

Amazing Grace Comes Alive

in this inspiring book by Lebanese-born Pastor Peter Rahme, who has lived in Australia since 1970. 2013 marks the 240th anniversary of the most recorded song in history.

ON 1 January 1773, John Newton, a former slave trader turned evangelical preacher and abolitionist, delivered to the world what we now know and love as the hymn *Amazing Grace*. Originally entitled *Faith's Review And Expectation*, the prayerfully chosen lyrics were carefully written for a New Year's Day service. After reading 1 Chronicles 17.16,17 and reviewing his own life in the light of David's response, John Newton reflected on how far he had come since his seafaring days of sinful lifestyle, self-indulgence and slave trading.

But now the Vicar of St Mary Woolnoth Church in London, like so many before him, was overwhelmed by God's amazing goodness and awesome greatness, and responded with the immortal words:

*Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
that saved a wretch like me,
I once was lost but now am found,
was blind but now I see.*



2013 Also Marks:

1. The 265th anniversary of Newton's Conversion (21 March).
2. The 255th anniversary of Newton's beginning to preach the Gospel (4 August).
3. The 227th anniversary of Newton's invitation to Rev Richard Johnson to be the chaplain and missionary on the First Fleet to the Colony of New South Wales (23 September).
4. The 210th anniversary of Newton's *Last Will And Testament* (13 June).
5. The 206th anniversary of Newton's death (21 December).

'This presents the Christian community in general and local churches in particular with a golden evangelistic outreach opportunity,' says Peter Rahme, who was born in Lebanon and now lives in Sydney, and is the author of the best-selling book, *The Man And The Story Behind Amazing Grace*. Rahme, founder and senior minister at Inner West Baptist Church, Homebush West, a western suburb of Sydney, NSW, explains why he had written the book:

'*Amazing Grace* is hummed and heard on every continent in the world,' he says. 'It transcends race, religion and even record categories. It takes in its stride all nations, regardless of colour, creed or culture. Whether presented in churches, performed in concerts or played in clubs, this 'song of songs' touches the hearts of those who listen to its tune and learn its truth: this hymn of hymns transforms the souls of those who hear its message and heed its meaning.'

Rahme told me that he first got involved in writing this book, after he penned *The Life And Legacy Of Mr Eternity*, which unraveled the mystery of a one-word message: *Eternity* that was written in beautiful copperplate script with yellow chalk over 500,000 times on the footpaths of Sydney, its suburbs, and beyond. Wherever this word appeared it mystified some and fascinated others. The part of the mystery he set out to discover was, 'Who wrote it?'

People were intrigued with this mystery and became even more fascinated when the giant word *Eternity* sparkled with splendour as it was emblazoned across the Sydney Harbour Bridge on New Year's Eve at the turn of the century. Eventually, it was discovered that it was first written by the hand of one man. When the mystery man was uncovered by the Sydney press, they nicknamed him 'Mr Eternity,' but his real name was Arthur Stace.



Where did Arthur Stace come from? How was he raised? What was special about him? And why did God use him? Pastor Rahme revealed it all in his book.

He then told me, 'What "Mr Eternity" was to Sydney, *Amazing Grace* is to the world! This was the seed that God planted in the soil of my heart in 2002, following the successful Gospel campaign of *The Life And Legacy Of Mr Eternity*, which then, after more than three years of work and labour of love, brought forth the fruit of *The Man And The Story Behind Amazing Grace*.'

Rahme stated that 500,000 copies have already been printed in an abridged Gospel tract format and distributed Australia-wide and overseas, with 100,000 having gone to the Melbourne Commonwealth Games outreach in 2006. Free download of this tract is available at:

<http://amazinggrace.org.au/media/Amazing%20Grace.pdf>

'My decision and purpose was to write a Gospel book and tell the wonderfully great story behind the world's greatest song,' Pastor Rahme explained. 'I wanted it also to be in a condensed but a comprehensive narrative (84 pages/10 chapters) with a strong evangelistic emphasis and an easy-to-follow format.'

'My desire and prayer is that the facts, figures and the faithful reproduction of Newton's authentic writings be presented in the book, and will cause the readers to move beyond the emotional level of just singing the tune into seeing the truth and realizing that what John Newton experienced there and then can also be theirs, here and now.'

Background On John Newton

John Newton, the only child of John Sr. and Elizabeth Newton, was born on 24 July 1725 in London, England. Thirteen days before his seventh birthday, his devout mother died of tuberculosis. His father, a commander in the Mediterranean trade, remarried the following year. At the age of 11, the young boy was taken on his maiden sea voyage.

At the age of 18, John, a confused adolescent, was press-ganged [the act of taking men into a navy by force and with or without notice] on board HMS *Harwich*, a man-of-war. Unable to hold up under its rigid discipline and unwilling to handle its daily routine, the defiant sailor deserted ship. He was sought and found, stripped and flogged. Filled with bitter rage and full of black despair, the demoted midshipman was eventually discharged from the British Royal Navy and dispatched onto a slave trading ship. At the age of 29, John, a growing disciple, turned his back on the sea and 'the business at which [his] heart shuddered.' Over the next four years he searched the Scriptures daily and studied its truth diligently. On 16 December 1758 he surrendered his life to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ

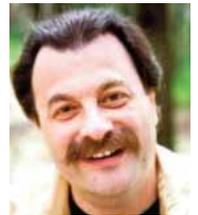
At the age of 57, John, by then an accomplished author, moved the family home from the small village of Olney to the big city of London. On 19 December 1779, Newton preached his first sermon as Rector of St Mary Woolnoth Church. There he renewed his connection with William Wilberforce MP, and equipped and empowered his newfound disciple who after 20 years of faithful campaigning to abolish slavery, finally succeeded in 1807 in passing an act of parliament in all British colonies.

On 21 December 1807 John Newton left this life and entered eternity. At the age of 82, his flesh and heart failed and his mortal life ceased but his soul and spirit found everlasting rest and eternal reward. Newton, who often used to say, 'I am packed and sealed and ready for the post,' was carried by the angels and hand-delivered to Heaven, to be with his Chief Shepherd and Captain of Salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ, who paid for his sin in full, provided his salvation for free and promised his security forever.

John Newton's last words were: 'My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things – that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Saviour. To order the book, just go to:

www.amazinggrace.org.au

Peter Rahme, popular conference speaker and accomplished singer/songwriter, can be followed on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/peterrahme?ref=ts&fref=ts> His e-mail address is: peterrahme@optusnet.com.au



Dan Wooding, 72, who was born in Nigeria of British missionary parents, is an award winning British journalist now living in Southern California with his wife Norma, to whom he has been married for 49 years. They have two sons, Andrew and Peter, and six grandchildren who all live in the UK. He is the founder and international director of ASSIST (Aid to Special Saints In Strategic Times) and the ASSIST News Service. He hosts the weekly 'Front Page Radio' show on the KWVE Radio Network in Southern California and which is also carried throughout the United States and around the world.

Besides this, Wooding is a host for 'His Channel Live', which is carried via the Internet to some 192 countries. Dan recently received two top media awards – the 'Passion For The Persecuted' award from Open Doors USA, and as one of the 'Top Newsmakers of 2011' from Plain Truth magazine. He is the author of some 45 books, the latest of which is 'Caped Crusader: Rick Wakeman in the 1970s.' To order a copy, go to: [Caped Crusader - Amazon](#)

