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# fromdeathtolife<sup>in5.24</sup>

- Life Only in Christ Our Hope
- A Tribute to David Burge
- Resurrection Revealed – Part 14
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- The Next 'You'



life · death · resurrection · eternal destinies · bible teaching

# Life, Death and Destiny

Second Edition  
Coming Soon!

Warren Prestidge

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# Life Only in Christ Our Hope

## Editorial—Tarnya Burge



In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 we read “Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.”

I am encouraged by reading these words at a time of grief. My dear husband David Burge fell asleep in

the Lord on the 4th July 2010. He was the editor of this publication and you can read a tribute to his work for the Lord on page 2.

David highlights the importance of life only in Christ, our hope:

“I do know I care deeply about the doctrine of Conditional Immortality and believe that it does make a difference. It affects every area of Christian doctrine. It affects how we understand Scripture. It affects how we understand the atonement, sin and its penalty, human nature, death, resurrection, and life in immortality. It puts the hope of the Second Coming and the Kingdom of God into proper biblical perspective: at centre stage. It affects our understanding of Judgment Day, “Hell”, and even God’s character. It affirms God’s final victory over sin and evil. “Life Only In Christ” gives full honour to Christ as “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). That’s why to me this doctrine - and the work of this Association in promoting this doctrine - is important.”

Maranatha. ■

# A Tribute to David Burge on behalf of CIANZ

## Warren Prestidge

David Burge has been Editor of From Death to Life for around 6 years, but he has been President of the Conditional Immortality Association of NZ for much longer still, since at least 1997. This in itself tells us a lot about David. He was a genuine leader, a gifted, enterprising, focused and humble person who could be relied upon to make the most of his own gifts and to take others with him. David was not afraid of responsibility, but rose to every opportunity granted him to serve His Lord and Saviour. He was inspirational, a man of courage and vision, who earned the complete confidence of all who knew him. Patient and tenacious, David was a man of wholehearted faith, who carried heavy burdens lightly, and displayed unfailing, cheerful good will towards all.

David was a hard worker, passionately committed to the cause of Jesus Christ. I was often amazed at how much David took on and handled so effectively, pastoring at



both Takanini and Christian LIFE, as well as preaching and leading Bible studies at Hamilton, Thames, and sometimes further afield, lecturing in the Philippines, leading CIANZ, and all the time caring admirably for a growing family. David also served with Christian Fellowship for the Disabled and in other connections of which I had no knowledge at all until his funeral. "Never flag in zeal," wrote the Apostle Paul, who praised people for hard work more often

than for any other reason. Paul would undoubtedly have warmly commended David Burge.

As President of CIANZ, David was no mere figurehead. In addition to both editing our magazine and writing many high quality articles for it, as well as chairing meetings with grace and warmth, David also oversaw a number of very significant developments for our movement. During his time, we were blessed with visits by several high quality overseas speakers. He managed complex matters to do with the transference of several church properties to the Baptist Union with unfailing skill, integrity, patience and generosity of spirit. He also led us into making far more effective use of the internet, casting an adventurous global vision for our work. And, of course, he maintained very positive links between us and the Advent Christian Church of America.

We mourn David's passing: he will be sorely missed. Yet we celebrate his life. David will be remembered with great affection and esteem, for he has lived with exemplary and uncommon wisdom, truly making the most of the time allotted to him. It is perhaps an unfortunate cliché, and

yet in David's case it is true: he has lived life to the full. As those who hold resurrection faith, we know, with the Apostle Paul, that David's labour has not been in vain and that he will share fully in the glory of Jesus Christ. Well done, good and faithful servant. Thanks be to God. ■



**Warren and his wife Jackie have been in church ministry since 1981. Before entering theological college Warren taught English at tertiary and secondary levels. He spent 14 years at a church on Auckland's North Shore, which began as Forrest Hill Church of Christ and became Sunnynook Baptist Church! After 2 years as Director of Oro Bible College in the Philippines, he has been Pastor of Remuera Baptist Church, Auckland, since 1997. He has also lectured at Laidlaw College (formerly Bible College of NZ) in various theological and pastoral subjects, and is currently a board member of CIANZ. Jackie has taught Maths for many years. Jackie and Warren have three grown sons, all overseas at present.**

# Resurrection Revealed

## Part 14—Beryl Ching

### The Resurrection in the Epistles—Part 1

#### General Resurrection

We find God described in Rom. 4:17 as “God, who quickeneth the dead” or as the N.I.V. translates it, “the God who gives life to the dead”. The New Bible Commentary says, “God’s life-giving power is seen in the miracle of Abraham’s procreation of Isaac (19; cf. Heb. xi. 12, ‘and him as good as dead’), by the deliverance of Isaac upon the sacrificial altar (cf. Heb. xi. 19, ‘God was able to raise him up, even from the dead’), and by the resurrection of Christ (24).” As Paul, later in his epistle, speaks of the resurrection of believers, we can assume that he also had in mind the power of God to raise from the dead all those who have faith in Him.

