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Letting Go of Busy

There's More to Life Than Economics

Living in Freedom,
Laughing Out Loud

SPECIAL EDITION: SA Prayer Breakfast Feature

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Cover: Natalie Paxton, CEO of CBMC International – SA Inc

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There's More to Life than

by Ian Harper

Economics is a good servant but a bad master.

While the discipline of economics makes a valuable contribution to clear thinking about important questions that focus on humanity's material condition, it is not a philosophy for the whole of life – and was never intended to be. It needs to be kept in proper perspective, especially the prominence we give to material prosperity in our lives.

Viewed as a way of understanding how to improve people's material standards of living and the causes of affluence and poverty, the study of economics seems an entirely appropriate calling for Christians.

Speaking from my own Christian perspective, economics is an important part of my life, but it is no longer all of my life. There was

a time when I lived for my profession – in a sense, economics had become my religion or at least it framed my outlook on life. Yet treating economics as a philosophy of life is to burden the discipline with a load it was never designed to bear. I learned this lesson the hard way, by coming face-to-face with the inadequacy of my profession as a source of purpose, meaning and significance in life, at least beyond the recognition it afforded within professional circles. I suspect I am not alone, even among economists, in seeking to invest my profession with more significance in the scheme of things than it deserves.

In my view, the chief contribution I can make as a Christian economist is to challenge the prevailing moral assumptions which lie implicit in much policy work emanating from secular economists. It is not so much

that these moral assumptions are wrong as that they lie implicit and unexamined. Economics started out as a branch of moral philosophy, and discussions of moral issues were not foreign to the classical economists. Sadly this is no longer true; mainstream economists generally regard themselves as immune from moral influences and are typically unwilling or unable to engage in an explicit moral discourse. Here is where I think Christian economists can make their contribution. Again, it is not to assert that our take on moral issues is the only one available or even the correct one – indeed, there is a lively debate among Christian theologians as to how Christian truth more broadly translates into morality and ethics. But since Christian economists are at least aware of moral presumptions in an argument, they should be willing to encourage open discussion about them. Modern economics has detached itself from its moral foundations, and this gives rise to much concern for anyone of moral sentience, Christians included. In a sense, Christians have an excuse for raising such issues and, as a Christian economist, I consider it my duty to do so.



Economics

People sometimes accuse Christians of focusing just on the afterlife and acting as apologists for complacency in the here-and-now. The historical record of famous Christians who devoted their lives to improving living conditions here on Earth – not least through the campaign to abolish the slave trade – should be enough to rebut this view. Jesus himself said that he came so that we might have life and have it ‘abundantly’ (John 10:10). He was, of course, referring to eternal life but also to our life on Earth. Christianity is a life-giving creed in both senses – now and hereafter. Jesus speaks of ushering in his kingdom on Earth, which Christians understand as having been inaugurated with his death on the Cross and which we anticipate being fulfilled with his Second Coming at the end of time. In the meantime, we live in expectation of the renewal of all things but accept that the timing of this event is beyond our knowing. Our role while we wait is to anticipate the kingdom by striving to live according to its values of love, self-sacrifice and service to others. Not only do we help to make this world a better place by doing so, but we also make the kingdom itself and its king more attractive and real to every human being – giving off the ‘fragrance’ of life, as St Paul described it to the Christians at Corinth (2 Corinthians 2:16).

As a Christian economist, I see my calling as helping to make this world an easier place to live in by releasing people from material want and deprivation. I also want human beings to flourish and express the goodness of God in the gifts he has given them. One need not look far at all to see how much remains to be done to meet the first of my goals, but this should not obscure the progress we have made towards the second. Amid all the poverty and hardship there is great evidence of material progress, including an increasing ability and willingness to care for the environment. Yet there is still much more to be done. I am excited by the potential for economics to rise to these challenges as succeeding generations of economists develop new policies to tackle emerging issues. Above all, I am grateful to God for the opportunity of knowing Jesus Christ and for the privilege of serving him through my professional life as an economist.

