

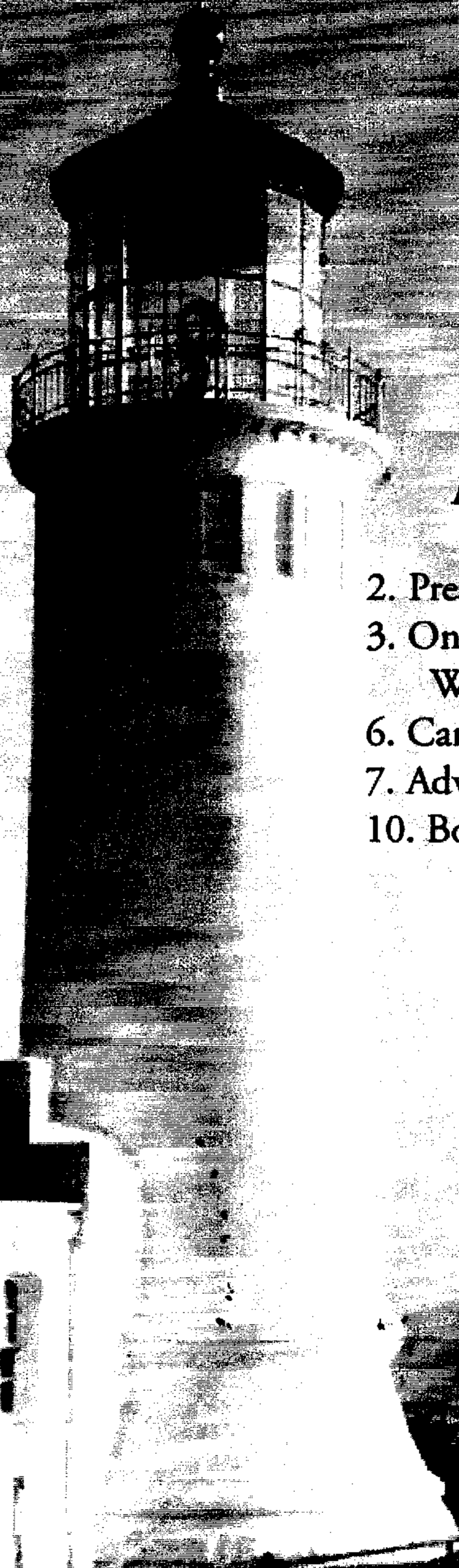
From Death TO Life

The Official Magazine of
The Conditional Immortality Association
of New Zealand

Issue 11

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from the President's Desk

You may have heard it said, "God is angry at sin, not at sinners". Not true! God is angry at sinners!

When Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord, contrary to his command, "fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord." (Lev 10:1-2). Aaron and his sons were told not to mourn "or you will die and the Lord will be angry with the whole community" (10:6). The Lord was angry with Nadab and Abihu not just their sin. If Aaron and his sons had disobeyed the command of the Lord, the Lord would have been angry with the whole community of Israel.

Again and again the Old Testament tells us that "The Lord's anger burned against Israel" (Num 32:14). "At Horeb", Moses says, "you aroused the Lord's wrath so that he was angry enough to destroy you" (Deut 9:8). The Lord's wrath broke out against Uzzah when he touched the Ark (2 Sam 6:8). The Word tells us that the Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel" (1Kg 11:9). Ezra praying about the sins of the people said: "What has happened to us is a result of our evil

deeds and great guilt, and yet, our God, you have punished us less than our sins have deserved and you have given us a remnant like this. Shall we again break your commands ...? Would you not be angry enough to destroy us ...? Here we are before you in our guilt, though because of it not one of us can stand in your presence." (Ez 9:13-15).

Hebrews tells us "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God" (Heb 10:31) and that "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12:29)

The only thing that stands

between us and the wrath of God is the Lord Jesus Christ. "He is the one who turns aside God's wrath, taking away our sins, and not only our sins but also the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2).

Now "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life but whoever rejects the Son will not see life for God's wrath remains on them" (John 3:36)

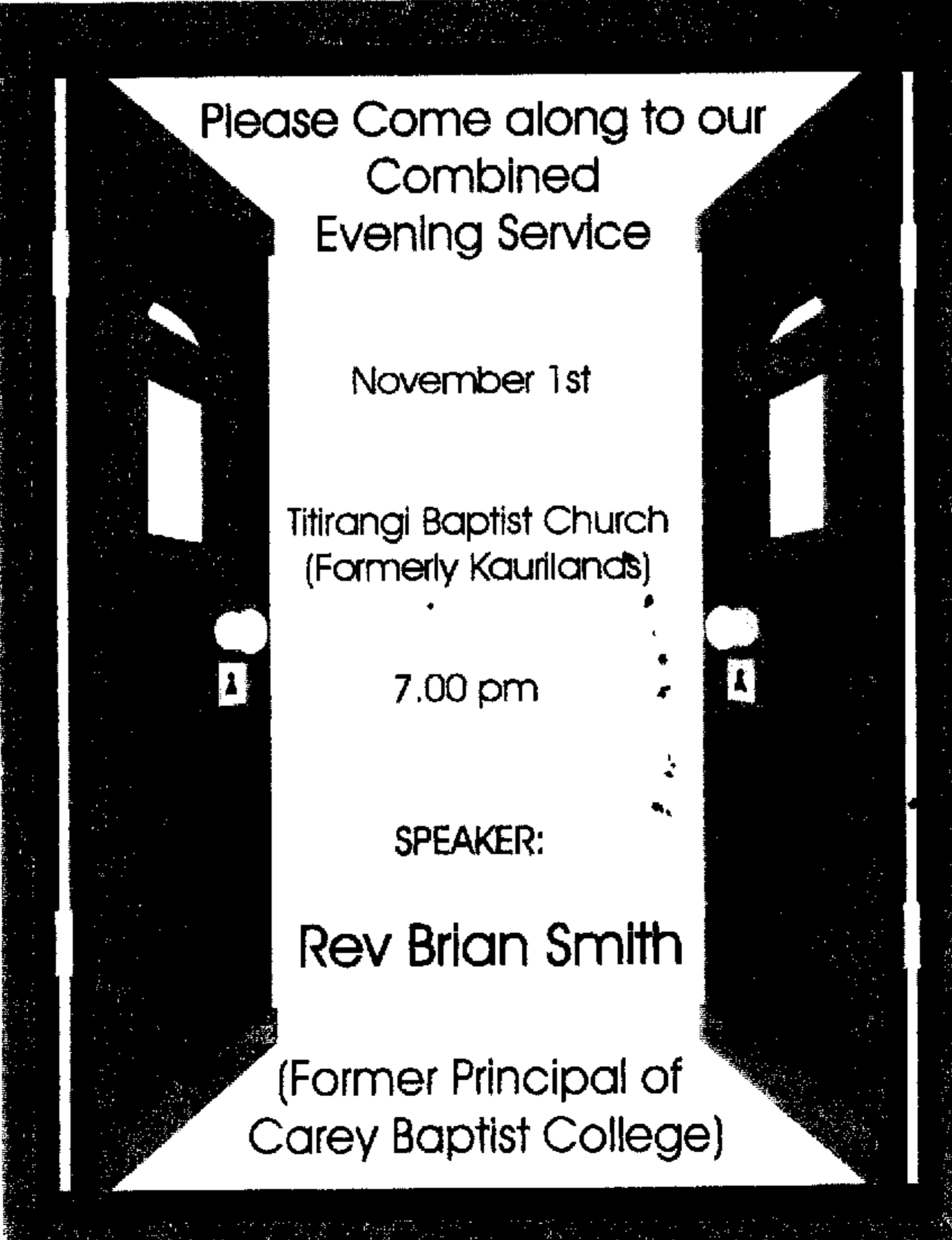
Do you believe the Word of God?

