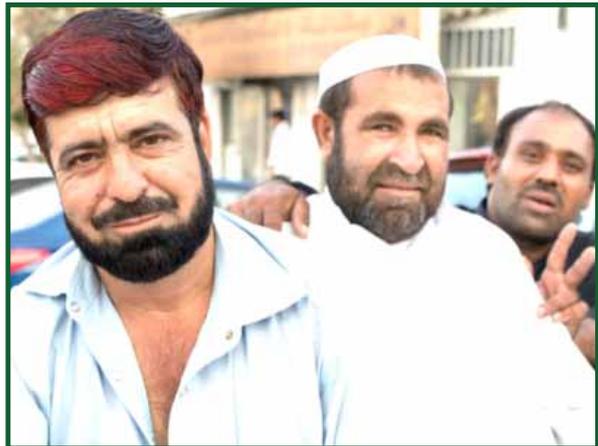


## **Qatar Crisis Sparks Call For Prayer**

**Christians in Qatar are requesting prayers** for the diplomatic crisis their country is in. A growing number of other Arab countries have cut all ties with Qatar. The future for Qatar and its hundreds of thousands of migrant workers – tens of thousands of those being Christian believers – is unclear.

**Open Doors spoke to several Christian believers living in Qatar.** All of them asked for prayers for the developing situation. Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, Yemen and other smaller states have severed diplomatic ties with Qatar over its alleged support for Islamist groups. 'Let's just pray this problem will not escalate further ... that they will be able to settle their differences,' one believer from an Asian country said. Up until now, the diplomatic crisis is not the biggest problem for the Christians. 'Life goes on, almost normal,' another Christian leader puts it. 'For us believers, life is same as last week, but do pray for our safety. There are crowds in the supermarkets because people are scared and are buying food to stock up.' This leader points out that there have been special prayer gatherings by Christians to intercede for the leaders in Qatar and its neighboring countries. 'Because of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting for the Muslims, most of the companies have cut the working hours by 50%. Also, Christian workers only have to work half days, so they have more time go to church and to pray.'

**An Open Doors worker expresses the hope** that something good comes from this crisis: 'Many Christians in Qatar already live with strict limitations to express their faith, and extra pressure on them is not what we want. But hopefully the current media attention on Qatar sparks people to pray for the country and the people living and working there.'



**Christian MP Upholds The Place Of The Bible In The Life Of The Nation**

**Murray Thompson, MP, for Sandringham in the Victorian Parliament,** at a recent event held at Parliament House, Melbourne, to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of the Bible Society in Australia, spoke of the importance of the Bible Society in promoting the Bible and Biblical values in national life.

**'We honour the work of the Bible Society,** an organisation whose mission has helped shape the culture and character of our nation,' Mr Thompson said. Recalling the faith of the state's founding fathers, he noted that in 1838 Charles La Trobe wrote in a report to Lord Glenelg in the House of Commons: 'The gift of an education should not be merely based upon worldly morality, but built upon the Holy Scriptures'. Mr Thompson added: 'It is not an everyday occurrence for such a forthright statement to be included in the concluding words of a report to Parliament.'

**In conclusion Mr Thompson declared:** 'The Bible and the Christ of its narrative has been the Cornerstone of our State. Today we can celebrate the work of the Bible Society in its building of our nation.'



VOLUME 79 NUMBER 22

ISSUE DATE:  
15 June 2017

FILE NO: NL 2017-06-15

ISSN: 1033-7903

FOUNDER:  
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PUBLISHED BY:  
New Life Australia Ltd

ABN: 15 005 035 138

CONTRIBUTORS PLEASE  
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## Tap Into Gospel Power

**Our world is broken and our response is weak.** Our families are hurting and our reaction is feeble. Our headlines are heartbreaking and we seem debilitated. We hear about Christian martyrs in the Middle East and terrorist attacks in Brussels. We see updates in our news-feed about fleeing refugees and the manhunt for Paris shooters.

**As followers of Jesus, have we forgotten where hope lies?** Have we forgotten the source of help and victory? Have we forgotten the power of the Gospel? Do we not see that we are called to respond to all of this with the truth, beauty, and assurance of the 'good news' of life in Christ? Do we really feel like we have nothing to say; nothing with which to respond?

**Scripture boldly declares a strong response** to a fallen and broken world, claiming that the power needed is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Over and over again we see that the Gospel 'is the power of God for salvation' (Romans 1.16), the Word of the Cross 'is the power of God (1Corinthians 1.18), and 'we preach Christ crucified ... the power of God (1Corinthians 1.24).

**The Gospel is powerful enough to bring salvation to the lost,** healing to the wounded, hope to the confused, restoration to the broken, and victory to the defeated. The Gospel is powerful enough to respond to the discouraging headlines and chaos of today. The Gospel can bring peace in the midst of turmoil, justice in the midst of terrorism, and truth in the midst of threats.