Edited extract from Economics for Life: An economist reflects on the meaning of life, money and what really matters by Ian Harper, published by Acorn Press RRP \$29.99. www.acornpress.net.au. The book can be purchased directly through Acorn's website or through Koorong or other good bookstores.

Guest speaker, 33rd South Australian Prayer Breakfast



Professor Ian Harper

B.Econ. (Hons) (Qld) M.Ec. Ph.D. (ANU) FASSA FAICD

Ian Harper is one of Australia's best known economists. He has worked closely with governments, banks, corporates and leading professional services firms at the highest level. As a member of the celebrated Wallis Inquiry, he was at the forefront of financial market reform in Australia. Ian is often asked to comment on economic and financial issues in the media and is sought after as a public speaker.

In March 2011, Ian joined Deloitte Access Economics as a Partner when Deloitte acquired the former Access Economics. He had previously served 16 years in various roles at the Melbourne Business School and was elected Emeritus Professor of the University of Melbourne on his departure.

From December 2005 to July 2009, Ian Harper served as inaugural Chairman of the Australian Fair Pay Commission, an independent statutory body whose role was to set and adjust minimum wages in Australia. From January 2011 to February 2012, he was one of three panellists chosen to review Victoria's state finances. He is a member of the Advisory Board of the Bank of America Merrill Lynch in Australia.



Ian was elected a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia in 2000 and a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors in 2009.



Letting Go of Busy

By Kristen Johnston,
with Rev Scott Berry

How have you been lately? Keeping busy?

Such a strange turn of phrase, isn't it? Is busyness our goal?

Our culture tends to link being busy with productivity and a sense of achievement, and in our search for meaning being busy is gratifying because we are doing something, earning something, working at something – but what for? It's almost as if busyness has become a badge of honour for many of us – but it is to our own detriment.

Over a thousand years ago Socrates warned that people should “beware of the

barrenness of a busy life.” I think he was on to something; our lives can definitely be full without necessarily being fulfilling. We can also be busy without actually achieving a whole lot.

Without a doubt life can be busy – there are many things that need to happen. Dropping kids at school, working, keeping the house in order, cooking dinner, maintaining relationships, study – there is plenty to do and all of these things have merit. But God encourages us to lead a life of balance. He created us as beings that not only need rest, but can take joy in being still in his presence.

So why is it that we strive to have our time taken by this monster called busyness?

Scott Berry is an Associate Pastor at Enfield Baptist Church and he lends some biblical insight.

Firstly, there are 3 things that we need to be aware of when it comes to evaluating our own time.

Busyness is often a cop-out. Life throws lots of different things at us – some we like, some we don't – and it is natural for us to avoid those things that we don't. Busyness is the perfect tool for this, especially if you're



wanting to distract yourself from thinking. Sir Joshua Reynold once said that “there are no lengths to which a man will not resort to avoid the real labour of thinking.” But we can’t run forever. So what is it that you may be avoiding? Risking having your feelings hurt again, working through a strained relationship, taking responsibility for your financial choices? Whatever it is we must not let busyness become our cop-out.

Busyness makes you the victim. The other convenient thing about busyness is that it is often perceived as something that happens to us rather than something we choose. Therefore, when those words slip out; “I’m sorry, I can’t, I’m just so busy”; it’s not our fault, we are a slave to our own diary. But what if we weren’t the victim? What if we took charge of our time? What would that look like in your life?

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens” Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.

Busyness is arrogant. The badge of pride that comes with busyness is probably its least attractive angle. Wearing it can make us feel important but it is dangerous – the more our identity is wrapped up in this idea that “I am busy, therefore I am” the less willing we will be to live deep, unhurried lives.

But what does Jesus say about our time?

Our time is a gift. Psalm 139:15, 16 tells us that our days are already laid out for us; “All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” Along with busyness comes a desire for control. We often believe that the more we do and the harder we work, the more control we have over our lives. But this is not at all true. God has our days laid out for us, so rather than asking, ‘how can I get ahead today?’ we need to be asking ‘what does God want from my day?’ God has given us our time as a gift, let us not squander it on the frantic activity of busyness (anymore than we would loathe to waste it in sloth).