Have you accepted Christ's work on your behalf?

Paul says, "Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord we try to persuade others" (2 Cor 5:11).

Will you shelter in the refuge that Christ provides and then refuse to warn others to flee from the coming wrath for fear that you may embarrass them or yourself? Or will you say with Paul that "Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Cor 5:14-15).

Pastor David Burge



Please Come along to our
Combined
Evening Service

November 1st

Titirangi Baptist Church
(Formerly Kaurilands)

7.00 pm

SPEAKER:

Rev Brian Smith

(Former Principal of
Carey Baptist College)

On Being Filled With Hope

Conditional Immortality and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A personal and pastoral testimony.

By Rev. Don Dickson

"We are filled with hope, as we wait for the glorious return of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. He gave Himself to rescue us from everything that is evil and to make our hearts pure. He wanted us to be His own people and to be eager to do right. Teach these things as you use your full authority to encourage and correct people. Make sure you earn everyone's respect."

Titus 2:13-15.

My faith story. My faith begins with my grandparents. They heard, in rural Taranaki, one of the first church radio broadcasts in New Zealand. The broadcasts came from the enterprising West St Church of Christ in Auckland. My grandfather travelled from Taranaki to Auckland to confess his faith in Christ by being baptized. Later my grandmother was baptized at the New Plymouth Baptist Church by Pastor Salisbury of the Hamilton Church of Christ. New converts become contagious and it was not long before a simple Bible based home group became the New Plymouth Church of Christ. In that fellowship I was exposed from an early age to Conditionalist Advent teaching with a strong evangelistic emphasis through the ministry of Pastor Cyril Cooney.

At Easter we would travel, as a New Plymouth Youth Group, through to camp at Salisbury House. In those days in the big tent services and camp activities, including sermonettes, were held. One year, after giving a sermonette on Romans 10, several men came from different corners of the tent to ask me, "Do you know that the Lord is calling you to be a pastor?"

At the time I hadn't been baptized but faith in Christ was God's gift to me and for this mercy I praise His Name.

This I knew - there was a burning desire within me to serve Christ wherever I went. Although my personality was naturally shy and reserved I found that God's Word had inbuilt authority and the Holy Spirit propelled me into various leadership positions - as a student, as a teacher and finally as a Pastor.

During my ministry in various churches I have always had freedom to teach from the Word of God with a Conditionalist perspective. "Your funerals are different from others," the undertakers would say. In church work I found that if one is true to scripture then who can argue? To those with differing emphases I listened with respect and found that they would respect my teaching. After all our one desire in ministry is to bring people to Jesus and to encourage believers to witness and serve the Lord by finding the lost. The lost are always around us and it is my experience that the Holy Spirit leads us, like Philip to the Ethiopian official, to one person at a time.

The Conditional Immortality Perspective.

What is conditional immortality? My mentor Cyril Cooney wrote a booklet answering this question. But let us today turn to Scripture.

1 Corinthians 15:20-26 spells it out. Verses 22-23 are the Conditional Immortality verses:- "Adam brought death to all of us and Christ will bring Life to all of us. But we must each wait our turn. Christ was the first to be raised to life and His people will be raised to life when He returns."

Immortality comes to us as believers at the resurrection when Christ comes again. It is then that our hope, as Christian believers, will be realized. The resurrection is a togetherness experience. This teaching is in harmony with other scriptures; for example 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 which emphasises the together experience. "With a loud command

and with the shout of the chief angel and a blast of God's trumpet the Lord will return from heaven. Then those who have had faith in Christ before they died will be raised to life.

Next all of us who are still alive will be taken up into the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the sky. From that time on we will all be with the Lord forever. Encourage one another with these words."

This reminds us of Hebrews 11:39-40. "All of them pleased God because of their faith. But still they died without being given what had been promised. This was because God had something better in store for us. And He did not want them to reach their goal of faith without us."

Note the togetherness thought. God has a timing for everything.

After all our one desire in ministry is to bring people to Jesus

4 Our planet is moving to a time of great climax when our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ will be revealed. When the heavens part we shall see Him as He is. We will be drawn to Him as a magnet draws. God is love and there is no greater force in all the world.

Conditional Immortality sharpens the focus of the Gospel.