In Rom. 6:4, 5 both Christ’s resurrection and ours are mentioned, because our resurrection depends on Christ’s. Paul points out that we are one with Christ - if we have died with Him, we will also be resurrected with Him. The theme is continued in v. 8 and 9. We can believe that we shall live with Christ, because He, having

been raised from the dead, will not die again - death does not have any further dominion over him.



In Romans 8, the first chapter in that epistle which gives a lot of teaching on the Holy Spirit, our resurrection is shown to be dependent on the Spirit who raised up Christ also dwelling in us - “if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he

that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” (vv. 11). In v. 17 we are to be glorified together with Christ. The suffering those early Christians endured for Christ often ended in death - only resurrection could be the way to be glorified with their Lord. Later in the chapter Paul lists in order the steps toward glorification of those called by God. There is no mention between justification and glorification of the resurrection. This is an accepted part of the process. V.23 speaks of the “redemption of our body.” That is, of course, the resurrection of our body. As v. 29 says, we are designed “to be conformed to the image of his Son”. In commenting on this, Chafer says, “This conformity to Christ is evident even in the resurrection or translated body that believers will receive” and quotes Phil.3:21 and 1 John 3:26<sup>65</sup>.

In Romans 8:23 the redemption of the whole of creation is linked with the redemption of our body. How can our body be redeemed? This can only refer to the resurrection.

Again, in 1 Cor. 6:14, our resurrection is mentioned in association with Christ’s. God has raised Him up, and



will also raise us up by His own power. In fact, our resurrection is inseparable from Christ’s, as is again shown in 2 Cor.4:14. God raised up the Lord Jesus, and by Jesus will also raise us up. In this reference Paul specifically includes himself with the





Christians of the Corinthian church.

The greatest chapter on resurrection is that of 1 Corinthians 15, which gives proofs of Christ's resurrection, and speaks of our own coming resurrection. Edwin K. Gedney calls this chapter "the most complete treatment of the resurrection in the Bible".<sup>66</sup> Paul first speaks of the truth of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection as being the essentials of the gospel (vv. 1-3). Of the resurrection he specifically points out that He was raised "the third day according to the scriptures". He then goes on to list the sightings of the Lord after His resurrection. (More on this later in this chapter.) Verses 12-19 are very strong words, stating that if Christ is not risen from the dead, our faith is vain, and the apostles are proved to be false teachers. However, Christ has risen from the dead, and this fact is sufficient to assure us of our own resurrection. Christ is the first fruits, but through Him we will be made alive (vv. 20-23). In v.32, Paul points out that if the dead in Christ do not rise, there is no advantage to him, even if he has suffered for Christ - or even given his life for Him. The manner of the resurrection is dealt with in vv.35 - 53, proving that it is a



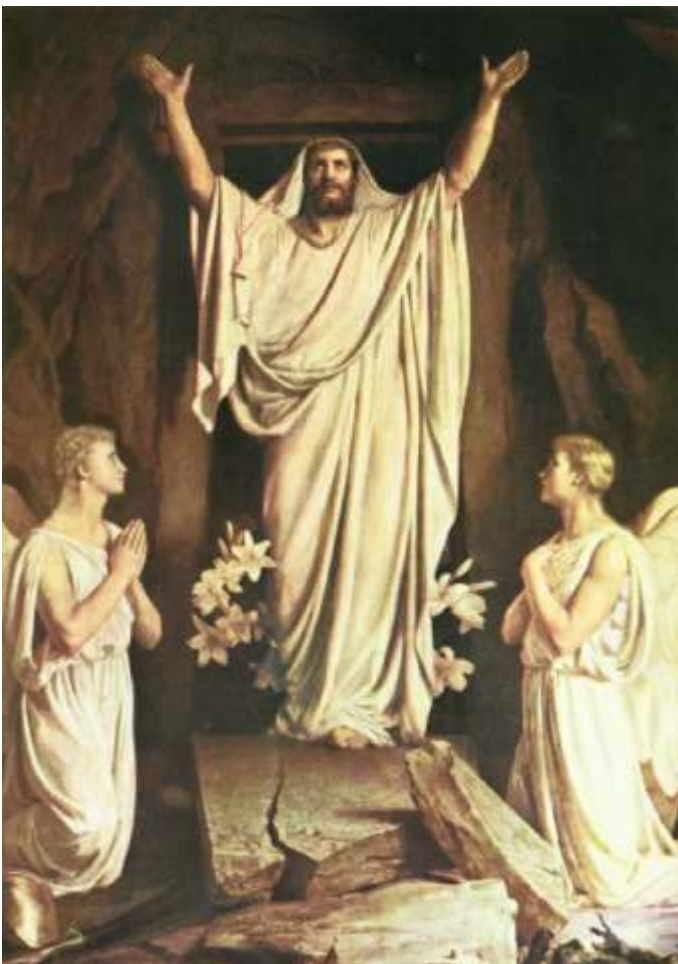
bodily resurrection, though the bodies of believers will not be the same as at present, but a spiritual, heavenly body, incorruptible, glorious, powerful, immortal. He discusses at length the type of body we will have in resurrection (vv. 36-49), and the fact that it will all happen "in the twinkling of an eye" (v. 52). He emphasises that this change will mean our corruptible bodies will become incorruptible, and we mortals will become immortal (vv.53). The chapter finishes with a glorious cry of victory and triumph - "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ... But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (vv. 55, 57). Chafer comments that man's "spiritual state...awaits perfection until the resurrection when he will receive a new sinless body..."<sup>66</sup>