There is enough time for everything. *“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens” Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.* How often have you heard it said that, “there’s just not enough days in the week”? Well, it’s not true. If God has given us our purpose and direction, why would he not give us enough time to fulfil it? Time after time God shows us that His priority is refining hearts not perfecting our results. When we understand that God

is enough, we will also understand that our time is enough also. If we can’t get everything done in a week then it’s likely that we have put things in our week that God did not intend for us to spend time on.

God calls us to rest. In Exodus 31:14-17 we are commanded about the Sabbath. God the creator of the universe put one day aside to enjoy his creation. He asks us to do the same. God did not need rest but he takes joy in his creation and wants us to do the same. He teaches us that solitude is precious and He wants us to know Him, enjoy Him and enjoy what he has given us. God takes the Sabbath seriously and even calls it Holy. When we take time to stop it is not laziness, rather it is participating in a Holy act that God commands us to partake in.

So how do we slow down our busy weeks? Here are a few things to keep in mind when conquering your calendar.

1. More often than not, busyness is a choice
2. Be mindful of your words – just saying you’re busy can put the weight of the world on your shoulders.
3. Learn when to say yes and when to say no.

God desires more for our lives than for them to be full of commitments. Let us look to Him as we assess what is life-giving and what is wearing us thin. As we become more deliberate in the way we delegate our time, we will be able to live in service of Him as well as resting in Him.

Rise Managing Editor Wendy Rush talks to Natalie Paxton about her recent appointment as CEO of South Australia's Christian business organisation, CBMC.



Living in Freedom, *Laughing Out Loud*

When I met Natalie Paxton for the first time there was one thing I noticed immediately, and that was her laugh. It is full and loud and speaks of a joy of living. It would be wonderful if more of us felt bold enough to express ourselves as openly. For many years I walked the corridors of male dominated business organisations and I would have found the sound of Natalie's laugh a great encouragement. Recently appointed as Chief Executive Officer of CBMC International – SA Inc, Natalie holds a senior role in a significant business organisation that once was male dominated, but over recent years has become inclusive.

Until 2005, CBMC in Australia was CBMA - Christian Business Men Australia and the change of name to Christian Business & Marketplace Connections marked a turning point for the organisation. "South Australia recognised the need to move to a 21st century model, which was inclusive of men and women as leaders and emerging leaders. The organisation aligned itself to the International chapter of CBMC, and changed its name to CBMC International SA Inc" explains Natalie.

Natalie's appointment is testament to the will of the organisation to keep pace with the ever changing business environment and the needs of our business leaders – the men and women who keep the wheels of commerce and industry turning.

Natalie was born on Kangaroo Island, growing up on a farm where her first job was driving a ute and a tractor, learning early how to work hard. Since then she has had varied roles, working in traditional businesses, serving communities, security, employment, teaching, coaching, in the finance arena and even modelling in her younger years.

"I was determined to start work as early as possible", says Natalie. She moved to the mainland to attend her final years of schooling and to establish herself into city life, but at the time she hated the experience. "I didn't fit into the city chic thing" she explains. "But I have since learned the value of study and education and how to translate the theory into practical, real life experience. This has proven to be a key to success and growth in a lot of areas in my life." Over time it appears that this is where she has found her place and her purpose.

With her broad business background, Natalie became involved in CBMC because she saw the organisation as making a real difference to the lives of people in business. "I saw CBMC being able to reach people, develop leaders and identify emerging

leaders in the business and marketplace. The traditional Church model seemed to have separated itself from the business and marketplace environment, making it difficult to be a woman of faith and in business all as one, yet I saw how CBMC helps people continue in their businesses, their ministry or other appointments in the workplace by supporting and encouraging them. I was attracted to the role of Chief Executive Officer because I found the work of CBMC to be very rewarding.

