

## Uncertain Future For Iraqi Christians Despite IS Defeat

A Christian charity has warned the future of Iraqi Christians remains uncertain despite the Iraqi government saying the city of Mosul has been liberated from so-called Islamic State. More than 100,000 Christians were driven from their homes in and around Iraq's second largest city following the jihadist's capture of the city in 2014. Many were forced to live in internally displaced camps and those that remained faced being captured, forced to convert to Islam, pay a protection fee, or even death.



**Rabea, a Christian displaced by IS in 2014**, told International Christian Concern: 'As Mosul [is] fully liberated, the government should do something to help the people affected. Will the government be able to cover the cost of rebuilding our communities?'

**Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's declaration of victory** came a day before Brigadier General Haider Fadhil of the Iraqi Special Forces said his men, closely backed by US-led coalition airstrikes, are continuing to advance and clear territory in the Old City. Iraqi commanders say they believe hundreds of IS fighters remain inside the neighbourhood and are using their families – including women and children – as human shields.

**Christians have lived in Mosul and the surrounding Nineveh Plains for nearly 2,000 years.** William Stark, Regional Manager for ICC, said that while the liberation of Mosul is something to be celebrated, the 'long road and difficult road ahead for Iraq's Christians' remains. He added: 'ISIS was allowed to occupy Mosul and its surrounding towns, some of which were considered Christian safe havens. During this occupation, ISIS not only destroyed much of what these Christians considered the symbols of their community, such as churches and schools, but also the homes these Christians were forced to leave in 2014. If bold action is not taken, one of ISIS's legacies in Iraq could still be driving Christianity out of one of its ancient homelands.'

– Eno Adeogun, multimedia journalist for Premier.

The Salvation Army's social enterprise law firm, Salvos Legal, is opening its first humanitarian legal service in Melbourne. Highly experienced criminal lawyer Darryl Annett has joined Salvos Legal as a Humanitarian Partner and will lead the growth and development of the new service. His expertise will add to the depth of their humanitarian practice groups which are already seeing around 200 cases each week for free. Together with the firm's free legal services currently provided in NSW and Queensland, and the national telephone service for rural and remote areas, Salvos Legal Humanitarian will now provide full coverage of the eastern seaboard. Salvos Legal's 'profit for purpose' model means that its commercial law arm operates like any other law firm, however, all profits are used to fund its humanitarian arm, which provides free legal services to disadvantaged Australians.

## From Moderator To President

Please join with APWM in praying for Pastor Obed Moses, a former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu, who has just been appointed President of Vanuatu following the sudden death of the former President. Pastor Moses received part of his theological education in Australia at Christ College under the sponsorship of the NSW Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union.



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## When Limitations Become A Spur To Growth

**'They grow up too fast!'** How often do we hear people – or maybe hear ourselves – say this about babies, or while we're watching the innocence of children at play.

**Yet it is sadder to see children growing too slowly**, or reaching adulthood while still dependent on ageing parents or on institutional care; prevented from completely fending for themselves by some kind of disability.

**Before training for ministry**, I enjoyed several years of employment counselling with clients from across the spectrum of physical, intellectual and psychological disabilities. Within the economic realities of the job market, I was privileged to associate with professional and volunteer workers in many care agencies, and to negotiate with employers who could see prospective employees as people instead of merely as economic units.

**Helping my applicants to find work** that both suited and stretched them was always rewarding, for I could see new dignity emerging among people who were so often ignored by the faster, more flexible world around them.

**This experience enabled me to step into ministry training** with a deeper appreciation of individuals within the wider picture. Theological, biblical and psychological insights, combined with in-depth historical study, filled out my perspective even further, especially as I took time to see how Jesus released and enhanced people's true value – from the down-and-outs to the up-and-outs.

**As a Christian counsellor**, I could help people find work. To fill part of their day.

**As a pastor**, I can help anyone to discover God's grace and start again – to fill their whole life. Forever. – Noel Mitaxa, [noelmitaxa.wordpress.com](http://noelmitaxa.wordpress.com)

*Inviting you to explore God's love.*

### Welcome To Rachael – Our New Office Manager.

With the retirement of Mignon Goswell as Office Manager, *New Life* is pleased to announce the appointment of Rachael Vrieze to this position. Rachael will be happy to help with advertising needs and matters relating to subscriptions. Her phone number is: 0415 612 646. The Office Manager's email address remains the same: [office@nlife.com.au](mailto:office@nlife.com.au)

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## **MALI AND PHILIPPINES: Captives In Crisis**

**MALI:** On Sunday 2 July at a meeting in the Malian capital, Bamako, French President Emmanuel Macron promised strong support for a new multinational military force to combat terrorism in West Africa. The 5,000-strong force, comprised of troops from Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad, will operate in the western Sahel region along with 12,000 United Nations peacekeepers in Mali and an existing French force of 5,000. Along with military support, France will supply 70 tactical vehicles, communications and operational and protective equipment. The European Union has pledged about \$57 million in support of this force, which is expected to be operational by September. The day before the Bamako meeting, the Mali-based al-Qaeda affiliate Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen released a disturbing video. Entitled *The Correct Equation* it opens with a clip of al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri explaining: 'Security is a shared fate. If we are secured, then you may be secured. And if we are safe, then you may gain safety. And if we are struck or killed then inevitably, by the will of Allah, you will be struck or killed. This is the correct equation.' Quoting the Qur'an [Sura 47:4 <https://quran.com/47/4>] and Islamic theologians, the English-speaking narrator explains that Islam not only permits but mandates the taking of non-combatants as captives, 'until the war lays down its burdens' (ie until war ends). Ultimately the video closes with a clip of Osama bin Laden essentially reiterating the correct equation.

