

# From Death to Life

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## Issue 24



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John Foxe was born in Lincolnshire England, in 1516. He joined the Reformers early in life and in "Bloody Mary's" reign he was forced to flee the country. In 1539 he returned to England and entered the ministry. As one who was himself on the run from persecution for a period of his life, Foxe was well qualified to put together his most famous work which became known as the "Book of Martyrs". It covers such stories as:

- \* the martyrdom of Stephen and the Apostles;
- \* the persecution of the early Christians by the Romans;
- \* the account of the persecution of Wycliffe and the reform movement inspired by him in England and on the continent; and
- \* the persecution of Bible - believing Protestants in England and Scotland, during the reigns of Henry VI I and Edward VI and that of "Bloody Mary".

The Convocation of the English Church ordered in 1571 that copies of the "Book of Martyrs" be kept for public inspection in all cathedrals and in the houses of church dignitaries. The book was open in many parish churches. Foxes passionate style and vivid descriptions of the sufferings of the martyrs made it very popular among Protestants down to the nineteenth century.

Jesus told his disciples, "I will build my church & the gates of hell [Hades] will not overcome it." (Matthew 16:18). John Foxe begins his famous book, with a comment upon this verse. In effect he shows that the whole history of the Church from the days of the first Apostles to his (and by extension to ours) seems but to verify this prophecy:

- \* First, Christ does indeed have a Church in this world.
- \* Second, that Church has been assaulted by all the powers of Hell;
- \* Third, all the power of Hades, has not overcome the Church.

Foxe tends to see the "gates of Hell" as an offensive on the part of "Hell" (presumably the "Devil's Head Quarters and staff"); "Hell", he says, is attacking the church. The truth however is much more subtle and much more profound.

In the Old Testament the "gates of Hades" (Sheol) never has any other meaning than that of death (In this context see especially Psa. 9:13; but see also Job 38:17; Psa. 107:18; I sa 38:10). This is not a picture of "Hell" attacking Christ's church, but of the threat of death's possible victory over the church.

But the Church is built upon the confession of Jesus as her Messiah. Death, the gates of Hades, will not prevail against the Church by keeping Him imprisoned. This is that great truth, which He soon began to tell them plainly (Mat. 16:21). This same truth is echoed in Acts 2:24,31. Thus, from this side of the cross, we can say that Christ's church has not been overcome by death because He has won the definitive victory. He burst the gates of Hades and came forth as conqueror. He lives forever and ever to be the guarantor of the victory of His people, the church, over death.



# President's Desk

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# Fire and Flood

## How the New Testament Uses the First Testament to Teach on Final Punishment (part three) **G. Andrew Peoples**

### Jude 7

In Jude vv. 5-16, Jude writes concerning certain false teachers in the church. In verses 5-7 he reminds his readers of the fact that the God who saved them is also the God who punishes the wicked. He recalls three examples from history where God has done just that. He destroyed in the wilderness those Israelites who did not believe. He imprisoned the angels who did not keep their “proper dwelling” and has reserved them for the Day of Judgment, and He punished the perverse and immoral men of Sodom and Gomorrah. The way this third example is worded is curious at first sight. “Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust, *serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.*”

When reflecting on how the doctrine of final punishment is taught and preached, the phrase “eternal fire” is a familiar one. It appears only three times in Scripture; in Matthew 18:8, 25:41 and here in Jude 7. Shedd’s treatment of Jude 7 is not unusual: He lists it along with many other texts supposed to teach endless conscious suffering (e.g. Matt 25:46; Mark 9:45; 2

Thess 1:8; Rev 20:10) and does not comment on this specific text.<sup>1</sup> The phrase “eternal fire” is there, and when put in a theological context of the doctrine of eternal torment, its meaning will be obvious: A fire that burns throughout all eternity, never ceasing. Dixon lists it along with a host of other proof texts (e.g. Dan 12:2, which does not actually mention fire at all; 2 Thess 1:9, which does not call the fire eternal; Matt 18:8 and Matt 25:41) to establish the proposition that “[hell’s] fire is eternal.”<sup>2</sup>

Over and against such treatments of this passage, it needs to be noted that Jude 7 is not a description of *final punishment* at all. The text tells us that Sodom and Gomorrah serve as an example by undergoing the vengeance of eternal fire. If we want an example of what eternal fire is, we may look to Sodom. It is illegitimate to import a doctrine of hell into this text. It looks as though some have equated the saying “eternal fire” with the concept of eternal torment. But to do this and thus find the doctrine of eternal torment here would be to commit a formal logical fallacy – even if the doctrine of eternal torment is *true*. It seems to go something like this:

1.) Hell is eternal fire

2.) Jude 7 refers to “eternal fire”

3.) Therefore Jude 7 refers to hell<sup>3</sup>

To the traditionalist the fallacy might not be immediately obvious, but let us use another example of the same kind of reasoning:

1.) Squares have four sides

2.) This shape has four sides

3.) Therefore this shape is a square

Not necessarily, the shape could be a diamond. Or for a Christian audience, consider the following:

1.) Jesus Christ is a man

2.) I am a man

3.) Therefore I am Jesus Christ

This clearly does not follow. It is the formal fallacy of *affirming the consequent*.<sup>4</sup> Just because a particular phrase can be predicated of hell does not mean that wherever that phrase appears it *is* referring to hell. If we followed this kind of flawed reasoning, the traditionalist would be permitted to find eternal torment in any text that referred to “punishment,” since she accepts the proposition that “hell is punishment.” Basically, what it amounts to doing is finding *your* beliefs in any text that uses the same terms *you* use to express that belief.<sup>5</sup>

It is, however, quite relevant to the issue of final punishment that the phrase

“eternal fire” appears here. While this verse does not refer to final punishment, this phrase *is* used to refer to final punishment elsewhere. And where it is so used elsewhere, it is said to demonstrate that hell consists of endless suffering. A good example would be Matthew 18:8 where Jesus warns that it is better to enter “life” maimed than to enter the “eternal fire” with all our bodily members.<sup>6</sup> If, however, the phrase “eternal fire” can be applied to the historical destruction of Sodom, then clearly it is not *necessary* to see the phrase as a reference to a fire that endures forever and ever. Some, however, have disagreed. Lenski tells us that according to Jude 7, Sodom and Gomorrah “are an indication or sign (not ‘example,’ – our versions), that *point* like a finger to ‘eternal fire’ “ [emphasis added].<sup>7</sup> The fire that destroyed Sodom, says Lenski, was *not* an eternal fire, but a shadow or symbol of eternal fire. Bietenhard, in an attempt to argue that the eternal fire in this verse does refer to the everlasting fires of hell and not the fire that destroyed Sodom appeals to a contemporary Jewish idea that the people of Sodom were presently undergoing fiery torture in hell.<sup>8</sup> Thus, we are expected to conclude, the “example” that they serve is an example of people *going to hell*, the “eternal fire.” Both of these arguments look like attempts to avoid the natural force of what Jude says. In the case of Lenski’s argument, whether we translate as *deigma* “example” or “sign” (although there is good reason