In Eph. 1:20 the focus is on the power of God demonstrated by His raising Christ from the dead. Looking back a few verses in this nine-verse sentence, we can follow Paul's reasoning, that the same power is what gives us the hope of our calling and our glorious inheritance, to claim which we also are going to need to be resurrected. In vv. 19, 20 he speaks of the "exceeding greatness" of this power which raised Christ from the dead. Our resurrection is made so sure by Christ's, that later on the epistle, in 2:5, 6, he uses the past tense, "hath quickened us together

with Christ", "And hath raised us up together.." In a spiritual sense, we experience this resurrection even now.

In Philippians 3:10, Paul states that he wants to know the power of Christ's resurrection. Is Paul saying that he is not sure of being resurrected? After reading the powerful chapter in 1 Corinthians 15, we surely cannot take this attitude. So we conclude that he is referring to "the power of the risen life of the Saviour realised in Paul's daily life and service."<sup>67</sup> The resurrection of Christ has more applications in the Christian's life than a final resurrection to eternal life. It affects the Christian's everyday living. However, in the next verse Paul goes on to say that he wants to attain to the resurrection of the dead. An unusual Greek word is used here, which some translate as the "out-resurrection" and interpret as being the first resurrection out of the dead, that is, the resurrection of the righteous. (See Revelation 20:5.) It is interesting to note that Paul's ultimate aim was not to attain "heaven when I die", but to attain the resurrection of the dead.

In Phil. 3:21, though not using the





word “resurrection” Paul describes how the Lord Jesus Christ is going to change “our vile body” into one like “his glorious body”, which is a description of the changes which will take place when Christ returns.

Colossians 2:12, 13 focus on the spiritual aspect of our being joined together in the resurrection of Christ, as it speaks of being “quickened together with Him” and of the forgiveness of sins. It is through God who raised Him from the dead, that we are risen with Him, through faith. “...in Christ they share the resurrection experience. In Christ’s case it was a literal bodily resurrection from the dead. In their

case, the death was spiritual...and the being alive is also spiritual.”<sup>68</sup> This thought is continued in Col.3:1 where Paul appeals to the Colossians to seek spiritual things on the basis that they are risen with Christ. ■

**References:**

<sup>65, 66</sup> *Chafer, Vol. 1, p.339, 340*

<sup>67</sup> *A Primer of Prophecy, Part II, p.58; Advent Christian Publications, Inc., Concord, N.H., 1964*

<sup>68</sup> *The New Bible Commentary. I.V.F.*



**Beryl Ching, spent over 40 years on the mission field in India. Returning to New Zealand to “retire”, Beryl was for a long**

**time secretary of the Conditional Immortality Association.**

**‘Resurrection as Revealed in the Old Testament and Confirmed in the New testament’ is the full title of her Thesis presented to the Faculty of the Freelandia Institute Biblical Theological College in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree Master of Biblical Studies.**