**This is the context in which proof of life is provided of six Western captives:** three men, Stephen McGowan (South Africa), Dr Ken Elliot (Australia) and Mr Iulian Ghergut (Romania); and three women, Beatrice Stockly (Switzerland), Sophie Petronin (France) and Gloria Cecilia Narvaez (Colombia). As if to justify its harsh treatment of the women, JNIM specifically accuses them of being 'Christian preachers' and 'missionaries [trying to] convert Muslims to Christianity'. No mention is made of captive Malian soldiers or of Jeffery Woodke who was captured by jihadists in Niger in October last year. The English-speaking narrator warns that, with negotiations failing, the fate of each captive lies squarely with their families and governments. Clearly these captives need to be rescued, delivered or redeemed before the new multinational anti-terror force commences operations in September.

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.' (Matthew 10:29,30 ESV)

**PHILIPPINES:** On 23 May conflict erupted in Marawi, southern Philippines, between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Islamic jihadists belonging to the Abu Sayyaf Group and the Maute Group, both of which have pledged allegiance to Islamic State. Catholic priest Father Chito Suganob and some 15 Catholics who were meeting in the Cathedral (nuns and lay-persons) were amongst the many hundreds of Marawi locals taken captive by the jihadists who have been using them as human shields. Some 400,000 civilians have been displaced. Father Suganob was seen alive on Sunday 25 June when militant leaders met with Muslim leaders in an effort to broker a prisoner swap. Refusing to be swayed, the Philippine government re-iterated its policy of not negotiating with terrorists.

**Whilst the Philippines is no stranger to Islamic jihad,** this time it is different. Far from being local Islamists fighting for autonomy or even independence, these jihadists are mostly foreigners, eager to fight to the death for an IS wilayat (province). More than 330 jihadists have been killed, along with at least 39 civilians and 84 AFP soldiers; many believe the death toll is much higher. Unable to be collected, the bodies that litter the streets are being eaten by dogs, vermin and flies; many fear an outbreak of disease is inevitable. Soldiers and escapees report that captives are being used as porters and sex-slaves – with some forcibly 'married' to fighters – and that Christians have been forcibly converted to Islam. The ring-leader, Abu Sayyaf commander Isnilon Hapilon, is believed to be hiding in a mosque inside the jihadist's ever-shrinking territory. The situation for the captives could not be more serious.

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

- intervene in the hostage crises currently unfolding deep in the Malian desert and in the city of Marawi, southern Philippines; may the Lord Almighty both rescue and repay. (See Isaiah 59.14-19; Isaiah 40.10)
- flood and guard the hearts and minds of believing captives with 'the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding' (Philippians 4.7); may each one be palpably aware of Christ's eternal, faithful and sustaining presence.

*'Who shall separate us  
from the love of Christ?  
Shall tribulation, or distress,  
or persecution, or famine, or nakedness,  
or danger, or sword? No, in all these things  
we are more than conquerors through  
Him who loved us.  
For I am sure that neither death nor life,  
nor angels nor rulers, nor things present  
nor things to come, nor powers, nor height  
nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,  
will be able to separate us  
from the love of God  
in Christ Jesus our Lord.'*  
(From Romans 8:31-39 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)

## Wesley Mission Saving Lives On NSW North Coast

Wesley Mission's suicide prevention program, Wesley LifeForce, will deliver training to 280 health, allied health and community 'gate keepers' like teachers and social workers on the NSW North Coast. This comes following the announcement of funding this week by the Federal Assistant Minister for Health, David Gillespie. Dr Gillespie said: 'This training is part of the Government's larger commitment to mental health, suicide prevention, and alcohol and other drugs in this region.' North Coast Primary Health Network is providing more than \$110,000 for the training through a series of workshops, seminars and on-line forums which will run during the next 12 months. The training aims to improve understanding of suicide, increase the participant's ability to identify suicide behaviours and intervene in the best possible way. Over 30 years Wesley LifeForce has trained more than 35,000 people in suicide prevention.

### Attachment To God Can Help With Sense Of Well-Being

As people grow older, those who are securely attached to God are more likely to have a sense of well-being – and the more frequently they pray, the greater that feeling, according to a Baylor University study. The study, published in the *Journal Of Aging And Health*, focuses on three measures of well-being – optimism, self-esteem and contentment with life – and shows that for all of them, there is a relationship between attachment to God and prayer. Researcher Blake Kent says there is a perception that prayer is automatically good for well-being, but that may not be the case for everyone. 'What we have found is that prayer can be associated with more or less well-being, depending on how you perceive God,' Mr Kent says. 'If God is seen as safe and secure, then prayer seems to have a positive benefit. If God is seen as distant, or even untrustworthy, then prayer is not associated with confidence in His care, but with uncertainty and anxiety.'

– *Breaking Christian News*

#### A Film To Help Us 'Run The Race'

*Run The Race*, an upcoming film, looks at the question 'Where is God when bad things happen?' *Run The Race* poses tough questions and is meant to stir up conversations about faith, according to filmmakers Jake McEntire and Trey Brunson. Mr McEntire says the film, currently still in the post-production and editing process, is a story of redemption. 'It's a story of a guy who knows a lot about Jesus, but isn't sure he knows Jesus like some of the people around him,' Mr McEntire says. 'It's a powerful prodigal son story.'