"God has appointed CBMC International to a strategic position here in South Australia for His reasons, not as any one person's platform. I am really thankful for the foundation that was laid, and the values and principles that were established in the early years of CBMA.

"I see our development for the coming year is to strengthen the foundation of the past and step into the new wine skin. As Isaiah 54 says 'enlarge your house, build an addition, spread out your home... for you will soon be bursting at the seams'. I believe that's where we are going in the coming years.

"As CBMC is an inclusive organisation, we are identifying and acknowledging where there are gaps in our city. We don't expect to fill them all, but we will be focusing on those that are part of our vision, for example:

1. Christ's influence in the business and marketplace arena;
2. Kingdom values and principles in life; and
3. Ultimately being Ambassadors of Christ as we develop unity and relationships with the young, those who are growing and the not so young, where support and accountability are rich and fulfilling."

Natalie is aware that there will be challenges ahead. "We workshoped with a small section of the South Australian marketplace last year, seeking to find out what their concerns were. It was undeniable how the many working environments are hostile to Godly values and principles. Considering South Australia is a State which was founded and proclaimed by the practice of sound morality and strict observance of the Ordinances of Religion, proving worthy to be the founders of a great and free colony, it is sad to hear how unfriendly we as a State have become.

"I see firsthand the advantage of the CBMC International model of small group relationships. Working with and encouraging leaders and potential leaders, we can impact a state and then a nation just by one person at a time."

Natalie's Christian faith is extremely important to her and has brought her through some very difficult times including the loss of a beloved nephew at just seven years of age, depression, and a sporting accident which almost left her a quadriplegic.

"I played lots of sport which I really loved. Unfortunately I had an accident on the basketball court and fractured my back which led to many years of trouble. But I received a miraculous healing one night at a church prayer time – it was a truly awesome experience for me and everyone there!

"My faith has brought me through some devastating situations and most extraordinarily wonderful moments. Only faith in all Christ Jesus did for me can explain it all. I'm sure some of us have thought ourselves not worthy or of value, yet Jesus' love for me and acceptance of me is beyond measure, and knowing what He saved me from means I cannot go back.

"I came to know the Lord through a man and his beautiful wife – he laughed as loud as me! I truly thought if God could love him, then I had some hope. That was over 18 years ago and Graham still laughs as loud as me!"

Natalie pays tribute to her husband Guy. "I love being Mrs Paxton. Guy understands me, encourages me in all I do and is my best friend. He is a man who loves the outdoors, (which includes spear fishing, cycling and camping). I am all I am due to the many and varied experiences we have had together and Christ's love for me. His love and understanding and Christ's sacrifice for me are two of the most important things in my life."

When asked who provides her with the greatest inspiration to do what she does, Natalie responds quickly "That's easy – Jesus Christ." She explains that without Christ her life was possibly heading in a very different direction, she felt there was no control. "I had no self-esteem, no value of myself. And to now live with such courage and confidence is exhilarating."

Natalie's passion is helping people to grow into all they are meant to be – empowered, taking responsibility for themselves, living life to the fullest, healthy and giving back to the community. "L.I.F.E. – Living In Freedom Everyday is my motto from God".

As I write I can hear Natalie's laughter ringing in my ears and I have no doubt that she is in the right place, in the right season and that, driven by her passion, she will help CBMC to achieve its vision.



Responding to the Key Issues of Life and Faith



Dr Nick Hawkes, writer of Rise Magazine's regular feature RiseWise, has spent a quarter of a century listening and responding to questions about life's toughest issues through his work as a pastor, lecturer and radio presenter. Now he draws on a thousand years of biblical wisdom to answer them in his new book 'The Bible on the Key Issues of Life.' His book covers a range of topics to help people looking for answers as well as those hoping to help others understand them.

Christians are called to be light bearers. God calls us to carry his message and embody his qualities in such a compelling way that people will want to walk by the light we show. It's sobering to think that at a time when Australia is free-falling away from its Christian heritage, God has chosen you and me to exist at this time in history to carry his light. You have been reserved by God for this time.