# Hell Under Fire

## CIANZ Annual Conference Address

### Part 1—Warren Prestidge

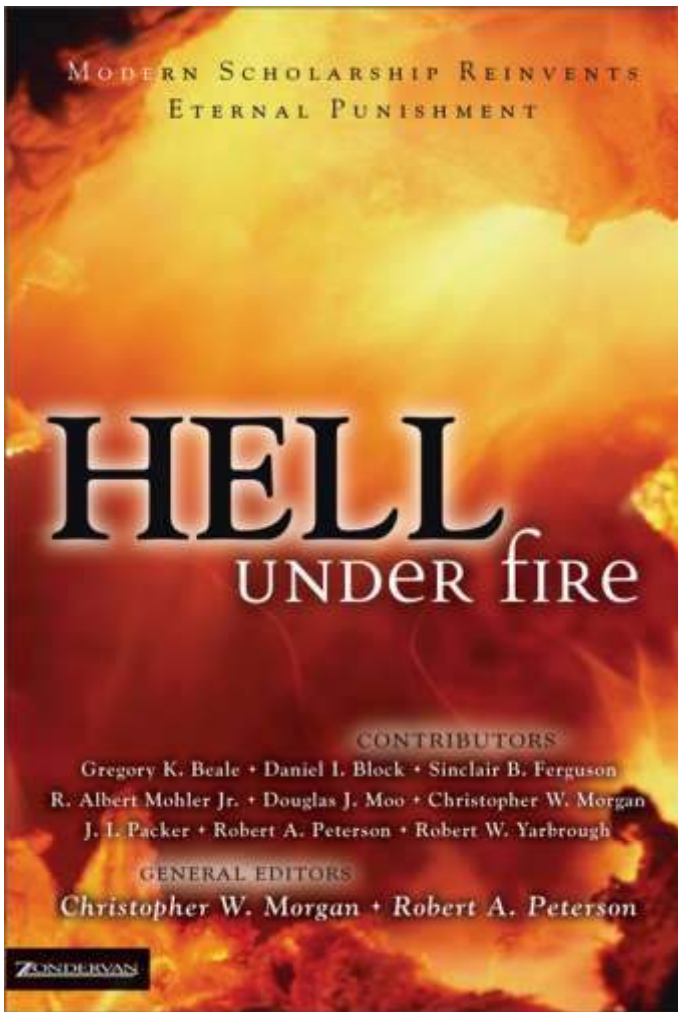
You must admit, it's a snappy title: *Hell Under Fire!* Well, I must admit, it's not mine! It's the title of a recent book that sets out to defend the Traditional doctrine of hell – eternal conscious suffering – against both Universalism, which we in CIANZ also reject, and Annihilationism, which is what we believe and promote. My excuse for shamelessly stealing this snappy title is that I have studied this book carefully and will devote this address to answering it.

We in CIANZ need to be aware of both the best and the latest in our field and this book, *Hell Under Fire*, is I should think the most serious attempt in quite some time to defend eternal conscious suffering against all comers. It's actually a set of ten essays, edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, brought out by Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan in 2004. Carefully planned and presented, it clearly aims to offer a comprehensive case for the "Traditional" view: namely, that not all will be saved and that

those whom God condemns will endure unending conscious suffering in hell forever and ever: that hell is, in fact, a place or state of everlasting conscious torment. Whereas for us hell is about literal, final destruction, as I've argued in my book, *Life, Death and Destiny*. For us the Bible teaches, certainly that some will be lost, but not that the lost will suffer for ever: rather, that through God's judgment they will all finally cease to exist. This is the view commonly known as Conditional Immortality or Annihilationism.

Now, most of what I have to say on the whole subject is already out there in that book of mine, *Life, Death and Destiny*. I certainly don't want to repeat all that today. I'm not offering a comprehensive defence of Conditional Immortality here, you'll be relieved to know! Rather, I think the best thing for me to do today is just to offer some observations in response to this book, *Hell Under Fire*.

First up **I think we in CIANZ ought to**



**be encouraged by this book, *Hell Under Fire*.** Seriously! **First**, the fact that nine dedicated scholars have gone to such lengths to produce this combined case shows that **the Traditional view of hell – unending torment – really is “under fire” today.** That’s a very *good* thing, in so far as it is testimony to the fact that our view, Conditional Immortality, is taken very seriously today, not just by a few on the fringe, but by all who know the subject, including evangelical Christian leaders. As the book itself says, challenges to the

Traditional view have “moved from the periphery of evangelicalism to its center” (p29).

And the **second** very encouraging thing about this book, *Hell Under Fire*, is: **its defence of the traditional view and its case against Conditional Immortality are both very weak!**

Really, very weak. And yet here we have nine dedicated and experienced scholars and practitioners going all out to be as convincing as possible. Yet they fail to show, either that there is a strong biblical case for the Traditional view of hell, or that the biblical case for Conditional Immortality is lacking. I’m certainly not going to cancel the second edition of my book, now that I’ve read *Hell Under Fire!*

Now, there are definitely some things I like about this book, *Hell Under Fire*, and some things I definitely agree with. **Well done, Morgan and Peterson, for being so systematic.** First, an essay that backgrounds the whole debate, then four essays that deal in some detail with different sections of Scripture, then a general essay on the overall biblical theology of hell, then three essays of systematic theology, taking a more reasoned approach, and finally an essay in pastoral theology, trying to

answer the vexed question: How can one preach eternal torment with conviction today?