– *Baptist Press*

#### Audio Makes The Bible Accessible In Mexico

Audio Scripture Ministries is tackling an ambitious goal in southern Mexico where there are 120 spoken languages. With the help of Wycliffe Bible Translators, ASM wants to get Scripture in all those languages translated and recorded. Jim Loker with ASM says that up to date, they have recorded New Testaments in more than 80 of these languages. Why audio Bibles? Because many people in this region are oral learners who cannot read. Mr Loker says each completed audio Bible recording means another community gets access to the hope and truth of Christ in their heart language, and lives are forever changed. He says that in one town, which was a centre of witchcraft, more than 2,000 people, including many witch doctors, have come to Christ

through listening groups. Many have been baptized and at least 50 new churches have been started because people have been listening to audio Bibles.

– *MissionNetworkNews*

#### French Bible Society Seeks 'Fashionable Image'

The dynamic head of the French Bible Society, Jonathan Boulet, believes God has called him to create a new, fashionable image for God's Word among the French people. Mr Boulet spoke to *Eternity News* during a break in the United Bible Societies' Roundtable Exchange in Sydney, attended by about 230 international delegates from the world's Bible Societies. In his first two years as Secretary-General the 37-year-old has moved the office from the suburbs into central Paris, launched new websites, created new Bible reading videos and blogs and made a clean sweep of the staff. Every Friday night they host migrants and give them food, legal and social support. For a youth audience, the Society has created a Scripture program with daily visuals and two-weekly videos released on social media. 'One of my aims is to make the Bible trendy,' says the former financial analyst who sold his publishing company to answer 'the call from God.' At the moment, he says, the only place where you would see anyone reading a Bible in France is in one of the evangelical churches.

– *Eternity News*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Evangelical Women in Academia – A Conference for Women

Over 60 women are planning to attend Ridley College's *Evangelical Women In Academia* conference on Saturday 22 July, 2017, from 9am-4 pm. The speakers are Lynn Cohick, Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College and Delle Matthews, Dean of Studies at Melbourne School of Theology. Lynn will talk about women as teachers and learners in the 1st Century, and on being an evangelical woman in academia today. Delle will speak on thriving and surviving as a woman studying theology in Australia.



Lynn Cohick



Delle Matthews

**Women's writing and women's voices are underrepresented** in evangelical academia in Australia, and experience of women's leadership is limited. This conference aims to help women develop as evangelical women in academia and offers an opportunity for edification and networking. For more info go to: <https://www.ridley.edu.au/events/event/women-academia-conference/>

Lynn Cohick will also give the Leon Morris Lecture on Friday 21 July on *Christ Our Peace: Redemption, Reconciliation And Radical Community In The Letter To The Ephesians*.

### You Can Go Trekking With A Purpose In Nepal

Here's some exciting news: Gospel Recording's *Trekabout Mission To Nepal* is on again. A team from Australia will share the story of Jesus with people living in Nepal. Using GRN materials the team will be sharing the Gospel with Nepali locals in their own language. The dates for Trekabout are 27 December 2017 to 18 January 2018. If you would like to join the team, see GR's website for further details: <http://globalrecordings.net/en/trekabout2018>

Even if you can't go yourself, please consider forwarding this news to someone you know. Please pray for the success of *Trekabout Nepal*, for the preparation and safety of the team, and for many to hear the story of Jesus in their heart language.

- Mark Hughes, Volunteers Manager

### Come, Celebrate Messiah!

**Simcha 2017 is a celebration** of our unity in the Messiah – Jew and Gentile one in the Messiah. Simcha 2017 provides: Messianic worship and celebration – experiencing the joy of Messiah; seminars and workshops with messianic leaders from around the world; fellowship with messianic believers from across the country; excellent facilities and dynamic program for the whole family.

**This year's Simcha will be held at** Phillip Island Adventure Resort from 24-26 November on the theme *Zealous Over Zion! Zechariah The Prophet Speaks Today*. This year's special guest speaker from Israel is Dr Erez Soref, President of One For Israel and Israel College Of The Bible.

**For further details** and to register go to: [www.celebratemessiah.com.au/simcha.html](http://www.celebratemessiah.com.au/simcha.html)

### Preview For The Love Of God

**Are you keen to hear more** about CPX's documentary-in-progress, *For The Love Of God: How The Church Is Better And Worse Than You Ever Imagined?* John Dickson and Simon Smart will be speaking at The Edge in Sydney, hosted by Justine Toh, on Thursday 10 August, confronting the terrible failures and sketching some of the great good that Christians have been responsible for. Come along, bring a friend (or several), and ask your curliest questions about the impact Christianity has had on our world.

**Book here:** <https://citybibleforum.org/city/sydney/event/love-god/> If you're not a Sydneysider, sign up for your Director's Pass, to receive behind-the-scenes updates about the documentary. Visit the project website now to get on board!

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## Freedom Laws Needed

The Diocese of Sydney, along with a number of other Christian groups, has called for special legislation to enshrine freedom of belief as a 'positive right' in Australia, rather than as a negative 'exemption' to other legislation. The call came in a submission to the Federal Government inquiry into the 'protection and promotion of the human right to freedom of religion or belief worldwide, including in Australia.



