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Waiting for our Blessed Hope...!



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Waiting for our Blessed Hope

Editorial

'Hope radiates from the pages of the New Testament.' This is how Mostyn Roberts opens his article on the doctrine of the last things (the last in our series of articles on the great doctrines of the Christian faith). We are waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This will be the last great day, the day of the resurrection of the dead. The Holy

Spirit who raised Jesus Christ from the dead will also raise us up and give us life in our mortal bodies as the apostle Paul tells us in Romans 8:11. Pastor Keith Noldt explains this profound and wonderful statement.

We know that the cosmos itself will one day be transformed into a new creation inhabited by God's resurrected people living and worshipping in the presence of

their God and Saviour and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a wonderful perspective for the future.

At the same time, we still live our lives in a world that is full of sin and evil even though the Lord leaves us signs of his presence and his reign over creation and the events of this world. We can see this in the progress of the gospel. This often happens outside the limelight of the modern media with its fast 24-hour news coverage.

The work of the gospel makes steady progress but occasionally the Lord sovereignly accelerates the work and gives a mighty shower of blessing upon the proclamation of his Word. This happens in times of revival. History abounds with examples and most of our readers will be familiar with some of the main periods of revival. The revival in Shandong, China, in the early 20th century will be less well known, and we are therefore grateful to Jonathan Bayes for encouraging us with this moving story of God's gracious work in that vast country.

All of this should help us to focus our attention not only on the details of events in this world but on the one who has all authority in heaven and on earth. He is the one to whom the Old Testament believers looked forward. We have the privilege of knowing what the New Testament calls the mystery that has now been revealed to us: this mystery is Christ in us, the hope of glory (Col 1:27). This idea of 'mystery' can be confusing as it has a different meaning in Scripture from our ordinary use of the word today. The article by Nigel Faithfull aims to clarify this for us and help us to think biblically about the end times.

Over- and under-realised eschatology

This brings us to the question: What does the biblical view of the future mean for our lives in this world now? People respond in very different ways and we can go astray in two opposite directions. One is that we give up on this world and put all our attention and hope on the world to come. The other is that we try to realise the glorious future in the here and now and neglect the truth that this world will not become perfect but that we expect new heavens and a new earth. The first is what is sometimes called under-realised eschatology and the second over-realised eschatology. Both are extremes and are moving away from a healthy, biblical balance.

We can see these errors already occurring in the New Testament churches. The church in Thessalonica has given us an example of under-realised eschatology. The believers there were worried about the fate of those who had already died before the return of Christ. They thought his return was imminent and as a result they tended to give up their daily responsibilities of work and caring about their life in this world.

The apostle Paul corrects their mistaken view and tells them, first of all, what will happen to those who have died already, pointing to the resurrection of the dead. Secondly, he impresses upon them the need to take responsibility for their work and for their life and testimony in this world.

The church in Corinth can be regarded as an example of the opposite error. As we know from Paul's letters, the church had become rather arrogant, boasting in

their spiritual gifts even to the extent that they started to despise the apostle Paul. They regarded him as somewhat inferior. Paul paints their troublesome spiritual condition in his letters, sometimes in ironic terms as in 1 Corinthians 4.

These errors still occur in the church today. There are people who have the inclination to give up any hope for this world and withdraw into their own holy huddles, just patiently and passively waiting for the Lord to return. They are hardly motivated for evangelism and mission. They tend to overemphasise that Satan rules this world and we have to stay away from this world as much as possible.

On the other hand, there are people who emphasise our responsibility in this world to such an extreme, suggesting that we not only have the duty but even the power to realise the kingdom and its blessings here and now. A good example is the so-called prosperity gospel, or the health and wealth gospel. The idea is that Christ has secured a perfection which we can already claim now. This often results in serious pastoral problems as it implies that when people still suffer it is their fault. They do not drum up sufficient faith to obtain the desired blessings of healing etc. This is a seriously misleading, mistaken, and one-sided approach, suggesting that God has promised us all blessings now. They forget that it was Jesus himself who called us to take our cross upon us and to follow him, and to expect tribulation in this world (John 16:33).

What is the remedy for these errors? Obviously we should study these scriptural examples and the response of people like Paul. We should be 'looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God' (Heb 12:2). On the one hand, our Lord Jesus set his mind firmly on the purpose of his earthly life and ministry leading to his death on the cross. On the other hand, he prayed to be glorified in the presence of the Father with the glory that he had with him before the world existed (John 17:5).

This biblical balance is often expressed as the 'already but not yet' scheme of salvation (see Mostyn Roberts' article). The gospel is already now a power that transforms our lives and relationships, but the full perfection still lies ahead of us.

A reliable and stimulating exposition of these matters and a biblical view of history is provided in a volume edited by Richard D Phillips and Gabriel N E Fluhrer entitled *These Last Days. A Christian View of History* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2011). In a contribution to this book, D A Carson points to Revelation 12:11, 'And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.' This is how we can and should live in this world! ■

THE GOSPEL IS ALREADY NOW A POWER THAT TRANSFORMS OUR LIVES AND RELATIONSHIPS, BUT THE FULL PERFECTION STILL LIES AHEAD OF US.



