

Encouragement Received At Sydney Prayer Breakfast



Sydney Prayer Breakfast

Steve Chong, working with RICE Ministries in Sydney, went to the Sydney Prayer Breakfast on 16 June at the International Convention Centre in Sydney.

What did he take away from it? 'I was encouraged to see people from so many different tribes within the Christian Church unite to pray bold prayers for influence across the church and secular spheres. The head of enterprise sales at Google just prayed for 'increased Christian influence in every board room across the top 500 companies'; the new CEO of World Vision prayed for our indigenous community, rain in Kenya and peace in Iraq; the Head of St Andrew's School prayed for evangelism, while the NSW Minister for Mental Health prayed for the church leaders. (We need all the mental health we can get!)

Kurdish Bible Translation Brings Sense Of Identity And Camaraderie To Kurds

After 28 years, Biblica's team in Kurdistan is finished, and the Kurds have 'an accurate, contemporary translation' of the entire Bible. Hans Combrink of Biblica said it wasn't an easy road. 'There have been starts and stops, wars, disruptions of all kinds, but the team persevered and they finally saw the work brought to completion.' Kurdistan is a sensitive part of the world that's difficult to work in. Made up of pieces of several countries, this new translation will help the Kurds feel a sense of identity and camaraderie.

'Bible translation is obviously tied up in language and culture — you can't separate one from the other', said Combrink. 'It forms people's sense of identity. Relationships are key in any kind of work that we do, especially in sensitive parts of the world.' Kurdistan's conflicts and religious context certainly qualifies, which is why Biblica teams worked side-by-side with indigenous translators instead of simply shipping copies in from somewhere offsite.

The translation's dedication ceremony showed just how united the teams were. More than half the people who attended came from some kind of Muslim background. 'The fact that there were so many people from other faith orientations at the dedication of a Christian Bible testifies to the fact that over many years, very important and lasting bridges were built in this community,' said Combrink. 'Now it's time to put the translation to use. Combrink said local Muslims often feel that they have a shared heritage with Christians since parts of the Old Testament are included in the Koran, and this has helped make them more receptive to the truth of Jesus Christ.

'Indigenous churches need your prayer as they learn to use this new translation to reach neighbours around them. 'Let us pray that God would establish His Kingdom also through His Word in Kurdistan and that this translation would play an important and critical part in that process.'

– Alex Anhalt

VOLUME 80 NUMBER 1

ISSUE DATE:
1 July 2017

FILE NO: NL 2017-07-01

ISSN: 1033-7903

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PUBLISHED BY:
New Life Australia Ltd

ABN: 15 005 035 138

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Thank God For The Apologists

While we can offer explanations to our own satisfaction about the declining percentage of Christians in the population, the results of the recent National Census – that ‘Christians’ have declined to just 51% of all Australians – is surely a call to arms.

In the Second Century, when the Early Church was under fierce and sustained attack, God raised up a group of men whom we know as ‘the Apologists’ to defend the faith. They include Quadratus, Aristides, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Apollinaris (Bishop of Hierapolis), Melito, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Clement of Alexandria, Marcus Minucius Felix and Tertullian (names worth Googling).

They wrote to defend Christianity against false accusations current in their day, especially charges that their religion was novel or godless or that they engaged in immoral cultic practices.

Fast forward to the 21st Century, and we find remarkably similar circumstances. Persecution is rife, misunderstanding (much of it seemingly on purpose) abounds, rival religions put their best foot forward and are treated as darlings by the media and a fascination to those bent on pursuing anything and everything except the One, True and Living God, the God whose love is so great that He sent His Only-begotten Son into this world so that all who believe in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.

City Bible Forum is one ministry which works hard at reaching out with the Gospel to non-Christians of all kinds, and David Robertson, minister of St Peter’s Free Church, Dundee, Scotland, is an individual who interacts with such people through his blog, *The Wee Flea*, and with growing influence as a media commentator. The two came together in Melbourne recently when Robert Martin, director of City Bible Forum, Melbourne, publicly interviewed David Robertson under the heading *Bigger Things*.

In the course of the interview David Robertson told us he had once been attracted to atheism. He had grown up in a Christian home, but in his teens found it restrictive. If there was no God to answer to, he felt that he could find freedom there, so he stopped going to church and tried to work through his teenage questions and problems without God. Eventually, through looking at creation, he found that atheism just didn’t make sense for him intellectually. As evidence accumulated he thought, ‘there’s no way this could be an accident.’

He found too that regarding the problem of a good God and the problem of evil, if you take God out of the equation, you’ve still got evil, but with no way to bear it. He realised that he knew no-one who had become an atheist by reading Richard Dawkins’ *The God Delusion*, but plenty of people who’d become Christians through reading it. He found that to focus on Jesus was to find that He sets us free – from sin, from society and from inequality. Studying history he saw that societies which get rid of God are societies which fall over. David Robertson said that as he came back to faith in Christ and learned more and more about Him, the stronger his faith became.

Go to: <https://citybibleforum.org/city/melbourne> to learn more about City Bible Forum, and to www.thewee flea.com and <http://www.solascpc.org> to read more about David Robertson’s ministry. – Bob Thomas

KENYA: Al-Shabaab Incites Against Church

Somalia-based al-Qaeda affiliate al-Shabaab is inflaming religious tension and escalating its terror attacks inside Kenya, doubtless in an effort to extract concessions ahead of Kenya's 8 August General Elections and possibly even make Kenya's involvement in Somalia an election issue.

On 18 May al-Shabaab released a video featuring Senior Private Alfred Danyi Kilasi, a Kenyan soldier captured in Somalia in January 2016. Under duress, Kilasi criticises the Kenyan government and appeals to the Kenyan people to 'find a solution for this dilemma'. Then al-Shabaab released another video on 22 May, this time showing al-Shabaab commander and spokesman Sheikh Ali Mahmoud Rage addressing al-Shabaab fighters at a graduation ceremony. Rage describes the graduates as 'muhajireen' (emigrants) who have travelled from 'faraway lands' and endured al-Shabaab's 'intense training sessions' so they might combat 'the enemies of Allah'. Noting that many of the fighters come from Kenya, he exhorts the graduates: 'You have to be the army that will conquer Kenya.'