'Within the boundaries prescribed by law, we should be seeking to promote the greatest (not the least) possible freedoms of religion or belief,' said the submission, signed by Bishop Michael Stead – on behalf of the Religious Freedom Reference Group – and Dr Karin Sowada (pictured), who chairs the Social Issues Committee. 'It is not prudent for legislation to call on secular courts or tribunals to arbitrate on what is or is not a church doctrine, tenet, belief or teaching,' the submission said. 'The law should provide for broad – not narrow– conceptions of "religion" and "religious organisation"'

Christian lawyer and expert on religious freedom, Associate Professor Neil Foster from the University of Newcastle, referred in his submission to a 'patchwork' protection for freedom of religion. 'It is past time for consideration to be given at the Commonwealth level for protection of religious freedom to be the subject of special legislation,' he wrote. 'The Commonwealth has undertaken to provide serious religious freedom protection by acceding to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ... it would be appropriate that this commitment be translated into law.'

The diocesan submission said possible changes in law relating to abortion, euthanasia and marriage could 'create potential conflicts for many people of faith ... We submit that there should be a general protection in Federal law that protects the individual's freedom of thought, conscience and belief, which will prevent a person being compelled in the course of their employment to perform an action contrary to conscience or religious belief.'

– Russell Powell, Sydney Anglicans

## FamilyVoice Appalled By Upper House MPs

Christian advocacy group FamilyVoice Australia has strongly criticised South Australian Upper House MPs who voted in favour of legal brothels. 'We are appalled that MPs with families would vote in favour of so-called sex work,' said FamilyVoice National Director Ashley Saunders. 'Each prostitute is someone's daughter,' he said. 'Since MPs would be horrified if their own 18-year old daughter was legally approached by a pimp to earn fast money in a brothel, the law should continue to protect against that possibility.'

– FamilyVoice Press Release

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John 17.3  
Get to know Him  
better

### VISITING MELBOURNE?

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**ST KILDA:** Cnr Alma Rd/Barkly St. Every Sunday 11am & 7pm;

*Living Stones* Korean Presbyterian Church. Every Sunday 1pm;

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

**MINISTER:** Rev Bob Thomas 0417 592 646

You're Welcome At *The Faith Factory*

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## Effective Christian Witness Amidst Disaster In Japan

**The Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011** prompted Japanese churches to rethink how they engage in evangelism and church development. In the Tohoku area of northern Japan, there are many examples of people who previously had shown no interest in the Gospel, but became receptive following their 2011 disaster experience. This openness came about through neither a major evangelistic campaign nor an attractive church program. Rather, people were drawn to Christianity as they saw Christ in the lives of Christian volunteers who, making no demands in return, kept coming to the disaster areas to provide aid and support.

**Immediately following the 2011 disaster**, a great number of local and overseas volunteers came to the tsunami-ravaged Tohoku seacoast. However, a few months later—when evacuation centres began to close, water and food distribution became unnecessary, and the work of removing tsunami mud from houses largely came to an end—most volunteers and support organizations stopped coming; but not Christian volunteers.

**Christians were aware that those suffering were dealing not just with physical needs.** They were also dealing with spiritual needs as they wrestled with the loss of loved ones and possessions that had been dear to them. As they asked themselves why such a disaster had fallen upon them, pastors and Christian volunteers found themselves engaged in ‘presence ministry’ as they tirelessly listened to victims repeat their stories of grief, anxiety, and regret. Even today, six years since the earthquake and tsunami, many pastors, both men and women, continue to visit elderly people in the Tohoku region who are lonely and stuck in temporary housing. Pastors share cups of tea, engage in conversation, and offer spiritual support.

**Now that most of the volunteers are gone**, people in the disaster areas often voice their concern that the rest of the world might forget about them, even though the work of restoration is a long way from completion. As Christians keep visiting the people affected by the disaster, they have come to be called Kirisuto-san or ‘Mr/Ms Christ’, with respect and appreciation. This is reminiscent of what happened in the 1st Century. People first used the term Christian in scorn for Christ-followers, but later came to use it with respect and affection. So it is 20 centuries later in northern Japan as people see Christ in the lives of Christians.



– Lausanne Movement. [lausanne.com](http://lausanne.com)

### 'Limbless Evangelist' Nick Vujicic To Release Music Album

Nick Vujicic may have been born without any arms or legs, but he's using his voice to reach countless people. And now he's going to take a step further. Because not only is he continuing to give his amazing speeches. He is also going to release his first music album! 'It's been a dream of mine for a long time now to be able to take my mission of spreading hope, purpose and encouragement across the globe, and combine it with my love of music and song, and now finally I am getting to do it,' he told his nearly 10 million Facebook followers last week. The album is titled *Brighter World* and is set for release on 28 January 2018. Nick lives to be a blessing to many. He recently said: 'I know that there are people who can get encouraged to see how God can use a man without arms and legs to be His hands and feet, but I wanted people to know that I am not a superhero, it's not about me, or how well I speak

or articulate – it's the Spirit of God. It is an active relationship with Him.'

– Hello Christian

### Effective Prison Ministry

Crossroads Prison Ministries has concluded training sessions in South Africa and Tanzania to connect with and support their prison outreach teams. In both African countries teams of volunteer mentors are supported by local churches as they go into prisons to share the Gospel and connect prisoners with mentors from the Church to form relationships around the study of the Bible. Through that they are seeing prisoners and churches transformed. Crossroads teams also focus on providing after-prison care, as prisoners are very vulnerable when they are released. They need to find work and they need a community to support them. Crossroads Prison Ministries has mentorship programs in more than 20 countries.

