

Barunga Kids Growing In Christ

About 50 Aboriginal children gather each Wednesday evening in the Baptist Church at Barunga, about 80 kilometres east of Katherine in the Northern Territory, to play games, sing songs and learn from the Bible.

Eternity News reports the Kids Club is run by the pastor of the church, Patrick Bauer, who says God gave him a passion to reach the Aboriginal people in Australia when he was just six years old.

For a boy growing up in the United States, that was unusual. But fast forward 28 years, and Patrick arrived in Darwin with his family to pursue his dream of ministering to the indigenous people of Australia.

After the Bauers arrived in Barunga, a few older Christian women took them under their wing, teaching them culture, language and local etiquette. Three years later, Pastor Bauer is a fixture in the community. 'We have seen people accept the Gospel, and come into relationship with Christ,' he says. 'It's a beautiful thing to see, and we see it often enough to keep us encouraged.'

Pastor Bauer says he would love to see more people bring the Gospel to the hundreds of other indigenous communities across the Northern Territory.

– *Eternity News* at biblesociety.org.au



Bring Them In ... Keep Them In

A study published by *LifeWay Research* has found that small churches that make a strong effort to share the message of Jesus Christ with non-believers retain the most Christian converts. Eleven denominations sponsored the major study, which was conducted in partnership with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and a Baptist Theological Centre.

The phone survey of 1,500 pastors of small churches asked how many converts each church had in the last 12 months and whether those converts stayed with the church after they came to faith.

Researchers found small churches retained almost 12 converts per 100 attendees while large churches retained fewer than 5 converts per 100 attendees.

Scott McConnell, executive director of *LifeWay Research*, says that small churches are on the right track when it comes to strategies to reach more people. He says that asking non-Christians to come to church, sharing the Gospel with them, following up with them, and inviting them to follow Jesus all lead to more converts.

– *Christian Post*

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Society Takes To The Slippery Slope

It started out as a referendum, turned into a plebiscite and is now a 'postal survey' on Same-Sex Marriage – if the High Court allows it to go ahead. And in any case, Opposition Leader Bill Shorten won't take 'No' for an answer – to the chagrin of many of his own Labor Party voters. No wonder he's labelled it as wasteful, hurtful and divisive.

The people are to be given an opportunity to express their mind and vote either 'Yes' or 'No'. But say-what-you-like-but-I'm-voting-'Yes' Bill Shorten is dead right – it's a waste of time and money because the 'Yes' people are just not listening. Speaking of money, if some State Governments and City Councils are pouring money into the 'Yes' case but not giving a cent to the 'No' case, does this not skew and therefore invalidate the vote of the people? Right again Bill, it's divisive. Then, following the biased reporting of the ABC and the unethical reporting of Channel 10, the 'No' case is under siege from the very beginning. Ouch, Bill. That hurts.

Now, I don't want to fill the pages of *New Life* with this matter. I know it's a magnificent obsession with some, whose views I share. Take a bow Fred, Bill, Lyle et al. We salute you and are thankful for everything you do to uphold Biblical morality. It's good that some church leaders are stepping up too. Archbishop Glenn Davies of Sydney has called for a 'No' vote; Philip Freier, Archbishop of Melbourne, has indicated he will vote 'No'; Denis Hart, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne has urged his people to vote 'No'; John Wilson, Moderator General of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, has spoken out strongly; Brian Houston, Lead Pastor of Hillsong, has also spoken out strongly in defence of Biblical morality. We applaud them.

For the record, I'll be voting 'No' for the simple reason that I take God at His Word.

- **Genesis 2.18-24**, especially vv18,24: Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him' ... 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.'

- **Leviticus 18.22**, You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

- **1 Corinthians 6.9-11** ... neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practise homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the Kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

A minister writing in *The Age* on 30-8-17 said he would be voting 'Yes' and warned against 'doubtful and dubious interpretations of the Bible'. Well, I ask you, what's 'doubtful and dubious' about the Word of God read in its natural sense, and who's doing the 'interpreting' of it?

So now, after this, we continue with our own magnificent obsession: 'Telling The Great Works Of Christ In The World Today' and proclaiming 'the **whole** counsel of God'.
– Bob Thomas

CAR: Islamic Militias 'More Heavily Armed Than Ever'

Gambo is located 70km west of Bangassou, in the Central African Republic prefecture of Mbomou. It sits on what is currently the front-line of one of the world's most catastrophic and neglected conflicts. Gambo has been held by ex-Seleka Islamic rebels for the past four years, but this year suffering has escalated markedly as Islamic rebels have split into factions, primarily along ethnic lines, and escalated their attacks on civilians associated with their opponents. Over recent months the ex-Seleka faction known as the UPC (the ethnic Peuhl/Fulani-dominated Union For Peace in the CAR) has escalated its attacks on the local people, especially women. Catholic news-agency, *Agenzia Fides*, reports that many local women have been abducted from their homes in front of their husbands and later raped. What else is this but a reign of terror?