Lamenting the plight of Muslims in East Africa in general and Kenya in particular, Rage devotes most of his 10-minute address to inciting hostility against the Church. He rails against the alleged crimes of Christians and the victimisation and imprisonment of Muslims. He laments that 'Kenyan crusaders' now occupy 'Muslim lands' and that Christians have 'erected churches in the place of mosques' so that in many places the Islamic call to prayer 'has been replaced by the chiming of church bells'.

Since the videos were released, al-Shabaab has markedly escalated its terror attacks inside Kenya, specifically in the Muslim-dominated eastern provinces bordering Somalia. Dozens of people have been killed in ambushes and by improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including three aid workers (one with a child) and at least 20 security personnel. On 31 May some 70 al-Shabaab jihadists invaded the town of Fafi in Garissa Province. It seems their objectives were to destroy the Safaricom telecommunication mast and to kill or kidnap the Christian teachers from the local school.

Christian school teacher Elly Oloo Ojiema was shot and killed in the school compound, while Christian teacher Joseph Kamau was taken captive. Despite much shooting into the air, no locals were targeted. Only when a Muslim teacher sprang courageously to Kamau's defence was that Muslim taken captive as punishment for siding with an infidel. *Morning Star News* reports that Ojiema was a member of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, while Kamau belongs to the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. After they destroyed the Safaricom mast, the militants retreated back into Somalia, laying IEDs on the roads as they went.

It is deeply concerning that numerous Safaricom masts have been destroyed in the eastern border provinces, disabling communications over a wide area. On top of all this, an investigation published by the BBC at the end of May reveals that al-Shabaab has been abducting Kenyan women (both Muslims and Christians) from the Kenyan coast. These young women are then trafficked into Somalia where they are used as 'wives' and sex slaves. The BBC interviewed more than 20 escapees, including Faith, Sarah and Elizabeth, for their *BBC Magazine* feature and documentary, *The Sex Slaves of al-Shabab*.

PLEASE PRAY THAT GOD WILL:

- comfort the young widow, extended family and friends of Christian teacher Elly Oloo Ojiema; may their faith remain strong through this storm;
- comfort, protect and deliver Christian captive Joseph Kamau; may evil hands be restrained and may God's amazing grace, as reflected by Kamau, be received by his Muslim colleague who risked his life to defy the jihadists. May God redeem this terrible situation for His glory;
- intervene to protect and preserve Kenyan security personnel, and shield and sanctify the Kenyan Church – especially those Christians and fellowships located in hostile Muslim-dominated areas. 'Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I pass by safely.' (Psalm 141.10 ESV)
- interpose His strong arm against al-Shabaab (Isaiah 40.10,11), to liberate those being held captive to Islamic jihadists.

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

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The Secularist Media War Against The Ark Continues



'Recently, a number of articles in the mainstream media, on blogs, and on well-known secularist group websites have attempted to spread propaganda to brainwash the public into thinking our *Ark Encounter* attraction is a dismal failure. Sadly, they are influencing business investors and others in such a negative way that they may prevent Grant County, Kentucky, from achieving the economic recovery that its officials and residents have been seeking,' writes Ken Ham, of *Answers In Genesis*, concerning their Noah's Ark theme park.

'Nowadays, it seems very few reporters in the secular media actually want to report facts regarding what they cover as news. In one sense, such negative, misleading, and outright false reporting doesn't worry me. As Christians, we know we will receive opposition like this – and after 40 years in Bible-upholding ministry, I have become used to such antics by those who oppose us. Nowadays, it seems very few reporters in the secular media actually want to report facts regarding what they cover as news. When it comes to reporting on theologically conservative Christians like those of us at AiG, whose ideology they strongly oppose, many writers have an agenda to undermine Christianity as they file their stories.

'I've found that not only do these kinds of reporters generally do very poor or lazy research, they will actually make things up for their agenda purposes. They often just quote others, who themselves have quoted yet others, who have quoted even yet others. Urban legends have now been created around our life-size *Noah's Ark*, mixing misleading and untrue statements gathered from a variety of sources, often not using primary sources but hearsay.

'Let me give you a recent example. Reporter Linda Blackford wrote a recent front-page article on the *Ark Encounter* for the secular newspaper the *Lexington Herald Leader* of Kentucky (the state's second largest paper). Her article was titled *Town Expected Flood Of Business After Noah's Ark Opened. So Far,*

NEPAL: Recovering After Earthquake

Just over two years ago a 7.8-magnitude earthquake devastated Nepal. The quake killed 9,000 people and impacted eight million lives. More than 600,000 buildings and structures were damaged. Deepak, a program director with Global Disciples, says that in the wake of the horrifying natural disaster, God has used the Church's witness to prompt a surge of new Christian believers in the majority Hindu nation. Even a secular newspaper has reported that since the earthquake many people have turned to Christ. Deepak says people are responding to the Gospel after seeing how the church has ministered to the needs of the people. – MNN

It's A Trickle."

'After reading that headline and then her article, I was convinced that she (and probably her editor) had an agenda even before she began her research and writing. She was determined to convince readers that the *Ark Encounter* wasn't successful and that it hadn't had much of a positive economic impact or created jobs in Grant County. As she ignored overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the reporter misquoted the few people she did interview and deliberately wrote an article that hid the whole truth about the tremendous economic impact that the *Ark Encounter* has had on all of Northern Kentucky. Her motivation? Well, because her newspaper has been known for antagonism toward anything Christian, and AiG has experienced this agenda from the paper over the years, what's occurred here is yet another example of anti-Christian bias.