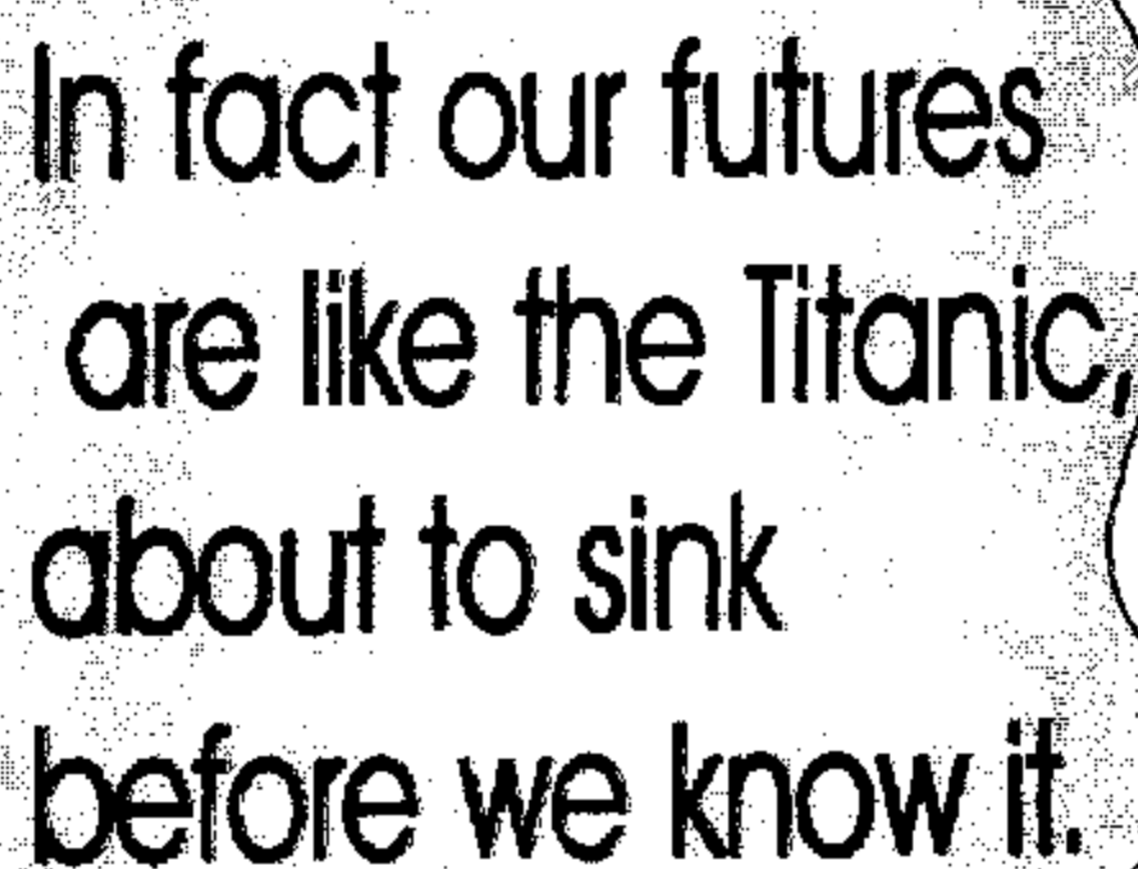
The gospel is about life and death. The scripture reveals there is no life for humans apart from Christ. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Life and the Truth." Humans have no immortality within themselves. The Greek philosophers' notion of the immortality of the soul is at best wishful thinking, at worst the devil's lie. To the parents of the human race the devil said, "You shall not surely die." A statement in direct contradiction to what God had said. The Apostle Paul wrote "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life."

In the Book of the Revelation the fact is clearly spelt out that all are going to have to give account for how we have spent our lives, for our lives are on loan to us. Each life affects other lives for good or for evil. No man, no woman is an island. As Christians we have to give an account to our Maker of our stewardship. According to the Book of the Revelation all evil and all wicked will be cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death beyond which there is no resurrection. It is a fire that consumes. This being so it is urgent that we bring, with great love, the gospel to those our lives touch.

Our present generation is turning into a death culture. We are losing respect for life. We have lost our sense of shame for abortions. In Thames our regional hospital has been scaled down dramatically with a reduction in surgical facilities. One major surgical facility is being considered for expansion - an increase in abortions. Thames might become a regional centre for killings. Once it was thought that

hospitals were for saving life. That was the Christian influence.

Suicides and attempted suicides are one of the great mysteries of life in New Zealand at the moment. They are part of the death culture. We had a student staying with us. He was suicidal and a great lover of heavy metal music which has an association with early death. The lad was baptized at our church and the last phone call we had from him in his home country was one of growth and development in Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ is about rescuing the perishing, caring for the dying. In fact our lives are like the "Titanic", about to sink before



In fact our futures
are like the Titanic,
about to sink
before we know it.

we know it.

Since many will have seen the film "Titanic" it may be relevant for us to observe four kinds of people that were part of the tragedy - all four kinds of people are in our churches today.

(1) The self confident.

The ship was unsinkable, brand new with the best of technology. But the crew had never had a proper life boat drill. They did not even seem to know how to lower the lifeboats. Many boats were loosed only partially full. With the "Titanic" self-confidence led to pride, and so concern for others was negligible. With Christians confidence in our methodology can lead to pride and so concern for the lost loses priority.

(2) The conservative, over-cautious.

There were two other ships which played a significant role in the drama of the "Titanic" tragedy. One was the "Californian". This ship had a very experienced captain. So experienced that he was reserved and cautious. The realities of life may cause us to react in this way if we allow the fear of failure to put us in a mode of perpetual hesitancy. When the Captain heard about the ice in the sea he slowed down. When he saw lots of ice, he ordered the ship to stop and wait for daylight. The radio operator began warning other ships in the area of the danger. At 7:30 p.m. the warning was received and logged by the "Titanic". The usually stormy North Atlantic was amazingly calm that night. The bridge watch of the "Californian" saw the "Titanic" coming to a stop only a few miles away. They saw the "Titanic" firing rockets into the air at regular intervals. A distress signal at sea. The crew of the "Californian" rationalised this, remarking that it must be a signal meant for another ship which they could not see. They did not even bother to wake the radio operator to see if he could contact the "Titanic". Then they watched the ship disappear beneath the sea while telling each other, as the lights dimmed, that she was sailing away. Had they responded to the first distress signal the "Californian" may well have been able to save most of the lives that were lost.

The incredible attitude of the nightwatch of the "Californian" is like many conservative Christians today. As our world sinks into darkness ~~we~~ are we going to sleep when we could save some? Or are we going to open our eyes and be angels of the Lord?

When we can help and we don't we will be held accountable before the Lord. The Lord Jesus came to give His life for others and He calls us to follow Him. Remember Daniel 11:23 "Those who know their God will display strength and action."