to read example”), the point is that served as this “sign” or “example” *by* “undergoing the vengeance of eternal fire.”<sup>9</sup> This strengthens the view that *deigma* should read “example,” as the eternal fire is something *seen* in the historical destruction of Sodom. In addition, the word is used in non-biblical Greek to refer to “samples of corn and produce.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, while this form of the word appears only once in the NT, other forms of it are used in many places, where the fairly consistent meaning is “example,” whether good or bad.<sup>11</sup> With regard to Bietenhard’s observation, the same rebuttal applies. Sodom’s serving as an *example* by undergoing the vengeance of eternal fire would scarcely be served by their present sufferings in hell, since whether or not they are or not is quite beyond our powers of observation. If that is an example, it is the most hidden “example” in history! The question might now be asked – *why* does Jude use the term “eternal fire”? The historical example of eternal fire (the fire that destroyed Sodom) is clearly not a fire that burns forever. What then does the term mean, given that in this context it cannot mean and *endless* fire? Edward Fudge (and he is not alone), after considering the various ways that *aionios* (eternal/everlasting) is used, concludes that while the word does have a quantitative element (i.e. it does often refer to *duration*), it also has a strong *qualitative* element. “It suggests something that partakes of the transcendent realm of divine activity.”<sup>12</sup>

Baird comments, in reference to the “eternal fire” of Matthew 24:31-46, that “The fire and the punishment partake of the nature of the *aion* [age],” that is, the age to come.<sup>13</sup>

This appears to be true in Jude 7 also, where the fire that annihilated Sodom and Gomorrah is explicitly said to be an “example,” a foretaste of the fire of the age to come. They suffer as an example of the fire that will consume the enemies of God in the coming *aion*.

#### **Revelation 14:9-11**

*Then another angel, a third, followed them, crying with a loud voice, “Those who worship the beast and its image, and receive a mark on their foreheads or on their hands, they will also drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and they will be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image and for anyone who receives the mark of its name.”*

According to Robert Peterson, this text is one of the three “most revealing biblical passages on hell.”<sup>14</sup> Like many, his conclusion is that “Revelation 14:9-11 teaches that hell entails eternal conscious torment for the lost.”<sup>15</sup> Millard Erickson reflects on this vision, saying, “What would produce smoke, unless something was burning?”<sup>16</sup> It would surely

follow that if the smoke goes up forever, then the unsaved must burn forever. The exegete who does not believe in eternal torment then, is in a position where she needs to show why this passage should *not* be interpreted to refer to the traditional teaching.

The Book of Revelation is replete with Scriptural language and imagery, and this passage is no exception. It is “rooted in the Old Testament. This is where we find the clues to the meaning of the various symbols – comparing scripture with scripture.”<sup>17</sup> In fact, while unlike most NT books this one never *cites* the Scriptures, it remains true that “**No** book of the NT is more thoroughly saturated with the thought and language of ancient Scripture than the book of Revelation” [emphasis added].<sup>18</sup> This fact should alert us to be extra sensitive to the scriptural background of the imagery that is employed in this book. The language used here of the followers of the beast is almost exactly like that used in the prophecy against Edom in Isaiah 34:9-10

*And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil into **sulphur**; her land shall become **burning pitch**. **Night and day** it shall not be quenched; **its smoke shall go up forever**. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; no one shall pass through it forever and ever.*

No exegete has ever suggested that Isaiah 34:9-10 is a reference to the eternal

torment of the inhabitants of Edom. On the contrary John Watts observes,

*The effects of the ban bring an end to Edom's existence as a country and as a people. The resulting desolation is pictured in three ways which may remind a modern reader of the anticipated results of a nuclear bombing. The countryside will smell of burning pitch and sulfur. Pitch ... occurs in the OT only one other time ... but sulfur ... was rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24) in a place very near to Edom... In Ezek 38:22 God allows sulfur and fire to fall on Gog and Magog. And in Isa. 30:33 the breath of Yahweh is pictured as a stream of sulfur. The desolation is pictured as lasting forever, burning day and night.*<sup>19</sup>

Otto Kaiser likewise finds himself concluding, “It is clear enough that he [the poet] thought of the end of Edom in a similar way to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.”<sup>20</sup> It seems self-evident that the language of endlessness here (fire never being quenched, smoke rising forever) is not intended to portray eternal misery but rather “the perpetuity of the destruction.”<sup>21</sup> The image of smoke used here in Isaiah is taken directly from the account of Sodom’s destruction in Genesis 19:28, where Abraham looks upon the remains of Sodom the following day and sees “dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace.”

There is, therefore, a biblical precedent in prophetic literature for the intended

meaning of the images of subjection to fire and sulphur, along with the accompanying picture of ascending smoke. Although a strictly literalistic interpretation might imply burning that lasts for all eternity and smoke that will continue to rise, the *point* being made via such imagery is that the destruction is total and irreversible. We see the same kind of imagery appearing in the book of Revelation elsewhere as well. For example, we are told that “the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again” (18:21). Yet when this overthrow is depicted we see a re-appearance of the language from Isaiah, “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever” (19:3). What is in mind here appears to be the overthrow of a godless kingdom, and as with Sodom and Edom, the smoke rising forever and ever emphasizes the totality and irreversibility of the judgment. It is these observations that lead Fudge to say that eternal torment “is a possible interpretation – if we ignore how the Bible itself uses the same language elsewhere.”<sup>22</sup>

G.K. Beale notes this connection between Isaiah 34 and Revelation 14 and 19 but does not seem to fully appreciate its significance. He notes that the reference to Babylon’s smoke ascending forever “comes from Isaiah 34:9-10, where the portrayal of smoke continually ascending serves as a permanent memorial to God’s punishment of Edom for its sin.”<sup>23</sup> However, when commenting on

19:3 he notes what appears to him to be an interpretative difficulty, and offers his own solution:

Rev. 14:11 also [i.e. in addition to 19:3] alludes to Isaiah 34:9-10 to describe the never-ending effect of God's judgment of the beast's followers. Here Edom's fall is taken as an anticipatory typological pattern for the fall of the world system, which will never rise again after God's judgment. Why does John reapply the Isaiah allusion from 14:11, which there referred to the eternal punishment of unbelievers and here to Babylon's judgment? What is the link between the two similar descriptions? It is perfectly natural that ungodly individuals whose lives were inseparably linked to the great city should also suffer the same fate as that city, a linkage borne out in 18:4.<sup>24</sup>

Beale sees the connection between the destruction of Edom, and the destruction of this city of "Babylon," and notes the obvious, that the latter is using the language of the former to make the same point – that it will be permanently done away with. However, when he sees that the identical imagery is applied to the fate of those who follow the beast in Revelation 14, he sees a problem. The problem is that Beale, like other traditionalists, does not believe that the ungodly people *will* suffer the fate suggested by this imagery – permanent destruction. How, asks Beale, can the imagery on the one hand mean "eternal punishment" (by

which he means eternal torment), and yet only a few chapters later mean everlasting destruction? It should be clear that this problem will only arise if we approach the book of Revelation believing in eternal torment to begin with; otherwise no conflict would arise when we see the destructive imagery of Isaiah being applied to the followers of the beast. We might also note that Beale's solution does not really achieve the end he seeks. When he acknowledges that these texts show the ungodly individuals suffering "the same fate as that city," it is apparent that he has not taken eternal torment off the proverbial hook at all. Rather, he undermines it, given that he has described the "fate" of "that city" as being like that of Edom, permanent destruction, and he has already noted there that the smoke rising forever need not imply eternal torment, but rather it serves as a "memorial" of its punishment.