Well, that last question is certainly very difficult and certainly is one that Traditionalists need to answer urgently, one way or another, because – and this is something else the book says that I do agree with! – the Christian doctrine of final judgment has been drastically sidelined today and we do need to restore the doctrine of final judgment to its rightful place, as a necessary component of the Gospel. To grasp fully that the Gospel is Good News, you need to appreciate that without it the news is bad: we are sinners headed for condemnation. The contributors to *Hell Under Fire* rightly bemoan the fact that this subject is not often addressed today, even in many evangelical churches. They recognise that in this way the full seriousness of the Gospel is undermined. I agree.

By the same token, **I also agree, broadly speaking, with their case against Universalism.** Universalism is the view that in the end, one way or another, all human beings will be saved for eternity. This view is not new. The great Bible scholar and theologian Origen taught it in the 3rd



Century, but it didn't catch on then. However it has certainly caught on in modern times, even amongst mainstream Christians. I deal with it very concisely in my book, but *Hell Under Fire* has a much fuller essay by James Packer, discussing it and arguing against it<sup>1</sup>. Packer actually makes the startling and probably quite correct observation that Universalism "is almost certainly the {view} most widely held among Christian people in the West, at both popular and academic levels" (p170). Of course, on the face of it Universalism is a very attractive view. Surely we would wish that, in the end, all would be saved. In fact, I

suggest in my own book that if we don't *wish* that, there really is something wrong with us. Certainly there's something wrong with our Christianity if we don't love people enough to wish that all would be saved. And in fact the Bible says that this is precisely what God also would prefer. According to the prophet Ezekiel, God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but only in their salvation.<sup>2</sup> Peter writes that God "does not want anyone to be destroyed."<sup>3</sup> Surely we feel the same way.

But – and here is another point on which I entirely agree with Hell Under Fire – **we've got to be biblical about things**. No question. The fact is that, outside of Scripture, outside of God's revelation there, we have no way of knowing about these eternal things at all! And history has repeatedly shown that, when we are not guided by the consistent witness of Scripture, in theological matters, when we are guided primarily by the spirit of our time, or by our own preference – or by church tradition, for that matter, - our thinking becomes futile.

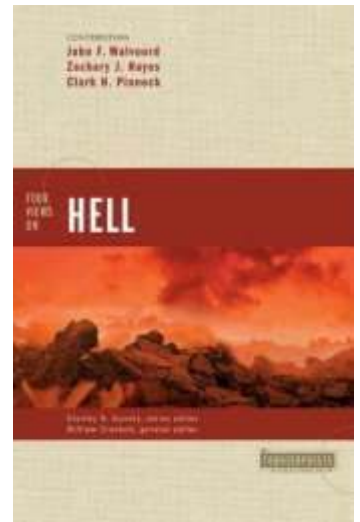
So, the fact that there's a kind of Universalism that is commonly simply assumed today in the popular

imagination certainly shouldn't decide the case for us. I mean, many people today seem to simply assume that their dead loved ones have somehow gone to heaven or to "a better place", regardless of any faith they may have held or of how they may have lived. That kind of Universalism owes much more to sentiment than either to revelation or to reason. There is also another side to this business of the popular imagination, of course. Many people would also find it extremely difficult to imagine that God might in the end forgive serial rapists and mass murderers and so on – or even, it seems, their own personal enemies! However, there are also serious arguments for Universalism out there. Some argue on the basis of certain biblical texts. For example, in John 12:32 Jesus talks about drawing all people to Himself. But the same book also says that those who have done evil will be condemned (John 5:29) and that those who disobey the Son of God will remain under God's punishment (John 3:36). In Philippians 2:10-11 Paul writes that all beings in heaven and earth and under the earth will proclaim that Jesus is Lord – but then in Philippians 3:19 he also says there are some

people whose end is destruction. It's only when you take a few texts right out of context that you can possibly claim that the Bible teaches Universalism.