But what, on earth, can we say about the complex issues of our time? What can we say is true in a world where postmodern thinking has dissolved the certainties of our Christian culture? Truth, it seems, is now whatever works for you. Christianity is in retreat. The Christian church has been attacked from within by institutional abuse, and the crisis of faith of liberal revisionism. And it has been attacked from without by an ideologically biased media.

Militant atheism is on the rise. It is fairly lucrative. Christopher Hitchens wrote a best seller entitled *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. Richard Dawkins wrote another: *The God Delusion*. Both evidently said what many people's itching ears wanted them to say. This ought to be of some concern because, in reality, these books have little intellectual depth. The authors have a very poor understanding of scriptural authority and what it is to be truly human. They are also horrendously careless with truth – ironic really as they seek to portray themselves as children of the enlightenment seeking a pure truth unfettered by religious constraints. But there it is – if you want to attack a God of truth, you will necessarily have to embrace untruth to do so.

This atheistic push is leading Australia into some very dangerous waters. In their book, *The Lessons of History* (1968),

the historians Will and Ariel Durant write, 'There is no significant example in history, before our time, of a society successfully maintaining moral life without the aid of religion.' It would seem that humanism inevitably transmutes to inhumanism without God. Certainly, communism, fascism and commercially driven self-obsession have resulted in nothing very beautiful, good or hope-inspiring.

And, amidst all this, God chooses you to carry his light.

But what on earth can you say? What does the Bible teach about the key issues of life and faith today?

It took a quarter of a century for me to get a resource together that hopefully helps. The journey began when I led a large youth group comprised of new Christians who had almost no biblical knowledge. They kept asking me question after question about what the Bible said about... and so I started to write.

When some of this teaching was edited down for use on radio as daily devotions (Life FM, Inspire Digital and Vision Radio), demand grew – and so a reference book was born.

It has now been published by 'Even Before Publishing' and is available in Christian bookshops. The book is written in an easy-to-read form and includes relevant Bible references for people to look up.

Here are the subjects covered:
Alcohol; Assurance; Bad Language; Baptism; Bible; Church; Devil; Divorce; Doubt; Environment; Evangelism; Faith; Fasting; Forgiveness; Getting a Job; Giving; God; Gospel; Grief; Guidance; Healing Heaven; Hell; Holy Spirit; Homosexuality; Jesus; Leadership; Living; Love; Marriage;

Meditation; Old Age; Other Faiths; Parenting; Persecution; Prayer; Predestination; Prophecy; Quiet Time; Resurrection; Second Coming; Self-Esteem; Sex; Sexual Abuse; Suffering; Temptation; Truth; Unfairness; Will of God for You; Worship.

Whew!

I've asked that the price for the book be kept down so that it is accessible to everyone – why? – because I want to be a light bearer. My hope is that it will be bought and given to family members and friends – as well as church leaders. Let's get people equipped and get the word out there.

There's always some key people who cheer you on to do big things for God, aren't there? In my case, two friends inspired me. The first was my mate, Danny Guglielmucci, (Senior Minister of Edge Church International). With his gorgeous, generous Italian heart, he used to run Edge Connect conferences for pastors to which David McCracken, a recognised and respected Prophet, was once invited. And, wouldn't you know it, he singled me out half way through his talk and told me God wanted to use me to provide resources for the wider church. I'd never even met the bloke – honest.

My second mate was Mike Hey (Area Director, East Asia and Pacific, for Operation Mobilisation). He is one of the most gracious and wise people I know. He simply said that he wanted this resource for the OM mission ships *Logos* and *Doulos*.

That was enough.

I hope you find the book a huge blessing.

I'm off to my next project, writing *A Summary of the Bible* – but that's another story.

Since Rise Magazine began publishing RiseWise as a regular feature, Nick's column has touched on topics such as Desire, Housework, Divorce, Toxic values, Suffering, Influence, God and other faiths. Be sure to read RiseWise in this edition.