Carson's rejection of the view of Revelation 14 presented here is almost staggering. He says:

*If there is an allusion to the sufferings of Edom in Isaiah 34 [in Revelation 14], I suspect that Edom has the same typological reference to hell that Sodom and Gomorrah have: "they [Sodom and Gomorrah] serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire" (Jude 7).<sup>25</sup>*

If Edom, like Sodom and Gomorrah really *do* serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of

eternal fire (as we have argued that they do), then the result is an *acceptance*, rather than a rejection, of the annihilationist understanding of Revelation 14:9-11. It appears, however, that this is not what Carson wants his readers to think. The context of his words shows us that he is defending eternal torment (or at least something like it) as a definition of hell. His argument cited above then, can be broken down as following:

- 1.) *Hell* is eternal torment
- 2.) The imagery of Sodom and Edom foreshadows *hell*, which is what is presented here in Revelation 14 using the imagery of Edom and Sodom
- 3.) Therefore, Edom and Sodom foreshadow eternal torment.

The circular nature of this argument is obvious. Unless premise 1) is present the rest of the argument falls to the ground. If we simply switch 1) for 1a) Hell is annihilation, then the conclusion would be transformed into 3a) Therefore Edom and Sodom foreshadow annihilation. Carson might object to having his argument cast in such an unfavourable way, but unless 1) is taken for granted then his statement is puzzling indeed, for it no more endorses eternal torment than it does annihilation. Surely a more persuasive argument is:

- 1.) Revelation 14:9-11, in order to convey a certain meaning, uses the imagery and language of Edom and Sodom
- 2.) The imagery and language of Edom and Sodom has a

biblical precedent for conveying the idea of annihilation

3.) Therefore the punishment alluded to (using imagery) in Revelation 14:9-11 is annihilation.

Peterson does nothing to rebut this interpretation of Revelation 14:9-11, although he does appeal to this text as though it clearly excludes the annihilationist view. It is noteworthy, however, that although the person he is interacting with (Edward Fudge) points out the Scriptural imagery that is being drawn on here from Isaiah, Peterson makes no reference to Isaiah's words in an attempt to account for their reappearance here.<sup>26</sup> Other defenders of eternal torment have offered similar approaches to this passage. Buis, for example, quotes it without comment along with Revelation 20:12-15 (also without comment), and apparently assumes that this will silence those who do not believe in eternal torment.<sup>27</sup> His later comments on the verses he has cited focus on proving that the Greek term for "forever" really means "forever."<sup>28</sup> It will be noted that this fact is not in dispute here. Rather, it is being pointed out that the vision itself is drawing on earlier imagery that we accept as referring to complete destruction. The conclusion that we may legitimately draw from this is that the visions in the book of Revelation are not intended to be taken absolutely "literally." Rather than trying to impose what we think would be a "natural" reading of the text (i.e. as literal a reading as possible), we must allow the

Scripture to spell out its own vocabulary for us. This is especially true in light of the very nature of apocalyptic literature, as Sam Hamstra explains:

Scholars describe this pictorial presentation or truth as apocalyptic: a style of communication and writing characterized by bold colors vivid images, unique symbols, a simple story line, a hero, and a happy ending. Thus, in Revelation you meet angels, animals, and numbers. You see lightning and hear thunder. You witness earthquakes and battles. You see the sparkle of jewels and a woman clothed with the sun facing a terrifying dragon. You see a rider on a white horse and hear the lyrics of the Hallelujah chorus.<sup>29</sup>

When we forget the genre that we are dealing with, and begin to treat the book of Revelation like simple historical narrative or a didactic piece of writing about the nature of the world to come, we are misusing it and cannot hope for any reliable results. When we do take the genre seriously into account, and allow Scripture to interpret its own symbols, we are surely on much safer ground.

A final observation on this passage is that made by Ralph Bowles regarding the "immediate context of Revelation 14."<sup>30</sup> A fact that seems to have eluded most traditionalist theologians commenting on Revelation 14:9-11 is that it does not depict any kind of punishment at all!<sup>31</sup> Rather, it depicts an angel *announcing* a punishment on the followers

of the beast. These are the words of the angel, not a description of the punishment that John sees. The punishment itself does not occur until verses 14-20. The Son of Man and His angels harvest the earth with sharp sickles, and the grapes are thrown into the winepress of God's wrath. Verse 20 tells us, "And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for a distance of about two hundred miles." Here we have yet more imagery drawn from the Scriptures (Isaiah 63:2-6), further confirming the annihilationist thesis. Rather than endless conscious suffering, the picture of being crushed until the blood gushes out for many miles is a ghastly picture of a gruesome death. But admittedly, simply to see the image and conclude that this is a snapshot of what final punishment will be like would be to commit the same error that traditionalists commit with verses 9-11. The point is though, using the same kind of hermeneutic as traditionalism uses for verses 9-11 to find eternal torment, we can find a model of final punishment in verse 20 that contradicts eternal torment.

*The Conditionalist interpretation of Revelation 14:11 fits the immediate context much better than the eternal torment reading. There is no tension between the terms of proclamation of final judgement in Revelation 14:9-11 and the description of final judgement in Revelation 14:14-20. The traditionalist reading has a tension between the eternal torment supposedly predicted in*

*Revelation 14:11 and the picture of final annihilating destruction that follows in Revelation 14:14-20.*<sup>32</sup>

It is not clear how the traditionalist (if any *had* shown an awareness of this problem) might justify taking one image so literally (vv 9-11) yet clearly not applying the same kind of literalness to the imagery that appears only a few verses later, but we suggest that such a decision would be purely arbitrary.

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(Footnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, *The Doctrine of Endless Punishment*, 76-77.

<sup>2</sup> Larry Dixon, *The Other Side of the Good News*, 86.

<sup>3</sup> A valid way to express the relationship between hell, eternal fire and Jude might go like this:

1.) Hell is eternal fire, 2.) Jude refers to hell, 3.) Therefore Jude is referring to eternal fire.

Although valid (i.e. the conclusion follows deductively from the premises), this argument would not be sound (i.e. the premises and conclusion are true). Obviously Jude does not refer to "hell," he refers to "eternal fire," and whether or not eternal fire in this context means "hell" is one of the very things in dispute.