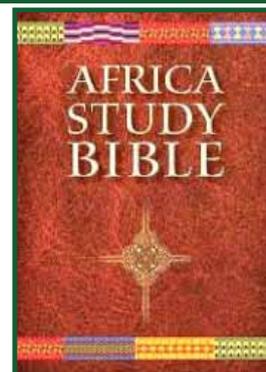
The Word For Africa

A new study Bible with a distinctly African voice has been launched to equip and disciple the churches in Africa, which are growing exponentially as an estimated 20,000 Africans are coming to Christ every day.

This is the first-ever study Bible developed exclusively by African scholars and ministers containing thousands of study notes by 350 contributors from over 50 countries. The *Africa Study Bible* was launched at the Moody Bible Institute, and is now being distributed throughout Africa.

In an interview with *The Christian Post* last week, Paul Nyquist, President of Moody Bible Institute, said, 'The African social and economic contexts are far closer to the biblical context than what we have in the West. Other study Bibles are written from a modern, first-world point of view.'

African Christians have few discipleship materials that speak directly to their experiences and this new study Bible is designed to both build their faith and teach them to apply biblical truth to every sphere of their societies and cultures.



– *Christian Post*

Queen Elizabeth II recently honoured hymn writer Keith Getty as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. The award recognizes Mr Getty for his contribution to 'Music and Modern Hymn Writing.' It is the first time the award has been given to an individual in the world of contemporary church music, according to *Charisma News*. Mr Getty says, 'It is wonderful to see hymnody and the great hymn-writing heritage recognized in this way. I am very grateful to Her Majesty the Queen for this honour.' Keith Getty and Stuart Townend wrote the hymn *In Christ Alone*, which is the most popular hymn in the United Kingdom. With his wife, Kristyn, and other writers, Mr Getty has written more than 60 of the most popular contemporary hymns.

– *Christian Headlines, Charisma News*

From Car Care To People Care

In the inner-city Sydney suburb of Darlinghurst, early work has begun on an aged care centre catering for homeless men and women. The 42-bed centre will be operated by HammondCare on a site previously occupied by a car wash. St John's Anglican Church owns the car wash site and has provided it on a long-term lease. Rector Ed Vaughan says the church already provides a cafe, legal services and counselling for homeless people. 'Homelessness is our heart and doing this makes a lot more sense than renting out a place to wash cars,' he says. The City of Sydney has provided \$1.5 million which has allowed early work to begin. The total cost is estimated at \$4 million and is expected to be completed next year.

– *Sydney Anglicans*

Sharing Love Through Cooking Meals

A group of Christians in Toowoomba regularly cook meals for the needy and vulnerable in their community. *Eternity News* reports that *Food For Friends*, a city-wide ministry of volunteers from different churches, prepare and store frozen nutritious meals which are available to school chaplains and other leaders to distribute to people in need. Val Ruyters, one of the volunteer chefs, says, 'This is one small way we can share God's love with our community.' The cooks work in a commercial

kitchen, and the cost of ingredients is covered by donations. *Food For Friends* is a ministry of City Women Toowoomba, an organisation that aims to make the city a better place for women and girls.

– *Eternity News at biblesociety.org.au*

Gideons Flooding Sydney – With The Bible

Gideons International has begun a three-year campaign to 'flood Sydney' with 500,000 copies of the Bible. The *Sydney For Eternity* campaign is the largest Bible distribution Australian Gideons have undertaken. The campaign has already been operating in Western and Central Sydney where organisers say some people receiving Bibles have openly made decisions to follow Christ. Gideon members are currently visiting churches to present their *Sydney For Eternity* vision. Organisers say many people are requesting information about participating in the campaign.

– *Gideon News*

SAT-7 Ministers To Suffering Egyptian Church

In light of the recent violence against the Coptic Christian community of Egypt, SAT-7's Arabic channels have addressed the effects and tackled each concern with the light and love of Christ. A special prayer night for Egypt, from Kasr El Dobara Evangelical Church in Cairo, was recently broadcast live on SAT-7 to entrust all the shock, trauma, and worries of the Christian community to God.

– *SAT-7*

'Intense' Fire That Destroyed Kambah Church Treated As Suspicious

Police are investigating an 'intense' fire that tore through the Tuggeranong Baptist Church. Local man Ben Langley saw fire crews tackling the Kambah church blaze at 6.15am while he was out walking his dog. Crews battled the blaze throughout the early morning, managing to contain the inferno and stop its spread to nearby properties within the hour. The fire was extinguished shortly after 10am following a sustained water attack.

Police are now treating the fire as suspicious and an investigation has been launched into its cause. The church's assistant pastor, Paul Massen, said many in the church community are in shock, with nothing from the building able to be salvaged. 'The damage is unbelievable. It can't be repaired, obviously, and it can't be replaced,' he said. 'I couldn't find anything that hadn't been damaged and it's quite a big building. Some of the walls have collapsed and the roof has buckled and caved in. I don't think there's any way of salvaging it at all.' A structural engineer has been called in to assess the site.

Among the damage to the church building itself, was the church's op shop as well as the recently renovated kitchen, which provided free hot lunches to the community and was also destroyed in the blaze. Mr Massen said the church's op shop, which had around 1,000 items, was the primary way the church helped people less fortunate in the community. 'It provided the finances for the community lunches, and also it did food vouchers for families doing it tough, and sometimes there would be assistance with electricity bills,' he said.

- Sherryn Groch and Andrew

Australian Christians Rally To Give 30,000 People The Miracle Of Sight

It started as a simple idea four years ago. What if Australian Christians joined together for one special day to give the miracle gift of sight to people living with cataract blindness in the world's poorest countries? The idea quickly caught on. This year on Miracles Day, Thursday 17 August, Christians of all denominations around Australia will join together in faith and compassion to give the gift of sight-saving surgery to 30,000 men, women and children.

'It's astounding to think that cataracts are the world's leading cause of blindness in middle and low income countries, making up almost half of all blindness, and yet they can be removed with simple surgery,' says Jane Edge, Chief Executive Officer, CBM Australia.

'Around the world, CBM works with medical professionals to restore sight. It only takes \$32 and a 12 minute operation to remove cataracts and give the gift of sight to someone.



