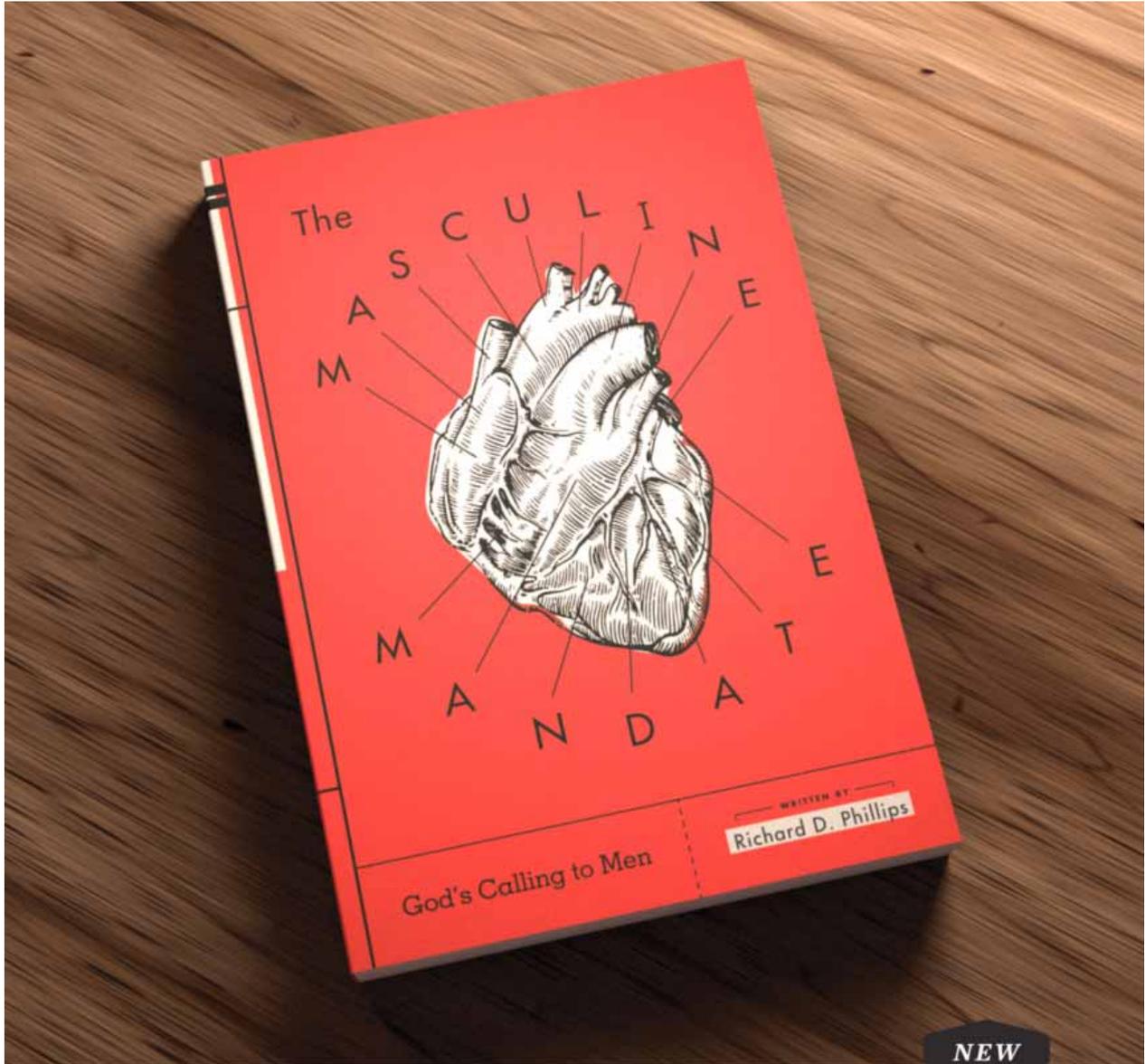
itual care on the streets of Nice following the horrific terror attack. International director of the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team, Jack Munday says once again they find themselves staring into the face of terror and evil. He says they will bring a light of hope into a very dark situation, providing a ministry of presence for those who want to talk, pray, or grieve. The deployment to Nice marks the seventh time in the last 10 months that the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team has sent chaplains into areas involved in mass shootings or terror attacks.

– *ASSIST News Service*

REACHING OUT TO KIDS

Gospel for Asia workers are holding 7,500 Vacation Bible Schools across Asia, teaching children important values through fun, educational activities, all while being taught that they are precious and loved by God. Each program has a theme — this year's is *New Beginnings*. VBS classes are conducted by people who have been given special training to teach, in collaboration with local Sunday School teachers.