<sup>4</sup> Irving M. Copi, *Introduction to Logic* (New York: MacMillan, 1978, 5th ed.), 251.

<sup>5</sup> While on the surface of it this might sound almost reasonable, it would in fact entail quite absurd hermeneutics if we applied it consistently. We might conclude (as some in history have), for example, that the disciples had a formula of Church-State relations in mind when they said, "here are two swords" (Lk 22:38). Or we might conclude that whenever a person is said to be in the presence of God (e.g. Ex 18:12; Deut 12:7; Ac 10:33) they have temporarily died and gone to heaven.

<sup>6</sup> While a full exegesis of this text would be beyond the scope of this work, two things can be noted:

1.) This saying in Matthew is a parallel of the text Mark 9 treated earlier in this paper, which suggests final death rather than eternal torment  
2.) Going into the "eternal fire" in this text is set in contrast to entering "life" which could easily be taken to affirm the annihilationist view that going into the eternal fire signifies the second and eternal "death."

<sup>7</sup> R., Lenski, *The Interpretation of St Peter, St John and St Jude* (Columbus: Wartburg, 1945), 625, cited in Edward Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*, 179.

<sup>8</sup> H. Bietenhard, "Fire," in C. Brown (ed.), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1975), vol. 1, 657, cited in Fudge, *The Fiire That Consumes*, 180.

<sup>9</sup> This literal wording is considerably obscured by the NIV, which inserts "of those who," reading "They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire." This addition can give the misleading impression that the Sodomites *themselves* did not undergo such a fire at the time.

<sup>10</sup> J.H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder, 1963), 173.

<sup>11</sup> For some examples, see Col, 2:15; Matt 1:19; Heb 4:11, 9:9; John 13:15; James 5:10; 1 Pet 2:6. This fact is pointed out by Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*, 180.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> J. Arthur Baird, *The Justice of God in the Teaching of Jesus*, New Testament Library (London: SCM, 1963), 233.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Peterson, "The Case for Traditionalism," 160. We would want to point out that the term "hell" (whether translated from *hades* or *gehenna*) does not appear in this text, and at no time in the book of Revelation is the word hell used in connection with the punishment in fire that is alluded to here, except from when *hades* is cast into the lake of fire (20:14). The other two passages that Peterson counts among the most significant are Revelation 20:10-15 (which we will cover next) along with Matthew 25:31-46, which lies beyond the scope of this work.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>16</sup> Millard J. Erickson, "Is Hell Forever?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152:607 (1995), 271.

<sup>17</sup> David and Pat Alexander (ed.), *The Lion handbook to the Bible* (Tring: Lion Publishing, 1973), 645-646. While a list of contributors is given, it is not stated who wrote the article on the book of Revelation.

<sup>18</sup> J.R. Michaels, "Old Testament in Revelation," in Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (eds.), *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Developments* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 850-851.

<sup>19</sup> John D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1987), 12.

<sup>20</sup> Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, trans. R.A. Wilson, Old Testament Library (London: SCM, 1974), 358.

<sup>21</sup> John N Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 614.

<sup>22</sup> Edward Fudge, "The Case for Conditionalism," in Fudge and Peterson, *Two Views of Hell*, 75.

<sup>23</sup> Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 929.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 929. It should be noted than when Beale uses the words "eternal punishment," what he *means* is "eternal torment," "punishment" being used in a qualified, interpreted way.

<sup>25</sup> Don Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 526.

<sup>26</sup> Peterson, "The Case for Traditionalism," 159-164.

<sup>27</sup> Harry Buis, *The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1957), 46-47.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>29</sup> Sam Hamstra, "An Idealist View of Revelation," in Marvin C. Pate (ed.), *Four Views on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 97.

<sup>30</sup> Ralph Bowles, "Does Revelation 14:11 teach Eternal Torment? Examining a Proof-text on Hell," *Evangelical Quarterly* 73:1 (2001) 28.

<sup>31</sup> For example Robert Peterson, Larry Dixon, Harry Buis and William Shedd offer no evidence that they are even aware of this fact, let alone that they have a responding argument to what follows.

<sup>32</sup> Ralph Bowles, "Does Revelation 14:11 Teach Eternal Torment?" 29.

# Carey Park Report

## Carey Park Report

We've had a taste of summer this year with some decent periods of sunshine which have helped us to install some new drainage pipes into our fields, do some landscaping and begin works on our new sewerage system.



We have had lots of activity around

here with many groups coming through and enjoying the facilities. One of the most frequent comments we get is "wow you guys have done so many improvements since we were last here". Its great to get that feedback, sometimes all we can see is everything that still needs to be done, but we just need to look at all that has gone on already and praise God for the way He continues to bless us and use us for the furthering of His Kingdom.



In January we took a group of Teenagers up to Summer Harvest in Whangarei. A great time was had by all, although with 700 rowdy teenagers there is no hope of achieving any decent length of sleep. Ian Grant, the speaker, did a great job of challenging these kids and there



was a great response to his message.

Our kids camp also went well with 60 kids and 20 leaders. The theme was "Space Legacy". Just about everything had a 'space' flavour to it including the food! The kids also had

a chance to make a tile which we are going to mount on a wall around the camp to 'leave their legacy'. We challenged the kids on what kind of legacy they were going to leave behind to future generations and Kim Beale once again did an excellent job with the Bible talks.

We are now gearing up for two very big weekends in March, both groups are hovering around the 300 mark and the staff are all heads down trying to get the grounds ready for them.

One of the key issues that faces camps today is 'Safety'. The Ministry of Education in particular is becoming stricter on facilities that schools use for their Outdoor Education. This is a good move in the right direction however this kind of thing also means more manpower and dollars needed to put the right documentation and practises in place. Please pray for us as we endeavour to make our camp meet these requirements and be proactive in creating safe places for children to play in.

Thank you for your support

Yours in Christ  
Cameron Dick  
Carey Park  
Camp Director



# ACMissionNZ



## Your Support Is A Blessing

Grant and Ernie on more than one occasion have expressed their thanks for all your prayerful support, for the letters, cards, email messages and gifts that you send. It is so encouraging for them to know the tremendous support that there is here for them and they do count it a privilege to serve the Lord and to represent you in ministry in both India and the Philippines.

## The Lord Answers Prayer

The Lord certainly is answering your prayers. The first phone call Ernie received, the day after he returned home to India, was from **Rev Magimai Dass**. He was phoning with good news. **Firstly, his health has been very good since we began to pray** – no more kidney stones. **Secondly, the neighbours of his church at Virugambakkam have agreed to discuss the sale of their land** to the church. The church may not need to relocate. **Thirdly, his wife Brindha and their younger daughter are back with him and his elder daughter**, and they are a complete family again! All of this is an answer to our prayers.

**We can also thank the Lord that Ernie was able to get another 6 month visa.** This will take him through to June when he will be coming home for his first furlough. There were some moments of uncertainty at the Indian Embassy in Manila, but prayer prevailed, and the visa was there waiting for Ernie when he returned for it two weeks later as he left the Philippines. Yes, the Philippines!