KEITH NOLDT

The Holy Spirit — Gives Life —

Romans 8:11

Romans 8:11 *'And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.'* (NIV)

The book of Romans is about the gospel. If you understand Romans you will understand the gospel.¹ Chapters 1 – 8 are about justification by faith and its consequences. They show that all people everywhere are sinful, unable to keep God's moral law and, therefore, alienated from God. The only way sinners can be counted right with God is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Chapter 8 begins by declaring that a Christian is no longer condemned. Indeed, such a person is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.² There are seven activities of

the Holy Spirit in the Christian believer referred to in this chapter.³ Verses 9-11 describe a true Christian believer's past, present and future. In the past, a Christian is someone in whom the Holy Spirit has come to live (v9). In the present, a Christian is being sanctified by the Holy Spirit (v10) and, in the future, a Christian has a sure hope (v11). Now to verse 11.

The promise of this verse is that the Christian believer's future resurrection is certain and the Holy Spirit is involved in it.

That's the apostle's point. We can be certain that our physical bodies – now imperfect because of sin – will, one day, be brought back to life by the power of the Holy Spirit.

¹ Thomas Steele, *Romans: An Interpretive Outline* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1963), p5.

² Steele, p9.

³ Iain H Murray, *Pentecost Today?* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1998), p112. The Holy Spirit, indwells believers vv9-11, subdues corruption v13, leads us v14, witnesses to us v15, gives assurance v16, prompts us to look forward to glory v23, and helps us to pray v26.

As Christians we are living between our conversion and our future resurrection. Looking back we remember when we came to God in repentance for sin and saving faith in Jesus Christ.

Looking forward we have the hope of the resurrection. In between we have been made spiritually alive, but our bodies are still mortal – i.e. subject to death and, also, weakness and temptation.⁴ But, there is a certain hope – the certainty of the resurrection of the body.

Now, how does this verse teach that?.

1. The Holy Spirit gives life in every true Christian *'The Spirit who lives in you.'*

This has already been referred to in verse 9 and serves as a test as to whether a person is a Christian or not. A Christian is a person who is controlled by the Holy Spirit. In fact, if you do not have the Holy Spirit you are not a Christian.

This is very important for it shows that the so-called the 'Carnal Christian' theory is false. That is the idea that a person can become a Christian but continue to live a life no different from that of unbelievers. Such people could be called 'Fire Insurance Christians' – that is, they want to escape the fires of hell in the future, but they do not want to live like Christians now. Verse 9 says that is impossible.

If you don't have the Spirit you don't belong to Christ. If you do belong to Christ then you do have the Spirit. And if you do have

the Spirit your life will be different.

So, in verse 11 the apostle says again what he has already said in verse 9: 'The Spirit ... is living in you.' This is a wonderful truth. God has graciously given us his Holy Spirit, who is described in this verse as the Spirit of God himself. Now, think about that: Do you really think that having given us the Holy Spirit, God is going to stop short? Do you think God is going to change his mind?

Do you think God is going to reverse his plans?

No! No! No! God has begun something in us that is wonderful and he is going to continue and develop what he has started. Giving us the Holy Spirit when we were converted – when we came to faith in JESUS CHRIST – is the start of something that will go on to completion in glory. And that will involve the resurrection of the body.

2. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God who raised Christ from the dead *'The Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead.'*

He who 'raised Jesus from the dead' is without question God the Father. Other verses also show that God the Father was the specific agent in the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:24; Rom 6:4). And, since the Holy Spirit is called here the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead, we are meant to see that there is a very close relationship between God the Father and God the Holy Spirit in this essential action in the plan of redemption.

⁴ The 'you' in the text is plural, but as a collection of individuals as well as corporately (v10: individuals who have the Holy Spirit).

We see this same idea in verse 9. There the Holy Spirit is called 'the Spirit of Christ' which shows an intimate relationship with Jesus in his office as Messiah (Christ=Messiah). The Holy Spirit, as the third person of the Trinity, has the closest possible connection with the other persons of the Trinity. They work together and this includes the resurrection of Jesus.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead is of the highest importance for us. The founders and leaders of other world religions have died – but only the Lord Jesus has been raised to life again.

The preaching of the early church emphasised the resurrection of Jesus Christ because it demonstrated God the Father's vindication of Jesus' life and death. Jesus' resurrection proved that he was who he had said he was – it affirmed his deity.

Furthermore, Christ's death, resurrection, ascension and exaltation form a pattern of the Christian's identification with Christ, through faith. We too, through faith in Jesus Christ, die to sin, are alive to God and await our future glory. Therefore, we must not underestimate the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

3. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee that we too shall be raised to life

This is the conclusion of the apostle Paul's argument. 'He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies, through his Spirit who lives in you.' The point of this verse is this: **God who raised Jesus will also raise us and the Holy Spirit**

is involved in both resurrections. That is, the Holy Spirit gives life and the life that the Spirit gives is resurrection life. Our future resurrection is certain.