– *Gospel For Asia*



NEW
TO
PAPERBACK

What does it mean to be a man made in the image of God? And what does it mean to be a man under God's grace, called according to His purpose? In *The Masculine Mandate*, former tank commander Dr. Richard D. Phillips provides clear biblical instruction for husbands, fathers, and sons as he carefully examines important truths from Scripture. **Now available in print and digital editions wherever books are sold.**



Reformation Trust

Now distributed by: Reformers Bookshop (Australia)

The Importance Of Faith At Work

Christian workers see their faith as important for their secular work. A new study of more than 1,000 Australians has revealed that those who identify as church-going Christians see their faith as a significant factor in their day-to-day work. *The State of Work In Australia* study was initiated by Reventure, a new organisation specialising in faith and work research, utilising the Barna Group, a globally recognised polling research firm.

In contrast to a secular expectation that faith is a private set of beliefs, most of the Christians (80%) surveyed said their faith helps them to face challenges at work, and that their church (69%) helps them understand how to live out their faith in the workplace. 'This is an exciting development in the history of faith and work integration in Australia,' explains Reventure Managing Director, Dr Lindsay McMillan. 'We are seeing that Christians are seeking to use the transforming power of faith in the workplace.'

However, it is not all positive. It appears that churches are not providing sufficient teaching or resources to maximise the opportunity of the workplace being a centre of spiritual expression. Only 40% of Christian workers say their churches provide teaching or resources. This is borne out by the study's revelation that most Christians are not open about their beliefs in the workplace, with 63% not feeling very comfortable when talking about their faith. 'We understand the challenges that Christians face in the modern workplace,' says Dr McMillan, 'and many feel the pressures on their faith expression.'

The study indicated that Christians are happy to work morally (60%) and ethically (54%), but struggle with temptations (39%) and do not feel confident evangelising in the workplace (22%). 'This research will help Reventure increase the conversation about applying faith at work, which we believe enables transformation not just of individual Christian workers, but also the organisations they work in,' Dr McMillan said.

The study was conducted in April 2016 and consisted of a nationally-representative survey of 1,001 Australian employed adults with an oversample of church attenders, with 321 identifying as church-going Christians. The study was representative of all major denominations. The sample was balanced for gender and age and included fulltime (57%), part-time (33%) and 10% self-employed/independent workers. For more information contact Dr Lindsay McMillan, Managing Director, Reventure Ltd, +61 (0)409 186 322.



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THE WHOLE WORD
VISION
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THE GOSPEL VISION

The Vision And Aims Of The Gospel Coalition Australia For Victoria

Peter Adam outlines the aims of TGC AU in Victoria as being:

- 1. To promote, support, encourage and enable the ministry of others**, and so strengthen the churches and ministries in which they serve. We believe that mutual communication, encouragement, prayer and co-operation are essential to strength in ministry, and we will try to encourage this as a normal pattern for those who minister in Melbourne and Victoria. We want to change and improve the culture of Gospel ministry in Victoria, so that we people from different networks and places know each other, pray for each other, communicate with each other, and, where possible act in co-operation rather than mutual ignorance, mutual suspicion, or competition. We believe that Gospel synergies will mean that the impact of all of our ministries will be increased, so that Jesus Christ will be preached and known, for the glory of God.
- 2. The Gospel Coalition network is based on a firm and definite theological foundation** as outlined in our *Foundation Documents*. We have used the USA document for our *Confessional Statement*, and adopted our own *Theological Vision For Ministry*, based on the USA document, but adapted for our own context of ministry. Our *Theological Vision For Ministry* has been approved by TGC USA.
- 3. We are praying for God to open doors for the Gospel in Victoria** so that many men, women and children will be converted to Christ, and come to maturity in Him. To this end, we are praying that God will raise up many godly Gospel workers, men and women of Gospel truth and integrity, Biblical wisdom, practical wisdom, and enduring faith, love and hope.
- 4. We intend to give special attention to five strands of ministry:** church planters, women in ministry, suburban ministry, inner-city ministry, and rural ministry.
- 5. The ministry of TGC Victoria is of course part of the work of TGC Australia.** And TGC Australia is currently growing its website with useful resources, and is also currently setting up a national network for women in ministry, and a network of those who train preachers. The members of our committee are: Shebu John, Sam Reeve, Nathan Melpass, Pete Sorrenson, Murray Campbell, Mike Raiter, Neil Chambers, and Peter Adam. Neil Chambers, Murray Campbell and Peter Adam are also members of the TGC Australia Council. In addition, Andrew Moody, a Victorian, is Editorial Director of the Australian section of the TGCA website, and Murray Campbell is a member of the TGCA editorial panel and oversees the Evangelism and Apologetics channel.

Websites Worth Watching: <https://australia.thegospelcoalition.org>

Full of helpful articles, including *7 Things I Wish People Knew About ... Sermon Illustrations* by Mike Raiter

Elizabeth Kendal's New Book ...

