

Museum Of The Bible – Putting God's Word On Grand Display

After five years of construction and planning, the Museum Of The Bible, three blocks south of the US Capitol and two blocks from the National Mall in Washington, DC, is set to open on 17 November. The museum's front entrance features bronze plates, replicating Genesis 1 on the Gutenberg press, which produced the first Bibles printed with movable type in 1455. Some say this could help stem the tide of a nation and world that have been turning sharply away from the truth and authority of Scripture.

The scope of the undertaking is unprecedented.

The 430,000-square-foot facility, one of the five largest of DC's more than 200 museums, will be a multimedia experience allowing guests to explore and learn about the Bible's history, stories and impact. The \$500 million project will provide a scholarly and engaging presentation of the Bible and will feature world-class interactive audiovisual exhibits, special effects and live theatre, along with art galleries, research labs and 800-1,200 artifacts at any one time.

A floor dedicated to Biblical narratives brings to life stories from Scripture, such as the crossing of the Jordan River. Among many technologically advanced adventures awaiting guests will be a simulated walk through the parted Red Sea, as if with Moses and the Israelites when God was delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians (Exodus 14); a surround-sound theatre with an action-adventure overview of Biblical history; a re-creation of a 1st Century village; and a 'flyboard experience' taking guests on a flight through Washington, showing the Bible's presence via inscriptions on monuments and buildings in the city.

'Hopefully, we will present the Bible in such a creative way that it will generate in people an interest to read it and pursue further understanding of it,' said Museum President Cary Summers, whose prior construction oversight projects includes Nazareth Village in Israel and the [Noah's] Ark Encounter in Williamston, Kentucky. 'We want to put the Bible back into the centre of conversation so it becomes a focal point to fill in the many voids around us that, unfortunately, are filled right now with the wrong things. This is not your grandmother's museum. We want it to be more than just a place where people pop in to look at things and then pop out to leave. It's one of the most technologically advanced museums anywhere in the world, but there are also some of the oldest artifacts dealing with the Bible in the world, so quite a contrast will occur.'

Among the exhibits will be one of the oldest known copies of Romans 5.1,2 that states that Christians are justified by faith, the second-largest private collection of Dead Sea Scrolls fragments, the largest private collection of Torah scrolls spanning 700 years of history, first editions of the King James Bible, and a letter written by Martin Luther the night before he was excommunicated by the Catholic Church in 1521 – an event that directly led to the Protestant Reformation.

Behind the scenes, the Museum is a working research centre, with dozens of scholars from around the world examining artifacts, translating manuscripts and developing educational curricula, which is already in use in Israeli schools.

– Charles Chandler, *Decision Magazine*, September 2017.

(Go to <https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/> to read the complete article and to subscribe to *Decision*.)



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The Party's Over For Hugh Hefner

That's the Melbourne *Herald-Sun's* headline on the death of Hugh Hefner. So the media does get some things right. 'It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after this, the judgment'. And after that? Eternal damnation and separation from God for those not having the righteousness which is by faith in Christ Jesus. **Social commentator Bill Muehlenberg writes:** '(Hefner's) whole life borders on the salacious and the sensational. But the simple point is this: his long life of lust, licence and libertarianism has now come to an abrupt end. Now he has all of eternity to face. Unless some sort of death-bed conversion took place, he will spend eternity apart from the God who created him, who loved him, and who died on the cross for him. What a wasted life!

'In my book, what he did was to cause incalculable damage. He has helped to corrupt and destroy millions of lives, and lead countless souls into a lost eternity. That is no small thing.

'While he was still alive I often would pray for him. My prayers were rather simple, as they are for others who are so powerful and influential like him. I prayed that God would either improve him or remove him. Either he needed to become a Christian by turning from his sins and coming to Christ in faith and repentance, or he needed to somehow be taken out of the way – figuratively or literally. Well, he has now been removed by his Maker and his Judge. (See the complete article at <https://billmuehlenberg.com/2017/09/28/dark-legacy-hugh-hefner/>)

Yes, for Hugh Hefner, the party's over. But the hangover has just begun – and to the best of our knowledge it will never end. May many see this as a cautionary tale. May they repent and believe the Gospel.

'Hide Not The Offence Of The Cross'

'But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man' – Galatians 1.11

A gospel which is after men will be welcomed by men; but it needs a divine operation upon the heart and mind to make a man willing to receive into his inmost soul this distasteful Gospel of the grace of God. My dear brethren, do not try to make it tasteful to carnal minds.

Hide not the offence of the cross, lest you make it of none effect. The angles and corners of the Gospel are its strength: to pare them off is to deprive it of power. Toning down is not the increase of strength, but the death of it.

Why, even among the sects, you must have noticed that their distinguishing points are the horns of their power; and when these are practically omitted, the sect is effete. Learn, then, that if you take Christ out of Christianity, Christianity is dead.

If you remove grace out of the Gospel, the Gospel is gone. If the people do not like the doctrine of grace, give them all the more of it. Whenever its enemies rail at a certain kind of gun, a wise military power will provide more of such artillery.

A great general, going in before his king, stumbled over his own sword. 'I see,' said the king, 'your sword is in the way.' The warrior answered, 'Your majesty's enemies have often felt the same.' That our Gospel offends the King's enemies is no regret to us.