(3) The prayerfully active.

A third ship was part of the fateful drama of the "Titanic". "Carpathia" was captained by Arthur Rostron. He was a practising Christian, a man of prayer and action. At 12:35a.m. it was reported to this captain that the "Titanic" had hit an iceberg. Immediately he ordered his ship to turn around and full steam ahead. He ordered doctors on board to get ready for the emergency. A doctor was assigned to every dining room. Every possible piece of equipment and supplies needed for the sick were mobilised. He ordered extra men on duty to look out for icebergs. Stewards were sent to explain to their own passengers the reason for this special activity. Then the Captain got down on his knees and prayed. At 2:45a.m. they saw the first iceberg. The next hour they steered around five more.

At 4:00a.m. they reached the "Titanic's" last called position and began picking up lifeboats. As the sun rose it revealed an astonishing sight. The sea was full of icebergs, as far as the eye could see. The Captain knew who had brought him through. And so some from the "Titanic" were saved.

(4) The committed witness.

There was an evangelist from the Moody Bible Institute aboard the "Titanic". Floating in the freezing water he called to young man on a raft. "Young man are you a Christian?" A wave separated them - then they were together again - "Have you made your peace with God?" "I don't know how," came the reply. "Then call out to the Lord and He will save you" was the quick witness. At that the evangelist disappeared beneath the dark freezing sea. The lad got on board a lifeboat. Several weeks later at a Christian Youth Meeting in New York he gave a testimony, "I was the last convert of that evangelist."

The gospel is a witness to where life can be found. Do you hear the

voices calling out to where you live and spend your time? As times become more desperate the cries will become louder.

Conditional Immortality Focuses on the Second Coming of Christ.

At the cross of Christ, the centre of our faith, the second coming was proclaimed. It was the dying thief who called out to Jesus "Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom." Our Lord accepts him, "I tell you today, you shall be with me in paradise."

At the ascension of Christ the angels told the disciples that the Lord would come again. The Second Coming is hard to analyse. All the dead will rise. Some to everlasting life as Daniel declares and some to everlasting shame.

It is a time when Jesus shall reign and every knee shall bow to Him. Much is involved in the great endtime events. It seems like the volcanic eruptions of the Coromandel peninsula. Once a chain of fire that ended on Table Mountain (the leveltop volcano you see as you prepare to cross the long bridge into Thames). But the volcanic fire is not finished. The lava plug of the Taupo volcano is rising each year in the southern end of the lake - at an unknown time the volcanic fire will break through. Even the angels don't know when Jesus will return. He will return. He is coming for the repentant thief who died on the cross. He is coming for all His people. When He returns every eye will see Him.

We are not children of God by birth. We become children of God by adoption. When we say yes to the Lord we have the family promise of eternal life in God's kingdom. Our citizenship is in heaven. We await the Saviour's coming. As we wait we are to fill the land with rescue homes for the dying. Recently we had a young lad staying with us, a recovering alcoholic. There is a generation and a culture gap be-

tween us. But no gap is too wide for the cross of Christ. Nothing is impossible for God. Christ died for the lost. As a conditionalist I see a new dimension in God's love at the cross. Like the thief I can only call out "Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom."

But the thief did not stop there. It was not enough that the Lord should remember him - he warned the other thief and pointed to Jesus. 'Lord remember me' is not the end of the story. It is the beginning of a life of witness to a life giving Saviour who is coming again.

This campsite where we meet today is called "Carey Park" after the great pioneer missionary. It is interesting to remember that on that day in January 1793 when William Carey was set aside for his missionary task, his biographer Samuel Pearce Carey records: "*Carey preached that afternoon from the last words of the Apocalypse, which he had been steadfastly expounding . . . 'Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according to his work.' In the Kettering deliberations and decisions of October and of that day he could hear their Lord's re-arriving, to test their alertness, appoint their tasks and pledge His blessing.*"

So it was that the great missionary awakening came from that great conditionalist document, the Book of Revelation. "Behold, I come quickly" was God's call to William Carey.

This is our conference call today. "Behold I come quickly."

Amen.

This is a copy of the address given at Conference 1998.

The Rev. Don Dickson and his wife Olwyn serve together as a pastoral team at the Thames Baptist Church.