– Mission Network News

**TEAR Fund Hard At Work In South Sudan**

Church leaders in South Sudan and in neighbouring Kenya and Uganda are calling for prayer for the restoration of peace and stability. A movement of over 3,000 churches recently united in prayer and participated in a *National Day Of Prayer* in South Sudan's capital, Juba. South Sudan, which recently celebrated its sixth anniversary as one of the world's newest nations, has seen ongoing conflict and a food crisis that has seen 50% of the population dependent on food aid, 2,000,000 displaced internally and a further 1,900,000 flee the country. Tearfund is providing food to vulnerable households, including the elderly and those with a disability, through vouchers and cash, and at the same time children who are malnourished are being given a high energy food supplement as part of a program to help them and their families. Andy Morgan, Deputy Head of Tearfund's East and Southern Africa Team says the food crisis is still extremely serious and they must and will do more. He says they are also committed to continue praying for peace in South Sudan, as peace and stability are essential for the people to be able to live dignified and

peaceful lives.

– *Inspire Magazine*

**'Why Do You Hate Me This Much?'**

An Iranian convert to Christianity, sentenced last week to 15 years gaol, has written an open letter to the authorities, asking what he has done to 'make you hate me this much' and declaring that he has decided to terminate his life slowly through a hunger strike. Amin Afshar-Naderi was sentenced alongside three other Christians and their pastor, Victor Bet-Tamraz for 'acting against national security by organising and conducting house-churches'. In his letter, as reported by *Mohabat News*, Mr Afshar-Naderi asked 'What have I done against you and our country that made you hate me this much?' He said he had learned from the Bible to love his enemies and pray for those who hate him. Extracts from the letter include: 'You have written a report filled with lies, stating that I have insulted your religious beliefs! While I have not done anything wrong and for one year have been deprived of basic needs, I have always prayed for you. Do whatever you want, just as you have done until now, outside justice, morality and law.

– *World Watch Monitor*

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*Kendal's book is a godsend to anyone who is at a loss to understand what lies behind the suffering in the Middle East. Drawing on authoritative voices from the region, her clear-eyed analysis untangles the conflicts with the heart and insight of a prophet.*

– 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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**TURN BACK THE BATTLE:**

**Isaiah Speaks to Christians Today.**

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

For purchasing options, visit: [www.turnbackthebattle.com](http://www.turnbackthebattle.com)

## PERSECUTION WATCH

### VIETNAM: Imprisoned Pastor Eats Insects, Mice And Frogs To Survive

In Vietnam's Central Highlands, pastors imprisoned for their faith are languishing, facing dire conditions that make it difficult to survive. Pastors on trial are rarely given access to an attorney, and the length of their prison terms is almost irrelevant, as labour camp officials can extend them indefinitely over the pettiest violations.

'One pastor we know was sentenced for 11 years, but it has already been extended to 20,' Su (not his real name), the director of an indigenous ministry told Christian Aid Mission: 'This happens if you don't get up on time or don't accomplish your task.'



**Leaders of both registered and unregistered churches have left Vietnam** rather than submit to government requirements that their churches combine into one larger church so that authorities can better monitor their actions. Some flee with their families; others consider it wiser to leave them behind.

**Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh, imprisoned since 2011**, was placed in a solitary cell in the Xuan Loc Prison in Vietnam's southern province of Dong Nai since October 2016. He suffers from sinusitis, arthritis, high blood pressure and inflammation of the stomach, but has received no medical treatment from the prison's authorities, according to his wife. Church leaders who remain face prison, where Su said 42 church leaders have been languishing for more than 10 years. Recently 15 more leaders of unregistered churches in Gia Lai Province, as well as seven from Dak Lak Province, were sentenced to prison for practising their faith, he told CAM.

**Living conditions in the prisons are harsh**, particularly by standards in the West. Inmates receive only one bowl of rice at noon and another in the evening. Some pastors don't have any support from the outside at all. 'One pastor's family is not allowed to visit him anymore. He's in a private cell now, so he gets only rice. He's hungry and malnourished. He eats insects, mice, frogs, whatever is available. When they let you out of the private cell after one or two months, you can't even walk; you crawl. You cannot stand.'

**It is not just the pastors facing persecution;** Christians in rural villages face pressures because of their new lifestyles. They get in trouble with local authorities because they don't get drunk, don't have more than one wife, and don't worship ancestral spirits. Declining to engage in those activities will catch the eye of local authorities and they will prosecute you for violating a value central to the local culture — unity.

— *God Reports*

#### IRAN: Massive Jail Terms For Believers

On 12 June three Azerbaijanis and an Iranian, arrested at a wedding in June 2016, received ten year prison terms for 'activities against national security'. On 4 July Pastor Victor Bet-Tamraz and three Persian converts received ten year prison terms for 'activities against national security'. They had been arrested at a Christmas celebration in 2014 and a picnic in August 2016. Pastor Victor's wife, Shamiram, and their son, Ramiel, have also been charged and are awaiting trial. On 6 July four members of the Church of Iran in Rasht received ten year prison terms for propagating house churches and promoting 'Zionist Christianity'. Two of those sentenced, including Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani, will also spend two years in internal exile, far from their families. Please pray for these Christians and for Iran.