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'Kendal's book is a godsend to anyone who is at a loss to understand what lies behind the suffering in the Middle East. Drawing on authoritative voices from the region, her clear-eyed analysis untangles the conflicts with the heart and insight of a prophet. She gives a sobering account of the West's complicity in the atrocities - and what we can do to bring healing in a crisis as appalling as is the indifference to it.'

- Jeff M. Sellers, Editor, Persecution News Service, Morning Star News.

For more information, including purchasing options see:

www.ElizabethKendal.com



UpComing Events: Faith Facing Up To Fear

SMBC Centenary Conference

Declare His Glory Among The Nations is the theme for the SMBC Centenary Conference from Tuesday 13 – Thursday 15 September 2016 at the SMBC Croydon Campus, 43 Badminton Road, Croydon, NSW. The cost is \$270. Speakers will be Don Carson and Julian Lidstone. Register by Wednesday 7 September.

The Geneva Push Webinar:

Budget Or Fail? is the theme of the upcoming Geneva Push webinar on 9 August 2016, from 9.30am – 10.30am. How important is budgeting to a church planter? How can we do this better and what are the factors that hold church planters back with this? Tune in for practical advice for starting out, as well as wisdom for well-established ministries. events@the-genevapush.com

Thinking Of God Conference

TOGCon will be held on Wednesday, 23 November at Christ College, 1 Clarence St, Burwood NSW. Simon Manchester and John McClean will focus on the theme *ProTestify*, looking at how we can reclaim our Protestant roots, as well as considering how we testify as Protestants in the 21st Century. To register go to: <http://thinkingofgod.org>

Connecting With Moslems:

Bernie Powers, of MST, offers various opportunities for Christians to learn how to interact with Moslems and courses on Islam to help in understanding Islam as well as events to meet and interact with Moslems. Go to bpo26554@bigpond.net.au for details.

Everyday objects – airliners and a delivery van – have become murderous projectiles callously aimed with cowardly hatred at soft targets, targets whose only ‘guilt’ was not being poisoned by the same hatred!

Amidst the agony and grief of these and other outrageous events, authorities will continue to upgrade security, seeking ways to pre-empt future efforts by these terrorists and their copy-cats. Yet weapons that threaten life prove little deterrent against culprits who glorify death as a religious reward.

Is God within reach in such evil, distorted turmoil? Yes, but it’s not His style to feed pious theories or to ferment revenge. Instead, as investigations continue, He energises medical resources and breakthrough treatments for victims. This I know, for a member of our family is presently working in a nearby hotspot.

Terrorists pervert everyday items into deadly weapons. But God has transformed Jesus’ crucifixion – a most-extreme, brutal death – into a doorway for life. Yet He didn’t stop there, for ever since then His followers have tapped into His promise of eternal life to spread hope instead of fear. And this hope is powered by His presence with us here and now, in whatever life serves up.

So in the good times we may fearlessly express His generosity; and we may just as freely release His grace and compassion whenever tragedy zooms in on us or on those around us, for pain, hatred or revenge can never be allowed to have the final word.

–Noel Mitaxa, on behalf of a church near you.

‘Inviting you to explore God’s love!’

Read: *The Christian Sabbath Or The Jewish Sabbath.*

Which Should I Follow? by David Holden, at www.defenceofthefaith.org

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**Anti-Slavery
Commissioner
Would Help In Fight Against
Prostitution Rackets
– ACL**

The Australian Christian Lobby backs calls for an Anti-Slavery Commissioner as part of a two-pronged approach to protecting vulnerable trafficked women in Australia. ACL spokesperson for women’s interest, Wendy Francis, said an Anti-Slavery Commissioner, as suggested on SBS’s *Insight* program by anti-slavery expert Professor Jennifer Burn, is badly needed to put a break on the widespread trafficking of girls into Australia to work in brothels. ‘Human trafficking, or slavery, is the fastest growing crime worldwide. Sex trafficking is one significant aspect of this trade,’ Ms Francis said. ‘Australia also needs to adopt the well-tested Nordic approach to combating prostitution which has had dramatic effects at decreasing the demand for prostitution by making it illegal to buy sexual services.

‘It is disgraceful that girls are being brought to Australia, often under false illusions, and live in fear of their pimps and brothel masters. The Australian Federal Police has identified widespread sexual exploitation of girls being trafficked to work in Australian brothels. Slavery and slavery-like practices are a violation of human rights and should not be occurring in Australia. An Anti-Slavery Commissioner will go some way in supporting the victims of trafficking and flushing out those involved in this illegal activity.’

NCCA Calls For Prayer

Given the dire straits of our times, the National Council Of Churches In Australia has called for prayer on the theme: *Create In Me A Clean Heart, O God. And Put A New And Right Spirit Within Me.* (Psalm 51.10.