The basis of that certainty is the fact that the Holy Spirit lives in Christian believers. The resurrection by God the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead is the foundation of the hope of our resurrection from the dead in the future. Because the same Spirit – the Spirit of CHRIST and of God – is living in us.⁵

It is true that all people will rise at the resurrection – but not all for glory. The unregenerate – non-Christians – will be raised by their judge to receive, in their bodies, eternal punishment for their sins.⁶ But, for those who are 'in Christ' it will be different. We shall be raised by God in the power of the Holy Spirit for eternal glory.

Right now, we are living between conversion and death – our spirits are alive in Christ, while our bodies are still subject to death. But, at the resurrection, God will also give life to our mortal bodies. This verse is looking to the future – the verb 'will give life' is in the future tense.⁷

So, I affirm that this verse is speaking about a future resurrection and regards it as certain for everyone who is in Christ. I stress this because there are two misunderstandings about this verse.

The first is that the verse is speaking of some sort of moral 'resurrection' now. It is true that when we are converted to Christ

there is a change in our attitudes and lifestyle as we 'put off the old and put on the new'. But I don't believe that is meant here because of the comparison between Christ's resurrection and our own. The point is that just as God raised Jesus, so he will raise us.

The second misunderstanding is that the verse is referring to 'faith healing'. There are some Christians who think that a Christian must always have perfect health and that healing is in the atonement. That is a whole new subject, but it is simply foreign to the context of these verses – it does not flow naturally out of the text.

Christian friends, we need to be sure of this: we can be certain that one day our bodies will be raised from the grave to be, as Paul says in Philippians 3:21, like his (Christ's) glorious body. In fact, our salvation would be incomplete if this were not so. Surely, God would not do all that he has done for our salvation and then stumble at the end, leaving us dead in the grave.

1 Corinthians 15:22 helps us understand this. 'As in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.' In Adam – the federal head of the human race – all humanity fell. Consequently, we all inherited a sinful nature – our 'default' position is to sin. However, all those who are 'in Christ' will be made alive — and that will be complete.⁸ That is, we cannot be saved but not raised!

Now, the text ends by saying that this wonderful, glorious and certain truth is brought about through 'his Spirit who lives in you.' We are back to the beginning

again. When a person becomes a Christian the Holy Spirit takes up residence within and this guarantees that God will do as he has promised.

Conclusion

Let us review the apostle's propositions and conclusion.

1. The Holy Spirit lives in all true Christians.
2. This same Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead.
3. The Holy Spirit living in us guarantees that we too shall be raised to life again from the dead.

So, the important question for you today is this: Do you have the Holy Spirit living in you? That's another way of asking: Are you a Christian? Have you repented of your sin and trusted 100% in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation?

If you really are a Christian, through repentance for sin and faith in Jesus Christ, then you do have the Holy Spirit living in you, because God's Word says so. You may be certain of a future bodily resurrection to live for ever with the Lord. Indeed, our future resurrection is the final act of the Holy Spirit in the Christian believer. He has called us, regenerated us, baptised us into the body of Christ (the Church), sealed us for the day of redemption; fills us, empowers us, strengthens us, grieves over our sin, reveals CHRIST to us, sanctifies us, and then, finally, will give life to our mortal bodies!¹⁰ [That's a certainty!](#) ■

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⁵ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p291.

⁶ Robert Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* (MacDonald Publishing Co., n.d.), p346.

⁷ 3rd pers. sing. fut. ind. act.; see also Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p493.

⁸ D M Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: The Sons of God, 8:5-17* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974), p86.

⁹ Murray, p292.10

¹⁰ Phil Newton, www.southwoodsbc.org/sermons/Romans

'THEY DESIRE A BETTER COUNTRY'

The Doctrine of the Last Things

THE LORD'S RETURN AND THE EVENTS ACCOMPANYING IT ARE WOVEN INTO THE WARP AND WOOF OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Introduction

Hope radiates from the pages of the New Testament. The early Christians were sustained and motivated by the joyful conviction that beyond death lay a far more wonderful life. Not only so, but the cosmos itself would one day be transformed into a new creation inhabited by God's resurrected people living and worshipping in the presence of their God and Saviour and elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ.

They could be joyful because of the teaching of their Lord and his apostles. Jesus had promised his return: 'And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory' (Mark 13:26; cf Matt 24:29-31; 25:31; Luke 17:24; 18:8; 19:11f). At the Last Supper Jesus promised his disciples that he was going to prepare a place for them and added, 'I will

come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also' (John 14:2,3); and at his ascension the angels told the disciples that 'This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven' (Acts 1:11).

The Lord's return and the events accompanying it are woven into the warp and woof of the New Testament – just as one example, to Titus Paul writes of Christians 'waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ' (Tit 2:13). But see also for example Acts 17:31; Rom 13:12-14; 1 Cor 1:8; Phil 1:6,10; 2:16; 1 Thess 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-17; 5:23.