From Charles H. Spurgeon, Galatians 1.11 – Our Manifesto. Preached on 25 April 1890, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London. – monergism.com

MATTERS FOR PRAYER:

IRAQ: Assyrians Request Prayer As Kurds 'Play With Fire'

Assyrians are the indigenous people of Northern Iraq and a Christian nation. Between June and August 2014, ISIS drove more than 130,000 Assyrians from their homes in Mosul and the Nineveh Plains. Traumatized and destitute, most found refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan, primarily in Dohuk (to the north) and Erbil, the Kurdish capital (to the east). This year, a coalition led by the Iraqi Army and aided by Popular Mobilisation Units (mostly Iranian-led Shi'ite militias), US-backed Kurdish peshmerga forces and Assyrian units have succeeded in liberating Mosul and much of the Nineveh Plains. As Assyrians tentatively trickle back into their towns and villages, they do so with the hope that the Nineveh Plains might one day be an autonomous entity within the state of Iraq. The last thing they want is to fall victim to a Kurdish land grab, or to find themselves caught in the middle of another war.

Unless there is a miracle, the Kurdish Regional Government will hold a referendum on independence on Monday 25 September. Though the anticipated 'Yes' vote will not trigger an automatic declaration of independence, it is expected to lead to official negotiations. Analysts suspect that KRG President Massoud Barzani's goal is not independence, but leverage to aid negotiations over revenue sharing (more money), further devolution of power (more power) and the demarcation of Iraqi Kurdistan's borders (more land).

However, as Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi commented on 16 September, the Kurds are 'playing with fire'. Talk of Kurdish independence has sent tensions soaring inside Iraq and across the region. Eager to expand its borders, the KRG aims to include 'disputed territories' in the referendum, including oil-rich Kirkuk and the Nineveh Plains. Despite pressure from Kurd and pro-Kurd authorities, most Assyrians oppose the referendum and do not want their lands included. Fearing Shi'ite power, Nineveh's Sunni Arabs support Kurdish independence and want to be included. In a move destined to destabilise the whole region, oil-rich Kirkuk (controlled by Baghdad until Kurdish forces seized it in the chaos of August 2014) will participate.

The Iraqi Government, Iran and the Shi'ite militias oppose the referendum, the break-up of Iraq and Kurdish annexation of Kirkuk. Meanwhile, Turkey, Iran and Syria oppose the referendum as it could embolden their own restive Kurdish minorities. The pro-Kurdish US is opposed to the referendum as it will weaken Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi to the benefit of Iran ahead of the April 2018 general elections. Many Kurds too are opposed to the referendum because they sense this is simply not the right time for such a provocative move.

Aware that the referendum could trigger a new conflict, Turkey, Iran, the US and the UN have been lobbying KRG President Massoud Barzani to cancel or postpone the referendum indefinitely, to no avail. On Sunday 17 September the KRG's High Referendum Council, headed by Barzani, voted to reject the US-backed alternative and press ahead with the 25 September referendum as planned. Chaldean Patriarch Louis Raphael Sako has issued an urgent appeal, calling on Erbil and Baghdad to 'resume dialogue with courage'. He laments that 'some have already started beating the war drums', noting, 'If there were a new military conflict, the consequences would be disastrous for everyone, and minorities would always be the ones to pay a high price ...' He said, 'Everyone should be aware of the seriousness of the situation and hurry to support national reconciliation and peace before it is too late.'

PLEASE PRAY THAT:

- The Lord will intervene in Iraq for the benefit of His precious long-suffering people; may peace reign and the highly controversial and provocative referendum on Kurdish independence be indefinitely postponed; may 'courageous dialogue' be the order of the day.
- May He surround and watch over His imperilled Church; may all God's children be secure; may He guard and preserve the Assyrian and Christian heartland of the Nineveh Plains for the Assyrian people.

*'Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings.'
(Psalm 17:8 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

A TIME TO REMEMBER

An Opportunity To Remember And Learn From The Reformation

The 500th Anniversary of the Reformation is a great opportunity to learn again from the lives, insights, and ministries of the Reformers. The Gospel Coalition Victoria's gathering on 8 November will help us focus on the doctrine of Justification By Faith. Gospel workers from across Victoria will gather at this second of two TGCVic events celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.



Rhys Bezzant and Brian Rosner from Ridley College Melbourne

will be speaking at this event. Brian is the Principal of Ridley and is passionate about theological education that is both rigorously academic and profoundly practical. He is also enthusiastic about promoting the Gospel in the public sphere and is a fellow of The Centre for Public Christianity. He has a PhD from Cambridge University and previously taught at Aberdeen University and Moore College. Brian will be speaking on *Justification By Faith In The New Testament*. Rhys is the Dean of Missional Leadership at Ridley College. Rhys' chief responsibilities are to teach Church History, Theology and Christian Worship, to lead a cohort of students in the Missional Leadership learning community, and to oversee the daily chapel services. Rhys's doctoral thesis investigated *The Ecclesiology Of Jonathan Edwards*. He has been on several occasions a Visiting Fellow in the Yale Divinity School, and leads the Jonathan Edwards Centre for Australia, housed at Ridley, which sponsors the study of evangelical history, and the texts and thought of Edwards. Rhys will be speaking on *Justification By Faith In The Reformation*.