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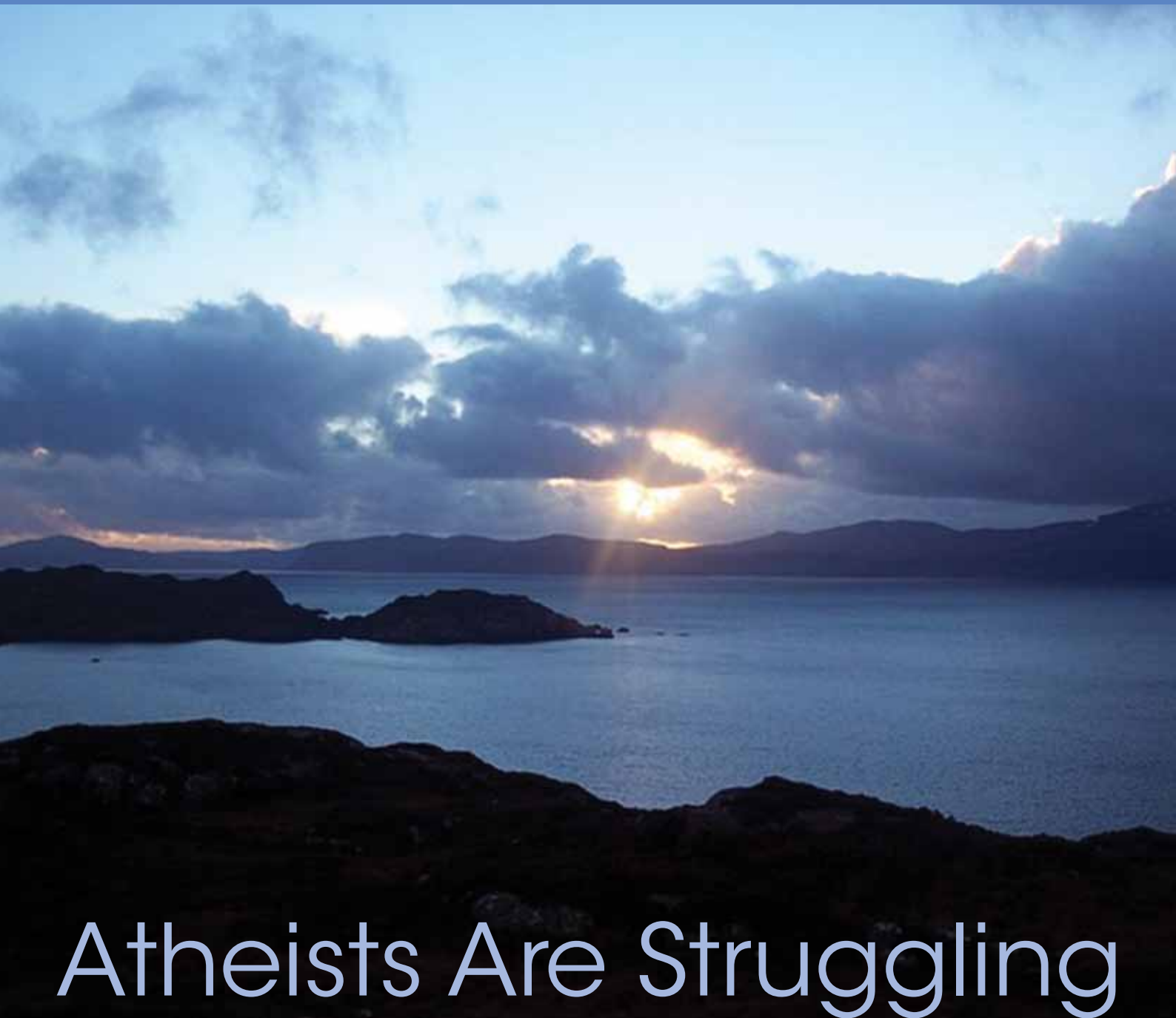
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Atheists Are Struggling

In recent years Great Britain's chief export to the US has been a stack of books by atheist authors such as evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins and literary critic Christopher Hitchens, both of whom claim that faith is irrational in the face of modern science.