**We live in a fallen world** that will continue to stumble through the storms until all is redeemed. But we are not without hope, for we are not without the power of the Gospel. Frail as we may be, God is still at work and His Kingdom is growing!

**We now have this light shining in our hearts,** but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves. We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. (2 Corinthians 4.7-9 NLT).

– Rev Richard Coombs, National Director, MECO

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## **IRAN: People Want Change**

**Iranians went to the polls on 19 May to elect a President.** In the end it was essentially a two-man race between the incumbent President Hassan Rouhani (68) and the quasi-socialist, ultra-conservative hard-liner, Ebrahim Raisi (56). It was a high turn-out election and Rouhani won comfortably, garnering 57% of the vote, while Raisi got 38.5%. What is most significant about this result is that Raisi lost despite being the preferred candidate of Ayatollah Khamenei, the clerical regime and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps. Increasingly convinced that election boycotts are counter-productive, Iran's more educated and less devout urbanites (indeed all those yearning for greater freedoms and openness and an economy energised through improved relations with the West) came out en masse to vote for Rouhani.

**What this means is that the era of boycotts is definitely over.** If this were not obvious in the 2016 parliamentary elections, which saw numerous hard-liners lose their seats to genuine moderates and reformers, it is certainly clear now. The people are rising, gathering momentum, and making their will known. As is becoming clear, the will of the majority is for change.

**What this does not mean is that anything will change at this point in time.** Presidential elections are engineered to ensure that the President will represent the Islamic revolutionary regime. Furthermore, ultimate power still resides in the hands of Iran's unelected powers: the Ayatollah Khamenei and the IRGC. Human rights will not improve. During Rouhani's first term as President more than 3,000 Iranians were put to death for 'crimes' such as 'insulting Islam', a marked increase on the previous regime of hard-liner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Executions will surely continue, as will harassment and persecution of Christians. But at least the situation will not deteriorate. Or will it?

**On 21 May, just two days after the Iranian election,** US President Donald Trump delivered a key speech in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in which he labelled Iran the 'world's biggest sponsor of terrorism', and called on 'nations of conscience' to 'isolate' Iran. Whilst Iran's clerical regime is indeed a leading sponsor of international Islamic terror, the 9/11 terrorists were all Sunnis (specifically Wahhabis) and 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudis. Likewise, the terrorist groups singled out by President Trump – al-Qaeda and Islamic State – are Sunni groups whose members were radicalised in mostly Saudi-funded Sunni mosques and madrassas. Ignoring all this, President Trump signed an extensive arms package worth almost \$110 billion on 20 May – potentially up to \$350 billion over the next decade – with Saudi Arabia, the world's other 'biggest sponsor of terrorism'. The reality is various Islamic jihadists, terrorists and militants wreaking havoc across the world today are nothing but proxies, incapable of surviving without state sponsorship. While Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia are the leading sponsors of terrorism, Saudi Arabia is also the primary facilitator of global radicalisation.

**By aligning America so completely with Saudi Arabia against Iran,** Trump and US Secretary of State Tillerson will surely have set back any gains made by Iranian moderates at the ballot box. This will complicate the situation for reformists in general and Christians in particular, especially evangelicals. The Iranian regime will become very defensive. As all this was unfolding, the trial of two Christians, Victor Bet-Tamraz and Amin Afshar Naderi, was continuing in Tehran.

### **PLEASE PRAY THAT GOD WILL:**

- be powerfully present and active inside Iran as He works all things together for good, for the benefit of the Church and the Iranian people, 'according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in Heaven and things on Earth'. (Ephesians 1.9b,10 ESV)
- protect, preserve and sanctify the Persian Church, as it grows both in its diaspora and inside Iran. 'And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.' (Romans 8.28 ESV)
- move the heart of President Rouhani and others in the regime, that the leaders will accept that the people are calling for change and will have the courage to pursue it.

*'Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, ...  
I name you, though you do not know Me ...  
I equip you, though you do not know Me,  
that people may know,  
from the rising of the sun and from the west,  
that there is none besides Me;  
I am the LORD, and there is no other.'  
(From Isaiah 54.1-13 ESV)*

**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](http://www.ElizabethKendal.com)**

## Widespread Participation In Prayer Event

Churches in 85 countries participated in the *Thy Kingdom Come* prayer initiative between 25 May and 4 June. Prayer events of all shapes and sizes took place, including round-the-clock prayer rooms, prayer days, prayer walks and half-nights of prayer. People gathered across cities and towns to worship and to pray for the empowering of the Holy Spirit for effective witness. In England 35 cathedrals were involved in running a prayer event. St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne hosted one of the prayer events, while millions of people also engaged through social media. The project manager for *Thy Kingdom Come*, Emma Buchan, said international engagement far exceeded expectation.

