So Much Has Changed,
But Jesus Christ Remains The Same
– Yesterday, Today And Forever

So Franklin Graham’s 2019 Tour of Australia rolled on – through Perth, Melbourne, Darwin, Brisbane, Adelaide and Sydney – as an older generation of Christians remembered the blessings poured out on Australia in the 1959 Billy Graham Crusades and the rising generation were challenged to come to Christ and acknowledge Him as their Lord and Saviour.

Common threads draw the reportage of the events in each city together. Thousands of people attended each meeting; hundreds made profession of faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour; the meetings were geared to appeal to the younger generation so the music was mostly high volume and contemporary; Franklin Graham’s messages were well received, Biblical, Christ-centred, needs-centred and delivered in measured tones, sincere and challenging.

Fullsome meeting reports from each city are available at https://grahamtour.billygraham.org and Facebook. All are worthy of reporting, but one stands out from the others because of the isolation and special needs of that city: Darwin.

Australia’s tough ‘Top Enders’ were unashamed to embrace Christ in Darwin, reports Tiffany Jothen. Located in Australia’s sparsely populated Northern Territory, Darwin sits directly below Indonesia, touching the Timor Sea. More than 3,100 people, nearly one-fifth of them Aboriginals, came to the Darwin Convention Centre on Wednesday 13 February to be part of the Graham Tour, considered to have been the largest non-alcoholic event in the city’s history.

Darwin has been nearly destroyed four times. There were the Japanese bombings of World War II and three powerful cyclones in the 20th Century, most recently Cyclone Tracy on Christmas Eve 1974. The city of 140,000 in Australia’s remote Northern Territory knows how to rebuild. There’s construction everywhere and modern skyscrapers are shaping the city’s expanding skyline.

Australian country Gospel singer Steve Grace has visited Darwin many times, and took part in Franklin Graham’s evangelistic Darwin event.

(Continued on Page Four)
Mass Evangelism Revisited

‘I’m most proud to proclaim this extraordinary message of God’s powerful plan to rescue everyone who trusts Him.’ – Apostle Paul, Romans 1.16 (The Message Version)

Over four months and 114 meetings during 1959, evangelist Billy Graham drew 3,000,000 people in Australia and New Zealand to his remarkable crusades. The impact was so significant it has been said that it was the closest Australia has been to experiencing a Christian revival on a national scale.

Sixty years later on a sunny afternoon in February 2019, people queued for entry to the Melbourne Arena. The gift of one generation had been passed to another. Billy’s son, Franklin Graham revisited the city with the Gospel message. The family and the message were the same but 1959 had been replaced with the mindset of 2019.

As a reward for waiting patiently in the long queue and for providing personal contact details, people were offered a free T shirt and an envelope to mail a contribution. Billy Graham had related to the modern era of his day, while Franklin was appealing to the post-modern generation, with a markedly different delivery. The hand-out said, ‘Many people … don’t know Jesus. You can offer hope!’

Instead of being ‘preached at’, from the outset I was being invited to be part of the answer. This was clearly mass evangelism in a different age with a different approach. In the 1950’s Billy Graham declared what was regarded as the known truth. His appeal was based on three simple words, ‘The Bible says’. It was a clear, sincere declaration followed by a confronting invitation to decide, to choose and respond.

While both the people’s needs and the message remain the same, we live in a world on the edge of accelerating change. Not only is the pace of life quicker but our way of thinking about life has become more complex. We no longer live in a world that can be sure about being sure. Our culture says we can no longer be certain about what is true. According to our current consciousness, many can no longer be sure about where to find the truth or that the Bible has the truth.

Today, with claims of ‘false news’ we can no longer make bold claims about universal truth and be taken seriously. Instead, celebrating diversity and valuing tolerance has become the acclaimed virtue. The problem however is that underlying this view there is no final authority and there are contradictory boundaries.

This means that the possibility of consensus becomes hard to find and instead of real tolerance we end up with selective tolerance. In other words the way we think about life and truth has changed. Today we are told we can only be certain we cannot be certain about anything. Nothing can be absolute. When it comes to evangelism then, how can the Apostle Paul be, ‘proud to proclaim this extraordinary message of God’s plan’ (Romans 1.16 Message Bible). How can we be confident in evangelism and in sharing the good news in today’s world?