On 4 August 'anti-balaka' militias (traditional village defence militias turned anti-Muslim and now anti-Fulani vigilantes) entered Gambo to oust the ex-Seleka/UPC fighters. Local Bishop Juan Jose Aguirre of Munos, Bangassou, told *Agenzia Fides* that when the anti-balaka arrived, UN peacekeepers immediately opened fire to repel them. When the anti-balaka returned fire the UN peacekeepers started shooting wildly and indiscriminately, hitting many civilians. When the UN peacekeepers pursued the anti-balaka into the forest, the ex-Seleka/Fulani UPC fighters in Gambo town found a Red Cross team holding a meeting in the hospital and proceeded to slit the throats of all men, women and children present. Six Red Cross volunteers, one a Baptist pastor, were among up to 80 victims. World Watch Monitor reports that Pastor Joseph Tokon had gone to Gambo to work as a medical aid worker. In his 50s, Pastor Tokon leaves behind a wife and seven children. 'I ask myself,' says Bishop Aguirre, 'why, once Gambo had been saved from the anti-balaka, did the UN [peacekeepers] leave the people in the hands of the Seleka [Fulani UPC]? These so called peace-keeping troops, whose job is to disarm all the factions in the country, did forcefully disarm the anti-balaka but not the Seleka who appear more heavily armed than ever. Here is a sense of complicity which we fail to understand.'

Fellow peacemaker, Imam Oumar Kobine Layama of the award-winning Interfaith Peace Platform, agrees with Bishop Aguirre that the Moroccan contingent of the UN Peacekeeping Mission is 'trigger happy' and needs to be removed. Human Rights Watch believes the UN peacekeeping force could do more to protect civilians, noting that in many front-line towns 'Seleka fighters openly circulate with weapons'. Of course the hottest question of all must be: 'Who is funding these Islamic militias?'

Meanwhile, the situation at the Catholic Cathedral in Bangassou remains explosive. Inside the cathedral, some 2,000 displaced mostly Muslim civilians huddle together under the protection of priests and nuns. Outside on the footpath, bands of young Muslim men harass the local people while anti-balaka fighters linger menacingly on the periphery, threatening to kill them all. The violence is spread along the front-line, from the south-east through the centre to the north-west. In the town of Batangafo, 400km north of the capital Bangui, two waves of violence through late July into early August left 24 people dead, 17 injured and more than 10,000 people seeking refuge in the grounds of the hospital after rebels torched the refugee camp and looted its supplies. Medecins Sans Frontieres project co-ordinator Carlos Francisco laments, 'Much of the general population is in a state of complete helplessness.' On 7 August the UN warned of the spectre of genocide, in the hope of arousing some interest from outside powers.

PLEASE PRAY THAT:

- God will 'Break the arm [means of action] of the wicked ...' (Psalm 10), so that CAR (which is 76% Christian) will be spared catastrophic bloodshed, ethnic cleansing and partial Islamic domination; may those who sponsor Islamic militancy be exposed and sanctioned and all channels of funding Islamic militias be totally broken.
- God will intervene in CAR to rebuke and chase away (Isaiah 17.13) all foreign jihadists (mostly Chadian and Sudanese); disarm and pacify all belligerents; remove all unhelpful powers and troops; and empower all who are working to improve security for this massively traumatised population.
- God will protect and bless His peacemaker Church, amplifying her message of reconciliation, exercise of grace and call to transformative revival through Jesus.

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

'NO' Campaign Website Up And Running

The Coalition For Marriage, the leading voice for the plebiscite NO campaign has launched its official campaign website. coalitionformarriage.com.au was unveiled at the start of the first full week of campaigning for the upcoming plebiscite on whether gender should be removed from the *Commonwealth Marriage Act*.

The Coalition is comprised of more than 80 groups from across Australia, representing more than 3,000,000 people. It is led by four groups, the Australian Christian Lobby, Marriage Alliance, the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney and the Anglican Diocese of Sydney.

Managing Director of the Australian Christian Lobby, Lyle Shelton, says this campaign is the opportunity for Australians to be informed and have their say on the consequences of changing the *Marriage Act* – the impact on free speech and on what our children are taught at school. In coming weeks, the Coalition For Marriage will hold campaign events across the country, and it has begun actively requesting support at the website coalitionformarriage.com.au – Sydney Anglicans

Brian Houston Warns Of 'Wide-Ranging Ramifications Of Allowing SSM

Hillsong Church Pastor Brian Houston has been among prominent conservative Christian voices warning of 'wide-ranging ramifications' in Australia's referendum on legalising gay marriage. The megachurch leader said he retained the traditional Biblical teaching that 'marriage is between a man and a woman', and warned of 'wide-ranging ramifications' for changing the definition of marriage. 'For Christians,' Pastor Houston said, 'the issue is a matter of faith and Biblical teaching. But some on both sides of the argument have failed to understand and respect the views of others,' he said.

A non-binding postal-plebiscite will seek the will of the people on the issue, beginning on 12 September and concluding on 7 November.

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SUPPLIES ARE EXPECTED THIS WEEK AT NEW LIFE BOOKS & ARCHAEOLOGY, 44 DUBLIN RD, RINGWOOD EAST. OPEN MON-SAT, 10am-2pm. MOB 0428.290.341

The Wind And The Spirit Drive YWAM's Mercy Ship

The crew of a Newcastle-based medical ship have been recognised by the City of Newcastle days before they head off to Papua New Guinea to continue their work. Newcastle Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes presented the key to the city to Christian charity Youth With A Mission for its efforts to provide much-needed health care and medical training to Australia's northern neighbour. The symbolic key is part of Newcastle City Council's ambassador program, which recognises individuals and organisations who exceptionally represent the city. The *Ruach* (Hebrew for 'wind' and Spirit' – a doubly meaningful name for a sailing ship which spreads the Gospel under the power of the Holy Spirit through works of mercy), the 37-metre Dutch ship that was donated to YWAM, has been based at Newcastle since the start of the year.