'Cataract blindness would pose challenges for any of us, but it is particularly devastating for those living in developing countries - where there are often fewer resources to support people with vision impairment and higher stigma regarding disabilities. This leads to more people becoming vulnerable to extreme poverty.

'On Miracles Day, for just \$32, Australians can give someone the gift of sight. For that person, being able to see again is a miracle,' explains Jane.

Listen to Miracles Day on Christian radio stations across Australia on Thursday 17 August. Donate your Miracle at www.cbm.org.au/miraclesday

CDP Celebrates Surge In Membership And Expanding Branch Network At Annual Dinner

Over one hundred and thirty members and guests gathered at Christian Democratic Party's Annual Dinner in Novotel Parramatta on Friday night. In a sign of growing political influence, a preview of an upcoming documentary on Fred Nile was shown. It featured interviews with many other prominent politicians such as Tony Abbott, John Howard and Bob Carr. Hon Tony Abbott MP noted that 'it is very rare for a state politician who is not part of a Government's ministry to have any influence outside of their state, but Rev Nile's profile is truly national'.



Rev Hon Fred Nile MLC reflected on the party's beginnings with 'no staff, no volunteers, no funding' and how its influence had grown to have so many members, branches and elected members of parliament. Hon Paul Green MLC had the crowd applauding and cheering as he gave a rousing speech urging guests to personally promote issues such as Chaplaincy and Scripture in School and engage in social media to spread the good news. His message ended by reminding the faithful 'there is one political party you can vote for that doesn't compromise on Judeo-Christian values – the CDP'

Guest Speaker Dr Stuart Robinson launched his latest book *Women & Islam* and drew several stark contrasts between the freedom and lifestyle enjoyed by Christian women and the brutality endured by many Islamic women. **State Manager Craig Hall reported on the increasing influence that CDP is having** in NSW, including a meeting at Parliament House earlier in the year where the Premier met with 40 Heads of Faiths invited by CDP. He also laid out the vision for the party to expand in both NSW and beyond with a grassroots movement developing in South Australia, ACT and even calls internationally from those interested in starting Christian Democratic movements. CDP Chair, Rev Dr Ross Clifford, invited Lyle Shelton from Australian Christian Lobby to lead in prayer as the night drew to a close.

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KEEPING PACE WITH TECHNOLOGY

Church Goes Into All The World – With Latest Technology

Thanks to technology, many churches now offer live streaming and other options such as *Facebook Live*. They are using technology to implement evangelism, and increase the faith of attendees.

Because some families are unable to attend church in person at the appointed time, due to travel, work, illness, or other engagements, they still can participate in the service 'off-site.' Some churches say that because of the technology they have a worldwide congregation, which they call an 'online campus.' They even have a staff member designated to 'greet' each person online as he or she arrives and to monitor the experience in real time. One church has an online congregation of more than 5,000.

These practitioners believe traditional church has its place, but it's about finding new ways to feed God's people and win others for Christ, people who may not be comfortable or simply are unable to darken the doors of a church. – PE News

Time-Out Called On Smoko

Residents of a community in northern India have pledged to help make it tobacco-free following a health awareness drive by Gospel for Asia. Carrying placards and handing out advisory leaflets about the dangers of smoking, GFA teams visited villages and neighbourhoods recently as part of a *World No Tobacco Day* initiative. In one area, people responded by saying they would try their best to make their village a 'tobacco-free village.' Around 900,000 people a year die from smoking-related causes in India. Dr K.P. Yohannan, founder and director of GFA says they wanted to show that God cares for the whole person – body, mind and spirit. – ASSIST News

Plane Comes Home 'On A Wing And A Prayer'

Passengers on an AirAsia flight from Perth, heading to Malaysia, recently experienced a terrifying situation when, about 75 minutes into the six-hour flight, the plane experienced engine failure. The aircraft began shaking 'like a washing machine,' passengers said.

The pilot manning the flight, who had been flying for 44 years, knew the situation was so bad that he twice asked passengers to pray.

The prayers of the pilot and passengers were answered, as the plane was able to get back to Perth with no loss of life and no injuries to anyone on board.

'And thus it was that all came safely to land.'



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.

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FROM ALL QUARTERS

The State Of The Church In Canada – It's Not All Bad News

Amid the decades-long decline in mainline Protestantism in North America, researchers in Canada recently found a sample of congregations whose growth has bucked the trend. The key characteristic which these exceptional Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and United churches had in common is: evangelical theology.

A team of sociologists has suggested that conservative theological beliefs, including emphasis on Scripture as 'the actual word of God' and belief in the power of prayer, may be the saving grace keeping attendance up at 9 of the 22 Ontario churches studied.

David Haskell, the study's lead author, says academics are hesitant to say one type of belief system is better than another, but if we are talking solely about which belief system is more likely to lead to numerical growth among Protestant churches, the evidence suggests conservative Protestant theology is the clear winner.

The growing churches emphasized markers typically associated with evangelical beliefs, such as describing evangelism as the main mission of their church. – Breaking Christian News

Snowfields Ministry Sees People Coming In From The Cold

Christian ministry is going strong on the NSW snowfields with a residential holiday lodge and a church and chaplaincy program reaching out to holidayers hitting the slopes. Southern Cross Alpine Lodge, a ministry that began in 1963, has seen thousands of visitors over its time. The Lodge host, Rev Graham Morrison, who is also one of Perisher Ski Resort's honorary chaplains says his work involves skating around and meeting people, helping when necessary, with many opportunities to pray and chat with people and provide a listening ear for problems and in times of accident and disasters.

One of the things Mr Morrison has noticed is that visitors to services at Perisher's Alpine Church are often people who have not attended church in years. He says: 'People see the chapel which is right in the middle of a snowfield, often with a barbecue running before services, and are happy to relink to Christianity in a way they might never choose to do back home.'

The ministry has seen people become Christians after attending a service. – Sydney Anglicans

Ramon A Williams
– Worldwide Photos –
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– Jeff M. Sellers, Editor, Persecution News Service, Morning Star News.