Why does he have to return? He has to come again to complete God's purposes.

Paul told the Ephesians that God has a purpose 'which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth' (1:10). He was profoundly aware that this plan was not yet fulfilled. The Christian experience of salvation is that you have it now, but there is far more to come. We often call this the 'already but not yet' scheme of salvation.

Already but not yet

On the one hand Paul could say that Christ was born to Mary 'in the fullness of time' (Gal 4:4) and that the first Christians were those 'on whom the end of the ages had come' (1 Cor 10:11) and the author to the Hebrews speaks of Christ's sacrifice for sin happening at the 'end of the ages' (Heb 9:26). The first coming of Christ signified that the 'last days' had come and we are

now in them (Acts 2:16-17; Heb 1:2). Yet the apostles were also conscious that there is an 'age to come' as Jesus had taught (Matt 12:32; Luke 18:30; 20:35; cf Eph 2:7; Heb 6:5). Paul encourages the Philippians with the teaching that God 'who began a good work in you will bring it to completion on the day of Jesus Christ' (1:6). The author of Hebrews is aware that the Lord perfectly accomplished all that the Father had planned for his first coming but also wrote, 'Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him' (9:28).

Sowing and reaping

Metaphors of sowing and reaping also show how the 'already but not yet' scheme is built into the biblical plan of salvation. We will reap what we sow, promises (and

warns) Paul (Gal 6:7,8). The resurrection body will be the fruit of what is laid in the ground (1 Cor 15:37-49). There is an organic connection between life in this world and the next, both spiritually and materially.

First fruits

The 'first fruits' imagery from the Old Testament is used of Christ as the first reaping of the harvest of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:20) and also of Christians as the first harvest of the new creation (James 1:18). It is also used of the Holy Spirit as the 'first instalment', in the believer, of full redemption (Rom 8:23). In using this picture, the apostles are not just teaching that more, indeed the best, is yet to come, but also that it is certain to come; the firstfruits are a guarantee of the full harvest.

The first and second comings of Christ are therefore best looked at as two stages of one event. Between the first and second stages, Jesus is reigning exalted in heaven at his Father's right hand interceding for his church (Phil 2:9-11, Rom 8:34, Heb 7:25) having accomplished the salvation of his people, and trampling his enemies under his feet (1 Cor 15:24-25) until one day he returns 'to save those who are eagerly waiting for him' and complete the judgment of his enemies. The church is caught up in, and is central to, this great work of Christ, whose two advents are two

stages of the one work of the Triune God for our salvation. You are secure in him, awaiting the sure and certain 'outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls' (1 Peter 1:9).¹

God's plan for our salvation began in eternity and was first revealed in history to Adam and Eve in the Garden, in the promise of seed to the woman who would

THERE IS AN ORGANIC CONNECTION BETWEEN LIFE IN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT, BOTH SPIRITUALLY AND MATERIALLY

crush Satan (Gen 3:15). The same plan is consummated in a series of events clustering around and centred on the Second Coming of Christ as taught by Jesus and revealed by him through the Spirit to his apostles. The plan is however present in the Old Testament and we do the older testament a disservice if we dismiss it from our considerations. What I want to do very briefly is to try to show how the Christian's eschatological hope² is present in the whole Bible and is one continuous whole, although it is clarified and reshaped by the

first coming of Christ. This should help us to see (i) the Bible as a unity, (ii) God's purposes as single and consistent, (iii) God's people as one through the ages, and (iv) our hope as the same as that of the Old Testament saints who 'died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar ... since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect' (Heb 11:13, 40).

I shall organise my material around seven great themes which are found throughout the Bible.³

1. Awaiting a Saviour

At its highest and broadest this is God coming to his creation in salvation and judgment.

Salvation and judgment cannot be separated.⁴ When God comes to do the one, the other is at hand or at least implied. The Old Testament prophets were understood to have taught them as coming in one event (eg Deut 33:2,26; Ps 50:1-6; Joel 3:18-21; Obad 15,16; Isa 26:21, 24:1, 66:15). This seems to have been John the Baptist's understanding. Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire, and come with his winnowing fork and gather his wheat into his barn 'but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire' (Matt 3:12). John perhaps was disappointed when Jesus showed no signs of doing this (Matt 11:3). Jesus asserted elsewhere that he had come for salvation not judgment (John 3:17). The only fire at Pentecost when the church was baptised with the Holy Spirit was in tongues that appeared on the disciples' heads and signified the gracious preaching of the gospel.

Nevertheless, judgment will certainly be Christ's one day (John 5: 27-29). The two realities are separated only by time.