Religion In The Public Square: Wide-Ranging Church And Nation Seminars

Every two years the Church and Nation Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria holds a Colloquium (C17) called *Religion In The Public Square*. It is held in Melbourne at Scots Church, 156 Collins Street on 20,21 October and is aimed at helping Christians think well about how we engage in the public square.

The first keynote speaker is Dr Augusto Zimmerman who will give three talks: *The Biblical View Of Civil Government; Religious Freedom And The Threat Of Secular Intolerance; Religious Freedom And The Threat Of Islamic Terrorism – A Critical Appraisal*.

The second keynote speaker is Rev Murray Campbell who will speak on: *Citizens Of Heaven, Residents Of Australia: The Beatitudes For Today; Poor And Mourning; Marginal Living; Peace And Persecution*

Other speakers include: Mrs Sharon Rodrick [*Preparing For Challenging Times In The West*]; Mrs Angela Shanahan [*Freedom Of Religion And Speech And The Threat To Both Posed By SSM*]; Dr John Mclean [*Conforming Or Transforming: The Urgent Need For Deep Christian Thinking (And Living)*]; Simon Kennedy [*How Should I Vote? One Christian's Guide To Politics And Voting*]; Rev Dominic Steele [*Winning Post Post-Moderns To Jesus*]; Rev Brett Lee-Price [*A Redemptive Approach To (Trans)Gender*]; Rev Darren Middleton [*Doing Justice And Righteousness In The Public Square*].

Bookings can be made online at <http://www.religioninthepublicsquare.org/>

Opposition For Facebook

A new social media platform has been started by Christians who were banned from *Facebook*. According to *The Christian Post*, the new Christian alternative to *Facebook* is called *SocialCross.org*. It was started by a group of pastors who were suspended multiple times from *Facebook* for posting unpopular thoughts and opinions on LGBT issues. The pastors hope that the new social networking platform will be a place for Christians to freely express their beliefs and engage in conversations without fearing backlash. *SocialCross* launched three weeks ago, and has thus far gained 2,300 users. Rich Penkoski was spurred on to create *SocialCross* after his *Facebook* account was banned for 30 days on multiple occasions. He says the whole idea is that it's a Christian site, run by Christians, designed by Christians and based on biblical principles.

– *Christian Headlines*

Epping (NSW) Church Looks Up

An Anglican church in Sydney is poised for a radical re-invention with plans to build two towers on its grounds. St Alban's Anglican Church in Epping

wants to capitalise on its land value and height limits, which allow buildings of 16 storeys. St Alban's minister Rev Ross Nicholson says the towers may provide about 150 homes and an opportunity for more community services. He says they will focus on such ministries as affordable housing, aged care and childcare. The current church building will remain and the hall would be replaced by an underground auditorium. The towers would not be limited to homes, with the lower floors possibly including offices and retail outlets such as cafes. Mr Nicholson says 'This is not focused on us but looking outward to the wider community.' The church does not plan to sell its site, rather it will grant a lengthy lease to a developer partner.

– *Sydney Anglicans*

Centre For Public Christianity

The important issue of domestic violence within the church has resurfaced in the Australian media. CPX has been responding to requests for comment. CPX is continuing to engage with the story and encourage positive, measured, and compassionate responses. Go to: info@publicchristianity.org

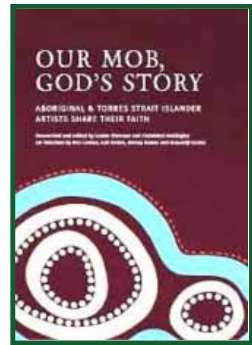
REACHING OUT

Our Mob, God's Story Wins SparkLit's Australian Christian Book Of The Year Award

Our Mob, God's Story, published by Bible Society Australia, has won the Australian Christian Book of the Year Award at the 2017 SparkLit Awards night in Melbourne. The highly acclaimed Indigenous art book celebrates the Bible through the eyes of Australia's First Nations artists gathered together from across the land. Along with stunning paintings *Our Mob, God's Story* also features each artist's personal testimony of Christian faith, compiled by award winning Australian author Christobel Mattingley and Bible Society Australia's Indigenous Ministry Projects Coordinator Louise Sherman.

When accepting the top award, Louise Sherman said, 'We have many unique voices in this country, particularly indigenous voices, that this world needs to hear.'

Our Mob, God's Story is available from www.bibleshop.org.au, Koorong Books, or by calling 1300 139 179. Funds raised from the sale of the book will go directly to Indigenous Scripture Publication work.



The Story Of A Christian Heroine

This Is My Beloved is an historical novel of a real woman, Mrs Ernilia Baeyerz, a Jewish Christian lady evangelist who lived in Melbourne and began teaching about Jesus the Messiah in 1877. Her distinctive style of preaching attracted thousands of men, women and children to hear her personal story of romance, tragedy and hope. She used her Jewish culture to give new insights into Bible stories familiar to her church-going audiences and her chief aim was to encourage people to follow Jesus Christ.

Although in the society of her time women were discouraged from teaching men in public, she was invited to speak to men and women in cities, towns and villages across Australia. From 1890 to 1918 Emilia and her daughter Marion travelled throughout New Zealand, North America and Britain to explain why it was important for people to follow Jesus.