The fact is that you can't really make any kind of a case for Universalism on the basis of direct biblical statements. The Bible is very, very consistent in insisting that some will be lost forever. As Paul says, in II Thessalonians 1:9, "They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction...". Now, whatever else the word "eternal" means here, it certainly means that there will be no comeback, and whatever else the word "destruction" means, it certainly does not mean salvation! The case for Universalism really depends on certain lines of theological reasoning. For example, if God really is love, will He ever finally condemn anyone? If God does indeed desire all to be saved, and God really is God, will He not ensure in the end that all are saved? If Christ did die for all, will not His death avail for all in the end? Many today say, yes. Some believe that somehow, at death, even those who have appeared to be hardened against God in life are granted a change of heart. Others – many, today –

believe that this change is bound to happen eventually after death. Perhaps the Gospel is re-presented in the afterlife. Perhaps this is actually what hell is: not a means of final judgment, but in fact a means of bringing sinners to a final state of repentance and salvation, no matter how long it takes: another kind of purgatory, in fact. That whole matter is debated pretty well in a book we recommend here at CIANZ: *Four Views On Hell*.<sup>4</sup>



I don't intend to go much further in debating Universalism just now. I'm going to assume that that is not such a live issue with my audience here today and, as I say, this is pretty much common ground between me and this book, *Hell Under Fire*. I don't agree with all Professor Packer's arguments even here –and, of course, his brief treatment of Annihilationism is very superficial indeed – but I do agree with him that not only is Universalism wrong, both biblically and rationally, but it is also a serious threat to real Christianity. First, if we human beings are not



ultimately free to choose between good and evil, God and sin, and are not ultimately accountable for our choice, then we are not truly and fully human at all. Second, if God is not ultimately either free or willing to judge evil and unrepentant evildoers, then He is not truly and fully God at all. Without final judgment, nothing makes sense, least of all the cross of Christ. And in fact you really don't have a Gospel, in the full biblical sense, if you have no doctrine of final judgment. The Gospel is not just about improving our lot here and now – though it certainly includes that. It is also about our ultimate destiny with God. And, as Paul says, in Romans 3:6, it's absolutely axiomatic that God will judge the world.

So, I agree Universalism is a big problem. But the question is: **Why is Universalism so commonly held today even among mainstream Christians?** Or, if they don't actually advocate Universalism, why do so many Christians today, including so many Christian pastors and teachers, pretty much avoid the whole subject of final judgment all together, even though it's standard, both in the Bible and in all Christian traditions?

**And the main reason, surely – or at**

**least one of the two or three main reasons – is that even Christians today are utterly embarrassed by, and in fact ashamed of, the Traditionalist view of hell!** And James Packer himself agrees with this. He says: "the deepest motivation in {Universalists'} minds has always been revolt against mainstream belief in endless punishment in hell for some people" (p171). In the first essay in the book, J. Albert Mohler Jr. traces something of the growing moral disquiet about this doctrine during the 19th Century. He writes: "Of all the articles of accepted Christian orthodoxy that troubled the consciences of Victorian churchmen, none caused more anxiety than the everlasting punishment of the wicked." ■

#### **References:**

<sup>1</sup> *Universalism: Will Everyone Ultimately Be Saved?*

<sup>2</sup> *Ezekiel 18:23,32*

<sup>3</sup> *II Peter 3:9*

<sup>4</sup> *Ed W. Crockett, Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1992*

<sup>5</sup> *"Modern Theology: the disappearance of Hell".*

**(Part 2 of Hell Under Fire will be published in FDTL Issue 47)**

# The Next 'You'

## Rev. Jefferson Vann

Law enforcement officers in this age of expanding technology have a number of new tools. Among the most intriguing are age advancement photography programs. Using these programs, one can alter a photograph of someone, and produce a photo of what that someone would look like years later. For example, photos of children who were abducted years ago can now be altered so that the public can see what they would look like today. Many lost children have been found due to this important tool.



Christian believers are also interested in what we will look like in the future, especially the post resurrection future. One of our favourite places to look for snapshots of our post-

resurrection selves is 1 Corinthians 15:1 Here, the apostle Paul gives the Corinthian believers some insights into God's plan for their resurrection. Paul does not do this simply to indulge their curiosity. This doctrinal section is intended to bolster the practical applications he seeks in his letter.

Some of those practical applications are as follows:

1. Paul wanted the Corinthian believers to reflect upon their insignificance when God rescued them (1:26). The resurrection reminds us that God intends to transform us, so what matters most is not who we were, but who we will be.
2. Paul wanted the Corinthian believers not to form rash prejudices that prevent them from enjoying the fellowship and ministry of others (4:5). The resurrection reminds us that we do not yet see the "finished product" God has in mind, so we should not be so quick to endorse some people's ministry, or reject others.

3. Paul wanted the Corinthians to avoid all kinds of sexual sin (6:18). The resurrection reminds us that our bodies are not disposable playthings. They are God's creation, and the Holy Spirit's temple (6:19). They are to be taken very seriously.