(Continued on Page 3)
‘I’m not here tonight talking about cyberspace or outer space, but inner space – your soul.

The Bible says your soul is more valuable than the whole world.

You are never a dying soul. Your soul will live as long as God lives.’

– Franklin Graham to the Grand Tour meeting in Brisbane

Mass Evangelism Revisited (Continued from Page Two)

Culturally speaking our world has moved on since the 1950’s. One of the reasons for Billy Graham’s impact in 1959 related to the mainline denominational churches working together in partnership. Today, however, many churches remain reserved, and sceptical about the validity and effectiveness of mass evangelism. Many have replaced the urgency of the Gospel with a mix of socio-political priorities. Franklin Graham was largely sponsored by a coalition of keen independent churches. There were also other contrasts. The style of delivery between Franklin and his father was markedly different.

• Instead of this being a structured mass meeting with introductions to songs, Bible readings, or offering, this was a non-stop celebration of music.
• Instead of a hand-out song sheet, if you looked rather frail you were graciously offered ear plugs.
• Instead of being glued to your seat and ordered by a program, diversity prevailed and you were invited to participate by jiving in the mosh pit.
• The loud, rap-like rhythm replaced the mass choir and the corporate singing of thousands of people with what appeared to be thousands of standing people stunned by banks of flashing lights and waves of sound vibrations, the intensity of which was indicated by the colour of the song lyrics appearing on two giant screens.
• Behind a central lectern the preacher appeared in the distance as a thin pencil-like figure but there was no raised voice or Bible thumping. Franklin spoke in a moderated conversational manner to each individual in a mass gathering.
• The complex technical infrastructure was contrasted by the simplicity of the message. We were not denounced as sinners but confronted with the problem of our brokenness and Bible verses announcing Jesus as the answer.
• This was a modified, scaled down, post-modern version of evangelism but the authentic message was faithfully proclaimed.

There are many styles of evangelism and many ways of engaging people. If our traditional churches have departed from mass evangelism for more socio-political or natural, relational programs then we need to ask, ‘Where is the evidence of fruit and growth?’ If the aging institutional church believes that being contemporary simply means advocating social change then we need to relearn that rather than being an end in itself, it is essential to understand that culture can be a bridge that leads to people having an opportunity to choose Christ. Social transformation still begins with personal transformation rooted and found in Jesus Christ.


(Mr Curnow is a member of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations Within The Uniting Church)
Unashamed To Embrace Christ In Darwin (Continued from Page One)

‘My prayer for the people of Darwin is that they, too, like their city, can be reborn,’ Steve Grace said, wearing a black baseball hat with the word Eternity written across the front.

Franklin Graham visited Darwin, Australia’s most remote capital city, for the first time on this second stop of the six-city Graham Tour. Darwin has one of the largest Aboriginal populations in Australia. Pastor Bunumbirr Marika spent three weeks traveling around the Northern Territory to tell Aboriginal people about the tour.

‘The people in this area are proud to be “Top Enders”,’ Steve Grace said, ‘able to survive the oppressive heat of pre-monsoon season and some dangerous wildlife, like the lethal box jellyfish. This is the land of crocodiles and wild water buffalo and snakes and all kinds of things that can kill you, but sometimes that tough-as-nails mentality can get in the way of a person’s need for God’.

Franklin Graham looked deep into the 3,100-plus crowd, recognizing that many may be burying their problems, seeking escape in anything that can take their mind off them. ‘Have you ever thought about what it would be like to run and get as far away from home as possible?’ Franklin asked, before sharing the Parable Of The Prodigal Son from Luke 15. The story was about a young man who left his family for a seemingly better life, which he soon found out wasn’t so great. Longing for his father’s home, he returned, and was greeted with his fathers’ open arms.

‘Have you been running? It’s time to stop. It’s time to come home,’ Franklin said. At 4 am on the day of the event, Bunumbirr Marika woke up with a vision from God. The Aboriginal pastor who helped spread the word about the Graham Tour said he saw a deep, clear river: ‘As Franklin Graham goes around Australia, that’s what God is doing,’ Marika said. ‘I believe this is the beginning of a river flowing from the throne of God in the Northern Territory.’