Yet – they *are* separated by time and this

was a fundamental change brought about in the first coming of Christ. What had been looked on as one event (the Messiah

The Lord's return and the events accompanying it are woven into the warp and woof of the New Testament.

coming in salvation-judgment) is now seen to be in two stages. Nor is it as simple as 'salvation now' and 'judgment then'; salvation is not just 'now' for final salvation must await his second coming, while judgment is also 'now' for those who condemn themselves in unbelief (John 3:18); and there are signs that portend judgment in his first ministry –

the clearing of the temple, the cursing of the fig tree. But the basic pattern is clear – there is a day of grace (2 Cor 6:2). Christ has come to deal with sin, he will come again to bring salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for him.

The expectation of a Redeemer developed, sharpened and focused from the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15) to the seed of Abraham (Gen 22:18/Matt 1:1-2), of Judah and David (2 Sam 7:12/Luke 1:32). He would be a prophet (Deut 18: 15/Acts 3:22), priest (Ps 110:4/Heb 7:15-17) and king (Zech 9:9/Matt 21:5). He would be Immanuel (Isa 7:14/ Matt 1:23), and the Son of Man (Dan 7:13/Matt 26:64). Most difficult of all for the Jews to accept, he would be the Suffering Servant (Isa 53/Matt 8:17).

The Redeemer came in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, but he was even more than the Jews had been expecting. This Redeemer was God himself – the child who

¹ Souls here refers to the whole life, including bodies.

² This means 'to do with the last things' (*eschatos* = Greek for 'last') – the study of the Second Coming and the events associated with it.

³ These are adapted from A A Hoekema, *The Bible and The Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), pp3-12. I recommend this book as an introduction to the whole subject.

⁴ For a lengthy exposition of this theme throughout the Bible, see James Hamilton Jnr, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010).

was now born, the Son who had now been given, who was mighty God, everlasting Father – as had been promised (Isa 9:6).

Since Christ's ascension Christians have awaited from heaven 'a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ' (Phil 3:20). The differences, however, between this and his first coming are immense. His first coming was in grace, his glory concealed; his second coming will be in glory. God has hitherto 'overlooked' sins committed in 'ignorance'; the next great event is Christ's return as Judge and Saviour (Acts 17:30-31). Typical words used for his return are the parousia (coming, his 'presence with' his people eg 1 Cor 15:23), apokalupsis (revelation, removing a veil, 1 Cor 1:7) and epiphaneia (majestic appearing, Matt 24:30). It will be 'an event, at the close of the present age, in which the present splendour, honour and authority that belong to the risen and ascended Lord will be visibly, personally and publicly displayed in his being revealed from heaven'.⁵

This is God coming in the full manifestation of his glory (1 Cor 15:28; Phil 3:20,21). There are many reasons for the Second Coming, not least the salvation of his people. God comes to confirm the truth of his promises (2 Thess 1:5-12) and

to answer his people's prayers (Matt 6:10; 1 Cor 16:22). He comes both to save his people and to bring destruction on the wicked. Yet he comes primarily to display his own glory. This simultaneously brings terror to the wicked and joy to the elect (Rev 1:7; 1 Thess 4:17). His people's greatest joy is to see his face (Rev 22:4).

HIS FIRST
COMING WAS
IN GRACE,
HIS GLORY
CONCEALED;
HIS SECOND
COMING WILL
BE IN GLORY

2. The Kingdom of God

God is king of the whole earth (Ps 29:10) but especially of Israel (Deut 33:5). He sets up a kingdom among the empires of the earth that will eventually conquer all (Dan 2:44) but the Son of Man is given authority over all kingdoms (Dan 7:13,14, Matt 28:18) and one day the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign for ever and ever (Rev 11:15).

The 'already but not yet' theme is particularly prominent in the context of the coming kingdom. Jesus spoke much about the kingdom of God. It had come close in him, and could be said to be 'among' the people with whom he spoke (Mark 1:15; Luke 4:21; Matt 11:11-12; 12:28; Luke 17:21). Yet it was still to come (Matt 6:10; 7:21-23; 8:11,12; 25:31-34; Luke 22:16-18, 29-30).⁶ Paul also spoke of the kingdom as present (1 Cor 4:19, 20) and future (2 Tim 4:18). Yet Paul did not speak so much about the kingdom of God as about

life in Christ, indicating that the presence of the king living in his people through faith is the central element of the presence of the kingdom in the present age. The kingdom of God that Jesus brought in was not a territory (John 18:36) but 'the reign of God dynamically active in human history through Jesus Christ, the purpose of which is the redemption of God's people from sin and from demonic powers, and the final establishment of the new heaven and the new earth'.⁷

He is now the ascended king with what we call a 'mediatorial' kingdom, over which he lives to direct from heaven the victory of the gospel and the defeat of his enemies (1 Cor 15:25,26).

There is tension between the present and future aspects of the kingdom. We know victory, but also struggles and defeats (1 Cor 15:57, Rom 6:14, 7:14, Gal 5:16f). We must work with urgency expecting an imminent return of Christ (Matt 24:45,46) yet with patience, as it is 'not yet' (Luke 19:11). It is in this perspective of 'already but not yet' that we understand our present sufferings – they are given along with faith (Mark 10:30, Acts 14:22, Rom 8:17,18, Phil 1:29) and are part of God's fatherly discipline of us (Heb 12:5f) but are to be given thanks for (Rom 5:1-5, James 1:2) and indeed contribute to our future glory (2 Cor 4:16-18).