This is interesting, given that other prominent British atheists seem to be having second thoughts. One of these is the philosopher, Antony Flew. His research led him to conclude that evolutionary theory was not enough to explain the origin of life.

As such, he discovered that his atheism was not logically sustainable.

More recently, the author, AN Wilson, a man who spent years mocking Christianity, returned to Christianity. He did so, he said, when he discovered that atheists were unable to make sense of the basic experiences of life. He noted that people who insisted we were just "anthropoid apes" could not account for things as basic as language, love, and music. They certainly could not explain how Christianity was able to transform lives.

In a similar vein, Matthew Parris, another well-known British atheist, saw the transforming power of the Christian gospel in Malawi, Africa. He said that his experience of Christianity at work "confounded his ideological beliefs, stubbornly refused to fit his world-view, and embarrassed his belief that there was no God."

Why do I tell you this? Because unless you discover the God who came to rescue you back to himself in Jesus, you too may struggle to make much sense of life.

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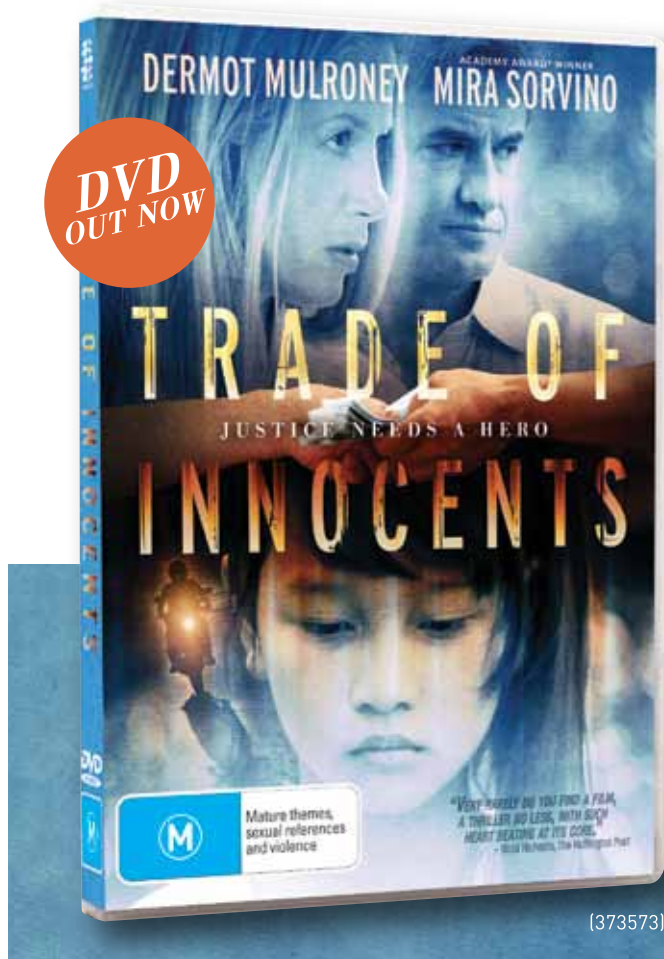
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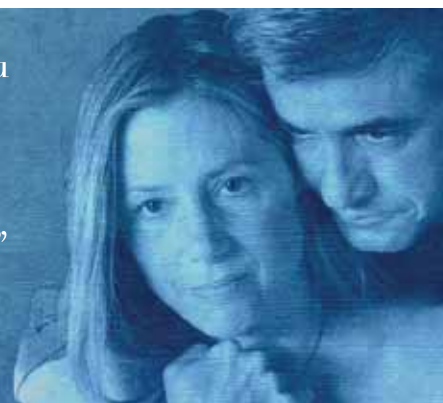
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