– Anglican News

### ONWARD 2017: Truth And The Tyranny Of Tolerance

Katoomba Christian Convention is holding a conference aimed at equipping Christians in engaging people with the truth of Jesus. The conference will be held at Sydney Showground Exhibition Halls, 1 Sydney Showground Road, Sydney Olympic Park NSW on 23,24 June. Speakers will be renowned speakers David Robertson, a minister of the Free Church Of Scotland well known apologist and Christian commentator, Kanishka Raffel, Anglican Dean of Sydney, with Sam Chan and Dave Miers in ministry to high schoolers. Go to: [onwardevent.com](http://onwardevent.com) for further enquiries and bookings.

#### Paul Bootes Steps Down

Paul Bootes, managing director of Koorong Bookshop, will retire in early July, after 40 years in the Christian bookselling industry. His brother, Rob Bootes, will succeed him as CEO. Paul oversaw the expansion of the original bookshop from humble beginnings in the garage of a big red brick house in Marsfield, in Sydney's north to the 15 store chain and online business it is today. Rob Bootes says, 'Despite the challenges presented by an ever-changing industry, the opportunities for the furtherance of the Gospel and the equipping of the Church remain as exciting and significant now as when Koorong began.'

– Eternity News at [biblesociety.org.au](http://biblesociety.org.au)

#### Archbishop Welby Speaks Out

In the wake of the London Bridge terror attack, the Archbishop of Canterbury said Islam needs to 'take responsibility' for atrocities carried out in its name. Speaking to the BBC, Justin Welby admitted that throughout history, people have 'twisted and misused' religious text to justify hate and violence – but it's foolish to believe Islam has 'nothing to do' with the ongoing terrorist attacks. The Archbishop said that if something happens within our own faith tradition we need to take responsibility for countering that, adding that politicians should not just say 'this is nothing to do with Islam.' At least seven people were killed and nearly 50 people were injured when a van carrying three terrorists rammed into pedestrians on London Bridge before they jumped out and went on a rampage, stabbing people at random on the street. Archbishop Welby said that 'the love of Jesus is more powerful than the evil of ter-

ror or the profound wickedness of the terrorist.'

– Gospel Herald

#### Christian Sports Ministry

The Christians in Sport ministry will soon begin working with LOGOS Golf Ministries – a charity whose mission statement is 'taking the Word of God to the World of golf'. Graham Daniels, Christians in Sport's General Director, says: 'The LOGOS Golf Ministries team is doing a valuable work in a very hard to reach area of sport.' The ministries believe they will benefit greatly from working alongside each other as they reach the world of sport for Christ together, especially as they reach out to professional golfers with the Gospel. Over the last 12 years, many professional golfers, caddies and officials have been reached with the Gospel through the service of LOGOS Golf Ministries.

– Inspire

#### Making Connections Through Low-Cost Food

An Anglicare Mobile Community Pantry operating in the Sydney suburb of Bankstown is aiming to provide a source of low-cost food as well as a sense of community, particularly for the growing number of refugees arriving from Syria and Iraq. The pantry is a van stocked with food provided to low-income people with pension, health care or immigration cards and is based at St Paul's Anglican Church. The majority of clients are people from Syria. The rector of Bankstown, the Rev John Bartik says the pantry is a great way to connect with refugees in the area, many of whom struggle to connect with services or even just meet people. 'We also have an opportunity here to show them love on a personal level, and hopefully engage with them about Jesus as well,' Mr Bartik says.

– Sydney Anglicans

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Why Am I Not An Atheist? – David Robertson To Speak In Melbourne

City Bible Forum, Melbourne, is delighted to host international apologist and evangelist David Robertson on Tuesday 20 June. David is a well known debater, speaker and writer who has been described as 'the Scottish John Dickson' for his desire to engage the Christian perspective in public forums in the UK. He is the associate director of *Solas*; the Scottish Centre for Public Christianity, and the author of *The Dawkins Letters*, one of the first published responses to Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion*.

David will be the guest of a special **Bigger Questions** evening event, speaking on *Why Am I Not An Atheist?* We will explore how David investigated atheism, considering it an attractive option at first, but was unpersuaded by Bertrand Russell's *Why I Am Not A Christian*. With atheism becoming an increasingly accepted worldview in Melbourne, David is an excellent speaker to engage this perspective. The event will be held on Tuesday 20 June, from 6-7pm, at the European Bier Cafe (Basement), 120 Exhibition St, Melbourne. Tickets cost \$15, with group discounts available. For more information visit [citybibleforum.org/melbourne](http://citybibleforum.org/melbourne)

**Come and enjoy an encouraging conversation** for Christians, and a tremendous opportunity to bring guests seeking answers to the big questions of life.



### PROCLAIMING CREATION

#### WHY ARE CHRISTIAN VALUES BEING COMPROMISED?

In a world where desensitisation of moral values is rampant, affecting every age group, there is a need to return to solid Biblical foundations. What is the answer? Whose rules do we follow—ours or God's?