## More To Thank God For

We can thank God for a great time of fellowship and relaxation that Ernie and Grant were able to share with our American missionary colleagues at Cagayan de Oro over Christmas. Ernie was able to meet again many Filipinos whom he had met and grown to love on earlier visits there. Some of them made special visits to Cagayan de Oro to meet with him.



Together Grant and Ernie had a few days of well deserved rest on

**Camiguin Island between Christmas and New Year.** Camuigin is about three hour's bus ride and an hour's ferry trip from Cagayan de Oro. This was just a wonderful, relaxing time for our boys. Their cabin was about 30 metres from the sea, under the shade of some big trees, and was perfect to enable them to rest and enjoy the beauty of the Lord's creation.



They did some "sightseeing" on the island, actually travelling the entire 64 km of road around it on one particular day!

**On New Year's Eve they travelled to Claveria**, up in the mountains. They attended the **baptism of ten people** from the church on New Year's Day. A jeepney crowded with church members went down to the coast to the beach where the baptisms took place. This was a time of blessing and rejoicing followed by a day of relaxation and fellowship.

**Another highlight of this time was the dedication of the Faculty housing project at OBC.** This has taken almost three years to complete from the "turning of the first sod". Although the third door (apartment) is not yet 100% complete it should be soon. Work continues daily. Each door has its own fenced front yard and the whole project looks very good. **New Zealand has contributed 74% of the funds and most of the team labour for what will be known as the "Silver Fern Apartments".** We can certainly thank God for the completion of this project. Following the unveiling of the panel, the apartments and those occupying them, were individually dedicated to the Lord's service and to His glory.



## An Urgent Matter For Prayer

A situation has arisen within the **Advent Christian Conference** in India - the organisation we in New Zealand often refer to as



the **"old Conference"**. It is a long, complex and very unfortunate situation. It may have serious repercussions for the Lord's work here. There is the potential for serious **division within the Conference (again!!) and between the Conference and the Mission**, and ultimately it may jeopardise the Mission's presence here in India. The Rev Dave Ross, the Executive Director of the Advent Christian General Conference in the United States, summarised the situation as follows:

*"We have a serious crisis undermining the ministry of the India Advent Christian Conference at present. A few corrupt officials are attempting to usurp and sell off part of the mission compound at Guindy for their own gain. Potential legal entanglements, given the present political climate in Southern India, could actually result in the ouster of our missionary staff there. Please pray fervently for the right thing to be done that the Lord's kingdom work may advance."*

The land concerned is not actually part of the piece of land that we have the use of here at Guindy, but some land which is at the other end of the same block.

Recently Ernie reported that there has been some progress made on this matter, but there is still much to be done. **All who are involved with this situation would value your prayers. It will need the Lord's wisdom and power if it is to be resolved in a way that is honouring to Him.**

## Getting To Grips With Grant

A major task for Grant for the beginning of January was the compilation and printing of the **Annual Accounts**. He was grateful for Ernie's help and expertise in getting the job done and which enabled him to have the necessary documents to the Tax department before the due date.

Assignments seem to be always coming due for the students, but **the end of January saw Mid-term Exams at OBC**. Students had studied hard and long and some had three exams in one day.

**The Vann family and Grant had to travel to Manila to be fingerprinted**. This is not because of any misbehaviour on their part! This was a very costly exercise in time and money (Airmiles, accommodation over two days) all for twenty minutes business.

### Grant asks us to please pray:

1. That the exit clearance and re-entry permit can be actioned from Cagayan De Oro otherwise Grant will have to make another trip to Manila three weeks before he comes home.
2. For one of Grant's "boys", **Reniel**. He has had a persistent cough since returning from the New Year's break and nothing that we do seems to shift it. There is a general reluctance to go to a Dr. unless it is almost a life and death situation.
3. For Grant as he takes up various speaking engagements at the **Advent Christian Church in Sto. Nino on a regular basis**. There are no dates set as yet, but the next of these could be either the first or second Sunday in February. Pray for Grant that he would know God's presence, as he did when he spoke there in November.



4. For Penny Vann has not been 100% well, particularly when she travels. Please pray that she would be restored to full health and strength.
5. For the Students who are now preparing for "Youth Challenge" to be held February 28 – March. The purpose of this event is to encourage young people to dedicate their lives for full time service and to study at OBC.
6. For the PACCI Conference arrangements. The conference is to be held in May.
7. Those from Claveria who were baptised on New Year's Day that they will go on and be strong in the Lord.
8. Give thanks that Grant's return trip home has at last been finalised. (April 15th). Grant has also already been able to book his flight back to the Philippines.
9. The students, Staff and Faculty of OBC as they prepare for the end of the semester.
10. Tori Reynolds as she returns to the USA after her year's service at college.
11. That all teaching positions at OBC would be filled for the coming year.

## Enquiring After Ernie

Back in India, on Sunday 12 January Ernie was able to represent New Zealand Advent Christians at the opening and dedication of another project that they had contributed to – the new church building at the little rural settlement of Panrutti, about an hour's drive from Chennai. The members of the Advent Christian Conference of New Zealand (ACCONZ) sent a contribution last year towards this project which provided a major part of the funds needed and enabled the building to be completed quickly and free of debt. Ernie had the privilege of bringing the address to that gathering, and included a greeting from New Zealand Advent Christians. Our contribution to this project is very much appreciated and has probably reduced the fund raising/construction time by many months if not years.

Our contributions of money and man-hours from Work Teams, mean so much to the members of churches and Conferences both here and in the Philippines. **Many projects such as those**



**mentioned above probably would never be undertaken without the generosity of folk from more wealthy countries.** Personal incomes, in general, are so low in India that most households struggle on a day to day basis, to house, feed, and clothe the family and educate their children, and even if tithing is practised, the amounts involved are very small. **Folk like us, from affluent countries have a real ministry, and a Christian responsibility, to help our brothers and sisters in the Lord in India and similar countries, with their ministry of taking the message of God's love to their people.**

## Ernie asks us to please pray:

1. For Rev Earl and Martha Wright. They are presently touring the United States, visiting churches and sharing details of the work in India. **They are due to return to India in March.** (Ernie will be pleased to have them back!).
2. For the **preparations for the annual Vacation Bible Schools**, when thousands of children, many of them from Hindu families, will hear of God's love.
3. For the **visit from Rev Hal Patterson, World Director of Advent Christian World Missions, and the new Asia Pacific Area Director, Rev Clio Thomas, in April.** During this visit they will conduct a series of **teaching seminars for the pastors of the FBHC** (Fellowship of the Blessed Hope Churches).
4. Also **during April**, India will be **visited by three representatives of the Japanese Advent Christian Conference** and we hope to hold the Annual General Meeting of the Fellowship during their visit.
5. **Ernie will be recommending language study again** shortly. His PA / translator on the staff at Guindy, **Immanuel, will be helping him** for an hour or so every day, to try to come to grips with day to day spoken Tamil. **Ernie would really value our special prayers for him in this area.**