This Is My Beloved Companion, edited by Garth Coverdale, is a resource for those interested in the original documents that support the novel. It includes newspaper articles, sermons and letters, a chronology, notes and a bibliography. Orders may be placed with the Emilia Baeyerz Society, 5 Laughlin Ave, Nunawading 3131, phone Miranda Starkey on 0401 903 972, email miranda@emilibaeyerz.org



Honour & Shame

The theme of this year's CMS Vic Spring Dinners is *Honour & Shame*, seeing God working through CMS Gospel workers around the world, and finding out how to support them in prayer.

The dinners are coming up in Melbourne, Geelong, Bendigo and Warragul. Book before Monday 4 September to secure your place at the Melbourne event.

Visit vic@cms.org.au for details and how to book to learn more about ongoing partnership in cross-cultural mission!

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Bush Church Aid Director Urges Christians To 'Go Sola'

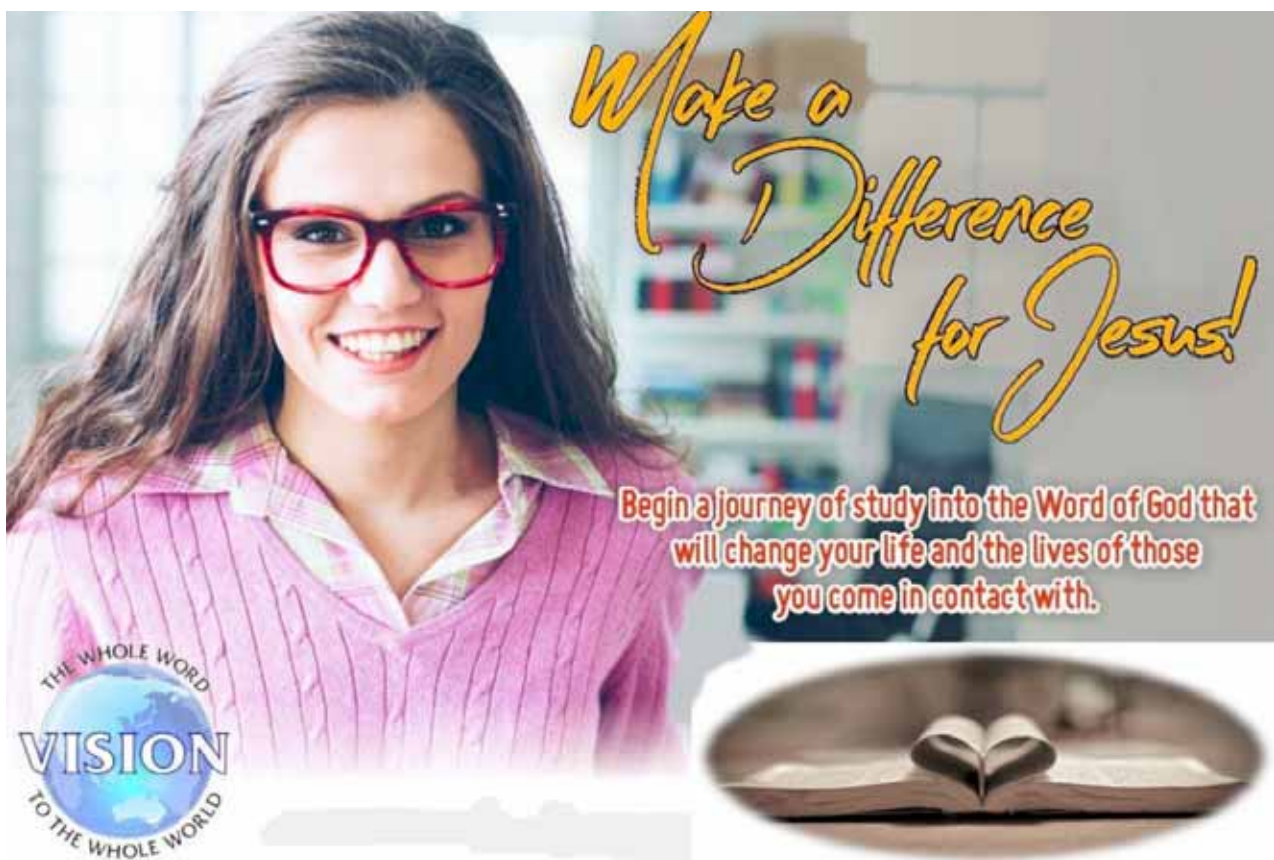
What has a German monk got to do with the Australian bush? More than you might realise! Five hundred years ago this October Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to a door in Wittenberg, beginning the Protestant Reformation. Later generations summarised the Reformation message using five 'solas' – from the Latin wording meaning 'alone'.

Bush Church Aid stands humbly in this Reformation heritage, believing it to be firmly grounded in Scripture. We want that commitment to be about more than slogans, so let me suggest how these five convictions might be lived out in a mission society like ours:

- **Trust God's Word.** We do mission by Scripture alone when we trust in the power of God's Word to change lives and transform communities. This frees us from trying to make changes by cleverness or force of personality.
- **Pray.** We do mission by faith alone when we bring our hopes and fears to God in prayer. This frees us from imagining the future belongs to us and our own worthiness.
- **Look To God.** We do mission by grace alone when we are confident that God's generosity will motivate people to be generous in response. This frees us from manipulation and desperation.
- **Evangelise.** We do mission for Christ alone when we long to see people trust Him as Lord and Saviour. This frees us from worrying about the survival of an institution or organisation.
- **Seek God's Glory.** We do mission for the glory of God alone when we are content for our service to be noticed by Him and no-one else. This frees us from captivity to popularity and reputation.