#### HALF-DAY CONFERENCE

Saturday 19 August 2017 12.30pm–6.00pm  
Arrive from 12pm  
\$15 per person | \$5 Student | \$40 max per family  
Ph: 07 3340 9888

Werribee Baptist Church  
cnr Heaths & Derrimut Rds  
Werribee Vic 3030



#### PRESENTERS

Rev. Peter Hastie  
B.A.H.S., B.Th., M.A.(Theol.),  
Ph.D.  
Dr Tas Walker  
B.Sc., Hons (Geol), Ph.D., Bng. B.Sc., B.E.(Hons), Ph.D.

Dr Geoff Downes  
B.Sc. (Hons), Ph.D.  
Dr Mark Harwood  
B.Sc., Hons (Geol), Ph.D., Bng. B.Sc., B.E.(Hons), Ph.D.

Register online at:  
[CREATION.com/proclaiming](http://CREATION.com/proclaiming)

### PROCLAIMING CREATION

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In a world where desensitisation of moral values is rampant, affecting every age group, there is a need to return to solid Biblical foundations. What is the answer? Whose rules do we follow—ours or God's?

#### HALF-DAY CONFERENCE

Saturday 26 August 2017 12.30pm–6.00pm  
Arrive from 12pm  
\$15 per person | \$5 Student | \$40 max per family  
Ph: 07 3340 9888

Mitcham Baptist Church,  
8-12 Simia Street,  
Mitcham 3132



#### PRESENTERS

Dr Martin Williams  
B.A., M.Th., Ph.D.  
Dr Tas Walker  
B.Sc., Hons (Geol), Ph.D., Bng. B.Sc., B.E.(Hons), Ph.D.

Dr Don Batten  
B.Sc. (Agr. Hons), Ph.D.  
Dr Mark Harwood  
B.Sc., Hons (Geol), Ph.D., Bng. B.Sc., B.E.(Hons), Ph.D.

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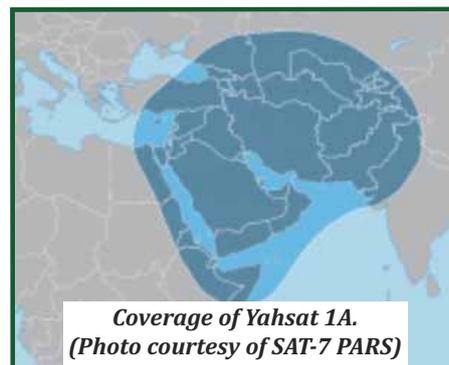
## Believers In Iran Sacrifice Safety To Hear The Gospel

**In Iran, like many countries in the Middle East,** being a Christian can cost your life. Christianity is seen as a threat to Islamic identity, and Muslims who convert face the most persecution. Sharing the Gospel and discipling believers are difficult, life-threatening tasks. One ministry, however, is finding efficient and safer ways to do this. SAT-7 PARS, the Farsi-language channel of a Christian satellite television ministry to the Middle East and North Africa, recently upgraded to a new satellite that could triple its reach throughout Iran and neighbouring countries.

**'It makes me feel that things are starting to happen inside Iran,** because after seeing this miracle — allowing us, the first Christian channel ever, to broadcast on this big satellite — I definitely feel that our Lord has a plan for the Farsi-speaking, the Afghan-speaking, the Tajik-speaking people who are inside Iran,' SAT-7 PARS Senior Manager Panayiotis Keenan says.

**It didn't happen overnight.** Keenan says the station had been trying for years to broadcast on Yahsat but had been consistently rejected. Keenan says the Muslim-based company out of Dubai rejected the station because of its Christian message. 'A month ago, again, we tried through our CEO who met the company in Dubai and they went through the programs, they went through everything that SAT-7 broadcasts,' Keenan says. 'I believe the reason the door was open to us is because of the ethos our programs have. Actually, the ethos is the second reason that we have been accepted. The first reason the doors have been opened is because of our Lord Jesus Christ answering our prayers.'

**While television provides a relatively safe means of hearing the Gospel,** using technology to learn about God or communicate with other Christians is risky. Keenan says believers live in constant fear and



mistrust of the people they interact with. 'The church is persecuted inside Iran,' Keenan says. 'The Christians are persecuted. Social media is filtered, so when you try to go to a page that has something to do with Christianity, immediately your page is shut down. Or, they might let you go to the site so they can find your IP address, see where you are, then come to arrest you. That's how far they will go. Also, Christians are scared because there are people who work for the government, who act like Christians in order for the real Christians to connect with them, and then they get arrested.'

**Still, God is moving in Iran.** SAT-7 produces a variety of programs that introduce viewers to Christ and help them grow in their faith. Viewers who respond are eventually introduced to an underground church network where they are further disciplined. Keenan says people's passion for the Gospel outweighs their fears.

– Reagan Hoezee,  
Mission Network News

### Extraordinary Election Puts Conservative Christians At The Heart Of British Government

A little-known conservative political party has found itself at the heart of power in Westminster after being called upon by British Prime Minister Theresa May following her failure to win a majority in the recent General Election. The Democratic Unionist Party from Northern Ireland can offer May's Conservative party the ten seats required to build a legitimate majority in the British Parliament.