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# The Intermediate State

## in Paul

### Part Eleven

by Carl Josephson

Following the introduction to 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 in the last issue we now look more closely at the first verse of this interesting passage:

Verse 1a. "For we know that if the earthly tent-house we live in is destroyed..."<sup>1</sup>

The opening 'for' links this passage with what has gone before and "answers why the gospel preacher focuses on what is unseen rather than seen."<sup>2</sup> An initial problem with this whole passage is that there are a number of words used that seldom appear elsewhere in the Scriptures. The first is 'tent' (vv1,4) which is not found in any other book of the New Testament.<sup>3</sup> Paul uses 'tent' in conjunction with 'house'. Liddell, Scott & Jones (1978) distinguish between *oikia* (dwelling-house) and *oikos* (the property left at a person's death)<sup>4</sup> so Belleville concludes "our body is thus likened to a house that we dwell in during our sojourn on earth."<sup>5</sup> A.C. Perriman agrees, paraphrasing it as "our earthly dwelling – no more than a tent."<sup>6</sup>

There are two main lines of interpretation as to what Paul is referring to here. The first, and most common, is that the 'earthly tent-house' is an individual believer's body.<sup>7</sup> The second is that it is the

corporate body of believers.<sup>8</sup> The former understanding can be further divided into those who understand the 'tent-house' to be referring to the body as distinct from the soul/spirit, and those who, in line with Pauline anthropology elsewhere, understand it in terms of earthly existence.

We prefer this latter understanding not only because of its agreement with Pauline anthropology as discussed earlier, but because of its continuity with the ideas expressed in chapter 4:7ff. The basic theme is trust in God rather than self, which Paul sums up in 4:7 as 'in order that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and not to us'. This refusal to depend on the human self is evident in the imagery of the 'clay jars' (4:7). Savage identifies four interpretations of these 'clay jars':<sup>9</sup>

- (a) A gnostic metaphor for the contemptible nature of the human body.
- (b) Cynic-Stoic language indicating humans as weak and perishable.
- (c) A reference to certain wrestlers who covered themselves with oil and dust and thus resembled jars of clay.

(d) A parallel with some of the scrolls of Qumran that emphasise the mortality of men by portraying them as jars of clay.

He then concludes, "What is significant is that each regards the 'earthen vessel' as a metaphor for human weakness."<sup>10</sup> He goes on to point to two further possible understandings – powerlessness and cheapness.<sup>11</sup> We therefore suggest that the imagery of jars of clay is one of impermanence, fragility and expendability.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to 'clay jars' there are references to 'in the body' (twice in 4:10); and 'our outer man' (4:16). These point to the 'tent-house' of 5:1 also being the individual body/ person. This concept is supported in 4:10-12 by a sequence of references to death and mortality – 'dying' (v10), death (v11), mortal (v11), and death (v12) followed by 'wasting away' (v16), reaching a climax with the term 'destroyed' or 'dismantled' (5:1), which is passive and "seems to underline the finality of death"<sup>13</sup> This is carrying on and bringing to a conclusion the thought of the impermanence, fragility and expendability of the clay jars of 4:7.

So until 5:1 there is the tension of dying and yet surviving, with slightly more emphasis on survival (especially 4:8-9), although the real possibility of death is suggested in 4:14 with the mention of Paul's conviction that God 'will raise us with Jesus'. Then in 5:1 Paul faces the ultimate question, "What if he doesn't survive?" He introduces the response with the conditional 'if', indicating that Paul's confidence is not in survival until the *parousia* (even though he is firmly convinced that his survival until now is wholly attributable to God) but in 'the one who raised the Lord Jesus'. As Osei-Bonsu writes, "Whereas 2 Cor. 4:16 refers to the on-going process of physical deterioration, 2 Cor. 5:1 ... states the end to this process."<sup>14</sup> Murphy-O'Connor agrees stating, "Having just defined suffering as 'death working in us' (4:14) it is very natural that Paul should now take up the logic of the meaning of physical death."<sup>15</sup> So in 5:1a Paul is in effect simply saying 'even if we die'.

Verse 1b "...we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Murphy-O'Connor seems to suggest a change in subject between v1a and b, from an individual's body to the corporate body of Christ or 'future sphere' in which the just exist.<sup>16</sup> In other words Paul would not be referring

to the 'spiritual body' of 1 Corinthians 15:44 but the 'body of Christ' of 1 Corinthians 12:27. Certainly there is some similarity of language between this verse and Mark 14:58.<sup>17</sup> However even if Paul were consciously using language from a Jesus tradition it is still debatable which of the two alternatives he would be suggesting. He could be using it to refer to the body of Christ, or to the shared hope of being raised with Christ and thus having a body like his.

Belleville notes four interpretations that take this part of the verse corporately.<sup>18</sup> They are:

- (a) A literal house in heaven (Charles Hodge)
- (b) A heavenly church (E. Earle Ellis, J.A.T. Robinson)
- (c) A heavenly temple (Guy Wagner)
- (d) The realm of the unseen and eternal (Victor Furnish)<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand the understanding of 1b as referring to an individual's body,<sup>20</sup> which is well supported by the commentaries,<sup>21</sup> does read more naturally for a number of reasons:

- (a) If v1a is referring to the individual it certainly 'flows' more easily than proposing a sudden change. Osei-Bonsu describes it as "antithetical parallelism" so that if v1a refers to the individual body, "the other side of the contrast must be a corresponding future body."<sup>22</sup>

(b) The later metaphor of clothing fits the idea of the individual (cf. 1 Cor. 15:53).<sup>23</sup>

(c) Verse 2 mixes the building and clothing metaphors implying a continuation of the same subject.

(d) The later reference to the mortal being swallowed by life (v4) does point to "the believers' hope of a material existence beyond the grave" (cf. 1 Cor. 15:53).<sup>24</sup>

(e) Other relevant passages in the New Testament always speak of replacing the earthly body with a new body (cf. Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; Phil. 3:20f).<sup>25</sup>

(f) I m m e d i a t e l y preceding this verse, in 4:14, Paul confirms that his hope for those who die before the *parousia* is resurrection.<sup>26</sup>

(g) Harris points to 4:16 (outer man wasting/ inner man being renewed) as indicating the earthly tent-house (5:1a) corresponds to the 'physical' body, and the heavenly-house (5:1b) to the 'spiritual' body, of 1 Corinthians 15:44.<sup>27</sup>

Lincoln agrees noting that the comparison of earthly and heavenly bodies is paralleled in 1 Corinthians 15:47-49.<sup>28</sup> While Perriman ties Paul's hope firmly with the preceding verses so that "the emphasis... is not on the continuation of the believer but on the assurance of a perfect replacement for the dilapidated earthly body."<sup>29</sup>

Gillman writes concerning v1 that "the believer's earthly

**being** (depicted in building imagery) will be replaced by a heavenly **being** (also depicted in building imagery).<sup>30</sup> In light of Paul's anthropology discussed earlier we agree with Gillman that it is the being rather than the body (as a separable unit) that is transformed, and that the contrast between 'tent' and 'building' typifies the contrast between the temporal and eternal, this age and the Kingdom, that permeates the whole passage.