#### TANZANIA: Christians Arrested For Frying Fish During Ramadan

Christian Solidarity Worldwide has learned that three Tanzanian Christians were arrested for cooking in their kitchen during the Muslim Ramadan fast. CSW said Em-

manuel Yohana, his wife Katherine Emmanuel and a woman identified as Khadija were arrested on 16 June at the couple's home in Zanzibar while the women were frying fish in the kitchen. According to CSW, the Christians were informed that they had allegedly breached the law by cooking food during Ramadan. The police officer reportedly verbally abused them and allegedly said, 'Today you will know how to fast'. They were released three days later following interventions by local church leaders.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, 'These arrests were unjust and unwarranted. Not only were these Christians preparing food in a private home, but as non-Muslims they are under no obligation to observe the Ramadan fast. Moreover, their arrests are in violation of provisions within Tanzania's constitution that recognise the right to freedom of religion or belief and prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion.' CSW said Christians are also discriminated against by being prevented from building churches because local officials impose extra-legal processes.

## Group To Place Sports Chaplains In Uk Gyms

In a move which could open up a whole new area of ministry in countries around the world, including Australia, Gym members across the UK will have the opportunity to have more help not only with their fitness, but with life in general. Sports Chaplaincy UK, which provides and supports chaplains in professional and amateur sports, has partnered with an organisation that will put chaplains in gyms across the nation.



The charity's partnership with *Fit Lives*, which already has 45 co-ordinators in gyms, will enable the organisation to have a farther reach. Speaking about this new venture, Dave Courteen, Chair of *Fit Lives* said: 'The work that Sports Chaplaincy UK is doing is widely recognised and I am confident that they will help see more chaplains within gyms. I would join with their call to see how Christians can respond to this growing opportunity.' Sports Chaplaincy UK said the role of a sports chaplain in a gym is similar to that of a chaplain involved in more traditional club sports with the same values of presence, excellence, relationship, confidentiality and humility being paramount.

Warren Evans, Chief Executive of Sports Chaplaincy UK, told Premier about the evangelistic side of the program: 'People go to gyms for not just getting fit, but seeking a whole well-being, identity, community and image. I think that's a great opportunity for the Church to go in, be the hands and feet of Jesus, and really meet that community where it's at, just being the presence of God, being a listening ear and being able to help people.'

A training session is required for those wishing to become a sports chaplain in a gym. The group said that people shouldn't be put off from joining the team for fears of not being fit enough.

- Tola Mbakwe, Premier News

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**Moving Further Forward – Acts 16.6-40**

Until now, the Gospel has advanced in Gentile territory through rural Asia, the region we now know as modern-day Turkey. People have been won over, but some critics might claim they were just gullible, simple folk.

Now the missionaries come to Europe (Macedonia) and its prosperous commercial and intellectual cities.

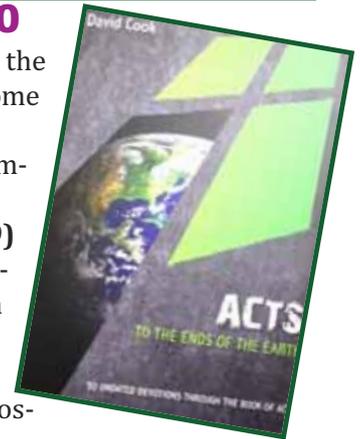
Under the oversight of God, Paul has a vision of a man from Europe (v 9) calling him to come and help. This was the call of God for work to begin in Europe and the first city Paul and his team visits is Philippi. In the absence of a synagogue in the city, the team knows they will find Jews and God-fearers meeting by the river. They find just such a group and Lydia becomes the first European convert – God is active here (v 14). Lydia is baptised and extends hospitality to the missionaries.

The conversion of the fortune-telling slave girl (vv 16–18) and her spiritual insight (v 17) leads to the first opposition in Europe and it arises for commercial reasons (v 19). Paul and Silas are flogged and imprisoned. Surely the Gospel has come to a dead end. But no – there is an earthquake, the chains of all the prisoners are loosened, but none of them escape. The fortune-teller earlier had said, ‘These men ... are telling you the way to be saved’. Now, the jailer asks, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ (v 30). He is told he will be saved if he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ (v 31).

This calloused man, who had beaten and flogged Paul and Silas, now bathes the wounds he had inflicted (v 33). He and his family are baptised and ‘set a meal before them’ (v 34). What a remarkable day for that household.

The first church at Philippi (v 40) was very diverse – a woman of wealth with a household, a slave girl, the cruel jailer and his household now transformed, and some others. Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female – all one in Christ Jesus (see also Galatians 3.28). After upholding their legal rights as Roman citizens, Paul and Silas are asked to leave the city and they do so, in their own time.

Paul has been stoned at Lystra and left for dead. Now he has been stripped, beaten, severely flogged and imprisoned. Beware of too quickly glossing over the agonising pain involved in these experiences.



**REFLECTION:**

What do you learn from the experiences of Paul and his fellow missionaries?

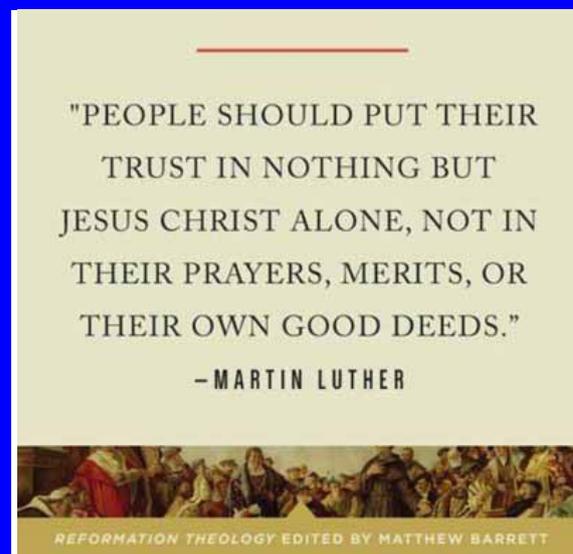
What does this teach you about perseverance in the face of adversity?