4. Paul wanted the married believers in Corinth to regularly enjoy one another's sexuality, not to deprive one another (7:5). The resurrection reminds us that although sexual relationships are temporary (Mat. 22:30), they are, nonetheless, legitimate, and should not be avoided in an attempt to be "more spiritual."

5. Paul wanted the believers in Corinth who considered themselves "strong" to avoid actions which might be a stumbling block to "the weak" (8:9). The resurrection reminds us that we will soon be armed with abilities and powers beyond our present comprehension. But, with much power comes much responsibility.

6. Paul wanted the believers in Corinth to discipline themselves like runners in a race, so that they might obtain the imperishable prize (9:24-25). That prize is the resurrection (Phil. 3:10-11).

7. Paul wanted the believers in



Corinth to avoid the mistakes the Israelites committed, e.g. grumbling (10:10), and idolatry (10:14), which caused them to go backward, rather than forward. The resurrection reminds us that our future selves are our real selves. We must look forward in faith, not backward in fear.

8. Paul wanted the believers in Corinth to make God's glory the basis for every decision they made (10:31). The resurrection reminds us that our bodies will be buried (sown) in dishonour, but raised in glory (15:43).

9. Paul wanted the believers in Corinth to invest themselves in

ministry with an attitude of love (12:31; 14:1, 39). The resurrection reminds us that those investments are not permanent. Like our present bodies, our current ministries will cease (13:8-10), but the love that should motivate them will not (13:13).

10. Paul wanted the believers in Corinth to stop associating with sceptics who doubt the resurrection (11:32-34). The resurrection validates all our effort to reach the world for Christ. When we take our cues from those who doubt the resurrection, it is as if we are in a drunken stupor, stumbling around without stability and direction. The resurrection gives us direction, because it serves as the goal of our effort, the target that we are aiming at.

1 Corinthians 15 reveals that the real, permanent You is not the present you, but the next You. Paul invites you to look ahead into your future as a glorified saint. He encourages some imaginative personal eschatological thinking. His argument can be summarized as follows:

### **I. THE NEXT YOU IS GUARANTEED. IT IS BASED UPON HISTORICAL FACTS.**

The evidence for the next you includes these verifiable facts: 1) The



Resurrection of Christ (3-8); 2) The apostolic witness through preaching (12-15) {and, by extension, all those who have spent their lives preaching the gospel since the apostles}; 3) The faith of Christians throughout the ages and the changed lives that faith has produced (17-19); 4) The commitment to Christ demonstrated by those who have been baptised (29)2; 5) The commitment to Christ demonstrated by those who have suffered in ministry (30-32).

Paul's argument is that every aspect of the Christian faith and life points toward the next you. Every breath you take in this life, every word you

say, everything you do, is a precursor to that permanent expression of you-ness in the next life. Rather than implying that this life is meaningless compared to the next, Paul implies the opposite. This life is important because it sets the stage for the main event throughout eternity. The next you will validate the significance of the present you. The present you is an investment in the future you.

## **II. THE NEXT YOU IS INTENDED BY GOD, AND WILL HAPPEN ACCORDING TO HIS TIMETABLE.**

Paul uses the analogy of a harvest to explain the chronological order of the resurrection. The sequence of God's resurrection/harvest is: 1) Christ, the first fruits of the harvest (20); 2) those who belong to Christ (the dead resurrected, then the living transformed and raptured) (51-52); 3) the millennial reign (25-26) during which all of Christ's enemies will be destroyed; 4) the end (of the harvest) which is the final resurrection of all the remaining dead (24) (see Rev. 20).

The resurrection, then, should not be just a minor blip on our theological radar screens. It belongs to those events by which God is shaping the destiny of his universe. In his

providence, the next you is just as important as creation, the exodus, the incarnation, the cross, or Christ's resurrection. Seen in that light, your existence today takes on new significance. You may think of yourself as caterpillar-like, but God has planned your butterfly-hood!



## **III. THE NEXT YOU IS NOT SIMPLY A RESUSCITATION OF YOUR BODY. YOU WILL BE THE SAME PERSON, BUT WITH A NEW GLORIOUS IMMORTAL NATURE.**

Paul's argument is that the next you will be the same you – only different. The seed and plant analogy assures that you will be the same person (37). The resurrection is not a re-creation, starting over with all-new materials (and hopefully getting it right this time). No, the seed and plant analogy speaks of a continuation of a life with which God

originally intended to bless his universe forever. Sin entered your life and corrupted it, making it necessary for you to die. But God loves you too much to let that be the last note of your song.