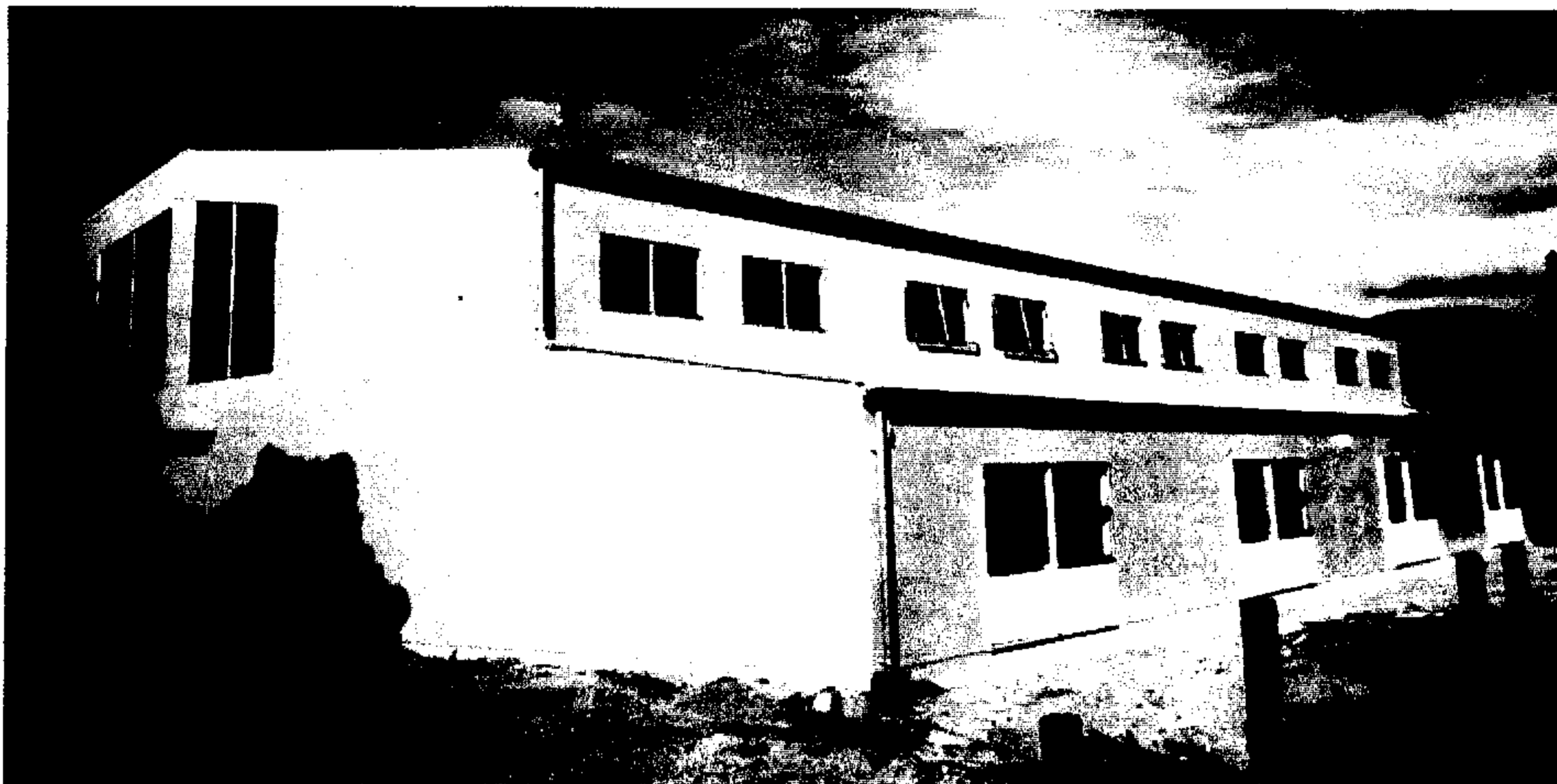
Carey park

CHRISTIAN CAMP

397 HENDERSON VALLEY ROAD, HENDERSON, AUCKLAND. PHONE/FAX (09) 8370494

Carey Park has had an exciting few months. Firstly of course, the "Re-creation Centre" which as of this date is almost completed with the final touches being done right now (eg. final drainlaying and painting - in preparation for the carpet going down in the next few weeks). It's a great facility and we are really looking forward to it being in full use. Because of a few overruns, mainly on the footings, we are unable to finish the mezzanine floor and back rooms - maybe next year(?) - although God has amazed us in the construction of this building. Last year we thought

we would have simply a concrete slab down by now and the picture shows just how much further down the track we are. If you would like to assist us in the finishing of the building we would love to hear from you.



TEEN MISSIONS TEAMS

Another exciting thing that has happened recently was the visit of 25 young people and their leaders from Teen Mission International in Florida. You might recall we had a group here in 1989 as well. Their reason for coming was to work (physically that is) on our site for 4 weeks.

They paid for their own travel here, plus their food while

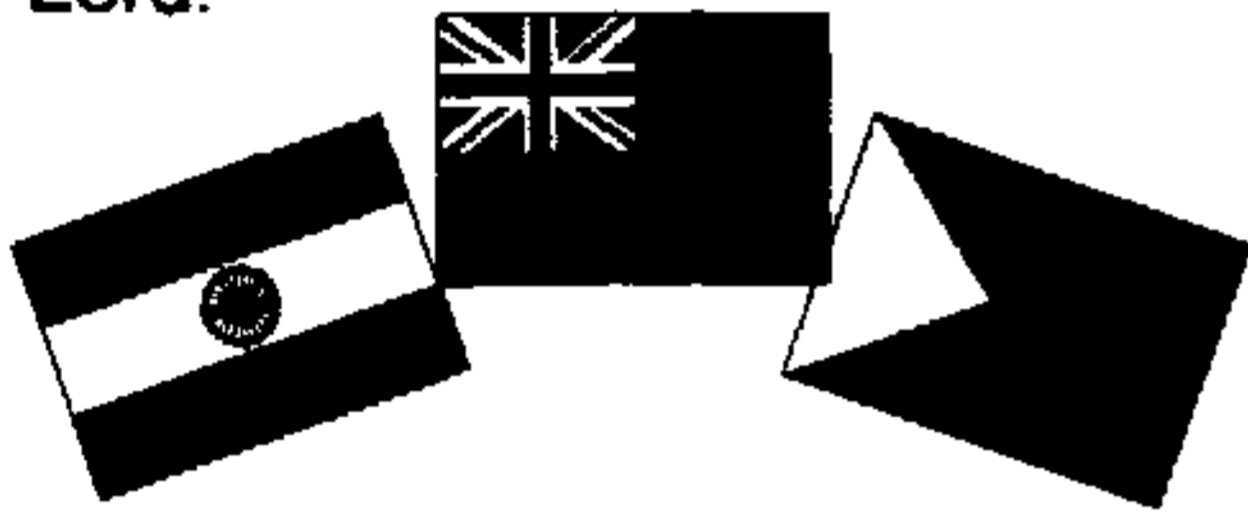
here, plus on top of that they gave us a donation of \$4200 to go towards the work they did. That was only one of their objectives, because they also took Church services, Sunday Schools, Youth meetings, and took ministry slots with some of the groups at Carey Park. Such an incredibly committed group. The work they did for us included building a tyre wall (which was very hard, backbreaking work), painting, helping us build partitions in the Salisbury Lodge dormitories, lay a carpet path and concrete a garage floor. We were so blessed by this group of kids from USA, Canada, South America and Alaska. They say they really enjoyed their time here, having the odd cultural experience on the way - like watching the All Blacks (lose), eating a roast dinner and pavalova, visiting Rotorua and seeing a Maori concert. We would love to have them back again sometime.



Cont'd on Page 9

Advent Christian Missions New Zealand

The focus of our activities over recent years has been to support, prayerfully and practically, the institutions in the Philippines and in India which train young people for various types of Christian service. The reasoning behind this policy is that by supporting these training institutions we are assisting and supporting the entire work of the National Advent Christian denominations, as Pastors, leaders and workers are fitted for full time or part time service for the Lord.