The meeting will be held on Thursday 8 November from 9am-1pm at CrossCulture Church of Christ, 333 Swanston Street, Melbourne. The cost is \$20 per person (including morning tea). Register at: <https://www.trybooking.com/book/event?eid=319740> and join us as we learn together, pray together, and encourage one another.

– The Gospel Coalition, Victoria

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Still They Come ...

Eternity News reports that thousands of Australians have made decisions to follow Jesus at major events happening around the country. In Sydney, at Australia's largest Christian gathering – Hillsong Conference – more than 1,800 people responded to calls to consider receiving Christ as their Saviour.

From the largest conference to some of Australia's most remote Christian meetings, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association reported over 1,000 decisions for Christ made at events held in Alice Springs and Mildura (in north west Victoria) earlier this year. A spokesman for BGEA says that since the large Billy Graham crusades of yesteryear they have never had such a period of ministry for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in Australia.

Meanwhile, at the annual RICE (or *Renewal & Inter-Church Evangelism*) Rally held in Sydney recently, founder and director of RICE, Steve Chong, also reported hundreds of young people coming to faith in Christ. The RICE movement brings together thousands of people from youth groups across NSW, offering an opportunity for youth to bring their friends.

– *Eternity News* at biblesociety.org.au

Back To The Future

In the wake of the recent hurricanes, the latest terror attacks, and ongoing global instability, *Leading The Way* founder Michael Youssef urges people to live a life of peace and purpose in his latest book *Fearless Living In Troubled Times*. Dr Youssef says he wrote this book to encourage Christians about the end times and equip them to maintain unwavering faith even in troubled times. He believes that through this book people will learn how to overcome fear with the right perspective, having steadfast faith in times of uncertainty, and understanding the true nature of the end times – and why there is no need to panic. *Fearless Living In Troubled Times* also delves into the 1st Century church, answering questions like 'How can I understand the true nature of the end times? What should I expect in the future?'

– ASSIST News Service

Teaching Driving Bears Gospel Fruit

Chester Hill Anglican Church in Sydney is giving refugees a helping hand behind the wheel with mentoring for drivers. The program, which also runs parallel to a job mentoring scheme at the church, started six months ago as a way to give practical assistance to local refugees as they settle into Australian society. Senior minister of the church, the Rev Paul Webb., says many of the people are good drivers but just needed to get hours up here, and don't have the money to get lessons or buy their own vehicle. He says the program is providing opportunities for further connection, as people start coming to church. 'It's grown quite rapidly, and there's been great Gospel fruit already.' There are currently about 20 trainee drivers on the books, with church members volunteering their time as mentors. Trainees are asked to pay \$15 for their lessons to cover petrol and other maintenance costs.

– Sydney Anglicans

Force For Good And For God Planned For 2020

Sydney Anglicans have plans underway to recruit a force of 1,000 community chaplains by the year 2020. The aim is that community chaplains will act as evangelists in every community to either form churches or feed into existing churches. Already the

Sydney Diocese has 70 community chaplains deployed in areas as diverse as Muslim evangelism, hospital work and prison chaplaincy as well as police, ambulance workers and in sporting clubs. Rev Bruce Hall, who chairs the community chaplaincy task force, says the target is 1,000 community chaplains deployed in the Sydney and Illawarra areas by 2020. He says sporting clubs are an area of great opportunity, with currently 8,000 unfilled sports chaplaincy positions across the country. Other examples of community chaplains include the *Jesus Club*, an outreach in nine Sydney parishes for adults with intellectual disabilities, and a ministry working with women recovering from domestic violence.

– Anglican Media Services

Chris Wright Helps You Make Sense Of The Whole Bible In New Online Course At Ridley

Christopher Wright is the latest internationally renowned scholar to join *Ridley Online*. In their newest subject, *Biblical Theology Of Mission*, he will help you make sense of the whole Bible as you immerse yourself in the thoroughly missional nature of the Bible and explore the rich ways in which Scripture challenges and shapes God's people for God's mission in God's world for God's glory. Go to www.ridley.edu.au for further details.

REACHING OUT

Wesley Impact! Radio Is Speaking To Australia And The World

A new and inspiring Christian radio program is hitting the airwaves across Australia and around the world. *Wesley Impact! Radio* is a fresh and encouraging program produced by Wesley Mission Sydney featuring music, a Bible reading and a heartfelt and inspiring Gospel message from Wesley Mission Superintendent Rev Keith Garner. Mr Garner's message draws on examples of the comprehensive and significant *Word And Deed* work of Wesley Mission. **The radio program is broadcast on the East Coast of Australia on:** 94.9 Rhema FM Central Coast at 6am Sunday, 99.9 Rhema FM Port Macquarie at 8am Sunday, and 91.9 1 Way FM Canberra at 9am Sunday. It also airs at 8.10am Sundays on United Christian Broadcasters UCB 2 on the *It's Sunday With Abi Gregory* show. People can listen in on UCB and on Australian radio stations.

UK listeners can listen via national DAB, by downloading UCB Player for iOS/Android or online at ucb.co.uk/player. International listeners can only listen via UCB UK website at ucb.co.uk/player. There is 28 day catch-up available on both UCB Player app and online.

The program is also uploaded onto Wesley Mission website and can be listened to via Soundcloud every Sunday morning at this address.