Marika lives in the northern town of Yirrkala, a day’s drive from Darwin. Months ago, he had a different vision – of a bald eagle, the United States’ national bird. A week later, he met an American named Justin Hoover who helped manage the Graham Tour stop in Darwin, a meeting that ultimately led Marika to spend those three weeks traveling across the Northern Territory, sharing the Gospel and inviting people to hear more about Christ from Franklin Graham.

‘Indigenous people are very open to the Gospel because of the missionaries,’ Marika said. Steve Grace agrees. He’s been in ministry for over 30 years, building relationships with people in some of the most isolated places of Australia. He said Aboriginals identify with the abandonment, rejection and suffering Jesus went through. In their culture, retaliation has to take place when someone does something bad to you,’ Grace said, ‘but with Christ, that battle is over. His perfect blood was spilled, covering all sins.’

‘Jesus paid the debt of sin,’ Franklin Graham explained later to the crowd. ‘Tonight you can be set free from the guilt and shame of your sins … Tonight you can have a new beginning.’ When Franklin invited the crowd to make Jesus part of their lives, more than 300 made their way forward – a man with one leg, a blind man holding onto the shoulder of a friend, a woman wearing a neck brace, and children coming barefoot. Some waited patiently to talk to a prayer volunteer as Billy Graham Evangelistic Association chaplains filed in to accommodate the crowd.

Prayer volunteer Joy Onyeledo spoke with a woman who was moved by the message and decided to follow Christ. Fellow volunteer Edwin Casilla talked to another who traveled hours from the middle of Australia to hear Franklin Graham preach and said she watches Billy Graham’s sermons on YouTube. Rev Marjorie Hall, who traveled from eight hours away with 48 others, joined her daughters in praying for both physical and spiritual healing over their community, specifically for the men to start filling the churches that mostly women attend.

In the 1950’s, Steve Grace’s parents saw and heard Billy Graham preach, which became one factor in their decision to attend Bible school. Steve Grace has shown the 1960 BGEA film Shadow Of The Boomerang featuring Aboriginal Gospel singer Jimmy Little at some of his music events, seeing many begin a relationship with Christ and get baptized as a result. With Franklin Graham’s visit, the story continues, with yet another great work of God.

– Tiffany Jothan
Hope Fulfilled By Logos Hope

The Christian ministry ship Logos Hope is celebrating 10 years of taking the Gospel around the world. The ship, operated by Operation Mobilisation, was first launched with an international crew of 400 Christian volunteers in 2009. It is the world’s largest floating book fair, carrying over 5,000 titles in English as well as languages local to the ports where the ship docks. In the last 10 years, the ship has visited 116 ports in 68 countries and territories, and welcomed 8 million visitors up her gangways. While in port, members of the crew team up with local churches to undertake community outreach and evangelism projects. The ship has sold nearly 2.5 million Christian books and Bibles. The milestone tenth anniversary is being celebrated in Chile, one of the stops on a two-year tour of South America.

– Christian Today

Unintended Consequences Of China’s Investments In Africa

As the Chinese economically invest in and build infrastructure in Africa, Africans are evangelizing the Chinese. Billions of dollars in loans from China to Africa in addition to foreign direct investment have significantly increased. As a result of the influx of Chinese resources and the estimated 1,000,000 Chinese working on the continent, many are hearing and responding to the Gospel from African Christians as many African churches have reached out to Chinese workers, including incorporating Mandarin into services. ChinaAid President Bob Fu told the Christian Post the Chinese leadership is increasingly worried about the rapid growth of the Christian faith, but despite its best efforts, China would appear to be losing its fight against Christianity. The growing influx of citizens returning from Africa is shaping up to be another hopeless front in that war.

– Christian Post

UNITED KINGDOM: Starting Them Young

Young Christians in the UK are being invited to spend a year with a church, discerning what God’s calling on their life might be. The invitation is part of a new initiative called Pursuit launched to get young people thinking about their vocation. Dani Taylor, a church Youth Officer leading the project, says Pursuit offers the opportunity to give a year to God by serving with a local church focused on an area of ministry that inspires them. Ms Taylor says the idea is that all participants should be able to gain hands-on experience that comes from pursuing God, seeing where He’s working and joining in. She says the year’s experience will not only give young people the opportunity to practically serve but also provide time for spiritual and theological learning. Participants will also have the chance to take part in a two-week overseas mission trip.