This policy has led to very close relationships with **Oro Bible College** at Cagayan De Oro in the Philippines, and the **College of Evangelism** at Kodaikanal in India. We are in regular contact with the leadership at these Colleges, and our input in and from New Zealand in several areas is welcomed and appreciated by them.

- we pray for them and with them
- we give financially
- we go and assist them practically

All of these activities have led to great blessing from the Lord for those involved, both in the countries concerned and here in New Zealand. It has been wonderful to see the Lord answering our specific prayers for various ministries, it has been a

joy to see funds sent from New Zealand helping to ensure good health and high standards of facilities and training for students, and there has been much personal blessing for the growing number of "Kiwis" who have been members of Work Teams.

We invite you all to share in the blessings by supporting the activities of Advent Christian Missions New Zealand in whatever ways you can - any assistance will be very welcome and will assist the preaching of the Gospel in the countries concerned.

WORK TEAM TO INDIA

Preparations are well in hand for our **second Work Team** to the College of Evangelism at Kodaikanal in southwest India. The Team is booked to leave **Auckland International Airport on December 27 1998 at 2.40pm**, and to return on **19 January 1999 at 12.40pm**.

Presently the Team consists of four men and two ladies, and

there are several other men seriously considering the Lord's call to join the Team. Please join with us in praying that we will leave with at least a further two or three men in addition to the already confirmed four. We have already seen the Lord's answers to our prayers as He has led a skilled builder to join the Team, we have a lady very fluent in the language spoken in the area we are going to, and we have a lady who has nursing training - add to that a trained Pastor to act as Chaplain to the Team and some good, keen handymen, and we have a Team which we are certain will achieve much both as far as the project is concerned, and in fellowshiping with and encouraging our Indian brothers and sisters in Christ, and the advisers to the Blessed Hope Fellowship - Earl and Martha Wright.

The main project the Team is to work on is the replacement of the galvanised iron /tile roof - which is leaking badly - of the hostel building in which the students live. As is always the case with our Work Teams, we are seeking to provide the funds to purchase all the materials needed for the project. This is to ensure that our Team's visit does not put the College under financial pressure, and allows us to contribute financially as well as practically. We are waiting for final figures from



A group of grateful Filipinos receiving food bought with funds sent from New Zealand

India for the
 8 cost of materials, and the amount needed for wages for the Indian workers we will hire to work with us, but we expect the figure needed to be in the vicinity of NZ\$10,000. We would welcome contributions towards this need. Please also pray with us that the Lord will provide the funds needed by each Team member to meet the cost of their travel, accommodation and living costs while away from home - we are grateful that churches and friends and families are often led by the Lord to assist individuals in this way.

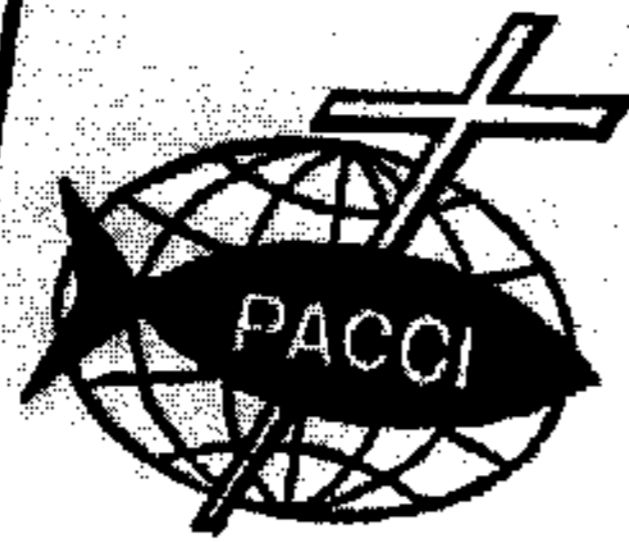
There will only be a small number of people going to Kodaikanal, but they will be representing a larger number here at home in New Zealand. Please begin now to pray for each Team member and their families, for all the arrangements to be made here in NZ and in India, for safety, for success and for great blessing for all concerned. Everyone who reads this report can be part of the Work Team's efforts in

service for the Lord by praying!

FAMINE RELIEF IN THE PHILIPPINES

Many of our Filipino brothers and sisters in Christ were badly affected by famine, caused by the El Nino weather pattern that has affected most of the world this year. Those living in rural areas, who depend solely on their crops for food were worst affected.

Because of the generosity of many individuals, and through fund raising efforts by some churches, we have been able to send funds to the Philippine Advent Christian Conference, for distribution to those most in need. The letter reproduced here is an indication of how much our assistance was appreciated. Since this letter was received we have been able to send a further similar sum for



Philippine Advent Christian Conference, Inc.
 32 MAX Y. SUIEL STREET
 CARMEN, CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY 8000
 PHILIPPINES

June 24, 1998

Dear Brethren:

Greetings!

We the Advent Christian Churches of the Philippines would like to express our gratitude and thanksgiving to the help you have extended to us.

Thank you very much for helping us. We distributed the P34,000.00 you have given us to the identified families through their pastors. There were about 570 families who received about 6 kilos of corn grits. Many of our people had been hungry since January of this year. Your help came when we needed them most. I think the months of May, June and July are the hardest. Your help has been of great relief. But the greatest joy was the reason behind the gift. The knowledge that there are brethren in far away places that do care has brought much thanksgiving and praise. When they distributed I am so touched by the report of one of our pastors. They had a prayer meeting giving thanks to God for the corn grits and the people who had sent them. They prayed with tears of joy.

Thank you for refreshing our souls.
 May God will cause His face to shine upon you!

In Christ Jesus,

Fernando C. Supangan
 REV. FERNANDO C. SUPANGAN
 President
 Philippine Advent Christian
 Conference Incorporated

famine relief - our sincere appreciation to every one who contributed in any way to this Hunger Relief Fund.

The rains have come, and the crops have been planted, but it will be several months before the harvests are ready. The need for assistance continues, and we would welcome continuing contributions to the Hunger Relief Fund and to the Blessing Fund which helps to provide food for the students at Oro Bible College. The students have also been affected by the drought, in that their families in the rural areas have not been able to as-

sist with their support, and inflation, caused by food shortages, has increased the cost of food even in the cities.