While the NCCA consists of the Anglican, Antiochian Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Assyrian Church of the East, Chinese Methodist, Churches of Christ, Congregational Federation, Coptic Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Indian Orthodox, Lutheran, Mar Thoma, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Roman Catholic, Romanian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, The Salvation Army and Uniting Churches, others will no doubt also be pleased to respond to this call to prayer.

Speaking on behalf of the NCCA, Bishop Philip Huggins (President), Sr Elizabeth Delaney (General Secretary), Bishop John Henderson, Mr Thomas Ling, The Rt Revd Fr Nabil Kachab, Mr Artin Jebejian, Mr David Penny and Sieneke Martin write:

A change of heart is so needed in this world of tears. Starting with ourselves, rippling out to others, we pray. Our context calls us to deeper prayer: the continual terrorism against innocent people; crimes of violence; loveless discourse in public life; the effects of hopelessness amidst poverty ... and much else.

The new Board of the National Council Of Churches met for the first time on the day many Christians remember Mary Magdalene: healed by Jesus. She followed Him to the Cross and then was at the tomb, faithful and grieving, thus to witness ‘Christ is Risen.’

In Resurrection faith, the first resolve of our NCCA Board was to call us all to deeper prayer. From the recent NCCA Forum we heard the timely request for a *Year Of Prayer*. Hence this note to you all, with the suggestion of a theme based on Psalm 51.10. Paraphrasing Pascal, whilst Jesus suffers in His love for all humankind, we must not sleep. A change of heart is what is needed in the human family – away from hate and fear. Each of us prays in our own way and according to our rich Christian traditions of prayer and meditation.

Additionally, perhaps around noon each day, we might pray: ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.’ At every level this cleaner and purer heart is needed: in ourselves, our Churches, our nation, our whole human family on this beautiful Earth in the vastness of God’s creation. In the love of Jesus, let us pray together now and for this coming year, with special intention.

Grace and peace in the Risen Jesus.

VISITING MELBOURNE?

You’re welcome at *The Faith Factory*:

ST KILDA: Cnr Alma Rd/Barkly St. Every Sunday 11am & 7pm;
Living Stones Korean Presbyterian Church. Every Sunday 12.30pm;

BALACLAVA: Cnr Hotham St/Denman Rd. Every Sunday 9.30am.

MINISTER: Rev Bob Thomas 0417 592 646

You’re Welcome At *The Faith Factory*

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'WITH CHRIST ... BETTER BY FAR'

Tim LaHaye, Evangelical Legend Behind *Left Behind* Series, Dies At 90

Tim LaHaye was a prominent Christian leader, a successful megachurch pastor, the author of scores of nonfiction books and the founder of The Institute For Creation Research as well as several schools. But he is best-known for *Left Behind*, the wildly popular series of novels imagining Jesus' return to Earth in the modern era. LaHaye conceived the idea for the series, which he co-wrote with novelist Jerry B. Jenkins. The resulting books illustrated LaHaye's religious interpretations, including the idea of a 'rapture' — when Jesus-believing Christians would suddenly rise up to Heaven, leaving non-believers behind. During his 70-year ministry, LaHaye focussed on the Second Coming of Christ. The *Left Behind* series prompted backlash, too. The theological underpinnings of the books have been criticized by both evangelical and nonevangelical Christians.



In addition to his work on the rapture and prophecy, LaHaye advocated for creationism. He once described evolution as 'the biggest fairy tale in our past two centuries', wrote books organizing personality traits along the four ancient temperaments and wrote about marriage, family and sex within the Christian family. LaHaye was on the original board of directors of the Moral Majority and was well-known as a supporter of conservative political causes.

— Baptist News Global

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TURN BACK THE BATTLE:

Isaiah Speaks to Christians Today.

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

For purchasing options, visit: www.turnbackthebattle.com

Pastor Loses Hand In Savage Sword Attack

Pastor Hamza lost his hand in a sword attack, two days after another pastor was killed in the same Nigerian state. Please pray for our brother: he is a farmer as well as a Baptist leader and will now find it harder to work his land. A Fulani herdsman attacked Pastor Hamza Alkali (pictured), who's 66, while he was working on his farm in Sabon Gida village in Nasarawa state. When the first sword blow cut his hand, Hamza realised he had to fight for his life. Despite being badly injured, he managed to pin down his attacker and snatch the sword from him. The man then fled. Neighbours took Hamza to the local medical centre where doctors had to amputate his hand and wrist.



Hamza's faith remains strong. 'God was with me, because I told the Fulani man that God who created me in His image will not give him power to kill me,' he says.

The attack came just two days after men with machetes killed Pastor Zakariya Joseph Kurah at his farm near Lafia, about 75 miles away.