United Christian Broadcasters approached Wesley Mission requesting a radio program hosted by Mr Garner and suitable for a music format station. David Taviner, Head of Radio, United Christian Broadcasters said the short ten-minute magazine-style program perfectly suits one of its two national Christian radio stations. 'The blend of music and a down-to-Earth, practical Bible-based message is the ideal start to Sunday for listeners,' Mr Taviner said. Mr Garner said he was delighted with the opportunity to share a message of hope and encouragement to people throughout Australia and the world.

– Graeme Cole



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Full-Face-Covering Prohibition Bill

On 14 September, the *Summary Offences Amendment (Full-Face Coverings Prohibition) Bill 2017* was read a second time in the NSW Legislative Council after being introduced by the Christian Democratic Party. The Rev Fred Nile MLC makes the following comments:

'There is a great deal that we can learn from the experience of other countries, particularly in Europe and Asia, on the issue of full-face coverings. It is true that Australia has been very fortunate in that we live in a relatively peaceful and successful society. There are many Australians who live as neighbours in tranquillity, and this is one of our greatest strengths. However, the "Lucky Country" can risk falling into complacency and squandering the very things that have worked for us for so long.

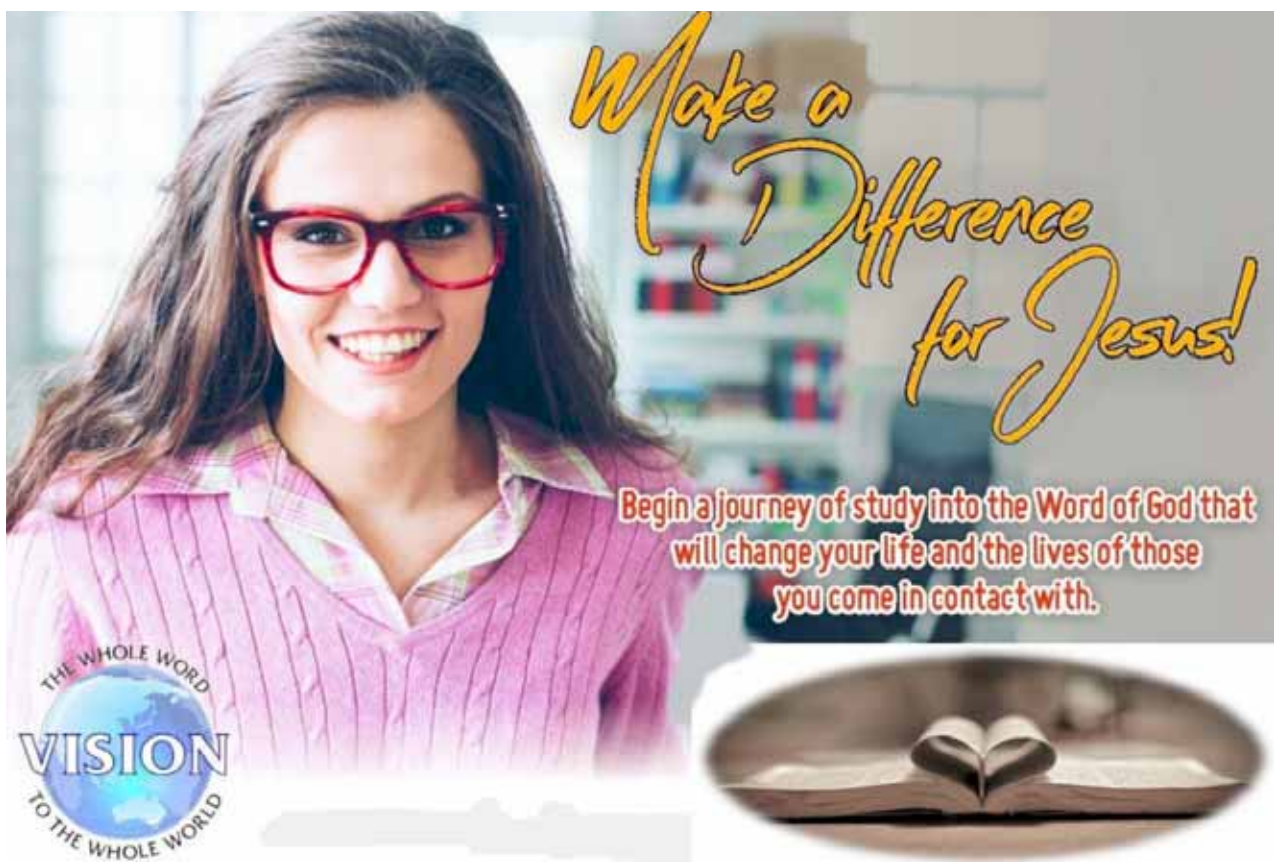
'One of the risks is that we can start to take our good fortune for granted, and fail to realise that it is the result of our history, tradition, and the prudent vigilance of our past leaders. My constituents are concerned that we are gradually eroding Australia's cultural cohesion by accepting, on an incremental basis, more and more ideas that are incompatible with our collective way of life.

'Nevertheless, I remind our critics that this Bill is specifically designed to address the issue without reference to religion. The Bill simply prohibits any face covering that conceals a person's identity. I hope that Australians will feel confident enough to honestly and boldly discuss this issue.'

TURN BACK THE BATTLE: Isaiah Speaks To Christians Today.