It is as king that the Lord Jesus Christ is most usually portrayed in his return. In the parable of the minas he goes to receive a kingdom (Luke 19:11,12). The Son of Man (Dan 7:13,14) is a royal personage who

receives a kingdom. Revelation portrays Christ as the conquering king, whose name is 'Faithful and True ... the Word of God ... King of kings, and Lord of lords' (19:11-16). He returns to establish perfectly again the rule of God over his perfected creation.

3. Covenant

Old Testament saints looked forward to a new covenant (Jer 31:31-34/Heb 8:8-13). In this covenant, unlike the old (Sinai) covenant, there is *for every member of the covenant*, regeneration (God's law written into their hearts and minds), personal knowledge of God and forgiveness of sins and, again unlike the old covenant, this covenant cannot be broken.

The heart of the covenant promise is 'I will walk among you and will be your God and you shall be my people' (Lev 26:12; cf Ex 29:45, Jer 7:23,11:4, 24:7, 30:22, Ezek 11:20, 14:11, 36:28, 37:27, 2 Cor 6:16). Now, in Christ, by the Spirit, God is with us ('Immanuel') in a way that he was not in the old dispensation. Yet this still has to be fully realised, for one of the promises concerning the holy city is that 'the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God' (Rev 21:3). The fullness of the covenant is yet to be enjoyed. The Lord Jesus prayed for the fullness of fellowship with his people: 'Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world' (John 17:24). In the new creation this will be fulfilled. The covenant reaches its zenith.

⁵ Cornelis Venema, *The Promise of the Future* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000) p83. This book is also recommended for further reading. See also the abridged version: Cornelis Venema, *Christ and the Future* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2008).

⁶ Perhaps here is the place to say that there is no difference theologically between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven (cf Matt 19:23-24 and Mark 10:23-25)

⁷ Hoekema, *op cit*, p45

The blessings of the new covenant for God's people are of course manifold. Paul outlines an 'order of salvation' in Romans 8:29,30: foreknowledge (God knows, or 'loves' his own intimately in eternity), predestination, calling, justification – all in the past. Paul then adds, as certain as anything that has already happened, 'glorification', which is in the future.

Glorification is the state of perfection in soul and body that will be enjoyed by saints in the new creation. There will be no more sin or its effects, no suffering, no pain or death. There will be no temptations, no Satan to oppose them. On death, until Christ comes, saints go to be with the Lord (Luke 23:43, 2 Cor 5:8, Phil 1:21-23) which is called 'the intermediate state'. When Christ returns, however, there will be a general resurrection of the dead and God's people will be raised with renewed bodies (1 Cor 15:42-57). Their souls are already perfect (Heb 12:23) and now their bodies are perfected too. Body and soul are reunited, and death (which entails the separation of soul and body) is truly conquered.

Glorification is never apart from Christ. 'It is the complete and final redemption of the whole person when in the integrity of body and spirit the people of God will be conformed to the image of the risen, exalted and glorified redeemer, when the very body of their humiliation will be conformed to the body of Christ's glory'. Moreover 'There will be a perfect coincidence of the revelation of the Father's glory, of the revelation of the glory of Christ, and of the liberty of the

glory of the children of God'.⁸

This then is the Christian hope. Our regeneration is completed in our glorification, so that the spiritual 'resurrection' we experience now (Eph 2:6, 2 Cor 5:17, Col 3:1-4, 1 Peter 1:3) is fulfilled in bodily resurrection.

But there are other aspects of present redemption that are fulfilled at Christ's return. Our spiritual *adoption* is fulfilled in the redemption of our bodies (Rom 8:15,23). Our *justification* is unassailable now in that the acquittal God grants us through faith for the sake of Christ's perfect obedience imputed to us cannot be lost or diminished or added to in any way. Yet at the end of all things, that acquittal will still be 'fulfilled' in that (i) resurrection itself is the end of all sin and of death, sin's punishment, so that resurrection 'completes' the work of justification. Sin's guilt is taken away in justification, its presence and effects are completely removed in resurrection. We undervalue Christ's work if we do not allow for this. Further, (ii) in the resurrection and final judgment the believer's acquittal, until then hidden, is made public; and (iii) in the resurrection and judgment believers' righteous characters and good works are revealed and rewarded, not as the cause of their salvation but as the fruit of God's grace and Christ's work (Matt 25:34-40).

In all this we are seeing what Richard Gaffin⁹ calls the 'inner-outer' dynamic of Christian hope – what is now real in the inner life, will at Christ's coming be made public and visible in glorification.

Finally, we can of course see that our *sanctification* is perfected (Eph 5:25-27, 1 Thess 5:23).