We thus conclude that the more likely option is that Paul is thinking of the individual human being when he writes of the earthly tent and the heavenly house.

The next question that arises is that of timing. The fact that the verb at the beginning, 'we have', is in the present tense does seem to indicate Paul is concerned with timing. We can simplify the various positions to three:<sup>31</sup>

- (a) A present possession in 'heaven' awaiting us.
- (b) Indicative of immediacy – as soon as we die.
- (c) Indicative of certainty – we **shall** have.

We agree with Bultmann,<sup>32</sup> Yates<sup>33</sup> and Lincoln<sup>34</sup> that option (c) is the correct understanding. We reject (a) because it is totally non-Pauline anthropological thinking and suggest it is pressing the metaphor of the house too far.<sup>35</sup>

We reject (b) because "the present tense of 'have' is certainly insufficient evidence that Paul has undergone a radical change of mind."<sup>36</sup> Also contra (b) Yates writes, "There is no real evidence in the epistles subsequent to 2 Corinthians that the believer 'rises' at death. Romans 8:22-24 emphasizes a future hope, and Philippians 3:20-21 places the transformation of the body at the *Parousia*."<sup>37</sup> We point out again that because both of these passages were written after 2 Corinthians, and are consistent with 1 Corinthians 15, it is preferable that this intervening letter be interpreted without recourse to theories of modification or retraction.

We advocate option (c), that 'we have' is a "futuristic present used by Paul because he was so assured of his possession of the resurrection body after the *parousia* that he could speak of it as present,"<sup>38</sup> with a minor alteration. We suggest that although Paul was very confident that all faithful believers would receive this resurrection body he appears in Philippians 3:10-12<sup>39</sup> to not want to be over-confident about his own personal salvation but rather encourage himself and others 'to follow/ press on' (v12). In other words Paul was so confident of God's promise of a resurrection body that he could speak of it as present, but he did not

discount the possibility of his own failure to remain faithful.

In conclusion, we agree with Cassidy that what "Paul is saying here in v1 is that the heavenly dwelling is a certain hope for Christians, but not necessarily something inherited immediately."<sup>40</sup>

#### (Footnotes)

<sup>1</sup> All translations here are taken from A. Marshall.

<sup>2</sup> Linda Belleville, *2 Corinthians*. IVP New Testament Commentary Series. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996) 131.

<sup>3</sup> Although the related words *skmh.n, skmo, wand skh, nmta* do appear. *Skh, noj* doesn't appear in the canonical books of the LXX but is in Wisdom 9:15, "a book with many borrowings from Greek philosophy." Glasson, 146.

<sup>4</sup> Cited in Belleville, *2 Corinthians*, 132.

<sup>5</sup> Belleville, *2 Corinthians*, 132.

<sup>6</sup> A.C. Perriman, "Paul and the *Parousia*: 1 Corinthians 15:50-57 and 2 Corinthians 5:1-5." *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989) 512-521, at 518n.

<sup>7</sup> Eg. Osei-Bonsu, "2 Cor. 5," 81.

<sup>8</sup> Ellis, 217, writes of "corporate solidarities which inhere in Adam and in Christ, the old and the new aeon."

<sup>9</sup> Savage, 165.

<sup>10</sup> Savage, 165.

<sup>11</sup> Savage, 165. Cf. Furnish, 278, who writes of 'frailty', 'vulnerability' and 'the trifling value.'

<sup>12</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *Theology*, 44, adds 'unreparable' to the list of attributes,.

<sup>13</sup> Osei-Bonsu, "2 Cor. 5," 82, citing R. Bultmann, *Exegetische Probleme des Zweiten Korintherbriefes* (Symbolae Biblicae Upsalienses, 9; 1947), 16. Osei-Bonsu further suggests *kataluqh/* | does not refer to the transformation taking place at the *parousia* but only to the possibility or probability of his own pre-*parousia* death."

<sup>14</sup> Osei-Bonsu, "Does 2 Cor. 5" 82.

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# Editorial

## The Perennial Problem of War

The whole world is talking once more about war. The problem never goes away because there are always people at war. This current one just happens to be of a scale that will effect more than most so as I write this editorial every newspaper, radio station and TV channel is feeding us more and more information/ propaganda just about every hour. I don't want to comment here on the rights and wrongs of the situation, but rather on the question that is often raised in such times – "Why is there evil in the world?" And more specifically "Why doesn't God intervene?"

A talkback host on one of our nationwide stations has several times offered the story of his uncle, captured and tortured during WW2 as 'proof' there is no God. This uncle suffered greatly and concluded from all that he saw that the existence of such evil was enough evidence to prove there cannot be a God – or at least not an all-powerful loving one – otherwise He would get involved.

Is there no God? Or is He just not powerful enough to deal with the problem? Or is He not benevolent enough to care?

There is a different possibility, but let's start from a different angle. Let's start from the

assumption there is an all-powerful, benevolent God and ask two related questions, "When should He intervene?" and "How should he intervene?"

Neither is as simple a question as may first appear. We might all agree that God should have stopped the Holocaust, the killing fields of Cambodia, and the atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima (as a few of many examples that could be chosen), but where should He draw the line? Is it a matter of numbers? How many people do you think need to be at risk before God steps in? If we choose a number, let's say 50, do we mean 50 people in one battle or in the war? Does 50 people mean 50 who die at the time (on the day) or within a few weeks from wounds suffered, or those who may have years of pain before succumbing to death? Should He count those who don't actually die but are scarred (physically or emotionally) for life? If He did set a number such as 50 what happens when there is one person less affected? Are 49 really less significant?

Why not stop all war! But how should He define war? When does rebellion and dissent become war? Was Tiananmen Square in 1989 war? What about systematic or random slayings by authorities in any country? Once again is it a matter of numbers or should God

intervene when individuals get brutalized by the powers that be? When clans fight is that war? When families fight is that war? Is a mass murderer waging war? When a man takes to his partner with a knife is that war?

Why not stop all killing! But what does that mean? Should God stop all abortions? Should He step in when road-rage or drink-driving or plain carelessness is about to claim a life? What about other forms of accident? Should He insure that I don't fall off my ladder and break my neck? Where should He draw the line? Is being paralysed permissible but dying not? What about substance abuse leading to death? Something like 300 people a year die in our little country (population < 4 million) from second-hand smoke – should God stop that? What about those who knowing it may or will kill them choose to smoke anyway?

Why doesn't God stop all sickness! Surely a benevolent God would do that, after all a benevolent doctor does all he/she can to help with limited power. Why shouldn't an all-powerful God do all He can?

Where should God draw the line? Should there be no more death at all?!