**The DUP was founded by the late Rev Ian Paisley,** in 1971 at the height of the Northern Irish 'Troubles.' Paisley also founded the conservative 'Free Presbyterian'. The DUP is socially conservative, opposing same-sex marriage and abortion. Their staunchly conservative views, intertwined with their conservative evangelical associations, have ensured that abortion remains illegal in Northern Ireland, despite it being legal to attain a termination elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

**Not surprisingly, this conservative party has been met with heavy protest from liberals** since being called upon as the 'kingmakers' in British politics. Hundreds protested against what they believe to be outdated and archaic views held by the DUP in a demonstration outside the Prime Minister's Downing Street residence. Many of the protestors were imploring the British public to 'Pray the DUP away.'

**'There has been a mixture of anger and bewilderment** within the Westminster establishment – Tory as well as Labour – over the way the DUP has suddenly become the central player in shaping who governs the UK,' writes Henry McDonald at *The Guardian*.

**The ten DUP members who are going back to the House of Commons** include some who are born-again Christians and deny Darwin's theory of evolution. They are also among the main opponents of gay marriage equality and even minor reform to Northern Ireland's near total ban on abortion.

**This extraordinary turn of events has put conservative Christians at the heart of the British Government.** We should pray for them, that they will represent Christ well in the public square, and will campaign on issues that are dear to God's heart.

– Will Maule, *Hello Christian*

## HOW TO TELL THE STORY WELL

### One (Great) Day In Melbourne Encouraging 'Servants Of The Word'

**One Day In Melbourne** was held at the Moonee Ponds Salvation Army Recovery Church on Saturday 3 June from 10.30am to 4pm in order for the many interstate delegates to fly in and fly out of Melbourne on the same day. We extend a special thankyou to Lt Erin Mains for hosting *One Day In Melbourne* at Moonee Ponds Salvation Army.

**John Sandeman led the morning session** of the *One Day In Melbourne* conference for Christian writers. John was a senior journalist with Fairfax for 30 years and brought those skills to establishing *Eternity Christian Newspaper*. *Eternity* soon found a place under the Bible Society umbrella, giving it a national identity.

**John highlighted the emphasis of the *Eternity* philosophy** of being equal to – if not better than – journalism in the secular media. He said that such journalism does not set out solutions for its readers. Rather, top journalism presents the facts, the truth, the clarion call of what it is, then leaves the reader to come down on one side or the other.

**He approached his topic of *Christian Media Today*** by highlighting that video is fast taking over from print. He explained that celebrities, not super celebrities make good news stories and spoke of how 'timing' is important, along with running the story 'at the right time' and 'beating the regular media' to a story. The key is developing the skills of presenting 'news of difference'. This becomes critical with social media having changed the time zones of all media – it is now 24/7. The idea behind *Eternity's* massive Facebook footprint is to direct readers to the *Eternity* web site and other *Eternity* connections, including the Bible Society.

**He explained that physical media is weak today**, but it will be with us for a long, long time yet. Today the *Eternity* hard copy newspaper experiences three quarters of *Eternity* readership. One quarter is online. The focus now for *Eternity* is to digitally move forward.

***Eternity* is not a fund raiser.** It is a top quality journalistic vehicle. Readers today are looking for authenticity, and we need to realise media is a construct, it only exists as people write or tell stories or make videos to create a market. One of the problems with Christian media is too many of them tell the same stories. Rather, there needs to be many more 'real stories with real dialogue'. These types of stories build people up. Moreover John Sandeman emphasised that all of us in Christian media need to be careful not to diminish our effectiveness in ministry by doing social media badly. We must be disciplined and limit ourselves to good media to be effective. John called upon the *One Day In Melbourne* delegates to follow Luke's example – find people who are eye witnesses and write down what they saw and heard. Journalism should be neutral. This is the hallmark of *Eternity* – telling the stories of people. He stressed the following points: whatever you do, do it seriously; it is very important to maintain quality; do the best we can; view our Christian stories as being more important than secular media.

**John Lemmon** was the final ministry philosophy presentation, blogging in a Christian context. In a powerful, enlightening, humorous and buoyant presentation, aided by Power-Point, John took the delegates through his journey along with graphs illustrating his blogger readership. His idea was to centre his blog on Bible teaching. His aim was to avoid preaching or seminary lectures, rather straight Bible teaching going from one passage to the next. His blog statistical history illustrated highs and lows of readership along with pages read. He then developed his philosophy of blogging demonstrating his specific model and although free, it has been so successful he sometimes wished he could have advertised his e-books. But from this successful blog he is now involved with friends in emergency services in another blog for this very specific enterprise.