Praise God for the strong faith and powerful testimony of Pastor Hamza. Pray that God will protect, strengthen and provide for him and his family. Thank God that many Muslims in the village, including the chief imam, have visited Pastor Hamza in hospital; pray that his relationship with them will remain strong. Ask our God, who binds up the broken-hearted (Isaiah 61.1), to comfort Pastor Zakariya's family. Pray that the Federal Government will do more to stop attacks on Christians by Fulani herdsmen.

– *Morning Star News via Release International.*

CHINA: Churches Banned From Worship During Two-Day Global Economy Summit

According to ChristianToday.com, world leaders are expected to attend the two-day summit in the city of Hangzhou. Religious worship is banned during the event 'to create a safe environment for the meeting.' 'They have been forcing house churches not to meet ahead of the G20 summit,' said Zhang Mingxuan, the president of China's House Church Alliance. 'The government has been clamping down on house churches in recent years, trying to manage them more closely, but they are a bit amorphous sometimes, so they have just told them they can't meet for worship,' he added. 'But the Bible teaches that we can't stop meeting.' Some believe this is part of a larger effort to crackdown on churches. More than 1,200 churches or places of worship have been attacked and had their crosses removed in the province of Zhejiang, where Hangzhou is the capital. Pastor Gu Yuese was arrested in January for criticizing the cross removals. He was just recently released.

– *Amanda Casanova, Religion Today via Breaking Christian News*

SYRIA: Church Destroyed In Suspected Islamic State Night Attack In Border Town

On the night of Monday 18 July gunmen opened fire on a church in Qamishli in the far north-east of Syria before detonating explosives inside the building. 'The church was completely destroyed, you can see only ashes here,' an eyewitness told local press. The attackers stole offering boxes from the church before blowing up the building. Militants from Islamic State are suspected of carrying out the attack. Churches across Syria have been

targetted during the ongoing fighting. Churches across Syria have been targetted during the ongoing fighting. Qamishli was already home to a substantial Christian minority before the outbreak of the Syrian conflict, and has increasingly become a refuge for Christians, with another surge of newly displaced believers arriving since Islamic State's capture last month of parts of the town of Hassake, which is 50 miles to the south of Qamishli. The security situation is extremely fragile, as control of the town is divided between Kurdish militia and Syrian government forces, who agreed an uneasy truce in April, whilst Islamic State controls territory to the south of Qamishli. In June, an IS suicide bomber killed two Christians in a failed attempt to assassinate Patriarch Aphrem II, the head of the Syriac Orthodox Church, and Christians have also been the targets of multiple suicide and grenade attacks by IS militants. In a particularly cynical attack, IS detonated bombs in three Christian-owned restaurants on the night of 30 December, killing 16 people and injuring over 30 others.

– *Barnabas Fund*

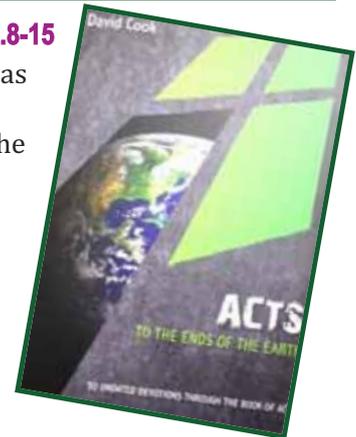
EGYPT: Rise In Attacks Against Christians'

There has been an 'exponential rise in attacks against Christians' in Egypt, the leader of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the UK has warned. Bishop Angaelos said Egypt was becoming 'more vulnerable to a disturbing wave of radicalism' because of a downturn in tourism, economic problems and loss of foreign trade.' He warned of 'heightened, targeted attacks against Coptic Christians in Egypt' and said tensions between Christianity and Islam has 'escalated over the past few months'.

– *Premier Christian News*

Open Opposition Met By Open Proclamation ACTS 6.8-15

The focus now shifts to one of the seven deacons who is described in v.3 as ‘full of the Spirit and wisdom’ and in v.8 as ‘full of God’s grace and power’. Luke gives a great deal of space to Stephen because his martyrdom will be the catalyst (according to 8.1 and 11.19ff) for the spread of the Gospel to non-Jewish, Gentile territory. Greek-speaking Jews begin to argue with Stephen (v.9) but, when they cannot better him in argument, they resort to underhanded ways. They persuade some men to make false allegations about Stephen and have him brought before the Sanhedrin. The allegations (v.11) are of blaspheming against Moses and God. This is elaborated in vv.13,14 with the claim that Stephen speaks against the Law of Moses and says that the temple will be destroyed.



In many ways the experience of Stephen parallels the experience of Jesus Christ; see the similar charge made against Jesus in Matthew 26.61 and Mark 14.57,58, and against Paul in Acts 21.28. The most effective false charges are those with an element of truth. Stephen probably did report Christ as speaking of the destruction of the temple, meaning His body, and the fulfillment of the law, and in favour of the new covenant Gospel.