For more information go to: www.ElizabethKendal.com



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PERSECUTION WATCH

Sudan Churches Risk Letter To Government On 'Systematic Violations', Including Church Demolition

The Sudanese Church of Christ has written an open letter to the Khartoum government protesting 'the systematic violation of Christian religious freedoms' including the recent demolition of one of their churches in the Suba area of the capital, Khartoum. The SCOC represents about 220,000 of about two million Christians in Sudan, in over a thousand congregations.

'This is the boldest move the SCOC leadership has yet made against the constant pressure they have been facing from the government,' a worker closely involved in working with the Church in Sudan (who remains anonymous for security reasons) explains. 'Over the past years they have complained against all viola-

tions of religious rights to all pertinent government bodies, but it is the first time such a letter is distributed on social media.'

In the letter, dated 16 May, the Headquarters of the SCOC detailed the 'hard conditions' they have faced in recent years, including the demolition of churches, confiscation of church property, government failure to allocate land for construction of any new churches, and travel restrictions on senior church leaders. 'We feel deeply sorry and strongly condemn these abusive procedures against the holy places,' they wrote.

Their letter was sent only a day before the Sudan government demolished a SCOC building – in Algardisia, East Khartoum (pictured above). According to Middle East Concern, a para-Church charity which monitors Sudan, someone else had recently claimed ownership but refused to provide any proof. The authorities then demanded that the church vacate the land. Even when the church showed ownership documents the authorities refused to hear the case, stating they had orders to carry out the demolition. Apart from these two, 25 other churches – ranging from Catholic to Coptic Orthodox, the Sudanese Presbyterian Evangelical Church, Jehovah's Witnesses and Pentecostal Churches – have also been designated for demolition. The government claims they violate designated purposes for these plots of land.

It also calls on the presidency to allocate land to churches and to guarantee Christians their constitutional right to own land in all of Sudan's states. It asks President Omar al-Bashir to order the NISS to return all arbitrarily-confiscated land ownership and travel documents and to prevent the NISS from any further violation of Christians' rights.

–World Watch Monitor

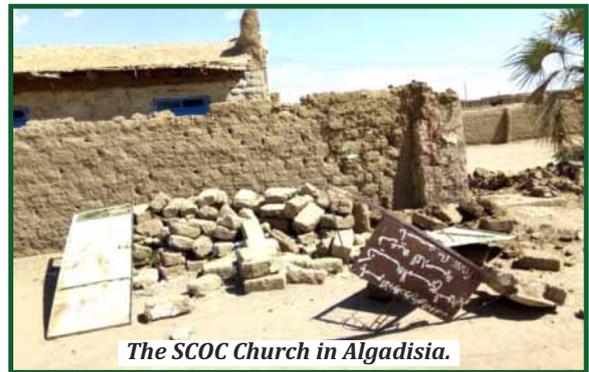
USA: Judge Halts Deportation Of Chaldean Christians To War-Torn Iraq

Evangelical groups have been urging President Donald Trump to step in and prevent the return of Christians back to their home nation of Iraq. Now, a district court judge has halted the mass deportation, reports CNA. 'We are thankful and relieved that our clients will not be immediately sent to Iraq, where they face grave danger of persecution, torture or death,' Michael Steinberg, legal director of the ACLU of Michigan, which represented the Iraqi nationals, stated following the ruling. 'I see it as a death sentence,' said one woman of a US army veteran who was set to be deported. 'I really don't know how he could survive with the combination of targets on his back.'

– Will Maule, Hello Christian

INDIA: Persecuted Christians Denied Access To Water

It's hot enough in India, but imagine living in Uttar Pradesh, where temperatures can reach 40C. Then



The SCOC Church in Algardisia.

imagine your neighbours had cut off a vital water supply – just because you were a Christian. Our brothers and sisters in a village in the northern state are being denied access to water for their crops – to force them to deny Jesus. They have steadfastly refused. Please pray that God will strengthen our Christian family in Jalalabad village in Ghazipur District, as they come under intense pressure to recant their faith. Local Hindus are refusing to sell water from their boreholes to four Christian families, and their crops are dying as a result. Even local police and the village chief have not intervened to restore the water supply, despite the Christians' appeals for help. Neighbours accuse the Christians of converting people by force. Yet, on one recent occasion, a mob forced every local Christian to take part in Hindu rituals and declare that they denied Christ. Some younger Christians reportedly felt they had no option but to give in to these demands. Those who resisted were beaten – and now find themselves without water for farming.

FAITH STILL COUNTS

Census Figures Not Such Bad News, According To Dean Of Sydney

The latest census figures showing a rise in the number of people reporting no religious affiliation do not show Australia is losing faith, according to the Dean of Sydney, Kanishka Raffel.

2016 Census figures, released on 27 June show the proportion of people reporting no religion increased to 30% in 2016 - up 8% in five years, and nearly double the 16% recorded in the 2001 census.

The Dean says Australia is still a predominantly religious

country. 'Over 60% of people said they had some affiliation with religion and the number of people who say they have no religion - it doesn't really tell us much about them. Some of those people are decided Atheists perhaps, many are just not committed and we know that some of those people would certainly say they have a spirituality, some kind of connection with God but they just don't identify with institutional religion. So I think that number is a bit opaque, we don't get the whole picture from the figures,' Dean Raffel said.

The census form also changed last year, putting 'no religion' as the top choice. Over half of the population and the majority of those identifying a religion, claim Christianity. That figure is 51% of the population, compared to 74% in 1991 and 88% who identified as Christian 50 years ago.

The number of Catholics dropped from 25.3% to 22.6% and Anglicans from 17.1% in 2011 to 13% last year. Islam at 2.6% and Buddhism at 2.4% were the next most common religions, with Islam up 0.5% in five years and Buddhism down 0.1%. Hinduism is the fastest growing religion. New South Wales is the most religious state with 66% of the population claiming to be religious.

'60% of people say they identify with some religion and for more than 50%, that's Christianity. This means that religion is important to a lot of people and so there is quite properly a religious perspective on the topics of importance in our society,' the Dean told SBS news (see photo above).