The resurrected you will be the same you, purged of all those things that cannot abide eternal existence, and transformed into something extraordinary. The different flesh/splendour analogies assure that your nature will be different (39-41). The next you will be as different from the present you as humans are different from animals. The difference will be as pronounced as the difference between celestial and terrestrial bodies.

The Adam/Christ analogy explains the essence of that transformation. Your new nature will “bear the likeness” of Jesus Christ! (49). All

those inherited predispositions and character flaws and physical defects which identified you with your ancestors Adam and Eve will have been replaced. The stuff that the next you will be made of is described as “from heaven” (49) and “imperishable” (50).

#### **IV. THE NEXT YOU IS NOT JUST AN ADDED BONUS TO YOUR SALVATION, IT IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL**

Paul describes your present state: “of the dust of the earth” (46), perishable (50), mortal (53). That is not what God wanted. Satan has intervened and tricked humanity into the rebellion that has resulted in the present mortal state. God cannot endure that forever. He plans to purge his universe of the disease that humanity has become, so that it can once again be pronounced “very good.”

Your future state is imperishable and immortal. The next you is more than just a revived you. The next you will be you as God intended you to be. By his death on Calvary's cross, Christ won the battle which has made the next you possible, but you have not yet received all the spoils of the victory personally.

Paul described his resurrection

chapter as essentially the gospel message that he preached (1-2). It is right for believers to emphasise the benefits we already have because of the death of Christ: forgiveness of sins, permission to approach God in prayer, guidance from the indwelling Holy Spirit, etc. But let us never forget that the gospel is not complete if it stops there. You have not heard the whole gospel if the message you have heard fails to include the next you. ■

**Notes:**

*1 Unless otherwise stated, all Bible references are from 1 Corinthians, ESV.*

*2 Note that the baptism Paul mentions here is not some kind of ritual proxy baptism. He is referring to those who become believing Christians and then are baptised at the prompting of evangelists like John the Baptist and others. Since John and many other Christian evangelists had already died, those they baptised have been baptised for (at the prompting of) the dead. Paul's point is that since there will be a resurrection, those baptisms do matter.*



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**Conference since 1996. They have served 13 years as professors at Oro Bible College in the Philippines, and are currently serving as pastors-at-large with Advent Christian Conference of New Zealand. He and Penny both attended Berkshire Christian College, where they graduated with a B.A. in Theology in 1983. Jeff served three years in the United States Army, stationed in Gelnhausen, West Germany. He has pastored four churches: three in the U.S.A and is currently pastoring at Takanini Church of Christ, Auckland, New Zealand. Jeff received his Master of Divinity (M Div) in missions at Columbia International University in 1996, and his Master of Theology (Th.M.) in Biblical Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 2006. He plans to pursue doctoral studies when he and Penny return to the U.S.A. in February, 2011.**

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## Statement of Faith

1. We believe in God and His one and only Son, Jesus the Christ. Heb. 11:6; John 14:1; 3:16; 20:31; Mat. 16:16.
2. We believe in the Holy Spirit. 2Pet. 1:21; 1Cor. 6:19; Jude 20; Eph. 3:5.
3. We believe that Jesus died for us and gave himself a ransom for all. Rom. 5:8; 1Cor. 15:3; 1Tim. 2:6.
4. We believe that God raised Jesus from the dead; that by resurrection He became Lord of both the dead and the living, and the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep; and that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. Rom. 10:9; 14:9; 1Cor. 15:20; John 3:16.
5. We believe that baptism is commanded by Christ, was practiced by His Apostles, and is taught in the New Testament. Mat. 28:18,19; Acts 8:12,38.
6. We believe that all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the people of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2Tim. 3:16,17.
7. We believe that human beings are by nature mortal. Gen. 2:7; 3:19; 1Tim. 6:16; 2Tim. 1:10; Rom. 2:6-7.
8. We believe that human beings in death are unconscious. Psa. 6:5; 115:17; Ecc. 9:5,10. This is likened to "sleep". Job 14:12; Psa. 13:3; Jer. 51:39; Dan. 12:2; John 11:11-14; 1Cor. 15:51.
9. We believe that immortality is obtained only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. 1Cor. 15:21-23; 2Tim. 4:7-8; 1John 5:9-12.
10. We believe that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked, to be followed by the Judgment. Acts 24:15; John 5:25,28,29; Rev. 20:12,13.
11. We believe that evil and evil-doers shall be finally destroyed. Psa. 145:20; Mat. 10:28 Rom. 6:21; Phil. 3:19; Heb. 2:14; 1John 3:8; Rev. 22:3.
12. We believe in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Acts 1:11; John 14:3; 1Thes. 4:16.