We encourage BCA Field Staff to live out these convictions. May you be encouraged to go 'sola' wherever God has called you to mission, so that together we might go the distance to reach Australia for Christ.

– Mark Short, National Director, Bush Church Aid Society, Anglican Mission ToThe Outback



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Hungary Shows the Way

In a time when much of Europe is in the grip of atheism, there is a nation where Christianity is thriving. The government is unabashedly Christian, thinks Christian values are worth defending and wants to protect and even nourish the family. Hungary's constitution is explicitly Christian, and says that marriage is between one man and one woman and that life begins at conception. It even includes the phrase, 'God bless the Hungarians.' Hungary's Faith Church, with 300 branches, is one of the largest Pentecostal churches in Europe, with 70,000 attendees.

The Hungarian government has taken on the role of protecting Christianity. It's even set up an office to help persecuted Christians worldwide. It says, 'Taking in persecuted Christians is our moral and constitutional duty.' Hungarian policy analyst István Pócza says Hungary is a historic bastion of Christianity, dating back over a thousand years.
– CBN Christian World News

Church Growth In North Korea

Christianity is growing in the despotic state of North Korea despite the horrendous persecution, sources on the ground say. A North Korean defector who works with the country's underground church says that people 'no longer respect Kim Jong-un,' and are refusing to worship the Kim family, as they were told to do in the past. The anonymous defector, a member of the *Worldwide Co-alition To Stop Genocide In North Korea*, told the *UK Telegraph* newspaper that 'people are looking for something else to sustain their faith'. He says the Christian church is growing and deepening its roots despite the fear of such extreme persecution as imprisonment, torture or execution.
– *My Christian Daily*

Bringing Hope To Syrian Refugees

Operation Good Neighbour is meant to increase aid to Syrian civilians caught in the midst of the civil

war. What began as a trickle of Syrian war-wounded appealing to their arch-enemy, Israel, for medical help, has now grown into a full-fledged humanitarian aid mission, managed by the Israel Defence Forces along the Israeli-Syrian border. In the past four years, Israel has helped more than 4,000 Syrians medically. Most of them were taken to Israeli hospitals. But Israel's aid to the Syrians didn't stop with the sick and wounded. Many goods donated by NGOs, including *Friend Ships*, whose shipping containers say 'From Jesus, With Love,' provide medicine, basic foods, fuel for generators, water pumps, and infrastructure for electricity are part of Operation Good Neighbour. A spokesman for the IDF's Northern Command says they see humanitarian aid as their duty to help, and they are hoping by this to secure the Israeli-Syrian border.
– CBN Christian World News

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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Family Imprisoned, Tortured For Fleeing North Korea – And For Their Christian Faith

As North Korea's missile testing focuses world attention on Kim Jong-un's regime, one woman's story shows how harshly families are treated when they refuse to follow his authoritarian rules. Hannah Cho (not her real name) was born just before the Korean War broke out in 1950. After the war, with public religion discouraged, her local church was turned into a school. Her Christian mother continued to pray at home but Hannah and her father kept watch for neighbours who might inform the authorities about her faith. 'If anyone came close, we'd cough and she'd stop praying,' Hannah said. Hannah wanted to understand her mother's faith but she spoke so fast when she prayed that it was difficult to understand: 'All we could make out was: "Hananim! Hananim! – Lord! Lord! Help!"'

'We had no idea who this "Hananim" was. My daughter even asked her one day why she wouldn't simply visit this guy if he was that important to her. My mother replied: "One day I will!"'

Life in North Korea grew more difficult for Hannah after her marriage. 'I bore six children, two of them died very early on. I still have three daughters and a son. My husband used to work in a factory, but when the economy collapsed there was no more work, and no more income. There was never any money for proper medical care.' After Hannah's mother died, she and her family decided to leave North Korea for China. 'My eldest daughters were first to flee, but they were betrayed by the broker. They were supposed to meet with a relative of my husband but they were sold into marriage to poor Chinese farmers. Fortunately, they were sold to families in the same village, so could stay in touch with each other.'

'When we didn't hear from them, my husband went to China to try to find them. Meantime, I took care of my two youngest children at home. My husband didn't come back; a year later, I went to look for them all in China. At first, I couldn't locate my husband. I worked on a Chinese farm as a maid, but didn't receive any money. I had lost everything that was dear to me. I prayed to God with the only words I knew: "Hananim, Hananim! – Lord, Lord! Please help!" Finally, I found my husband's relative and he connected me with my husband, but my daughters were still missing.' Hannah's husband went back to North Korea to collect the two youngest children, who'd stayed with family, and take them back across the border to China. He also discovered where the two older daughters were. 'A few weeks later our entire family was reunited in China,' Hannah said.

The family settled into their new life together and started to attend the church of a relative, where they all converted to the Christian faith. 'We had seen my mother's faith, but now we understood it,' Hannah said. 'We felt peace in our hearts and unexplainable joy. It was so refreshing, as if the specks in my eyes had been washed away and I could finally see God. Now I could follow Him like my mother had. The pastor taught us about Christ and the Christian life. Our faith grew very quickly because we had been prepared all our lives for this moment.'