– Christian Today

USA: Baptist Church Places Integrity Above Profit

A Baptist church that suffered building damage during a tornado last month is returning a $25,000 donation from a casino, citing a conflict of interest. The Alabama church is still recovering from major damage to its chapel and two-story multipurpose building, but the church voted to return the money and the cheque was never cashed. The church’s minister James Troglen explained to the casino that the church opposes gambling. He said, ‘If it keeps one person from listening to us with the Gospel, we can’t keep it.’ Pastor Troglen says he hopes the money can be used to help others in the community. Wind Creek Casinos donated a total of $100,000 to two churches and the police department.

– Christian Headlines

THE PHILIPPINES: Big Response As Will Graham Brings The Gospel

Billy Graham’s grandson Will Graham brought his evangelistic celebration to the Philippines this month during a time of political unrest. National and local elections are scheduled for May and there has already been politically motivated violence and deadly bombing attacks in the south. In the midst of all these occurrences, Will Graham says, it’s even more imperative to preach the Gospel, because the Gospel alone can change people’s hearts. The timing and location of this event holds a special memory for the third generation evangelist, occurring just days before the first anniversary of his grandfather’s death. CBN News reports that Will Graham held evangelistic meetings across all levels of Philippine society and tens of thousands of people responded to his invitation to follow Jesus Christ.
Hanoi, the capital city of Vietnam, will host the second North Korea-US Summit on Wednesday 27 and Thursday 28 February. The choice of Hanoi is really significant for, like North Korea, North Vietnam has fought a war against the US. Like Korea, Vietnam suffered immensely and was left ravaged by the Cold War conflict. However, unlike Pyongyang (the capital of North Korea), Hanoi is now an ally of the US, ‘a major cog in the global trading network’, and one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Millions of Vietnamese have been lifted out of poverty, despite Vietnam remaining a repressive one-party state. North Korean and United States officials landed in Hanoi on Saturday 16 February to prepare for the summit. Kim Jong-un will arrive on Monday 25 February for bilateral discussions with Vietnamese officials. A key focus of the NK-US (Kim-Trump) Summit will doubtless be Washington’s fixation on complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearisation (CVID) – a deal-breaker if ever there was one – as a prerequisite to sanctions relief. Pyongyang will continue to press for step-by-step, synchronised confidence-building measures, a plan supported by neighbours South Korea, China and Russia, and possibly by President Trump himself.

Journalists, analysts, diplomats and politicians who say ‘nothing has changed; we’ve seen it all before,’ are wrong. Today’s situation is entirely different, giving reason for hope. Because virtually all reporting on North Korea is negative (much of it out-dated) few people are aware of how much the situation has changed in recent years. They are unaware that while Kim Jong-un has retained the programs and revolutionary language of his ancestors, he has tweaked the details somewhat. It used to be that the central government took 100% of a farming co-operative's produce before distributing a fixed ration. By providing no incentive to work hard or innovate, it contributed to famine. In 2012, just months after assuming control, Kim tweaked the system. Since then, the government takes a set quota and the farming co-operative (now defined in such a way that it could be a family) is free to keep and trade everything it produces above that fixed quota. It appears that every effort is being made to pursue economic reform and raise the standard of living as a prerequisite to increased openness.

On 12 February a delegation of some 250 South Koreans travelled to North Korea’s Mount Geumgang (Mount Kumgang) tourist precinct for two days of civilian engagement with North Korean counterparts. The total number of delegates was around 400, with representatives from a wide range of fields, including religion, economy, agriculture, the environment, academia, peace, labour rights, women’s rights, youth, art and culture. The aim is to establish co-operative projects, joint symposiums and student exchanges. And that is not the only engagement that is happening.

On Tuesday 19 February the Australian Broadcasting Corporation broadcast a short documentary on its Foreign Correspondent program, showing how American, South Korean and North Korean doctors are co-operating in a project run by the Eugene Bell Foundation (a Christian charity) to treat multi-drug resistant Tuberculosis in North Korea. Dr Stephen Linton is convinced that most people have an image of North Korea that is both wrong and unhelpful. ‘What you think you know is not what you will find,’ he says. It is a very moving program and shows what is already possible.