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*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation
of my heart be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.
- Psalm 19.14 (ESV)*



*Photo: Beinn Ailge & Loch Torridon,
by Rev John Ross, Inverness*

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

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The Nambour Wesleyan Methodist Church is seeking expressions of interest from any Pastor who may feel that God is leading them to pastor our church.

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A more detailed resume of the church is available upon request. Nambour is approximately 1 hrs drive north of Brisbane and is part of the Queensland Sunshine Coast. It is a rapidly growing town with a population of almost 20,000.

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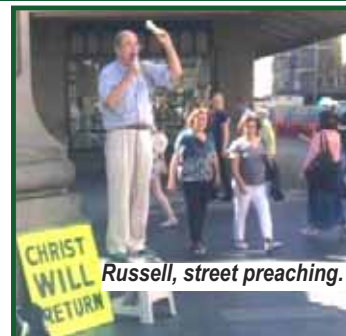
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The Bible – Glorious Truth

Russell F, from Sydney, shares with us how he came to faith in Christ:

I was born in 1953. I started high school in 1965. That's when we were taught about evolution and the Big Bang and billions of years. I don't recall any science teacher saying that such teachings were in fact theories. They were simply presented as facts. So we believed what they taught. At the time I had next to no real acquaintance with the Bible or Christian beliefs. But I was nevertheless given to realise by straightforward common sense that there must be a First Cause Creator/God behind the universe and life. So even then I resolved to try to find out one day who or what this Creator God is.



Fast forward to 1982. The time had come to make a concerted effort to seek out this Creator God. It seemed a sensible place to start would be the world's religions. So I started researching the world's major religions, at the same time recognising the possibility that this Creator God may have chosen to not reveal Himself/Herself/Itself in a way personally accessible to us little creatures.

The two primary questions with each religion researched was: What did they believe? And why did they believe it? It soon became clear that almost every religion I researched based its beliefs on the thoughts or opinions of a single person or group; which over time became a cultural belief; and then an established religion. What struck me in each instance was that there was little or no *objective* support to what they believed. It was really just subjective speculation.

The one exception to this, though, related to the beliefs of Judaism and Christianity. They base their beliefs on the Bible, which they claim to be the unique, eternal revelation of the One True and Living God. (Though the Jews of course don't accept the New Testament as divine revelation.) I was astonished to find the number of things stated in the Bible which were 100% accurate. And that these accuracies related to a broad range of fields of enquiry, including history, science, archaeology, fulfilled prophecy, and the historically attested resurrection from the dead Jesus Christ. I was caused to realise that if this Creator God had revealed Himself, it turned out to be in the Bible, or not at all.

But I didn't take the next logical step. I didn't venture into one of those peculiar buildings where these Christians collectively met on an assigned day each week. After all, didn't these Christians realise that their Bible was proven false by science? All the other legitimate claims notwithstanding? However, shortly after the realisation that this Creator/God had revealed Himself (turned out to be a Him) in the Bible and in Jesus Christ – either that, or not at all – I happened one night to be strolling past the Presbyterian Church in Liverpool Road, Ashfield. People were meandering into the church, so after a moment of hesitation, I took the big step – into the church.

On that particular night the preaching was replaced by a man giving his testimony of how he became a Christian. He began by talking about what he was like before becoming a Christian. He recounted how he would then think a lot about things like the Big Bang and Evolution and First Cause and billions of years and so forth. I realised this fella could've been me – except he was a Christian and I wasn't. I realised it wasn't coincidence that I happened to be there. So I plunged myself into the Truth – this being the only 'god' I was really interested in. And the Truth turned out to be Jesus.

I soon encountered problems though. One problem was the doctrine of hell – which was resolved in due course. The other problem was reconciling 'science' with the clear statements of Scripture. And it seemed no-one at the church could guide me through this. I even broached it with the student minister – a food scientist by profession! But he didn't give a response. It seemed he too couldn't reconcile 'science' and the Bible. Shortly after I left the church and the Bible and God.

A couple of years later, though, I was introduced to *Creation* magazine. I was blown away to have my eyes opened to the delusion of 'science, falsely so called'; and how true science was in harmony with the Bible in a vast range of areas. And it was about that time that I truly repented of sin and became a born again child of God.

Looking back, I don't think it was coincidence that it was about the time of my conversion that I came to realise that the Bible could be fully trusted as the infallible and inerrant Word of God, as it claims to be. And Creation Science ministries were instrumental in this. The 'whispers' of unbelief at the back of my mind had disappeared.

That was in 1986. Since then I've found Creation Ministries – and most especially creation.com – of incalculable help both in establishing me deeply and firmly in the Word of God as eternal Truth; and in helping others – many of them in 'the church' – to see that the Bible is totally trustworthy from Genesis 1.1 to Revelation 22.21 in all spheres of enquiry. The information it supplies may not be exhaustive in any given area; but what it says matches the known facts like no other belief system. It's in a class of its own. And I thank God for opening my eyes ever wider to this Glorious Truth. 'You will know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' (John 8.32)

SOUTH INDIA: Police Broke All Jatya's Fingers For Sharing Christ

Jatya, a pastor in southern India, is able to document eight times he was persecuted for his faith, all memorialized in old newspaper clippings he keeps in a faded envelope. In 1992, police ordered Jatya to stop sharing Christ with others in his village. After he refused to stop, police broke all his fingers. Three years later, he was beaten and jailed for a week. Another time, a Hindu neighbour beat Jatya with a bicycle chain.