WORK TEAM TO ORO BIBLE COLLEGE 1999/2000

We are planning, God willing, to send a Work Team (the fifth) to Oro Bible College in the Philippines in December 1999 to assist with the construction of the badly needed building to provide on-campus accommodation for faculty members. This is the project which the 1997 Team which was postponed, was to carry out.

Because of the size of the project, we will need as large a Team as possible both as far as workers and support staff are concerned. We will also need to raise a large sum of money to assist with the cost of the project. Perhaps you may be used by the Lord to help this project progress! Perhaps you will be able to see the beginning of the new Millennium in the Philippines!! Would you begin praying with us for this undertaking also. In recent years we have seen God's answers to so many of our prayers - He will continue to be faithful!

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Carey park cont'd

Wedged in between these things was the **Baptist Youth Ministry camp** of 400 young people over Easter. It was great that they could use the part of the "Rec Centre" that was built. "First users." We were grateful once more for the many people who came and helped us with the cooking, cleaning etc. It doesn't look like we are having them next year as they have changed their emphasis and are looking at having a camp around the Waikato.

Our September holiday camps are all ready to go and we would value your prayers for:

"Kids" camp Sept 28th - 2nd Oct,
"Skids" camp 2nd - 4th Oct,
Teen Camp 5th - 9th Oct.

(The Teen camp is at Ponui Island) This is one of the major reasons we exist - to minister to Kids and Young people.

Who or What can you pray for?

Kim Beale speaker at the Kids,
May Kirkham at the Skids,
Frank Walton at the Teens,
The leadership and leaders as they run these programs,
For the kids themselves.

Has it ever occurred to you that this could be their last, or indeed their only opportunity to hear the gospel, to mix with Christian leaders and to really enjoy the wonderful outdoors God has blessed us with. We value highly the prayers of support which we know we get.

We are experiencing something of a downturn in bookings this year, probably for a number of reasons and our Board and Staff are constantly looking at ways to pull in our belts. I'm sure we are all feeling some of the same restraints. Next year is looking a whole lot better but in the mean time we are seeking ways to continue on the work in such a way that brings Glory to God.

Something to put on your calendar so that you can be a part of it, is the **"Grand opening of our Recreation Centre"** on

Sunday 6th December at 2.30pm. We are just making up our programme at the moment and we will inform everyone of the details later on. This will be a real celebration and we would love everyone to join us in a spirit of thankfulness to our great God.

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Don't Forget

**Combined
Service**

**Details,
Page 2**

Review *Life, Death and Destiny.* By Pastor Warren Prestidge

Resurrection Publishing, 1998
116 pages, \$15.00
Only available direct from the publisher.

I have read Warren Prestidge's book with a great deal of interest. I think Warren's presentation of the case for a conditionalist understanding of Biblical truth on the nature of life and death, and the ultimate destiny of the saved and the unsaved, is very thorough and cogently presented. Among the features I particularly appreciated I would list the following:

1. Every point is thoroughly dealt with from a Biblical understanding. The author quotes scriptural references throughout, and where the original Hebrew and Greek words are important to the understanding of a verse, he gives them carefully.

2. His references to others' writing on the subject are very comprehensive. Naturally, he has quoted mainly from authors who have said things similar to his understanding but the enormous number of these is overwhelming and shows a very wide reading both of classical and contemporary theologians. These certainly demonstrate that the position he is presenting is not a novel one.

3. It seems to me that Mr Prestidge has argued an overwhelming case to show that the Bible does not teach the immortality of the soul as a natural phenomenon for all human beings, but is an import especially into New Testament interpretation from Greek philosophy predominantly. Man is

not inherently immortal, but has the capacity to receive from God the gift of eternal life. I think his argument in the latter chapters of the book that this recognition gives added import to the proclamation of the gospel is convincing. The argument that the Bible's picture of the soul is the picture of a living being, not a part of human nature contained temporarily within a human body, that humans are not "body and soul", but body-soul unities, has

The argument that the Bible's picture of the soul is the picture of a living being, not a part of human nature contained within a human body ..., has much to commend it.

much to commend it and is in accord with scientific approaches today.

4. There is as the author states, much disquiet among many Bible-believing Christians as to the traditional pictures of hell as a place of endless torment for the impenitent whom God rejects. Disquiet as it gives a picture of a vindictive God to many people. The interpretation of *fire* as permanent final destruction rather than endless torment is cogently argued. Mr Prestidge is right in pointing out that much Biblical language is symbolic, and this interpretation of the symbol has much to commend it. The only clear reference to "*torment for ever*

and ever" is Rev 20:10. However, as Mr Prestidge points out, this is only spoken of as the fate of the devil, the beast and the false prophet. For the condemned at the Final Judgment, in 20:14, the *lake of fire* is described as *the second death*. Death speaks of cessation of being rather than continued consciousness. And maybe, even for the infamous three the metaphor of "being tormented day and night for ever and ever", is best understood as expressing pictorially the fact of their cessation from ever troubling the people of God, as Mr Prestidge argues. Some other metaphors used for the fate of those rejected by God such as the burning up of stubble in the furnace (Mal 4:1), or the chaff in several places, blown away, or burnt up, suggest annihilation rather than continued torment.

5. I liked the humility and tolerance of Mr Prestidge's statement on p.88 (bottom), "*Not that only conditionalists are truly or fully Christian! Not that non-conditionalists are apostate! At the very least, however, it is time for traditionalists to stop labelling conditionalists heretical!*" Surely after reading this book, people, even if not convinced, would agree with this sentiment.

6. For many of us, there will be an inherent unhappiness at the thought of nothingness or non-existence of the believer from death until the return of Christ. I think the book gives the best understanding of this when it speaks of the individual believer at death moving into a state of unconsciousness, of "dreamless sleep" from which he/she awakes

at the resurrection of the body. From the individual's point of view, there is no break of consciousness from the moment of death to the resurrection.

Now to some other detailed comments:

The positive presentation of what seems to me a view which is true to the teaching of the major part of the Bible is very thorough and convincing. Mr Prestidge seeks in all honesty to deal with passages that seem at first sight to give an alternate view, and to give an explanation of these in accordance with the conditionalist understanding. In my opinion he generally does this very well, but I do not think he is quite as convincing on these difficult passages as he is on the general positive interpretations.

There are passages which seem to suggest some kind of conscious existence of people who have died, before the general resurrection. Mr Prestidge's explanation of some of these (he tries to deal with most of them) are perhaps right, but sometimes one thinks he has had to resort to special pleading, to fit them into the overall convictions.