4. The people of God

The old covenant was made with Israel and with a few non-Israelites (eg Rahab, Ruth, Naaman, Ebed-melech) as 'first-fruits' of the Gentiles. In the new covenant the people of God are 'all whom the Lord our God calls to himself' (Acts 2:39) for in Christ there is 'neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3:26-29, Col 3:11). There is, however, a oneness of saints across the covenants as Hebrews 11 makes clear. Not all Israel was Israel (Rom 9:6). Not all were children of Abraham by faith, even if they were by descent. The faithful, however, in every generation have had the same faith and looked forward to the same Christ (John 8:56) and to the same hope – a city with foundations, a better country, a heavenly one, and they and we enjoy the consummation of our hope together (Heb 11:10, 16, 39-40).

Salvation is personal, but it is never merely individual. It is the church for whom Christ died (Jn 10:11, Eph 5:25-27). It is the heavenly city that descends from heaven, not a multitude of diverse individuals. The resurrection will be a corporate event as well as a corporeal one. John Murray says that 'glorification is something upon which all the people of God will enter *together* at the same identical point in time ... [it is] the instantaneous change that will

take place for the whole company of the redeemed when Christ will come again.'¹⁰

One of the pictures of the return of Christ is of the wedding. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 Paul speaks of believers as 'betrothed' to Christ, implying the marriage yet to come; in Revelation 19:6-10 the marriage feast of the Lamb takes place, welcoming all who are invited and ready.

We must never think of salvation as anything less than that of the whole body of Christ.

There remains a question about whether there is any future for the Jews as God's people as a race. The starting point is usually a study of Romans 9-11 and I have no intention of doing that now. Any interpretation however has to take into account the whole tenor of New Testament doctrine which leans in one direction – the oneness of God's people. Paul makes this clear in Ephesians 2:11-22, stating that Christ has made peace between the two by his blood through the cross so that they are now one. Any teaching that sees a special place for Jews as a race must contend with that. Any teaching that sees a two-track salvation, one for the church, one for Israel, is untenable. Some evangelicals suggest that Paul teaches in Romans 11 an ingathering of the Jews at the end of time, whereas others take this as something that will happen throughout the last days between Christ's first and second comings. Teaching that sees Jews entering God's kingdom *along with other races and equally with them and on the same terms of faith in*

⁸ John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1961) pp175,177.

⁹ In 'Justification and Eschatology' in *Justified in Christ* ed. K Scott Oliphint (Fearn: Christian Focus/Mentor, 2007).

¹⁰ *Op cit* pp175-176.

Christ alone throughout salvation history, is consistent with the flow of the New Testament.

5. The Holy Spirit

Christ's gift to the church on his ascension was the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity (John 7:39, 14:16, Acts 2:33). Peter's first words at Pentecost were to explain that the manifestations of the Spirit were prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures (Acts 2:16-21, Joel 2:28-32). He would be the church's 'other Helper', Christ to her in the Saviour's personal absence.

His presence with his disciples is not just a stop-gap. He is here constantly to remind us that the fulfilment is yet to come and to prepare us for it. His very presence is a seal of our salvation and a 'pledge' or 'guarantee' of more to come (2 Cor 1:22, Eph 1:13-14). He is the firstfruits of our full salvation (Rom 8:23).

Moreover, the work of the Holy Spirit in us is preparing us for that day. We are to be holy as our Father in heaven is holy, instructs Peter, again showing continuity with the Old Testament (1 Peter 1:15-16). Awaiting the day when we see Christ as he is, and we shall be like him, with this hope in us we should purify ourselves (1 John 3:2,3). We should perfect holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor 7:1). 'For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ,

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(ROM 8:11)

who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works' (Tit 2:11-13). But how do we do this? Only by the work of the Holy Spirit in us. The work of sanctification is the work of the Triune God but especially of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:1-17, 2 Cor 3:17,18, 1 Peter 1:2) and it is always forward-looking.

Nor should we think that the Holy Spirit disappears from the scene after Christ's return and in the new creation. Will he not still be the mediator of the presence of Christ to us? Our relationship with the Triune God will be more than it is now but it cannot be less – with any Person of the Trinity. And as to the resurrection itself, Sinclair Ferguson notes how Paul attributes Christ's resurrection to the Spirit (Rom 1:4; in line with the presence and work of the Spirit in all of Christ's life including his self-offering on the cross – Heb 9:14). It will also be by the Spirit's ministry that we are raised (Rom 8:11). Indeed, our bodies will be 'spiritual' as Sinclair Ferguson says: 'Having indwelt the believer in the present age, the Spirit will take absolute possession of the believer's entire being. The body in which the life of the future is lived will be both S/spiritual and glorious in its very constitution. The resurrection of the body is simultaneously our adoption, the redemption of the body (Rom 8:23), and our comprehensive vindication ('the crown of righteousness', 2 Tim 4:8) and glorification'¹¹ (and for 'vindication' we could read – 'full justification').