Stephen’s integrity and serenity are obvious (v.15). He is now ready to answer the charges before the highest court of Judaism, the Sanhedrin. When reasoned debate fails (as in chapter 4 with the Sanhedrin and chapter 6 with the Synagogue Of The Freedmen), the world resorts either to the oppressive exercise of power in seeking to impose silence or the desperate search for fake witnesses and charges.

We hold the truth. For the Christian, the best case for truth is made by its clear and open presentation. God is the great Evangelist who blesses the clear proclamation of truth. Like Paul (2 Corinthians 3.2), we renounce underhanded ways that seek to manipulate adherence to the Gospel. These methods are unworthy of the Gospel itself. Our trust is not in eloquence but in God to do His work through the Gospel (1 Corinthians 2.1). Neither is our interest in quelling the rights of others to proclaim their religion, truth has nothing to fear from its counterfeits.

The opposition of the world to the Gospel is stubborn, irrational and perverse. In 2 Corinthians 4.4 the reason is clear. Like Stephen and Paul, our response must be ‘to preach not ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord ...’ 2 Corinthians 4.5.

FOR REFLECTION:

How inevitable is opposition for the faithful Christian witness?

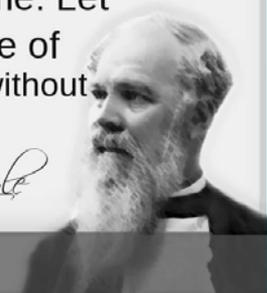
How rational is the world’s opposition to the Gospel today? How does it respond underhandedly now?

Content taken from 'ACTS – To The Ends Of The Earth' by David Cook, published by 10Publishing, used with permission.

SEEN ON FACEBOOK:

"The Bible is the true lantern for a dark and cloudy time. Let us beware of traveling without its Light."

- J.C. Ryle



*Philippians 4.4.
Rejoice in Him.*

Words Of Wisdom:

It is not our eye on him which is our great protection, but his eye on us

- Charles Haddon Spurgeon



BOOKS WORTH READING

A THEOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE PENTATEUCH: INTERPRETING THE TORAH AS CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE, Ed Richard S. Briggs and Joel N. Lohr, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012. ISBN 978-0-8010-3912-6

The editors and contributors of this new introduction to the Pentateuch have two things in common: they are all evangelical scholars and they are research students or colleagues of Walter Moberly. They write this volume to honour their teacher and mentor. Moberly himself has written helpfully on *The Five Books Of Moses* over many years and has taken seriously the theological dimension of these foundational Bible books.

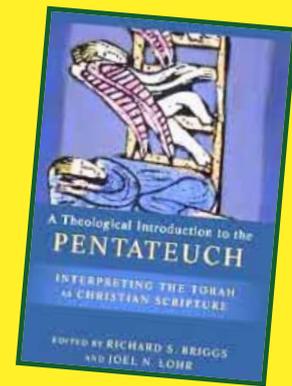
What is 'theological interpretation'? It is not a strange new beast, but in many ways a recovery of how the *Old Testament* has been traditionally read and preached in the Christian Church, namely it reads Scripture for its enduring truth as a witness to the nature and ways of God and what that means to be truly human and to live for God. In other words, why does the Old Testament matter and how does it throw light on the things that matter? We are not to play historical and literary concerns off against treating the text of the Bible as theologically serious. Instead, what is needed is an interpretation that gives proper place to all these dimensions of Holy Scripture. The Bible is historically accurate, theologically profound and the greatest literature in the world.

Richard Briggs reminds us that locating *Genesis* as the first book of the Bible was a choice, and its effect is to highlight the creation backdrop of salvation history and God's interest in all nations, not just Israel. This stops the *Old Testament* just being a *History Of Israel*. Specifically, *Genesis* shows that the 'first family' (Abraham's) is dysfunctional and its 'family values' are anything but ideal (eg various members want to kill each other). Briggs also provides an insightful reading of the story of the Tower Of Babel, wherein the divine scattering of humanity may be a mercy as well as a judgment. Diverted from their building project, they spread out to fulfil their real calling (Genesis 1.28), forecasting God's final Kingdom that will embrace all nations, languages and tongues. It is not the aim of salvation to obliterate human cultural diversity.

Jo Bailey Wells alerts us to the fact that *Exodus* is not just a story of rescue. That aspect only occupies 15 chapters out of 40. Theologically, it is about God's power and presence, and the latter is the focus of chapters 16-40. She pays special attention to Exodus 19.1-6, which is, indeed, a key passage, where Israel is made a corporate priest-king with special access to God. I am not at all sure she has properly assessed the phrase in that passage, 'for all the Earth is Mine'. There is no implied mission to the nations to be found in this verse.