*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:**



## BOOKS WORTH READING

### CONNECTED: LIVING IN THE LIGHT OF THE TRINITY, Sam Allberry, Nottingham: IVP, 2012.

ISBN 978-1-84474-588-3

**Sam Allberry describes studying and writing** about the Trinity as a joy and a struggle, and so it should be, for what should give a Christian more delight than contemplating the wonder of the One God in three Persons, and what should stretch the human mind to breaking-point more than trying to understand and properly express who God is in His tri-unity?

**The Trinity is not to be thought an unnecessary complication** of the simple teaching of Jesus, for it is our Lord's instruction in the upper room (John 14-16) more than anything that requires the doctrine and gives us the words to express it. Indeed, the plan of salvation and Christian ethics (the focus on relationships) do not make sense without it. In other words, as Allberry shows, the doctrine of the Trinity is not an added extra but of the essence of the faith.

**There is only one God**, so all rival deities are excluded and declared non-existent. God is to be the God of all people and all cultures, which means that the church should be mono-religious but culturally diverse. It is not, therefore, legitimate to mandate that all believers worship in exactly the same way we do (our style of hymns etc). That is not how to make all followers of Jesus feel welcome!

**The unity of God means that we cannot play off** one divine Person against another, for instance, setting the Father's holiness against the Son's love. All the Persons are equally holy and loving. God is self-consistent, and this leads to the moral imperative that we should reflect that divine integrity by being wholeheartedly committed to Him. Indeed, the emphasis of this helpful book is that the Trinity is no needless baggage that would be best discarded, rather the Trinity illuminates Christian experience and enables the Gospel to make sense.

**Despite what Allberry suggests**, it is highly unlikely that occasions in the Old Testament when God speaks in the plural (eg 'Let Us make man in Our image') reflect His constitution as Trinity. Nor do the occasional appearances of the Angel of the Lord, nor Messianic passages like Isaiah 9. This reviewer wishes that Allberry had consulted an Old Testament scholar! God has always been Trinity, but that only becomes clear when Jesus comes! On the other hand, Allberry makes good use of John 5 to demonstrate the unity and distinction of Father and Son in the Godhead.

**'God is love' because He has always subsisted as Three Persons.** The Trinity is also the basis of all the relational qualities of God (eg righteous, just). God as Trinity is the perfect community and does not need us. God did not create us because He was friendless and lonely. It is an eternally pre-existing relationship that we are invited to join through faith in Christ. The Trinity shows that what matters is relationships, therefore life is about people, not things, and it's about serving, not the exercise of power.

**The Trinitarian pattern of unity in difference** is also the foundation of heterosexual marriage and bans same-sex unions. Our view of gender and how husbands and wives are to relate, is patterned on the headship and submission of the members of the Trinity. (Cont. p.13)



*'The Trinity shows that what matters is relationships, therefore life is about people, not things, and it's about serving, not the exercise of power..'*

## BOOKS WORTH READING

(From p.12) This pattern is seen in the ministry of Jesus, but the pattern was the same in eternity past and will be the same in eternity future. This demonstrates that equality is not sameness, and those with equal status can have different roles.

**The church, likewise, is meant to be a visual aid for the Trinity**, displaying relationships that exemplify unity and diversity. So too, prayer only works because of the involvement of the whole Trinity. The Spirit assists as we pray through Christ and according to the Father's will. We should not muddle up the Persons when we pray, and the same applies to worship, for the Father chose, the Son rescues and the Spirit indwells the believer. Giving each divine Person their proper place and role enriches our experience and enjoyment of God. Here, then, is a book that will assist to our worship and enhance our relationships.

– Greg Goswell

### **BURNING OR BUSHED? THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA 40 YEARS ON,**

**Ed Paul F. Cooper And David A. Burke, 2017, Eider Books, PO Box 878, Stanhope Gardens 2768.**

**Two churches were celebrating on 22 June 2017** – the Uniting Church was celebrating its 40th birthday, and the Presbyterian Church was celebrating the 40th anniversary of its rebirth. *Burning Or Bushed*, with a nod to the Burning Bush (for long a symbol of Presbyterian Churches worldwide) brings together a number of essays by various ministers and elders involved in overseeing the rebuilding operation, in many cases starting from scratch. Those who were committed to Church Union had been given to declaring that Church Union was the will of God, while those who were continuing at first refuted that assertion. Forty years on, both can agree. Church Union was the will of God for both groups, the one to move on freed from past shackles, the other to go forward backwards – always reforming *according to the Word of God*. May God bless us all.

– Bob Thomas

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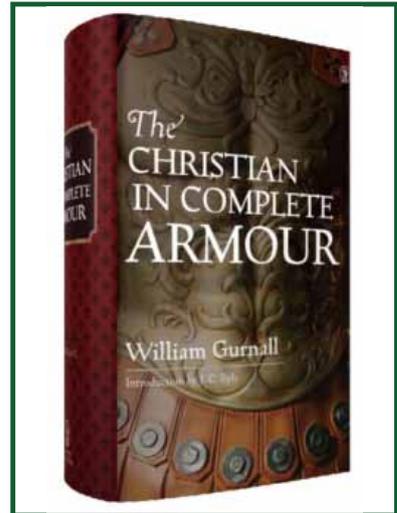
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## Read Just Three Pages A Day ...