Each time Jatya was persecuted for his faith, his response was the same: he went back to the streets with his Bible sharing the Gospel of Christ. With a boldness derived from the filling of the Spirit, he feels an urgency to declare the Good News! More recently, Jatya shared the Gospel with a young man in his village. An angry mob of radical Hindus surrounded Jatya and beat him until he lost consciousness. Jatya downplayed the severity of the beating when recounting the story to VOM. He said the most important part is the young man became a follower of Jesus!

Jatya hopes that someday soon he will be able to meet the men who beat him and share Christ with them. When asked if he harbours any trepidation in facing future persecution, Jatya quoted 2 Timothy 1.7 – 'God has not given us a spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.' 'Until my last breath,' Jatya says, 'I want to serve and live my life for Jesus.'

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Voice Of the Martyrs (VOM) paid for Jatya's medical treatment after his most recent beating. To know more about their work, go to: <https://www.persecution.com/>

– Mark Ellis



THE MALDIVES: Christians Losing Rights

Christians in the Maldives have few rights, but until now at least the courts would protect those rights. Now, however, the government is increasingly controlling the courts and simply ignoring the law, leaving Christians in an even more vulnerable state. The Maldivian government has just suspended one-third of all lawyers in the islands after they tried to submit a petition to the Supreme Court calling for the rule of law to be respected. The 56 lawyers who signed the petition were suspended from practising by the government. Despite being a popular tourist destination, the Maldives is one of the most difficult places in the world to be a Christian. The 2008 Maldivian constitution bans non-Muslims from becoming Christians, which leaves open the question as to whether someone who becomes a Christian could be stripped of their citizenship. In 1998, the government arrested 50 Maldivians suspected of having become Christians, and is thought to have tortured them. Any Maldivian even found to have a Bible in their house faces a prison sentence. There were signs of hope in 2008, with the election of President Mohammed Nasheed, of the Maldivian Democratic Party, who called for a 'tolerant' form of Islam. However, he was forced out of office in 2012. He was recently granted political asylum in the UK, after being sentenced to 13 years in prison for 'terrorism' in a trial that the UN said was politically motivated.

NEPAL: Missionaries Imprisoned For Praying For Mentally Ill Woman Released

Four Christian missionaries to the nation of Nepal have been released after being imprisoned for praying for a mentally ill woman. Even the woman's husband denied that there was any wrongdoing involved. Despite the

husband's testimonies, the four Christians were imprisoned. ICC recently launched a petition calling for the Christians' release. The Federation of National Christian, Nepal has thanked the court for 'setting free our innocent people', and said it would continue to offer support to the Christians and their families following their release. Lali Pun, Bimkali Budha, Ruplal Pariyar and his wife Ganga were found guilty in December 2016 at the District Court in Salyan despite the woman testifying in court that their prayer had healed her. A fifth Christian, Rupa Thapa, was found not guilty.

– Will Maule

CHINA: New Rules Could Mean Less Freedom For China's Christians

In China, new restrictions on religious affairs could mean less freedom for Christians. While some say the new rules won't have much impact on believers, others believe authorities will face more pressure to dole out punishments. Some believe their purpose is to curtail Islamic extremism, while others say they have already seen greater restrictions imposed specifically on youth work.

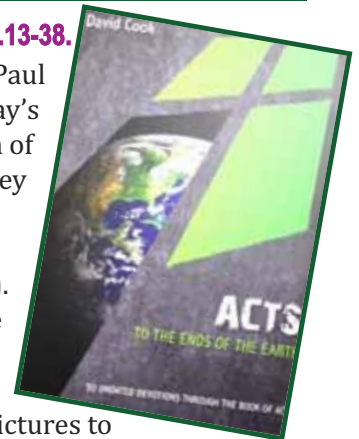
– www.worldwatchmonitor.org

AND NOW FOR SOME GOOD NEWS: Spreading The Gospel In China Through Making Great Coffee

It's a winning combination: the Gospel and a great coffee, and it's a beautiful marriage that is working wonders in the Chinese capital of Beijing for one young entrepreneur. Wei Han Ye was struggling to get his native city-goers to get into this 'Western' drink, and was finding it hard to get his business off the ground. Then he ended up giving his life to Christ after hanging out with a Christian friend. Everything changed. 'It's like God suddenly opened a tap. People started to come to my coffee shop. I was overwhelmed by blessings and provision. He taught me so much over the years.'

The Value Of A Word-Based Ministry

ACTS 20.13-38.



Of all the ministries in Acts, only one is reviewed – that at Ephesus. What Paul did at Ephesus is recorded in 19.8–12. His review of what he did is given in today’s reading. Paul calls together the elders of the church at Ephesus to remind them of what they already know. He tells them what he did whilst with them, so that they can continue in like manner the work he began.

Paul’s ministry was Word-based. He speaks of preaching and proclaiming (vv 20,27), teaching (v20), declaring, testifying (vv21,24) and preaching (v25). The content of his ministry is ‘anything helpful’, ‘the Gospel of God’s grace’, ‘the Kingdom’ and ‘the whole will of God’.