There can be little doubt that an intensive and furious spiritual battle is underway over North Korea, and over its integration into East Asia (the spiritual powerhouse of the future!)
Technology To The Fore In Bible Translation

New developments in technology are rapidly expanding the reach of the Gospel around the world. The Bible translation software, Paratext – used by Wycliffe Bible Translators – is now adapted to a mobile-friendly version called Paratext Lite.

Paratext is a software application used to produce, check and revise Bible translation texts. This enables missionaries to use the technology in remote areas where the equipment needed to translate God’s Word is harder to access or maintain. It also means the native population can take part, changing the role of Western translators.

Doug Hennum, with Wycliffe, says that Nationals can do most of the initial drafting of the text. He says Wycliffe follows with linguistics experts to check that the translation is faithful to the original text.

Increasing numbers of people worldwide engage with the Bible through the use of smartphones and mobile applications. – Christian Post

Strong Involvement In School Scripture Teaching

Scripture teachers of all ages attended this year’s Youthworks training conferences in Sydney and Wollongong. Some teachers were in their teens or 20’s just starting out, while others had faithfully taught in schools for decades.

Ed Springer, the head of Youthworks said that almost half of those attending the conferences have taught Scripture for more than 10 years.

Joan Hawkins was the longest serving teacher at the conference, having served for 56 years. Mrs Hawkins says the children she teaches get to know about Jesus and His Salvation. And for most of them, she says, religious education at school is the only place they get to hear it.

A record 1,400 teachers took part in the conferences. – Sydneyanglicans.net

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MYANMAR: Reaching Out To Buddhist Families

Native missionaries in Myanmar are reaching Buddhist families through Sunday morning Good News clubs for children. The clubs involve high-energy games, songs and Bible stories. The children hear God’s plan of salvation and many respond to Christ as Saviour. Through the 26 clubs now operating, the missionaries are also reaching the children’s parents with the Gospel. Parents are happy to send their children to an activity that is social, fun, educational and about God. Many attend special parent events where the children present their songs and missionaries tell of the one, true, living God. The missionaries also engage in follow-up family visitation, and as a result, adults have put their faith in Christ and been baptised.

– Christian Aid Mission

SCOTLAND: Prayer Preceded Revival

A spiritual awakening 70 years ago is still impacting society today. Two elderly sisters who prayed for the awakening in Scotland are credited with sparking the movement known as the Hebrides Revival. Little did they know their nephew would one day become the President of the United States. The Smith sisters lived on the Isle of Lewis, where the church today still has significant influence in society. One minister describes the Western Isles today as ‘a world apart from the rest of an increasingly secularised Britain.’ The revival between 1949 and 1952 saw large numbers of people come to faith in Christ.

– Breaking Christian News

PAKISTAN: ISIS Soldier Now Soldier Of Christ

A man trained as a child soldier to attack Christians has come to faith in Christ despite threats to his life. The 24-year-old Afghani says he was taught to kill people who had become Christians because they were ‘infidels and no good,’ but one of his friends became a Christian and told him all about his faith. ‘And when I read the Bible,’ he says, ‘I understood that what I had been taught is very different.’ He told the Christian Post he is now in a happy place as a Christian, but he had to escape his family who threatened to kill him. Christian converts in Afghanistan are considered insane for leaving Islam. They are often committed to psychiatric institutions.

– Christian Post

FAITH NEWS FROM OVERSEAS

Read: The Objective Evidence For The Christian Faith by David Holden at www.defenceofthefaith.org

New research shows that attending church at least once a week can lead to longer and happier lives. The research shows that families attending church at least once a week are ‘very happy’ and are more likely to eat dinner together daily and participate in family activities. The increased family time results in a healthier household. Commenting on the findings, author Timothy Carney told CBN News he believes the key is churches that deliberately and unceasingly try to build communities and become institutions of civil society, not merely places of worship. He says these churches teach their followers to live out their faith by serving their neighbours.

However, despite the research, there is an increase in the number of people identifying themselves as having no religious affiliation.

– CBN News

Spreading The Word In Arabic

After a generous donor gave 50,000 Arabic Bibles to the Mission Cry organisation, workers have begun distribution. Dedicated to repurposing used Christian literature, Mission Cry is spreading the good news in the Holy Land, Jordan and Palestine. Mission Cry’s Executive Director Jason Woolford says it is fitting that they should try to help Christians there who don’t have the means to buy a Bible or Christian book. Despite facing economic and political issues, Mr Woolford hopes that the Bible distribution will provide comfort to Christians and give others an opportunity to experience the ultimate hope of Christ. Islam is the main religion in Jordan and Palestine, and Christians living in these regions face persecution and limitations on the practice of their faith.