Joel Lohr reminds us that *Leviticus* is the heart of the *Pentateuch* and central to its overall message, and the centre of the centre is the ritual of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16. As Lohr points out, one factor that makes it hard for Protestant readers to properly appreciate the material is that most do not value ritual as something that shapes their lives under God, or symbolism, such as that of the scapegoat who carried away the people's sin to a place where it will not return to harm the people. Lohr then shows the connection of the Day of Atonement to the death of Christ (John 1.29; 1 John 2.2), with the day Jesus dies being the ultimate Day of Atonement.

(Continued on p.14)



'This is a book for the discerning reader, who knows what to pick up as useful and to discard what is not.'

BOOKS WORTH READING

(Continued from p.13)

Nathan McDonald provides a useful survey of recent scholarly work on the structure of the book of *Numbers*. *Numbers* has a key role in connecting the revelation of God to Israel at Sinai and the revelatory speeches of Moses in *Deuteronomy*. It is a vital part of the glue that holds the whole *Pentateuch* together.

Rob Barrett shows how influential *Deuteronomy* is in both testaments, one example among many being Jesus' quotations from *Deuteronomy* when tempted by the Devil in the wilderness.

The strength of this book is that it treats the *Pentateuch* in a theologically serious way, though this reviewer does not appreciate the authors at times toying with modern critical theories (though they have moved beyond the old JEDP Hypothesis). It is a book, then, for the discerning reader, who knows what to pick up as useful and to discard what is not.

– Greg Goswell

SONGS FOR TROUBLED TIMES: EXPOSITIONS OF SOME PSALMS, Paul Barker and Peter Lau, 18RM.

This book, by two Anglican scholars who are influential throughout South East Asia, is highly commended by Professor Gordon Wenham, of Trinity College, Bristol, who writes: 'Everyone loves Psalm 23, but what about the gloomy, indeed bitter ones? Can we learn from them or use them in our private prayers and public worship? Paul Barker and Peter Lau here offer us eight gripping sermons on some of the most difficult psalms, showing their relevance to our lives today. Whether you are very familiar with the psalms or just beginning to study them, this collection will instruct your mind and warm your heart. I thoroughly recommend it.'

Chris Wright, International Ministries Director of Langham Partnership, agrees with him as he writes: 'So much Christian worship is full of happy froth, either denying or ignoring the realities of life's pain, unfairness, grief, depression and baffling evil. Not the biblical Psalmists. They bring all of that into the presence of God with a mixture of protest, praise, faith and hope. But the moods of some Psalms, in their anger, or their violence, or their seemingly exaggerated promises, present a challenge to preachers that many simply ignore. This book shows a better way, which respects the context and integrity of the Psalmists' words while bringing them into the further light of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then showing how they can still speak to us, and for us, as those who trust, love and worship the same God.'

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... For The Life And Work Of J.I. Packer

Today (22 July 2016) is J.I. Packer's 90th birthday. Longevity in life and ministry is often taken for granted in our day. We quickly forget that Thomas Aquinas died at the age of 49. Both John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards were 54 when they entered the presence of Jesus. Charles Haddon Spurgeon died at the age of 57. Martin Luther outlived them all, passing away at the age of 62. The church of Jesus Christ should pause and thank God for sustaining Packer's remarkable life for as long as He has. As I reflect on who J.I. Packer is and what he has meant to me personally, several things come quickly to mind.

First, few theologians are as thoroughly and pervasively Christo-centric as Packer. When I was writing my book, *Packer On The Christian Life*, I was repeatedly and pleasantly surprised by the way in which all exegesis, theological reflection, and pastoral application were grounded in the truth of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. It was the odd page in Packer's writings that didn't include a hymn of praise or a prayer of adoration focused on the person of Jesus.

Second, although I'm profoundly grateful for all his writings, I want to especially highlight a short introduction he wrote to John Owen's, *The Death Of Death In The Death Of Christ*. Packer openly acknowledges that no-one in church history exerted a greater or more formative influence on the shape of his soul and the content of his theology than did Owen. Many of us who joyfully identify with the Reformed theology that Packer has so faithfully defended can point to our reading of his *Introductory Essay* as a decisive factor in persuading us of the truth of particular redemption or definite atonement. For those who are struggling to grasp the meaning and extent of Christ's death, I can do no better than direct you to Packer's essay.

Third, the evangelical world as a whole is deeply indebted to Packer's relentless, yet loving, articulation of the truth of biblical inerrancy. When people on both sides of the Atlantic have argued that the notion of an inerrant biblical text is indefensible and out of touch with the discoveries of contemporary biblical criticism, Packer has held his ground. And he has done it with remarkable intellectual integrity, clarity, and in my opinion, persuasiveness. I've always been impressed with one statement in this regard, taken from his book, *Truth And Power*: 'Authority,' he insists, 'belongs to truth and truth only ... I can make no sense - no reverent sense, anyway - of the idea, sometimes met, that God speaks His truth to us in and through false statements by biblical writers.' I thank God today for J.I. Packer's immovable commitment to the truth of an inerrant Bible.