The goal of all this work is to encourage all people ‘to turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus’ (v21). In verses 26–28, Paul uses two pictures to describe his ministry. They are:

- **The watchman, who sounds a warning** and is therefore innocent of the blood of those who fail to heed it;
- **The shepherd, who must watch himself** if he is to effectively guard others.

C.H. Spurgeon said in his lectures to his students, ‘we shall be likely to accomplish most when we are in the best spiritual condition’. According to Augustine, this type of self-watch consisted of ‘praying, reading the Word and weeping’.

Remember, these verses are Paul’s ‘upper room discourse’, his last word to his elders. The elders are to be diligent overseers, with ultimate confidence in God and His Word of grace (v32), for ultimately, the flock is His, bought by Him and is under His protection.

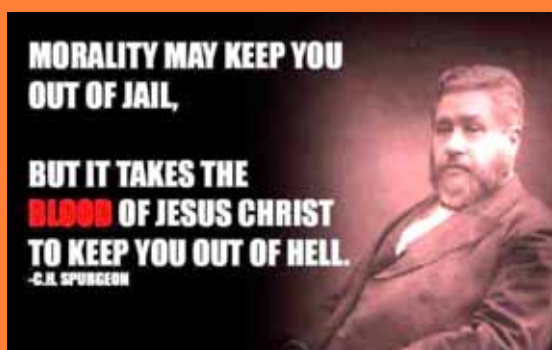
In the 21st Century world, that which is weighty is often trivialised and that which is trivial is often exalted. We must never allow the ministry of shepherding to be trivialised.

FOR REFLECTION:

Think about Paul’s apostolic model of shepherding. Think about each element of this ministry – the Word; personal integrity; accountability. Think about the church in Ephesus – its beginning recorded here; what it was like a little later, when Paul wrote his letter; a generation later, when another letter arrives (see Revelation 2.1–7).

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

SEEN ON FACEBOOK:



WebsitesWorth Watching:
www.proctrust.org.uk/equipped
David Jackman on Preaching

Psalm 37.4,5
Right desires.

Words Of Wisdom:



BOOKS WORTH READING

LEARNING ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT - A Biblical-Theological Introduction, Allan M. Harman, Banner Of Truth, Edinburgh, 2017. ISBN 978 1 84871 743 5

For me, the mark of a good scholar is soundness married to the ability to carry his learning lightly and write in a manner which is profoundly simple yet simply profound. Allan Harman is such a scholar, who writes to his readers' comfort zone with an affirmative and assuring tone.

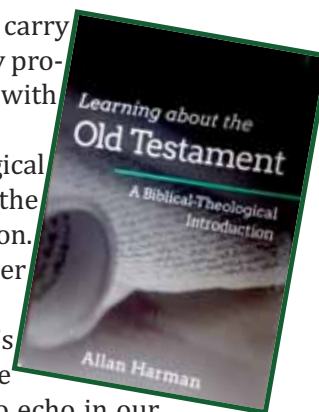
This book arose from a series of lectures he gave at the Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne, which were aimed at introducing the laity to the study of the Old Testament. As such, the book is generally free from technical terms and jargon. At the end of each chapter, though, a reading list will take the reader a step further into a deeper study of the Old Testament.

He urges his readers to study the Old Testament with reverence (it is God's Word as spoken and written by His servants), with devotion (it speaks of the wonderful truths about God and His works and gives us passages of praise to echo in our own worship), and with obedience (it reveals God's character and His demands upon us).

Though his scholarship and teaching has been predominantly focussed on the Old Testament, he insists on our seeing the unity of the whole Bible and the Old Testament's importance within it. His writing in this regard illustrates the old saying that 'the New is in the Old concealed, the Old is in the New revealed.' ('... as our understanding of the Old Testament increases, it should also increase our understanding of the New Testament.') Central to such a view is Allan Harman's focus on the covenant(s) and the theology which arises from it.

Whether the reader is just setting out on the journey of study or looking for revision of the basic elements of the Old Testament and its theology, this book is a valuable tool. Highly recommended.

- Bob Thomas



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WITH CHRIST WHICH IS BETTER BY FAR

REV STUART WINDSOR was Christian Solidarity Worldwide's National Director for 19 years and more recently, CSW's Special Ambassador. Throughout his time with CSW the work achieved a high profile for advocacy on religious freedom throughout the world. Stuart travelled extensively to countries where Christians and others suffered persecution for their religious beliefs. He carried out briefings in the US Congress and Senate, giving evidence in hearings at the UN High Commission for Refugees and spoke at the European and UK parliaments. In recent years, his work involved securing the safety of several Pakistani Christian families who were subject to persecution. CSW's Chief Executive, Mervyn Thomas said: 'We ask you all to pray for Stuart's wife Ethel, their two children Elizabeth and Stuart and also his grandchildren at this difficult time.'



– Ramon Williams

NABEEL QURESHI, associate of Ravi Zacharias. Ravi recalls: 'The first time I saw Nabeel Qureshi, he sat at a table across from me, his one leg constantly moving almost subconsciously, warming up for a run. It was a habit of his restless disposition – he hated sitting still. He was a man with a mission, ready to run. Sadly, for us, he finished his race all too soon and our hearts are broken at the loss of one who ran with spectacular passion to do what filled his soul.'