Sadness soon followed the joy of the family reunion. 'We were discovered by Chinese secret agents and arrested. They moved us from prison to prison until we were finally sent back to North Korea. We'd hardly arrived when we witnessed a terrible scene. A woman in prison was pregnant by a Chinese man. Race is very important in North Korea: the pure race may never be defiled. To mix Korean blood with Chinese blood is a terrible "sin"; Hannah said. 'The woman gave birth in prison, but then the guard ordered her to kill her baby, but she couldn't. The guard threatened another woman, telling her he would let her live if she killed the baby. He put his gun to her head and the inmate had no other choice but to strangle the baby until he died. And we had to watch.'

The family were separated in the prison. 'My husband was treated badly. He told the guards he'd become a Christian. Later, he told us he had no choice. After he saw what they did with the baby and the guards threatened to kill his family, he had to tell them the truth. After his confession, all four of us were locked up in solitary confinement – a small cage, no food or water and we couldn't sleep,' Hannah said. 'We were badly beaten. Nobody dared resist because you'd only make the torture worse. But my husband was different. The more they tortured him, the harder he defended his faith. He yelled at them: "If believing in God is a sin, I'd rather die! Just kill me! It's my mission to live according to God's will!" Each time he spoke out against them, they stripped him and beat him up as if he was an animal. His flesh was torn and ripped. When he lost consciousness, they woke him and started again. 'I felt close to dying. I was dehydrated and beaten until I was unconscious too. When I woke up, I was dragged back to a regular cell with my daughter and other female inmates. Then they beat me in front of them. All my daughter could do was cry silently, which she did day and night.'

'Of course, we prayed throughout our time in prison. One day, our entire family was called out of the prison cell. That was a bad omen.



(Continued on p.12)

PERSECUTION WATCH

(Continued from p.11)

'Of course, we prayed throughout our time in prison. One day, our entire family was called out of the prison cell. That was a bad omen. Usually when people are taken from their cells during the night they are transferred to a camp for political prisoners. When we got to the office, there were two male prisoners. I recognized my son, but the other was in such a bad shape, I didn't recognize my husband and he didn't recognize me. That's how horrendous we looked from all the torture. His ribs and collarbone were broken, so he couldn't even stand up straight. But I realized it was him. We were in front of the prison deputy, waiting to hear our verdict. We all desperately prayed for a miracle. We didn't want to suffer and die in a political prisoner camp. But the deputy gave us a special amnesty. When we walked out of the prison that night and were finally free and alone, we quietly sang a hymn.

'We were separated again. We went to our old home to recover, but we still feared for our lives. Life in North Korea was too dangerous and too hard. My husband suggested that I take my daughter first and go back to China. "Don't look for a job," he said. "Just go to our church where you will be helped. I will come with our son in about a month." I did what he said and reached our church safely with our daughter. A month went by. No word from my husband. Then, a second month, a third, a fourth ... I waited three years. Then I found out that he had died shortly after we left North Korea. He was never able to overcome the pain and illnesses from prison. My son could not cross the river by himself. He is still in North Korea. I haven't seen or spoken to him in many years. I will never give up hope of finding him.

'About two years ago I found out that he is still alive and lives with a family member. We were even able to phone each other once. I now live in South Korea. My first and third daughter are here with me. My second daughter lives in China with her husband. She is still at risk of being discovered and sent back. I hope one day I will be reunited in South Korea with that daughter and my son.

'My mother only taught me one prayer. But I still pray it every day, for my family and for my country: "Hanonim, Hanonim! – Lord, Lord, please help!"'

– *World Watch Monitor*

SOUTH SUDAN: Humanitarian Aid Blocked

Government militias in South Sudan are blocking the delivery of humanitarian supplies to those in the country's internally displaced people camps, according to Anglican Aid. *Eternity News* reports that with farmers separated from their fields by the war and relief agencies unable to reach large parts of the country, the resulting famine has left an estimated 100,000 South Sudanese in need of aid and protection. Anglican Aid's operations manager Eddie Ozols says people on the ground had told him that the church is the only agency that had come and offered hope. While food was the most urgent need, the greatest need expressed by people in all the camps was education for their children rather than food. Counselling is also urgent, to address the spiritual emptiness of so many people.

– *Eternity News at biblesociety.org.au*

TURKEY: Brunson Case Takes New Turn

Andrew Brunson, an American pastor who's spent over two decades serving in Turkey, is facing trials to this very day. Todd Nettleton of *The Voice of the Martyrs USA* says earlier this month they were hoping to hear that all charges against Brunson had been dropped, but 'Instead, they've now added more charges against Andrew Brunson, charging him with gathering state secrets for espionage, attempting to overthrow the Turkish parliament and government and change the constitutional order.' And as the government continues to go in the wrong direction of justice, the question is, why? Over the last year, Turkey has been caught up in the harried cycle of chaos and control. Chaos followed 2016's failed coup and allowed Turkey's President Erdogan to gain more control over the nation. Since then, the nation has

been in a declared state of emergency. Nettleton says, 'When you think about who has undermined the rule of law in Turkey over the last year, it certainly is not Andrew Brunson.' In fact, big moves have been made recently to move the state more and more towards a dictatorship. As to why Brunson has been targeted in particular, Nettleton says while it's speculation, he believes that the Turkish government may be trying to trade Brunson for Fathulla Gülen, an Islamic cleric living in Pennsylvania. The Turkey government blames Gülen for leading the failed coup. He is now living in self-imposed exile.' Turkey is number 37 on the Open Doors World Watch List which ranks the nations where living as a Christian is difficult. Believers face trouble from political and ethnic standpoints as well as from radical Islam. There is increasing pressure to 'Islamize' Turkey in a nationalist movement. Brunson's case is significant not just on an individual level, but for all Christians living in Turkey. 'They are concerned, as all of us are when a Christian is imprisoned for their faith. We should be concerned, we should be in prayer for them. I think the entire Christian community in Turkey has watched the human rights situation there, the religious freedom situation there, really go downhill over the last 12 months.