**David Goodwin** was the *OnFire* Salvation Army youth magazine editor. Now he is a freelance editor and writer and internationally acclaimed author of science fiction. His call to arms was to tell his story of online communications by joining online-groups whereby his audience reach was exponentially increased by having to carefully think through issues these various online groups were discussing. Many were professional people and he found himself needing to argue his case, which required research into his own Christian beliefs. David Goodwin provided chapter and verse as to the delights of Christian thinking being involved in such groups and illustrated the value of being challenged, and the manner in which one is part of such a discussion.

**Cheryl McGrath**, the Communications Officer for Church Missionary Society in Victoria went through the dynamics within the structures of this well established mission society. Cheryl provided a well presented and precise application of the principles of an evangelical mission. 'If God's love is for anybody anywhere, it's for everybody everywhere,' she said. Then her understanding that language itself carries with it its own culture and that within language are many assumptions. Cheryl's discussion on missionary encounters in the third world demonstrated the depth of her presentation's clarity.

– Mark Tronson, Press Service International



**WATCH THIS SPACE FOR DETAILS OF NEXT YEAR'S ONE DAY IN MELBOURNE!**

**Through The First Australians' Eyes**

*Our Mob, God's Story* takes you on a Biblical journey through the eyes of the first Australians. *Eternity News* reports that the book is a collection of artworks that represent different passages of Scripture. Bible Society is currently offering a look at it, with a 21-day devotional series drawn from the book. Bible Society Australia's Daily Bible service will include artwork, a Bible verse and a reflection on the verse and the painting by the artist. Artist Glendora Naden says of her painting *So Loved*, 'This painting is based on John 3.16, a favourite verse from Sunday School days on the mission.'

– *Eternity News* at [biblesociety.org.au](http://biblesociety.org.au)

**The Word At Work**

While shepherding his animals, Dul, living deep in the Himalayas found a discarded New Testament. The word 'Holy' caught his attention, and he began reading. As he understood that 'whoever believes

in Jesus has eternal life,' he resolved to follow what he read. Later, the Operation Mobilisation team that had left the New Testament travelled through his area to follow up their earlier distributions. When they came to Dul's household, which had been missed previously because nobody was home, he immediately invited them into his house. Holding the New Testament he had found, he shared his story and asked the team many questions about his reading. As a result, Dul and his entire family are following Jesus.

– OM

**Disillusionment Drives Muslims To Christ**

A Syrian pastor who has shared the Gospel in the war-torn country over the past six years says he's witnessed a staggering number of Muslims, disillusioned by the atrocities committed in the name of Islam, come to Christ. Pastor Simon was speaking with persecution watchdog Open Doors.

– *God Reports*

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

*Philippians 3.10*  
*Know Him*

**Elizabeth Kendal's New Book ...**

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

For more information go to: [www.ElizabethKendal.com](http://www.ElizabethKendal.com)



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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.

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## SRI LANKA: Over 20 Attacks On Christians This Year

There have been over 20 violent incidents against Christians so far this year, according to the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka. Following a parallel surge in violent attacks on Muslims in the country, the alliance calls on the government to ensure the protection of minorities and their places of worship. 'Since the current government took office in 2015, over 190 incidents of religious violence against churches, clergy, and Christians have been recorded,' said the alliance in a declaration on 27 May.

The recent attacks on Christians and Muslims have been blamed on a Buddhist nationalist organisation called Bodu Bala Sena, or the 'Buddhist Power Force'. The police are seeking to arrest its secretary general, the

controversial Buddhist monk Venerable Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thero, who is in hiding. Meanwhile, another BBS member was one of five people arrested for instigating religious violence against Muslims. In a video message released on 11 June, a BBS spokesman denied that the group was behind the anti-Muslim attacks, but accused the government of allowing Islamic extremism to flourish in the Buddhist-majority nation. 'Within a decade or two, Buddhism will be under serious threat in Sri Lanka,' spokesman Dilanthe Withanage said.

Human rights groups, religious leaders, lawmakers and the United Nations have all called on the Sri Lankan government to take immediate action against sectarian violence and growing tensions in the northern and eastern parts of the country. The Christian Evangelical Alliance pointed out that freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental right guaranteed by the constitution but that protests continue to occur unrestrained against minority places of worship. One recent example of this was the story of a church leader in south-western Sri Lanka. In March, after a Sunday morning service, a group of about 50 people, including Buddhist monks, forced entry into his church, the Christian Fellowship Church in Ingiriya – in the Kalatura District, which has been badly affected by the recent floods and mudslides. World Watch Monitor was told that the group threatened those who were still in the church, demanding that they stop holding services. Later, when the police arrived, they reportedly accused church members of 'disrupting the peace'.