The Dean says the figures tell us something important about our culture. 'I think we can get very distorted impressions. Most people don't necessarily say a lot about their religion, and that might make you think people aren't religious. But if you ask them, you find something that is personally important to them and is no doubt shaping their whole engagement with the community, even if they are not wearing it on their sleeves. So I think it's worth knowing (the figures) so we get a clearer picture of the things that are most important to a large number of people.'

The Dean says the fact that one in five migrants are from Asia or the subcontinent is being reflected in churches. 'The census tells us that there are now more migrants from India and China than there are from England and Europe and we are certainly seeing that at St Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney. People who might not necessarily have had much contact with Christianity in the past in their own home countries are very eager to find out about Jesus and so we have a large number of Sub-Continental and South East Asian people coming, with questions about who Jesus is and what He is about. We are really delighted with that and seeing that change being reflected here at the Cathedral and in many Anglican churches around Sydney.'

Dean Raffel also believes there has been an increase in commitment among those who do claim adherence to Christianity. 'I think it's true that in the 1960's there would have been a higher proportion of people saying that they identified with the Christian religion and that number is certainly smaller now, but those people are more deliberate and intentional. It's not just a matter of habit or social expectation, but there's something personal and important going on for people when they take the trouble, as it were, to identify with a local church or a local faith community.'



Dean Kanishka Raffel makes his point to the media.

Read *The Judgment of God, And A Place Called Hell* by David Holden
at www.defenceofthefaith.org

‘A Time For Everything’

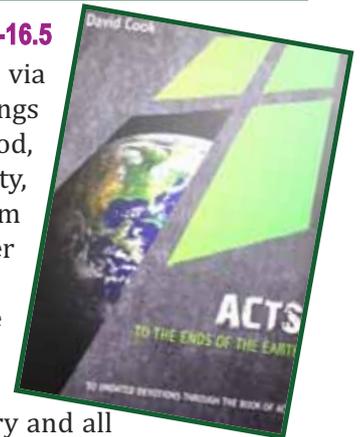
ACTS 15.22-16.5

The important letter from the church council at Jerusalem is circulated, via Judas and Silas. The inclusion of sexual immorality (v 29) amongst the four things the recipients will do well to avoid is unusual. Surely the other matters – blood, eating food offered to idols and meat of strangled animals – are matters of liberty, which can be avoided for the sake of fellowship with Jewish believers, to whom these would be matters of sensitivity. Sexual immorality, however, is not a matter of liberty. Why is it listed here?

All four are activities associated with pagan temples. Therefore, they are no longer appropriate behaviour for believers. Here, the general word used for sexual immorality (Greek, porneia) is best understood to refer to ritual temple prostitution. Therefore, the message is that Gentiles are to turn from idolatry and all pagan temple activities, including prostitution.

Two ironic events follow, in a chapter that does so much to ensure unity amongst believers. First, verses 36–41 tell of the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark’s leaving the first missionary journey (see 13:13). This is a sad event and yet it leads to good, with two missionary teams being formed to advance the work of the Gospel. Secondly, in 16.1–5 we read of Paul’s ironic request for the uncircumcised Timothy to be circumcised, so that the Jews will listen to his preaching. Paul resists circumcision when it is imposed as a necessity for salvation. However, when there is no such demand and it serves to facilitate the Gospel’s acceptance, Paul has Timothy circumcised. After all, it is a neutral surgical act.

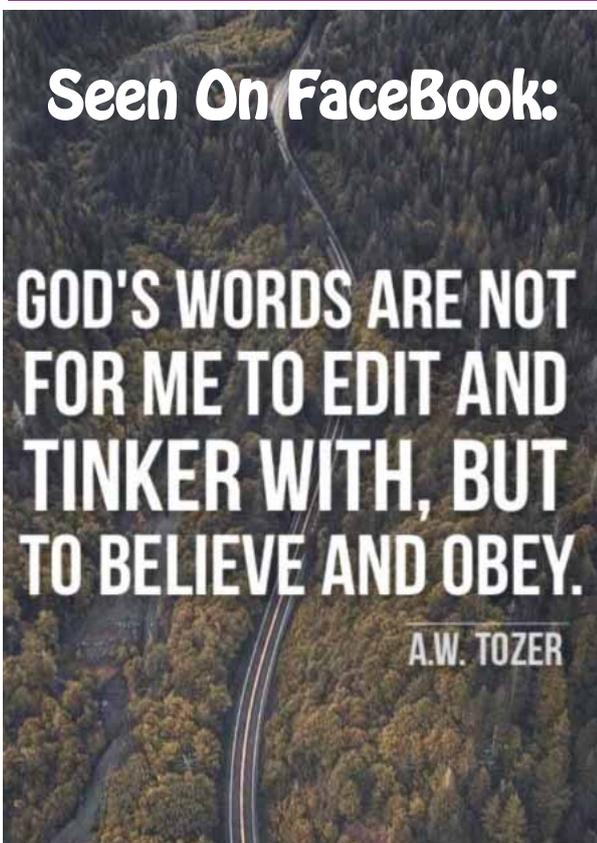
John Newton, the 18th Century pastor and hymnwriter, said of Paul, ‘he was a reed in non-essentials, but an iron pillar in essentials.’ The next time you think of ‘timid Timothy’, remember his ready submission in this matter at about the age of twenty.



REFLECTION:

What do these verses teach us about Paul, Barnabas and Timothy and their priorities? Why is 16.5 such an appropriate conclusion to this section?

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



Words Of Wisdom:

‘To follow in my father’s footsteps, I had to go through my mother’s knee prints.’
 – Franklin Graham

Colossians 1.27,28
Christ in you.

PLEASE NOTE:

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BOOKS WORTH READING

SEVEN LEADERS Preachers And Pastors, Iain H. Murray, Banner Of Truth, Edinburgh, 2017. ISBN 978 1 84871 739 8.