Fourth, I've learned more from J.I. Packer about the nature of progressive sanctification through the power of the Holy Spirit than from any other individual in Christian history. Of course, Packer would confess that he himself has learned from the giants of the Christian faith, most notably Baxter, Bunyan, Calvin, Owen, and Edwards. But in a way that goes beyond each of these heroes of the faith, Packer puts the dynamics of spiritual transformation in a language that is accessible to believers of all ages. The clarity, conviction, and practical value with which he describes Christian living is, in my opinion, unparalleled in the history of the church.

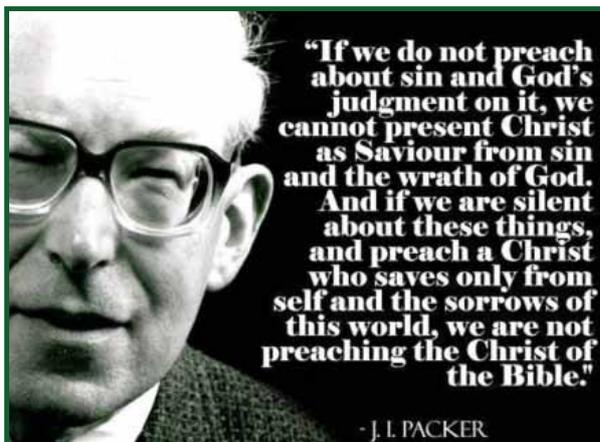
Fifth, and finally, I want to draw attention to J.I. Packer as the consummate Christian gentleman. By this I have in mind the admirable and humble way in which he has conducted himself in numerous controversies, many of which resulted in unjustified assaults on his character. One need not agree with Packer on every issue to recognize that he has modeled for us the way to maintain a godly and principled position on disputed topics. Be it his involvement with *Evangelicals And Catholics Together*, his disagreements with Martyn Lloyd-Jones on church unity, or his unwavering opposition to so-called same-sex marriage, Packer has consistently displayed a unique blend, without compromise, of both immovable theological conviction on the one hand, and the meekness and gentleness of Jesus Christ on the other.

So, on his 90th birthday, I say to him, 'Jim, thanks! May God richly bless and empower and extend your life as you seek to honour the Lord Jesus Christ in every way.'

Sam Storms, PhD, has spent more than four decades in ministry as pastor, professor, and author of more than two dozen books.

He was Visiting Associate Professor Of Theology at Wheaton College from 2000 to 2004, and is currently senior pastor at Bridgeway Church in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

He is the founder of Enjoying God Ministries and author of numerous books, including Packer On The Christian Life: Knowing God In Christ, Walking By The Spirit.



ONE AFTERNOON IN SYDNEY

...Whose leaf shall not wither - Psalm 1:3

SATURDAY 13 AUGUST

Time 1:30pm – 4:00pm
Location Salvation Army's Stanmore House
Address 51-61 Harrow Road Stanmore, Sydney
Cost Free
RSVP by Monday 8th August
Contact info@markt.id.au
 0419 917 713

Aimed to assist mission agencies-society publication editors, Christian bloggers, small Christian media outlets: co-hosted by Rev Bob Thomas (New Life), John Sandeman (Eternity) and Dr Mark Tronson (a daily columnist with Christian Today).

The workshops and panel discussion will inspire a new generation of Christian writers and agencies reaching out through online and social media.

One Afternoon in Sydney has been compacted into an afternoon as it has been combined with Press Service International's Young Writer Annual Conference and Awards - delegates are welcome to stay for the Annual Awards at 4pm.

Press Service International is a ministry of Well-Being Australia.

PROGRAM

9:20 AM Young Writer Conference

 1:30 PM **FAITH AND MEDIA**
 with Josh Reid
CREATIVITY AND FAITH
 with Justin Monaghan
 2:00 PM **PANEL DISCUSSION**
Panel Chair: Chief Editor:
 Press Service International,
 Sophia Sinclair
Panelists:
 Thomas Devenish - Hobart
 Justin Monaghan - Adelaide
 Tash McGill - Auckland
 Charis Jackson - Brisbane
 Josh Reid - Woolongong
 3:30 PM **AFTERNOON TEA**

 4:00 PM Young Writer Annual Awards

SPEAKERS



Josh Reid

Josh Reid is an Australian media professional, author, actor and speaker. For the past eight years he has been the CEO of Pulse 94.1 FM and is currently working on a children's novel. He works with Christians involved in the creative arts and media, encouraging them as they go out and influence culture.



Sophia Sinclair

Sophia, chief editor at Press Service International, will be chairing the panel discussion in the afternoon.