– World Watch Monitor



A Buddhist shrine in Hambantota District, Sri Lanka, (courtesy Open Doors International)

### EGYPT: Three Christian Women 'Kidnapped'.

Suzan went missing last week, as she walked to the church where she works in Egypt. Local Christians fear the 22-year-old has been kidnapped – just like two other young women who vanished from the same Cairo suburb a few days before. Women in Al Khosous, a mainly Christian town just outside Cairo, are said to be too frightened to leave their houses: a women's meeting at Suzan's church, which she attended, has been cancelled. Please pray for the safe return home of our three Egyptian sisters in Al Khosous. The suspected abductions follow an incident in which a Muslim was accidentally shot and killed during a dispute over money. A Christian man was taken into police custody and is expected to be charged with manslaughter. Since then, there has been a sharp increase in attacks on Christians, especially women, in Al Khosous. But this persecution is nothing new: several local women have had acid thrown in their face, for not wearing veils. Christians across Egypt remain

under intense pressure. – Release International

### NIGERIA: Boko Haram's Worst Attack This Year Kills 17, Injures 34

On 11 June, Boko Haram carried out their bloodiest attack this year in northeast Nigeria, according to Amnesty International in a statement to *Daily Post*. Gunfire and three suicide attacks in Maiduguri killed 17 and injured at least 34 people. Some of the attacks targeted other Muslims in the community, as explosions detonated in and around the local mosques. David Taylor with Christian Aid Mission says this isn't surprising, considering Boko Haram's extremist ideology. 'Boko Haram doesn't spare anybody. They've been attacking both Christians and Muslims, and now that Christians have been driven out of the area, their attack is primarily affecting Muslim people. They view their version of Islam as being the 'pure Islam', so any group that is not conforming with their standards is subject to attack. It's a way to impose their viewpoint on everybody else.'

– Lyndsey Koh, Mission Network News

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**The Turning Point**

**Acts 15.1-21**

This section has been called the centerpiece, the watershed, the turning point of the Book of Acts. This meeting of the church at Jerusalem is framed by Paul's first and second missionary journeys.

The purpose of this first church council is to consider the nature of the true Gospel. The matter of concern is that some Jewish believers were urging Gentile believers to be circumcised in order to be saved (vv 1–5). This is the same concern addressed by Paul in his letter to the Galatians. He wrote this letter during his stay at Antioch (see Acts 14.28). If the church embraced this teaching, Christianity would become a mere sect of Judaism.

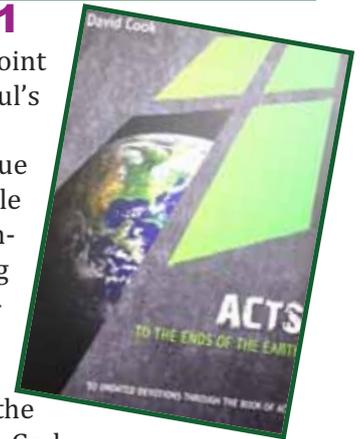
Such additions to the Gospel, even if thought to be good and helpful things like sacramental observance, are dangerous. They take our focus away from the sufficiency of Christ's work alone as the means by which we are set right with God.

The debate is recorded in verses 6–12. This is Peter's last appearance in Acts and he clearly states his conviction (v 11). Barnabas and Paul underline God's accreditation of their ministry (v 12). James, the Lord's brother and leader of the Jerusalem church, diplomatically refers to Peter by his Hebrew name, Simeon (v 14), but quotes Amos 9.11–14 from the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

In doing so, he recognises the presence of a number of Greek-speakers. He says that the restored Kingdom of God will include Gentiles (vv 16,17) and the people of God will include Gentiles (v 14).

On the basis of what God has done and said, it is concluded that there will be no additions to the true Gospel. In verses 19–21, we read that a letter is drawn up and the decision is circulated.

Things that go without saying need to be said! Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. There must be no additions or subtractions to the true Gospel. This very minute, a sinner who is not circumcised, baptised, or confirmed may come to Jesus and, by repentance and faith receive freely, immediately and forever, the forgiveness of sin, the gift of the Holy Spirit and a warm reception into God's worldwide family.



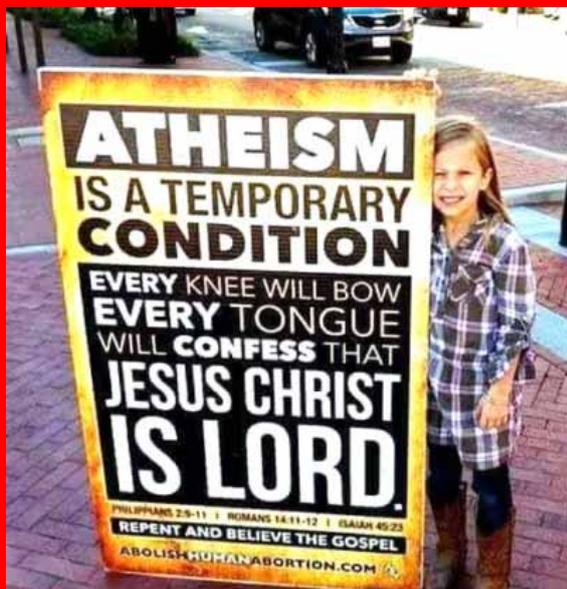
**REFLECTION:**

Think about some of the things you add, or are tempted to add, to the Gospel, as a supplement to the work of Christ.