On 17 December 2015 I read the last word on the last page of 1,189 double-columned, tiny-print pages of William Gurnall's *The Christian In Complete Armour*. I found myself surprisingly emotional. A few years ago our congregation formed a *Dead Theologians' Society*. When I proposed Gurnall's formidable text for 2015, I counselled the intimidated, 'Just read three to four pages a day.' Do the math. Make it a part of your daily devotions, and a year later you're through.

**What did we experience reading Gurnall?** Words fail me. Paragraph after paragraph, page after page, day after day, Gurnall illumines, inspires, challenges, humbles and encourages. Yet I don't recall any repetition. At times I had to resist underlining every sentence of the day's reading. I had long thought that John Owen could not be equalled. Anyone who has been dismantled by *On The Mortification Of Sin* will know what I mean. Yet Gurnall is the equal of any of the Puritans, including Owen.



**Every morning I found my heart 'strangely warmed'** by Gurnall's insights. When I read that last word on the last page, I felt as though I was saying goodbye to a dear friend who for the past twelve months had been my daily companion. So, yes, my soul surged with melancholy as Gurnall and I parted company. I could provide a sampling or two of quotes to whet the appetite. However, already there are books devoted to Gurnallisms. Besides, one might miss the point, much like isolating Beethoven's fourth movement from the third of his Ninth Symphony. It's as Gurnall is read in context that his insights pack their punch. He is best read as a whole rather than merely cherry-picking quotes.

**John Newton wrote:** 'If I might read only one book beside the Bible, I would choose *The Christian In Complete Armour*.' Spurgeon said: 'Gurnall's work is peerless and priceless; every line is full of wisdom; every sentence is suggestive. The whole book has been preached over scores of times, and is, in our judgment, the best thought-breeder in all our library.'

**Read right through, three to four pages a day.** This is the pace I recommend to others that the Puritans be read. I find it difficult to absorb more than that at one sitting. Three to four pages was my policy when I waded into Stephen Charnock's *The Existence And Attributes Of God*. Charnock, like Owen, like Gurnall, is extraordinary. He too says so much in so little space, illuminating, inspiring, challenging, and humbling with memorable couplets, with brilliant clarity, with theological depth, that one is amazed, page after page for 1,100+ pages over two volumes.

**Did I mention George Swinnock's *The Incomparableness Of God (Works, Vol. 4)*?** It is a mini-Charnock, covering much of the same ground in but 133 pages, without sacrificing quality. Remarkable.

**Who were these men?** Time will fail me if I mention Sibbes, Flavel, Baxter, Brooks, Henry, and Edwards. They seem almost to be another species, or even from another world. Perhaps that is because it was in that other world that they primarily lived, undistracted by the technological intrusions, the entertainment barrages, and the busyness of the modern world. We desperately need their insights, their godliness, their wisdom.

**Read three to four pages a day of the Puritan classics,** a thousand pages a year, for 30 to 40 years, and we may absorb a measure of their piety, virtue, and courage. They provide food for the soul that endures, that transforms, and in my experience, is without parallel. They are readily obtainable from the Banner Of Truth Trust ([www.banneroftruth.org](http://www.banneroftruth.org))

- Terry L. Johnson, Savannah, Georgia, in *The Banner Of Truth Magazine*, July 2017

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## **World Summit In Defence Of Persecuted Christians**

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association held a *Summit In Support Of Persecuted Christians* when 600 invited delegates gathered in Washington DC from 10–13 May 2017. Among those who addressed the meeting was the Vice President of the United States, Mike Pence. 'Our brothers and sisters in the Faith,' he declared, 'I can assure you that you are being carried by the prayers of the faithful across this nation and across the world.'

### **THE MEETING FORMULATED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:**

**WE DECLARE OUR ALLEGIANCE** with all who suffer for Christ's name and pledge to make the following commitments:

**WE PLEDGE TO PROMOTE** awareness of persecuted Christians worldwide and work to help in their hour of need.

**WE PLEDGE TO PRAY** unceasingly, urging other believers throughout the world to pray for those being persecuted, that the whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless. (1 Thessalonians 5.17, 23,24)

**WE PLEDGE TO PROVIDE** practical assistance, whenever possible, to the persecuted church. (Philippians 2.4)

**WE PLEDGE TO WORK** with individuals, organizations, and government agencies encouraging them to act as advocates on behalf of the persecuted because of their faith in Christ Jesus. (Proverbs 31.8,9)

**WE PLEDGE TO FOLLOW** the biblical mandate to comfort and edify one another so that we exemplify Christ's love and transforming power, even in the midst of hardship (1 Thessalonians 5.11).

**WE PLEDGE TO STRENGTHEN** the worldwide witness of the church around the world through biblical proclamation-evangelism, and to do so boldly, unapologetically, and without compromise (Mark 16.15; Romans 1.16).

**PERSECUTION IS INCREASING**, but the church's witness to the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ will never be extinguished. We pray for our fellow Christian believers, wherever they may be found. We claim the Lordship of Christ and watch for that day when He will return and reign as King of Kings forever, and we pray for that promised day when, as that cherished hymn of the faith declares, 'the great church victorious shall be the church at rest.'

*'For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood,  
but against principalities, against powers,  
against the rulers of the darkness of this age,  
against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.  
Therefore, take up the whole armour of God,  
that you may be able to withstand in the evil day ...'  
(Ephesians 6.12,13).*