– www.mnnonline.org

IRAN: Ebrahim On Hunger Strike

Our Iranian brother Ebrahim is growing weaker by the day as he continues with his hunger strike in jail. He is more than a month into his protest over the way the Iranian legal system is treating him and his fellow Christians, especially those with a Muslim background. His physical condition is said to be deteriorating. Pray that God will strengthen him as he continues his protest.

Sad, Bad And Glad Reception Of The Gospel

ACTS 18.



The Gospel is ‘punching above its weight’. So far, it has won converts in four European cities, but now it comes to Corinth, the toughest of them all. Corinth was located between two harbours and was renowned as a place of prosperity and wickedness.

Again, the Jews oppose Paul (v 13). In response, Paul shakes the dust off his feet as a sign of God’s judgment on their hardness of heart (v 6). The missionaries leave the synagogue, and yet the Gospel is still effective (vv 7,8).

In each city where there is opposition, the opposition is used by God to open up new areas of endeavour. The missionaries left Philippi, came to Thessalonica, were sent to Berea, escorted to Athens and then went out of the synagogue in Corinth into the house of Titius Justus (v 7). God uses the bad as well as the glad to see His purposes fulfilled.

What keeps the missionaries going in the face of such opposition? Paul was not a loner. He had meaningful and supportive friendships (vv 1–4). Paul was sustained by the timely arrival of Silas and Timothy and the good news they brought with them (v 5; see also 1 Thessalonians 3.6). A direct word comes to Paul from God (vv 9–10): he is not to be anxious or silent, for God has His elect and will call them out through Paul’s ministry.

Ministry is always a battle, but there will be a Lydia, a jailer, a Dionysius, Damaris, Jason and many others to encourage us along the way. God’s message is unstoppable. He buries His messengers, never His message.

Paul’s ministry was persuasive (Acts 17.4; 18.4) and he keeps persuading, right to the end (Acts 28.23,24). The fact of God’s sovereign control in the face of fierce opposition means that Paul never backs off in his ministry. Even in his trial before Festus and King Agrippa, Agrippa says to Paul, ‘Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?’ (Acts 26.28).

Paul persuades as long as he has breath.

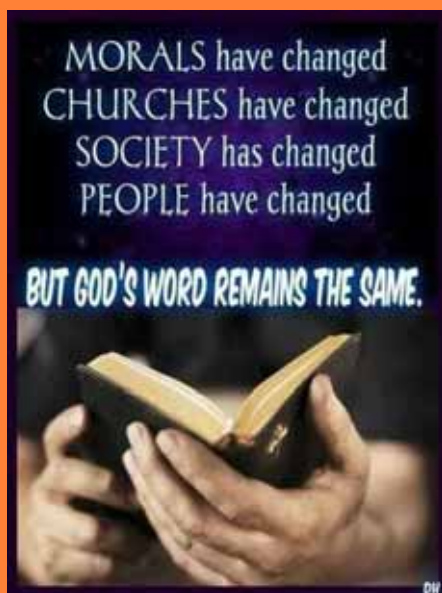
FOR REFLECTION:

What special promise of God encouraged Paul (vv 9,10)? How does this word encourage you?

Identify how each hindrance of the Gospel recorded in these chapters opens up new opportunities for ministry. What does this teach you about God?

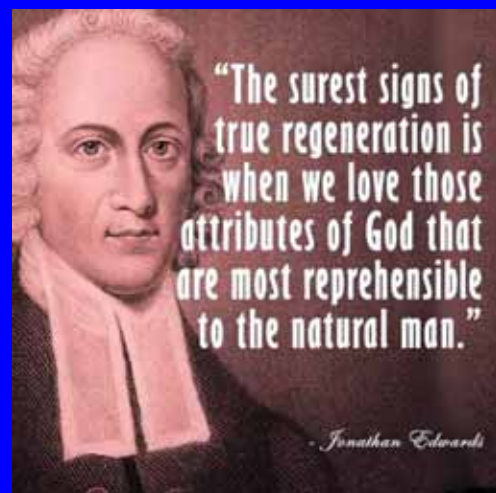
Content taken from 'ACTS – To The Ends Of The Earth' by David Cook, published by 10Publishing, used with permission.

SEEN ON FACEBOOK:



John 14.7
Peace is yours.

Words Of Wisdom:



BOOKS WORTH READING

HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH AND MALACHI, Anthony R. Petterson, Apollos Old Testament Commentary 25, Nottingham: Apollos, 2015. ISBN 978-1-78359-211-1

Dr Anthony Petterson is lecturer in Old Testament at Morling College, Sydney, and is eminently qualified to write a detailed commentary on *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi* in this leading evangelical commentary series by Apollos, for his doctoral studies were in the book of *Zechariah* under T. D. Alexander at Queens University, Belfast. *Zechariah* is a challenging but important book, for it is the most quoted Old Testament prophet in the passion narratives of the Gospels.