– Mission Network News
With Thanks To BGEA For Remembering ‘59

‘Last night (24 February) the Graham Tour finished. It’s been a spectacular success. Thanks to all those who supported the tour with seven events over six cities, close to 60,000 attendees and over 4,000 Gospel responses. Most venues turned people away as they were over capacity. Wonderful outcome!’ – Karl Faase, Chair, BGEA and Samaritan’s Purse in Australia and New Zealand.

‘Franklin’s dad preached for four weeks in Melbourne in 1959 and those who took that step of faith were among those who changed the social fabric of this city. Check the crime rates, check the drop in divorces, check the reduction in social drunkenness. My prayer is that those who have stood here will be the start of the transformational impact that Melbourne and Australia so desperately needs. – Al Watson, Australian Director, Walk Thru The Bible

Value-Adding To Help The Needy
A Christian not-for-profit group is teaming up with a Shellharbour (NSW) church to help low-income families stretch their budget further. Anglicare Sydney and Shellharbour City Anglican Church have combined to provide low cost food for those in need in the community.

Jon Thorpe, Senior Minister at Shellharbour City Anglican Church, says they want to help people in the community with their food needs, but they also want to engage with them about how Jesus answers our greatest needs. For a $10 contribution, eligible low-income families will be able to take home a shopping bag full of food worth close to $60. Stocked with household pantry items, Anglicare Sydney’s Mobile Community Pantry will visit Shellharbour every fortnight to distribute food.

– Sydneyanglicans.net

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Brave Converts And Their Children Need Your Help

A young mother called ‘Umida’ was killed by her Muslim husband on 9 February 2019. She was trying to flee her homeland, Uzbekistan, because of his threats. But he caught up with her at Tashkent airport, forced her into a car and slit her throat.

**Umar Mulinde survived a terrible acid attack** but his wife and children are threatened. Barnabas helped with his medical costs. Their two-year-old son must now grow up motherless. The little boy will also be effectively fatherless for many years, as Umida’s husband has been arrested and is likely to serve a long time in jail. Umar (pictured) has courageously resumed his ministry of discipling and caring for other converts from Islam with support from Barnabas Fund. A Ugandan Muslim, Umar was training to become a sheikh when he ‘found truth and love in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God’. His former zeal for Islam was now directed towards leading other Muslims to Christ.

**What did Umida do to anger her husband?** She got interested in Christianity, started going to church and asked a friend for a Bible in the Uzbek language. This was enough to make him lock her in the house and remove their son. Just before her martyrdom, Umida had decided to leave Islam and follow Christ.

**On 11 February, father-of-five Anant Ram Gand, was beheaded in India’s Odisha state.** He had left his old religion to follow Christ about nine months ago but it was not until he was baptised, just two months ago, that local extremists became really enraged. They reportedly armed and persuaded Maoist Naxalites to carry out the murder. When three men came to Anant’s home, his wife and daughters (aged 13, 11, 3 and 2) were out, but Purno, his six-year-old son, was at home. The little boy was woken by the shouts and knocking on the door. As the men tied his father’s hands and dragged him away, Purno ran after them, crying. They told the child not to follow, and forced his father into a car, driving off at speed. Later Anant’s head and body were found lying on the middle of a road in broad daylight; his skull had been smashed by a stone before the neck was cut through.

**Enquiries about helping these and other victims of persecution may be made to Barnabas Fund,** phone (07) 3806 1076 or 1300 365 799, email bfaustralia@barnabasfund.org, or write to: Barnabas Fund, PO Box 3527, Loganholme, QLD 4129
**PERSECUTION WATCH**

**INDIA: Persecution Soars**

Evangelicals in India recorded 325 incidents against Christians last year. The Evangelical Fellowship of India published a detailed report of attacks against Christians in 2018 and asks the government to ‘ensure the rule of law and the security of religious minorities’. The Evangelical Alliance of India reports: ‘Targeted violence and hate crimes against the Christian community in India continued unabated in 2018’. The evangelical body has recorded 325 incidents where Christians have been targeted using violence, intimidation or harassment. More than the numbers, what is disturbing is the sudden spurt of violence in a few districts of Uttar Pradesh, the country’s most populous province, and in Tamil Nadu in the extreme south of the subcontinent. General elections approach in India, due in April-May 2019 and attempts at religious polarization are at an all-time high: Christians in India are 2.3% of the 1.3 billion population.