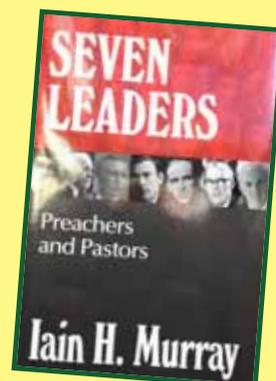
Throughout the centuries of the Christian Era there has been a succession of Christian leaders who have faithfully proclaimed the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in all His saving power. Iain Murray has singled out seven such men whose lives overlap and span the period from 1774 to the present day.

This is the Roll Of Honour: John Elias (1774-1841), Andrew Bonar (1810-1891), Archie Brown (1844-1922), Kenneth MacRae (1883-1963), Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981), W.J. Grier (1902-1983) and John MacArthur (1939-the present day) – an eclectic mix of Baptists, Presbyterians and Independents; more and less well known; all of them men of strong faith, deep conviction and great giftedness.

Some of these men have already been the subjects of major biographies by Iain Murray – Archibald Brown, (a close associate of C.H. Spurgeon); Kenneth MacRae (*The Diary Of Kenneth MacRae* is, in my opinion, one of the most valuable books a minister can read); Martyn Lloyd-Jones (first and foremost in the massive and definitive two-volume biography and then in a series of smaller works dealing with more particular aspects of the Doctor's life and ministry); John MacArthur (well-known present-day pastor, author and broadcaster in Los Angeles). This does not mean, however, that Murray has simply rehashed or pared down his earlier material. We are given fresh knowledge and insights into the personalities and ministries of these men.

Three of them, John Elias, Andrew Bonar and W.J. Grier may not be so well known by today's Christians, but in their day were greatly used by God in Kingdom building: John Elias in Wales during times of evangelical endeavour and spiritual revival; Andrew Bonar in Scotland during times of declension and division of the National Church; and W.J. Grier in holding back the tide of liberalism in Northern Ireland and beyond through an extensive bookselling ministry, preaching and in the writing of a helpful end-times book, *The Momentous Event*.

What those who have gone before have done in the Lord's service is both an inspiration and a challenge for us today. As the publishers say: 'Records of faithful servants of Christ still speak and can bring new life today.' Of interest to Australian Christians is the fact that this book began life as a series of addresses given by Mr Murray at the Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne. It is dedicated to: 'The rising generation preparing to preach the Gospel in Australia, and their wives.' We can only add to that generation and their colleagues in other generations, 'Take and read ... take and read.' – *Bob Thomas*.



'What those who have gone before have done in the Lord's service is both an inspiration and a challenge for us today.'

As the publishers say:

'Records of faithful servants of Christ still speak and can bring new life today.'

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We're Encouraged!

One Of Australia's Major Mission Agencies has advised us they send each edition of *New Life* around to everyone in the office and the members of their National Council.

Who Can YOU Forward New Life To?

BOOKS WORTH READING

THE PURITANS DAY BY DAY, Compiled by H. J. Horn, Edinburgh, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2016. ISBN 978-1-84871-7076-7

The Puritans often get bad press! They have the reputation (quite undeserved) of being harsh, joyless and the preachers of interminable sermons and the writers of ponderous tomes. Yet they also had a way with words, for they knew the Scriptures and they knew the human heart, and that combination makes for wise and memorable sayings – such as recorded in this book, which provides 6-8 pithy quotations for every day of the year (including February 29). It is, therefore, a kind of 17th Century version of the *Proverbs Of Solomon*, full of wisdom and insight.

The compiler of this treasury of pearls of wisdom is the Rev H. J. Horn, who retired from pastoral work in England in 1935. This book was originally published in 1928 as *The Puritan Remembrancer*. Over many years he had amassed this store of wisdom from his reading of devotional literature, especially by those nicknamed Puritans.

These men of God knew the ways of God, even when those ways were strange to human ways of thinking, such as when God uses an unworthy instrument in his work, as observed by Thomas Watson (someone frequently quoted in this book), 'God can make a straight stroke with a crooked stick'.

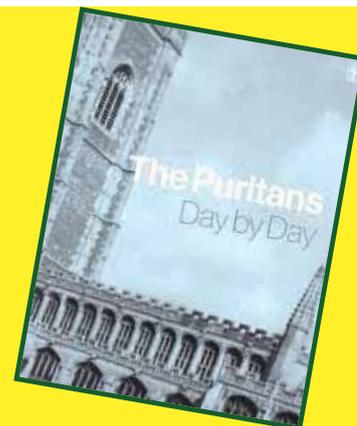
William Gurnall (whose church in Lavenham is pictured on the cover and whose remarkable sermon series, *The Christian In Complete Armour*, preached there has recently been reprinted by Banner) provides encouragement to believers in times of general apostasy, saying 'News may come that truth is sick, but never that it is dead'. Likewise, John Flavel writes, 'O be not too quick to bury the church before she is dead'.

The Puritans were those who stood for and proclaimed God's truth. The Gospel will triumph and overcome all opponents. As John Calvin says, 'The gospel is an anvil that has broken many a hammer, and will break many hammers yet'.

William Secker encourages a thankful spirit with these words: 'He enjoys much who is thankful for a little'. The Puritans knew how to give wise counsel, 'It is not a sin to be angry, but hard not to sin when we are angry' (John Trapp). Warning against vain worship, Thomas Goodwin advises, 'God is most exalted with fewest words'.

The Puritans had a striking way of presenting old truths, such as when Thomas Watson says, 'The two testaments are the two lips by which God hath spoken to us'. God knows the right time to answer our prayers and bless, as Thomas Boston states, 'God does not keep our time, because it is not the due time'. In other words, God knows best!

Mr Horn sets an example of what all preachers should be doing in collecting useful quotes for sermons and pastoral work. The gathering of well-crafted sayings will train the preacher to be able to frame his own pithy sayings and memorable expressions that will stick in the memory of his hearers. A lot of the value is in the very exercise of collecting such quotes, for the process of doing so will help to refine the collector's taste and will assist in turning an average preacher into a wordsmith. This book will also be a delightful and practical gift to any Christian to keep with their Bible and used daily. – Greg Goswell



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CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

five minutes with...