For instance I have uneasy qualms about his dealing with the parable of the Lord about the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16). Granted that the main point of the parable is not to discuss existences in the after-life, but responsibilities in this life to "hear Moses and the prophets", to say that Jesus was simply using the framework of a well-known story, probably of ancient Egyptian origin related to Anubis, and taken up by some Pharisees, without questioning implications which were in conflict with truth, seems to me dangerous. At what

other points are Jesus' statements to be held to be in error?

With regard to the penitent thief, Mr Prestidge explains "today" in Luke 23:43 as referring "to the whole era of salvation inaugurated by His ministry, death and resurrection, to be consummated at His return". "While this is possible, it seems stretched! Jesus was responding to a man who asked to be remembered when, at a future date, Jesus came into his kingdom. If the Lord was simply confirming what the man asked, why should he use a word "today" in speaking to this man? Did he offer a word as a theological conundrum to a dying man? Personally, I think much more likely the explanation of von Allmen, which Mr Prestidge regards as unlikely, that "today" is to be read with, "I say to you", not with "you will be...." I think von Allmen overstates the case in saying, "it is far more common, in biblical Greek, for 'today' to follow rather than precede the verb it refers to". But leave out the "far more" and the statement is correct. I checked out all the uses of *semeron* (today) in the New Testament where it modifies a verb (not another adverb or time phrase), and found that of 24 occurrences, in 15 it is before the verb it modifies, and in 9 it is after. At least this means that either rendering is about equally possible. The whole question is where a modern Greek N.T. will insert the comma. There were no punctuation marks in original manuscripts. The UBS text, following earlier texts, inserts a comma before "today", leading to our usual translation. But to insert the comma after "today" is the simplest solution to a problem text. I can only find one other place where *semeron* is used, as here, in a direct quotation. It is in

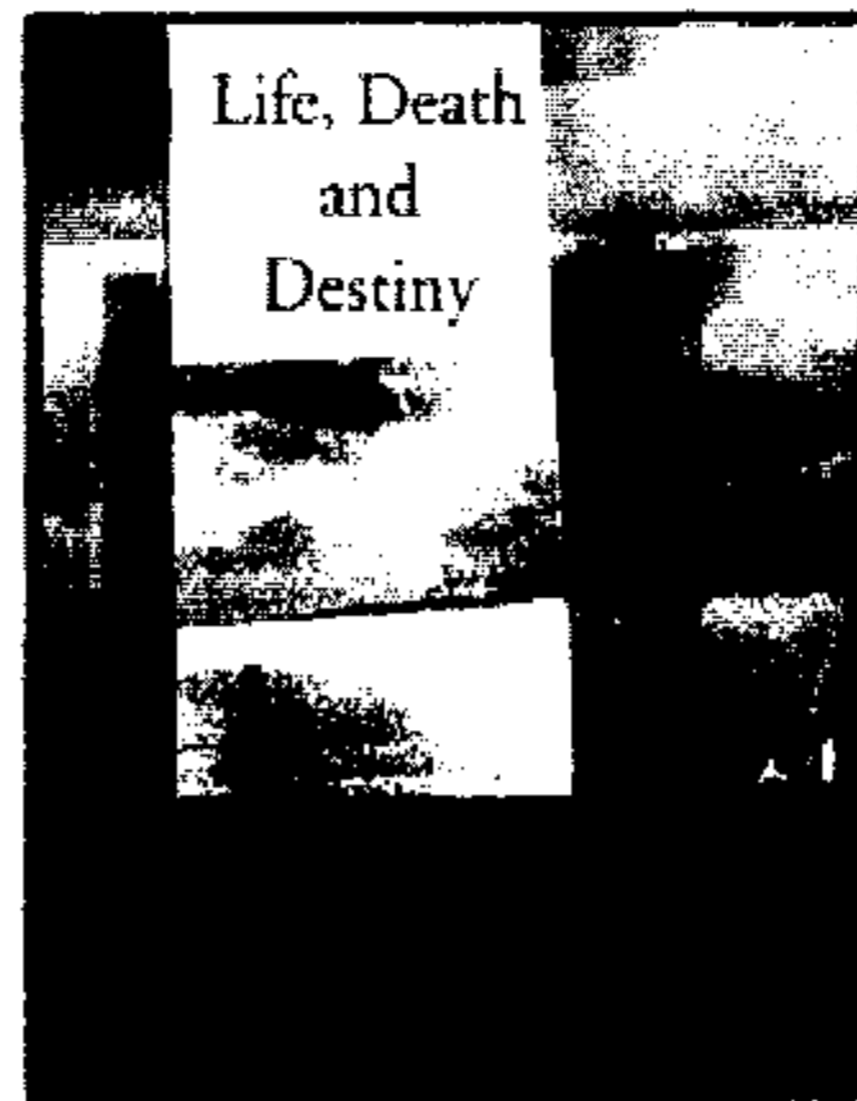
the Greek LXX rendering of Deut 30:18, *I declare to you today. "You will utterly perish ..."* In this text it is certain that *semeron* comes after the verb it modifies, because *oti* (that) is inserted before the quotation.

I think the frequent references in John to the present possession of eternal life (e.g. John 5:24) should not be turned into a promise for the future, though of course the ultimate future is guaranteed thereby. It is like "the kingdom of God" which is seen both as a present reality, and a final future coming in its full realisation. In fact, "eternal life" seems to generally replace "the kingdom of God" after 3:5 in John's Gospel. Perhaps it is better to think of the quality of life we receive when we are born again: the life of God, the life of the Eternal, rather than as "unending". For me, I would think we have this gift of eternal life now. Maybe from death until the Lord's return this possession of ours will be in God but it continues on, and will be confirmed to us in the final judgment, for our names are already inscribed in the book of life (Rev 20:15). So for the born-again believer, death is not non-existence, but non-consciousness.

I appreciated the book very much. It is a very good, thoughtful presentation of a vitally important subject. I hope it will enjoy good circulation, and will be read by many, both those who are already convinced of its truth, and those who are not, but are willing to consider the case for an alternative presentation from their own convictions.

Rev. Dr. David Stewart,
Principal Emeritus,
Bible College of New Zealand.

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