The second question, 'How should He intervene?', is just as problematical. Should He

stop the looming war in Iraq by killing off the 'bad guys' before any of the 'good guys' die? Who are the good ones and who are the bad? Perhaps God could cause all the armaments to malfunction, but would that really stop war? How would He stop sword fighting once He had disabled all the more advanced weaponry? And again should He draw the line at killing, or maiming, or hurting? Even if He took all recognised weapons away our bare hands are enough to kill someone else. History shows, especially in the area of war and hatred, that 'where there's a will there's a way'.

To really stop wars, killings and hatred the only effective method would be to change our hearts and wills so that the desire to hurt and destroy never entered into us. But how would He do that? He could control our minds, but the cost of that would be our freedom of thinking.

So God has this choice – does He limit our freedom by force, or does He give us our freedom and allow us to hurt ourselves?

As I read Scripture I conclude that the God of the Bible, the Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, has chosen to give us freedom, but this freedom comes at a price – all the hurt and suffering and hatred and death we see around us.

But what a great God we have! He does not abandon us to this freedom. He offers, but does not force upon us, the very change in heart and mind we need. Unfortunately the change, though real, often seems too slow (in me at least). God offers this change through His Son, Jesus Christ. Standard Christian belief is that in fact God entered into our suffering as this man Jesus of Nazareth. Far from ignoring all the hurt and suffering our benevolent God became a human being and suffered with us, for us and because of us, even to death.

Why is there so much suffering and hurt and death and bitterness and hatred in this world? It is the price of freedom. This freedom is finely balanced in the wisdom of God and what a marvellous balance it is! There is enough evidence for God for those who want to believe, but not enough proof to compel those who don't want to know Him. There is freedom to question, to inspect, to analyse and criticise – and then to accept or reject Him; to worship or

mock Him; to seek or to ignore Him. It is our choice; it is your choice. And then it is our choice to become peacemakers, to allow the Holy Spirit of God to keep changing our hearts and minds so that we become salt and light in this sin-ravaged world.

But this finely balanced freedom can't go on indefinitely. God knows when the cost of this freedom will exceed the benefits, when the evil outweighs the good and it will become necessary to once again send His Son. When that happens there will be judgment and an end to all evil. When God does intervene as many people say He should now, it will be the end of opportunity for choosing Him. Everything that is anti-God will be finally destroyed in the lake of fire and God will be all in all.

Until that time we have the choice of how to use this freedom. May we use it wisely and for His glory.

Carl Josephson



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## President's Desk cont'd from p2

The truth of this verse is also illustrated progressively throughout human history. The Church has not been overcome by death because despite persecution even unto death, the church continues to grow. As Tertullian, an early Christian writer, said: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church" (traditional translation). As Revelation 12:11 puts it, "They overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."

Lastly, the truth of this verse will also be illustrated finally in that Paul says, Death and the gates of Hades will eventually be swallowed up in victory, at the resurrection when Christ comes for His people, the Church (1Cor. 15). Then the whole Church together will experience the reality of victory over death forever. Truly Christ is building his Church. Truly the Church has many enemies, the last and greatest of these being death itself. But truly those in Christ can rest assured that death will not overcome the Church of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

## ACMissionNZ cont'd from p13

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## Intermediate State cont'd from p16

<sup>15</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *Theology*, 49.

<sup>16</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *Theology*, 51.

<sup>17</sup> *kataluqh/|...oivkodmh.n... avceiropoi,hton 2Cor.5:1; katalu,sw...ceiropoi,hton... avceiropoi,hton... oivkodmh,sw* Mark 14:58.

<sup>18</sup> Belleville, *2 Corinthians*, 132.

<sup>19</sup> All scholars mentioned are cited in Belleville (as above) without direct reference to any particular work.

<sup>20</sup> Of course by 'body' we do not mean a separable part of the person but rather the whole represented as 'body'.

<sup>21</sup> Furnish, 265, "Most interpreters believe that the imagery of the present passage is anthropological rather than ecclesiological."

<sup>22</sup> Osei-Bonsu, "Does 2 Cor. 5" 85.

<sup>23</sup> So Polhill, 349.

<sup>24</sup> Belleville, *2 Corinthians*, 133.

<sup>25</sup> So Osei-Bonsu, "Does 2 Cor. 5?" 85.

<sup>26</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:14 "Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence".

<sup>27</sup> Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 122.

<sup>28</sup> Lincoln, 61.

<sup>29</sup> Perriman, 518.

<sup>30</sup> Gillman, 446. (Emphasis added).

<sup>31</sup> For a fuller discussion see Yates, 311-312.

<sup>32</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*. Trans. Roy Harrisville (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985) 132.

<sup>33</sup> Yates, 312.

<sup>34</sup> Lincoln, 64.

<sup>35</sup> Lincoln, 64, notes that Paul's merging of building and clothing metaphors indicates "that his

metaphors are not to be pressed too far."

<sup>36</sup> Lincoln, 64.

<sup>37</sup> Yates, 312.

<sup>38</sup> Lincoln, 64.

<sup>39</sup> Philippians 3:10-12 "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own."

<sup>40</sup> Cassidy, 214. So also Belleville, *2 Corinthians*, 133, who writes that the main point Paul is trying to make is "the certain possession of this building" for believers.

# Correspondence

My very Dear brother Mr. Josephson,  
Greetings to you from the saints here in Kenya  
and Merry Christmas to you all! I hope you are  
doing well in the Lord and prospering in the  
ministry to which our God has called us.  
The Lord is so Gracious and I stand amazed at  
His Incarnation, that He would leave heaven's  
glory to come down on earth, because we needed a  
Saviour, praise God!



Above: Dr Sam Warren and Rev. Frank Jewett with  
Simeon Rianga in Nairobi after the convention meeting  
Below: Two pastors receiving bicycles from the local  
committee.



Left: Sunday School Class 18, 10, 02



I hope by the time you receive this message you  
will have received our paper mail together with  
some photos. I want to seize this opportunity to  
thank you in advance for your love  
for the infant growing ministry of the Advent  
Christian Church in Kenya.

We certainly are reminded especially at this time of the year when our Lord Jesus was born  
in a stable in humble surrounding, visited at His birth by only few poor shepherds, it is the  
kind of love that can move us. Our best wishes to you to a Merry Christmas and Happy New  
Year.

Warm regards, Simeon (KENYA)

Greetings have also been received from  
ANGOLA - from Rev Paulo Sapelonga  
- pictured here with Isaiã Fonsela and  
John Kenier (from South Africa) dur-  
ing an evangelical meeting in the  
church in Luanda.



These two pieces of correspondence are put  
here to encourage readers to pray for the  
work. If anyone is led to contribute finan-  
cially to these or any other Christian work  
outside of New Zealand, the Philippines or  
India, please contact American Advent Christian World Missions, PO Box 23 152, Charlotte,

North Carolina, 28212, USA. For work in the Philippines, India and New Zealand see address of  
ACMissionNZ inside back cover.