– Evangelical Focus

**PAKISTAN: Still Holding Asia Bibi**

At the time of publication we understand that authorities in Pakistan are still dragging their feet over allowing Asia Bibi to leave the country. The Christian woman, sentenced to death for blasphemy of Islam, was acquitted after eight years in prison and released. She has been in ‘protective custody’ in a secret location where even contact with her family was severely restricted. Despite Canada offering the 47-year-old asylum, *The Times* newspaper reports that Pakistani authorities are deliberately obstructing her departure because they fear she will cast a negative light on the country if she speaks to the media once overseas. Pakistan has given assurances that Mrs Bibi is free to leave the country after final paperwork has been completed but the continued delay is causing alarm among Canadian officials as well as her friends and family.

– The Times

**NORTH KOREA: ‘Persecuted, But Not Forsaken; Cast Down, But Not Destroyed.’**

A North Korean Christian has told of the torture and beatings she endured for her faith and how God sustained her through the brutality. She became a Christian after fleeing to China in the midst of North Korea’s great famine during the 1990s. She was captured there and sent to a North Korean prison camp, where she was put in solitary confinement for a year and then transferred to a re-education camp. She says she sustained her faith by quietly singing and praying and in secret meetings with other Christians. She says that every day she was beaten and kicked. Her ears would ring for hours, sometimes for days. Finally released, she is living in a secret location. North Korea is ranked by persecution watchdog Open Doors as the most difficult place for Christians to live.

– Christian Telegraph

**NEW LIFE – 1 March 2019 – Page Eleven**
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It is the day on which this man’s healing took place, the Sabbath, which so aggravates the Jewish leaders. This opens the opportunity for Jesus to engage with them about His identity. He clearly states the following:

1. He is one with the Father. Because the Father works, even on the Sabbath, He works (v.17). In fact, everything the Son does is because He sees the Father doing it – such as raising the dead and giving life (v.21). The Father has delegated the task of judgment to the Son (v.22). In the tasks of giving life and judgment, Jesus is clearly laying claim to being God. Neither of these are human activities. They belong to God. The unity of Father and Son means that to honour the Son is to honour the Father. To withhold honour from one is to deny it to the other.

2. The Jews understood Jesus to be making Himself equal to God and sought to kill Him (v.18). So how do we determine whether His claims are true? Jesus argues here as He does in John 8.14: Jewish law required witnesses to testify on a person’s behalf, otherwise it would just be their word against another’s (Deuteronomy 19.15). Here Jesus refers to four witnesses to back His claim. He does not appear as His own witness; there is another witness to back Him up. John the Baptist has testified to Jesus (v.33), but Jesus has weightier witness than John does. Jesus refers to the works of healing (v.36) – the signs testify that the Father has sent Him. But the Father’s more direct testimony is the Scriptures ‘that testify about Me’ (v.39).

Yet the Jews have no regard for God or His Word. Jesus has called on John the Baptist, the signs, and the Scriptures as witnesses, and now He refers to the witness of Moses: ‘He wrote about Me’ (v.46). To the two men on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24.27), Jesus began with Moses to show how Scripture testified to Him. In Deuteronomy 18.15–19, Moses foretells God raising up ‘a prophet like Me’. In Acts, both Peter and Stephen see this prophet to be the Lord Jesus (Acts3.22–26; 7.37,51–53).

The consistent response of the Jews is to reject what Moses wrote (v.47), to reject the Father’s testimony (vv.39,40), and even to reject the reality of the sign itself (v.16). Hardened, rebellious, a stubborn refusal to come to Christ and have life (v.40) – this is the story of Israel.

It is our greatest privilege to know Christ – one with the Father, universal judge, sovereign giver of life. Therefore, in the words of J.C. Ryle, ‘Let us lean our whole weight on this mighty Saviour. So leaning, we need never be afraid.’ (J.C. Ryle, Expository Thoughts On The Gospels: John, Volume. 2, Edinburgh, Banner Of Truth).