Petterson provides a brief historical overview of the post-exilic period in which these three prophets ministered. He reads the three prophetic booklets in the context of the larger *Book Of The Twelve* (= *Minor Prophets*), which has several key themes running through it. He also reads them with the Biblical-theological framework of God's Kingdom purposes that centre on Christ, for Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi look forward to the final dawning of that Kingdom. Petterson practises what he calls 'confessional criticism', namely he reads Scripture as the Word of God, applying scholarly analysis to the sacred text. The result is a thoroughly up-to-date and reverent explanation of the Biblical text.

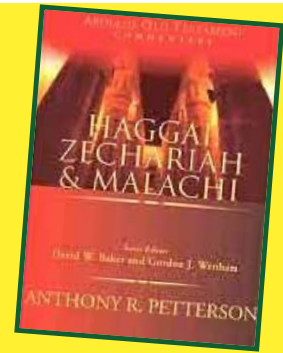
The theology of *Haggai* is focussed on the temple (= palace) of God and in terms of application, Petterson shows it has little to do with the church 'building fund' but everything to do with devotion to Jesus and His saved people, who are the New Temple. Petterson is especially effective in setting Haggai's teaching within wider Biblical theology, relating the prophetic message to Jesus and Christian living. In Haggai 2.14, Petterson properly notes that the only possible fault of the people is their (earlier) failure to rebuild the temple, but does not seem to realise that such a view (the correct one) requires verse 14 to be translated as past tense (for by this date they are working on the temple site). This is a view promoted by the great evangelical Old Testament scholar from Columbia Seminary, William McPheeters, however, Petterson fails to refer to his insightful writing on the subject. The final oracle of *Haggai* looks forward to the coming Kingdom of God, not of Zerubbabel, and Petterson finds promise of the restoration of David's kingdom that is not there in the text, though, to be fair, he is not the only Old Testament scholar to hold such a view.

Turning to the prophecy of *Zechariah*, Petterson encourages his readers with the words, 'the book of *Zechariah* is not easy to understand, but is richly rewarding to study'. It is pleasing to see that he argues for the unity of the prophecy, all to be traced back to the teaching of Zechariah himself. He is right in discerning that the key theme of the whole book is the return of God to Jerusalem after the judgment of His people, but despite that, Petterson understands the figure on the donkey to be the Messiah (*Zechariah* 9.9) rather than God depicted as a victorious warrior entering the city to be crowned. This view finds a claim to divinity in Jesus' Palm Sunday entrance into Jerusalem.

On the other hand, Petterson correctly resists the suggestion that Zechariah proclaimed Zerubbabel as the Messiah. Rather, the Davidic 'shoot' is a future figure (of course, pointing forward to and fulfilled by Jesus).

The prophecy of *Malachi* is not difficult to apply to our time, for in that prophet's day, the people were cynical and complacent about God's promises. We need this prophecy to shake us out of our moral and devotional lethargy. Petterson brings out the covenant focus and covenant logic of Malachi's dispute with God's people, who have been unfaithful to their covenant obligations. He wrestles with the textually-difficult verse about divorce in 2.16 and comes to sensible conclusions, reading it as: 'If he hated (his wife) to divorce (her), then violence will have covered over his garment'. As did Zechariah, Malachi announces that 'the Lord' (= God) is coming, with John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus who is God in the flesh.

(Continued on p.15)



'We have, in this book, an exhaustive 400-page commentary that is judicious, careful, scholarship which reflects the fulsome evangelical convictions of a fine Australian scholar, teacher and preacher.'

BOOKS WORTH READING

Sometimes Petterson's (admirable) desire to harmonise different Old Testament texts means that he fails to see the rich variety of Old Testament expectation. Malachi wrote the whole prophecy, even the final few verses that too often are viewed as later editorial additions. What we have, therefore, is an exhaustive 400-page commentary that is judicious, careful scholarship and reflects the fulsome evangelical convictions of a fine Australian scholar, teacher and preacher.

– Greg Goswell

WONDERS OF GRACE – Original Testimonies Of Converts During Spurgeon's Early Years, Compiled By Hannah Wyncoll, The Wakeman Trust. Available From The Metropolitan Tabernacle Book Shop, <http://www.tabernaclebookshop.org/>

It's always heart-warming to hear a God-glorifying testimony, and this book is full of them – testimonies given by converts baptised and received into membership of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, during Spurgeon's early ministry there.

Hannah Wyncoll tells us: 'In the Metropolitan Tabernacle archives there are more than 30 large volumes of testimonies of those converted during C.H. Spurgeon's ministry, 15,000 entries beautifully handwritten by the interviewing elders of the church.

'These are conversion accounts of men and women, young and old, living in Victorian London. These accounts contain fascinating glimpses of life in those times. Occupations include many working people such as servants, crossing sweepers, hatters, bookbinders, coopers in the docks, tailors, and candle and pottery factory workers. Health issues such as diphtheria and consumption are mentioned, and also social problems including alcoholism, domestic violence and illiteracy.'

So here are 138 testimonies drawn from more than 15,000 such accounts, each one illustrating the wonderful, varied and, yes, amazing grace of God displayed in the calling of His own to Himself. Read it and be blessed.

– Bob Thomas



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*'Thy rainbow arch
Our mercy's sign;
All, save the clouds of sin,
are Thine.'*

'Ark Encounter', Near Louisville, Kentucky



Photo Credits: Rev John Ross (above). Answers In Genesis (below).