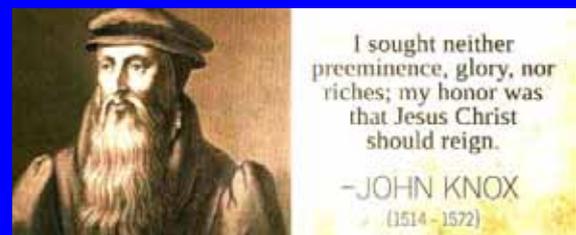
By adding these things, have your standards of acceptance of other professing Christians become higher than those of God?

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

**SEEN ON FACEBOOK:**



**Words Of Wisdom:**



Our God is a missionary God. The Bible is a missionary book. The church is a missionary institution. Christ's mandate is a missionary mandate. The Great Commandment (to love) is to be the regulating principle of all mission activity. Contemporary culture presents many opportunities for the entrance of the gospel. So each church must find ways of having meaningful interaction with those outside the church. But this must be done without capitulating to the prevailing culture.

Joel R. Beeke

## BOOKS WORTH READING

### THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD: ASPECTS OF JUDGMENT IN PAUL'S LETTERS, John R. Coulson, Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016. ISBN 978-1-4982-9034-0.

**John Coulson is Deputy Principal and Lecturer in Bible** at Brisbane School of Theology. He has been lecturing in biblical studies since 1997. He writes on a largely neglected theme in Pauline theology, namely God's judgment, and one of his aims is to restore the balance of truth in Gospel proclamation. He shows that judgment was integral to the message that Paul preached, for to understand God's grace, we need first to appreciate our predicament, that we face the righteous judgment of God as sinners.

**Coulson conducts a survey of all Paul's letters**, extracting and commenting on what Paul teaches about this sobering truth. The opening chapters of *Romans* show that God's wrath is fundamental to the apostle's view of reality, for salvation is rescue from God's wrath, and this is only possible because God judged sin as Jesus bore the punishment of sinners. As a result, if we deny that there will be a judgment day, we make nonsense of the cross and can no longer explain how God can forgive.

**The author's painstaking exposition of Paul's letters** succeeds in showing that they are permeated by a consistent message of judgment, so that the theme is by no means limited to a few classic texts (eg Romans 1.18; 6.23). Coulson brings out the prominence of the theme in a masterful way, showing that almost everything Paul says is dependent on or in some way connected to the fact of God's judgment and its consequences for humanity.

**He demonstrates that Paul believed in the final judgment and also in present-day judgments (even of erring Christians)**, an example being his warnings about the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11). Coulson combines uncompromising faithfulness to the teaching of Paul with a pastoral tone. He shows sensitivity, while also being pointed in his practical application to contemporary readers. The effects of sin in the world are not evidence that things are out of God's control, but of the righteous judgment of God, and they point forward to the final judgment and destruction of evil on the last day.

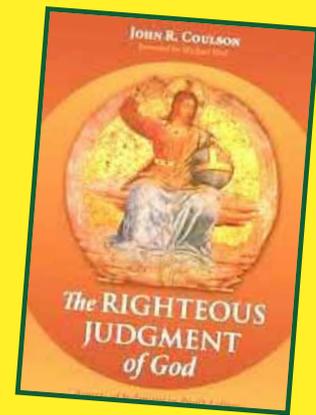
**Only in this framework does the Gospel make sense**, for the answer to the human predicament must come from God. Coulson challenges our complacency, our imbibing of current cultural values like self-sufficiency and self-improvement, our reluctance to suffer, which we will if we proclaim the message of judgment and repentance. He urges Christians to get serious about holiness.

**He asks and seeks answers to the hard questions about temporal judgments**, drawing insights from Paul. It is refreshing to find Coulson urging Christians not to stand aloof from and only criticise society, but instead to face the truth that the sinful trends of modern life have also invaded the church, and we must get our own house in order. In fact, when it comes to temporal judgments, Paul warns believers and especially leaders that God will judge wrong behaviour in church life.

**Coulson is right to resist recent attempts (even in Evangelical circles)** to redefine what happened at the cross so as to eliminate propitiation and penal substitution. He insists that God's wrath was poured out and satisfied when Christ suffered for sin and was punished in our place. When substitution is denied, the cross is robbed of its power.

**He also shows that we cannot dispense with the truth of final judgment** and hell as a state of eternal punishment, but, in arguing for the traditional view, he does so with clarity and sympathy. In other words, this book is extraordinarily helpful in how it handles vexing and sensitive issues and will be a great help to many who are confused and troubled about these issues.

– Greg Goswell



*'Coulson challenges our complacency, our imbibing of current cultural values like self-sufficiency and self-improvement, our reluctance to suffer, which we will if we proclaim the message of judgment and repentance. He urges Christians to get serious about holiness.'*