Ravi (left) and Nabeel

'**He was a thorough-going evangelical.** He held dear the Gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Old and New Testaments and carried the message of salvation. Jesus' grace for a transformed heart was his message. For years as a young man, he laboured and struggled to gain "righteousness before God" only to find out that righteousness was already met in the cross through Jesus Christ. That was his message in his best-selling book, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*.

'**Qureshi was not just an evangelical; he was passionately evangelistic.** He desired to cover the globe with the good news that God's forgiveness was available to all. I have seldom seen a man with such deep conviction and proportionate passion and gifting. When he spoke, he held audiences spellbound. I invited him to join our team at Ravi Zacharias International Ministries four and a half years ago. He placed one condition, and I placed one condition. His condition was that after he joined, he'd travel with me for one year, to observe and learn. I asked that after the year, he'd go to Oxford. I wanted him to complete his doctorate to be better prepared to answer the toughest questions a Christian apologist faces – and to do it with gentleness, respect, and learning. He agreed.

'**He called me "uncle."** He became part of our team. Everywhere he went, they wanted him back. Nabeel came like a streak of lightning, brightened the night sky, and has returned to the One who gave the power to do what he did. One night after supper I noticed that he was just nibbling away at his food. I said, "Nabeel, are you not going to eat?" He said, "Uncle, I have been having some strange sensations in my stomach." I asked how long that had been going on, and he said it had been a few weeks. I urged him to have it checked out. He said he was planning on it.

'**The rest is history.** He went to see the doctor. They had concerns, and the first diagnosis was cancer of the stomach – probably stage 4. That was a stunner. It strained credulity. We were taken by shock. He moved to Houston for treatment. But the condition was on a downward spiral. Within a few months, the handwriting was on the wall. But he remained firm that he was in God's hands.

Who Can YOU
Forward
New Life To?

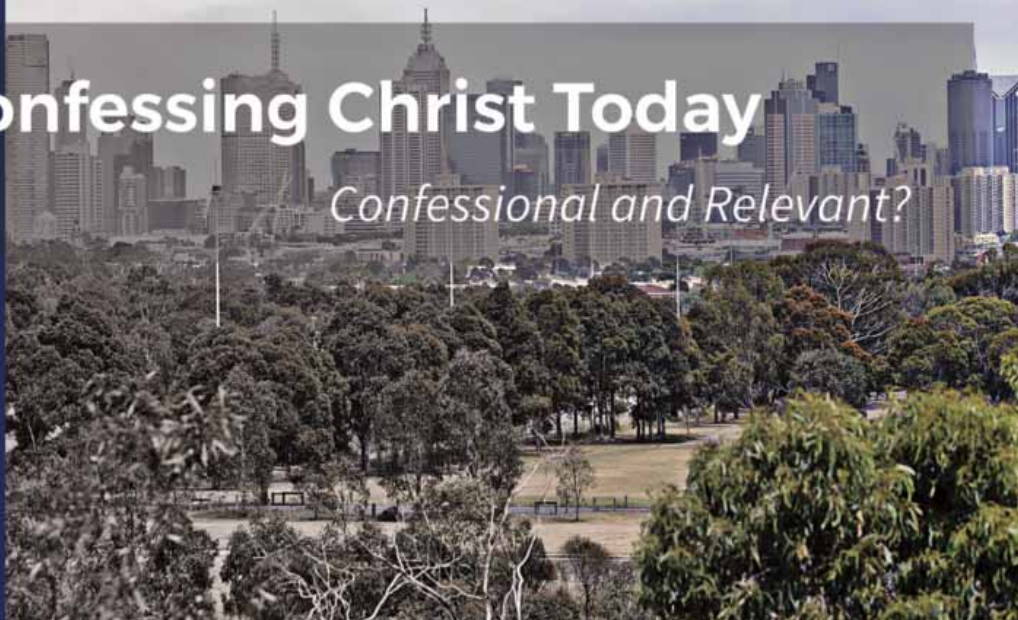
'**In May, he took one last trip with me.**

I took him with me to Malaysia. His body was weak, his passion undiminished, his speaking, powerful, his messages reaping a harvest of followers of Jesus. His answers to people's questions were profound and persuasive. They would applaud with each answer. He would talk one on one; he would pray one with one. His belief in God being One and the answer to salvation being One were all part of his spiritual DNA.'

TOGCON Comes To Melbourne

Confessing Christ Today

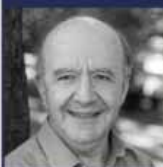
Confessional and Relevant?



Kamal Weerakoon



Darren Middleton



Peter Adam

+ More!

Thinking Of God (TOG) is a Reformed interdenominational organisation established in 2014. We cordially invite you to our first Victoria event on 19th October, aiming to encourage and equip people in ministry.

With 2017 celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, **Kamal Weerakoon** (TOG) will be giving a talk on what it means to be confessional and contemporary today. **Darren Middleton** (North Geelong Presbyterian) will share his experience of how being vigorously reformed has strengthened his ministry at North Geelong. There will also be a panel discussion by local ministers on what Reformed ministry looks like today and much more!

Lunch and refreshments will be provided as well as a free gift from Banner of Truth!

When: 9:30am-3:30pm, Thursday, 19 October 2017

Where: St Margaret's Presbyterian Church
106 Hotham St, St Kilda East, VIC

Costs: \$10 (Lunch Provided)

<http://thinkingofgod.org/togrow>

TOG
THINKING OF GOD