Ramon Williams

Photographer and writer Ramon Williams has been working in the Christian media industry for 53 years. A recipient of the prestigious Gutenberg award, he has interviewed Mother Teresa and chronicled some of Australia's most memorable events. He reflects on his incredible journey.

WHEN DID YOU BEGIN WORKING IN THE CHRISTIAN MEDIA INDUSTRY?

While serving as a missionary with Worldwide Evangelisation Crusade (WEC) in Indonesia, the mission called for someone to open a new department to produce good-quality audio-visuals. I accepted the challenge and (with wife Dorothy) came home to Australia in November 1967, to start the work.

I noticed in the ministers' meeting, prior to the 1968 Billy Graham Crusade, that nobody was photographing the event for the Christian media. *New Life*, an Australian Christian newspaper, was willing to accept my offer to photograph the crusade but they could not pay. Afterwards I found *The Australian Baptist* was willing to accept photos but could not pay. I've been doing it ever since—supplying photos to people who cannot pay!

YOU WORK FROM 7 AM TO MIDNIGHT EVERY DAY. WHAT KEEPS YOU GOING?

The assurance that the Lord had called me to do this work has kept me going. He has provided financially for the ministry and personal needs. Nobody else has provided for either, on a regular basis. Recently a support group decided to support mission work in Australia, whereas previously they only helped those overseas. As a result, I have been able to buy digital cameras.

WHAT IS THE PHOTO/STORY COVERED THAT YOU ARE MOST PROUD OF?

Cyclone Tracy (Darwin, December 25, 1974). I was there on December 27, courtesy of an RAAF Hercules, stayed four days and reported (and photographed) every church's damage and spent a day photographing the Red Cross activities, for a friend. I was able to talk Telecom into helping me make a phone call to Radio Station 2CH on the Sunday and reported on what had happened to every denomination's church. 2CH re-played the five-minute report throughout the day and night.

IF YOU WEREN'T WORKING IN THE MEDIA WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE BEEN DOING?

I was serving WEC in Indonesia as the mission's government representative. The Indonesian Government wanted only one spokesperson [so] I volunteered and was accepted. I had to convince government departments of the need for visas for new missionaries and obtain customs department clearances for equipment.

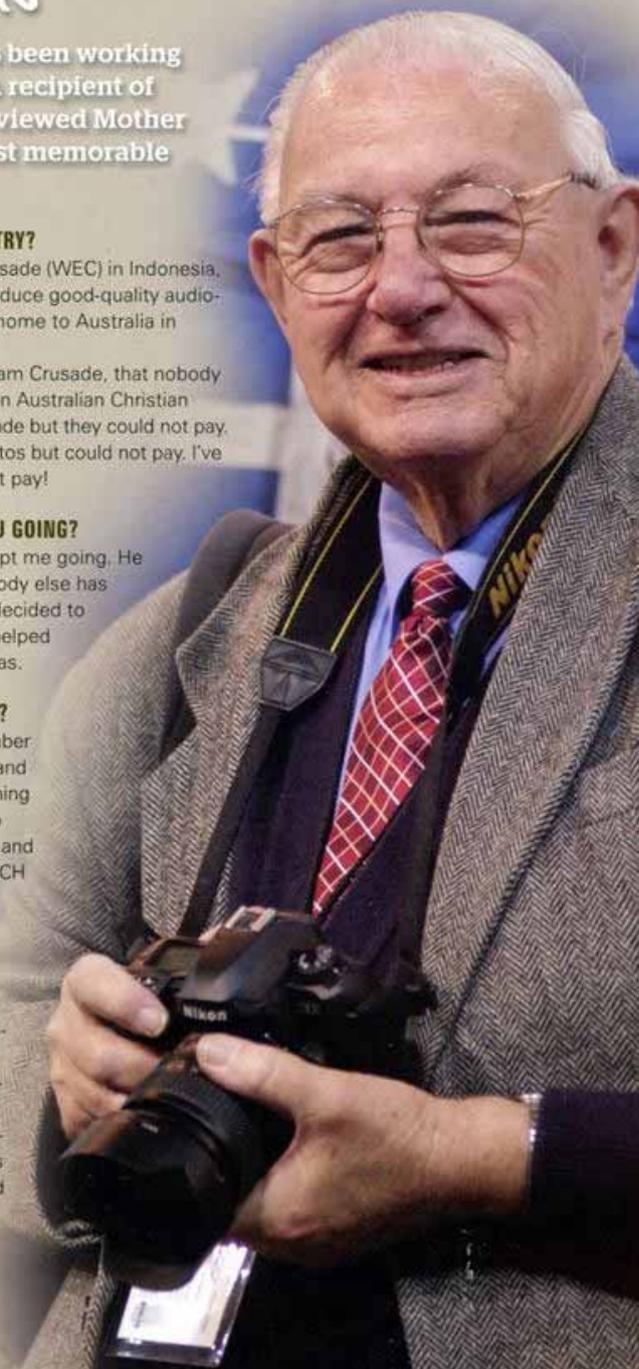
I had trained as a fitter and machinist, so felt the need for training in office management. A correspondence course of four years finished with lessons on preparing press releases, advertising and dealing with the media.

I guess the Lord knew I needed those lessons!

Curated from Sacred Turf and ASSIST News Service (assistnews.net) with permission from Ramon Williams.

Published in The War Cry, the Salvation Army Magazine

24 JUNE 2017



Queen's Birthday Honours

Mr Peter Edward ROWSE, of Warragul, Vic, was awarded the OAM in the latest Queen's Birthday Honours for service to the community through a range of church organisations, including the Belgrave Heights Convention, Bible College of Victoria, OAC (Outreach And Church) Ministries, Steer Incorporated, Gippsland Christian Farmers Camp Group, Christian Leaders Training College of Papua New Guinea, Alliance Training Association in Papua New Guinea, and as a lay preacher in the Uniting Church. Pictured are Peter and Margaret Rowse.