FOR REFLECTION:
Jesus made some very bold claims about who He was. How might you show someone who was not convinced of His deity that He is who He claimed to be, from the Scriptures?

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SEEN ON FACEBOOK:
Barbie Prout Continues Her Report On The Recent Belgrave Heights Summer Convention

John and Alison Risbridger enjoyed their second visit to Belgrave Heights Convention. We appreciated sharing with these delightful and gracious servants of the Lord. John is Team Leader at Above Bar Church in Southampton. He is a past Chair of Keswick Ministries and is currently Chair of UK Evangelical Alliance. He spent ten years in student ministry and loves Bible teaching and evangelistic ministry. John led the congregation in a very challenging and heartfelt series: The Psalms ... Journey Outward ... Engaging With Heaven With Your Feet On The Ground.

Expressing Joy (Psalm 98). People can be categorized into two groups: thinkers and feelers. God created us both to think and to feel. But all has been distorted by sin. In the Psalms we see ourselves, understand and engage with our feelings; to bring our emotions to God with authenticity and Christ-centred faith. The paradox of the Psalms is that words are given to us to speak to God, while God's Word speaks to us. The Psalms are an invitation to joy; God's permission to bring to Him the whole range of emotional human experience with the confidence that He won't push us away. Each generation has a new song; creative, loud, exuberant, rich, infectious. God wants to hear our unrestrained joy as we reflect on His majesty and glory. Our great source of joy is our joy in the victorious Saviour. He is the joy of the people of God.

God has done marvelous things. He displays His supernatural power in a way which throws light on specifics that can be used in many situations. The richness of musical sound makes a global symphony of praise to the Lord, the reigning King. All the Earth is rejoicing because God's plan is to bless the nations though Israel. All creation unites in song because He comes to judge in righteousness and equity. God comes to put things right. Creation praises God in anticipation of the final fulfilment. He is the true Saviour, as Jesus' resurrection defeated the enemy. He brings forgiveness. He sets us free and gives us eternal life because He became sin for us. He is the true King; the Lord. He reigns over all creation; and as the sovereign King He is always at work. Jesus is the coming Judge who will banish injustice and punish evil. The ultimate joy is to see God's Saviour, King and Judge revealed in Jesus. Joy in the Lord is the antidote for despair.

– Barbie Prout (‘Mrs D.P.’)

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.ElizabethKendal.com
1. New Site Needed

*New Life Books And Archaeology* currently rents 80 sq metres of space in a church hall in the Eastern Suburbs of Melbourne, but needs to relocate from this property very soon. Do you know of a similar area next to or part of a church property which could be suitable for relocation of this ministry?

2. More Volunteer Staff Needed

Enthusiam for hard-copy books is a wonderful asset for anyone volunteering some of their time, plus an eagerness to help raise money for Christian Missions.

If you can help with either or both of these matters please contact *New Life Books And Archaeology* on 0428 290 341.
**For Further Reading:**

Every fortnight *New Life* receives more material than we are able to include in the current issue due to the exigencies of space. For the most part these are articles which exceed the space available in their particular category. Others are longer than the usual run of articles we publish. Still others, though worthy, are judged to be of interest only to a small proportion of readers, generally because they are more technical than the articles we choose for publication.

However, we believe that such articles would be of sufficient interest to enough of our readers to refer them to the websites where they can be accessed.

The following items come into this category as we go to publication of this issue:

- **5 Myths About Christian Publishing**, Samuel James, <communications@crossway.org>
- **Chosen For Service**, Sermon by Dr Peter Masters, Pastor of the Metropolitan (‘Spurgeon’s) Tabernacle, London, [www.metropolitantabernacle.org](http://www.metropolitantabernacle.org)
- **Never Mind The Naysayers: Franklin Graham’s Visit Is Good News For Australia**, David Furse-Roberts, abc.net.au
- **Story Together**, Karl Faase, noreply@hellostorytogether.com
- **Masterclass Melbourne 2019**, Bible Society, bibles@biblesociety.org.au
- **James 1 and Charles 1**, Michael Reeves, Renewing Your Mind, Ligonier, daily@renewingyourmind.org
'For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their Shepherd; He will lead them to springs of living water.'  
- Revelation 7.1  
Photo credit: Rev John Ross