The life of the future, therefore, is the Spirit-filled life to the fullest, when unlike the present tension we now feel, with the frustrations of living in a fallen creation, our bodies will be 'spiritual' (under the influence of the Holy Spirit) to the fullest possible degree and fit vehicles for the Spirit to work in us to the glory of God.

6. The Day of the Lord

Although we are in the last days, there is still a 'last day'. This is very much where we are at one with Old Testament believers. The 'Day of the Lord' was a prophetic theme, a day of judgment on unbelieving nations and of deliverance for the people of God (Isa 13:6,9,13, 24:21, 25:9, 26:1f, 28:5; Joel 2:28-32; Obad 15,16); and for judgment too on the apostate people of God, see Amos 2:4-16, 5:18-27.

From the New Testament perspective we know that the day of grace, of salvation (2 Cor 6:2) precedes that day of judgment, but that day will surely come – a day when God will judge the world by his risen Son Jesus Christ (Matt 25:31ff, John 5:22-29, Acts 17:31, Phil 1:6, 10; 2:16; 2 Thess 1:10; 2 Peter 3:10).

The New Testament is clear that Christ will return; that when he returns there will be a general resurrection of the righteous and the wicked at the same time (following Daniel 12:2¹²; see John 5:25-29).¹³ The righteous will have been with the Lord since their death, not in some form of unconscious 'soul sleep' but very conscious and rejoicing in his presence (Luke 16:22, 23:43, Phil 1:21-23, 1 Thess 4:14).

The wicked will have been in hell (Luke 16:23). Following the resurrection there will be the judgment (Matt 25:31ff, 2 Cor 5:10, Rev 20:11-13). The wicked will be consigned permanently to eternal condemnation (hell) (Matt 25:46; Rev 14:9-11, 19-20; 20:14,15; 21:8, 22:15) and the righteous to eternal life (Matt 25:34, Rev 21:7; 22:14).

According to what criteria does Christ judge? According to works (Matt 25:31ff, 2 Cor 5:10, Rev 20:13). But works, remember, include the motives behind the act and the purpose and spirit with which it is done. Significantly the 'sheep' in Jesus' parable are not aware that they have done any good works – their attitude has been one of self-effacing humility. Good works must be done for the glory of God, out of love for him and one's neighbour; the average 'decent life' lived by many 'good pagans' will not suffice. So judgment according to works is in fact judgment that is looking for the fruit of the regenerate life, the life that only the elect (Matt 25:34) can live.

Satan too is despatched to his final end – the everlasting fire (Matt 25:41; Rev 20:7-10). He has been 'thrown down' at Christ's first coming and has been bound (Matt 12:28,29; Luke 10:18; John 12:31; Rev 12:7-9; 20:1-3). He cannot deceive the nations any longer. Not completely powerless of course, not by a long chalk, yet still always completely under the authority of God, Satan cannot stop the work of mission and the progress of the gospel, as 2000 'years of Christ's power' have shown. His final end will come at the return of Christ in glory.

¹¹ Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Leicester: IVP, 1996) p253.

¹² For other Old Testament testimonies to the resurrection of the dead see Job 19:25-27; Ps 16:10, 17:15; Isa 25:7,8; 26:19.

¹³ Paul's concern in 1 Thess 4:13-17 where he speaks of the dead in Christ rising 'first' is in their relation to the translation of living saints, not in relation to dead unbelievers, who are not in his mind at this point. He is encouraging the Christians not to grieve over their dead brothers in Christ – they are not at a disadvantage!

When will the Day of the Lord be? Christ professed ignorance of it – in the sense that it was not something that his divine nature had revealed to his human nature (Mark 13:32). There are broadly speaking three groups of New Testament texts on this issue: (i) those that suggest an imminent coming (Mark 13:30, Matt 10:23); (ii) those that suggest it could be a while yet (Mark 13:6-8, Luke 19:11); and (iii) those where ignorance is expressed (Mark 13:32). The key is *watchfulness* – as Jesus’ teaching and parables on the ‘last days’ (the talents, and the wise and foolish virgins – Matthew 25) make clear we are not to know the time, but are always to be ready for his coming: ‘We are to remain in a state of constant alertness because at any moment Jesus may come.’¹⁴

What of signs? The Gospels speak of signs that the Messiah has come – Jesus’ first coming – signs of the presence of the kingdom: the casting out of demons (Matt 12:28), the fall of Satan (Luke 10:18); miracles and gospel preaching (Matt 11:4,5) and the forgiveness of sins (Mark 2:10). So too Jesus speaks of signs that we are in the last days – Mark 13:4ff, (Matt 25:3ff). Some signs speak of the grace of God – the gospel going to all the world; some speak of the world’s fierce opposition to God – tribulation, persecution, apostasy and antichrist; and some of God’s judgments – wars, earthquakes and famine. These undoubtedly have some significance in pointing to the closeness of ‘the end’ – as they intensify we can expect we are close to the last day, not just in the last days. For example, there is a great tribulation as well as tribulation throughout the age (Rev 7:14, Mark 13:9, 19) and there is a final manifestation of antichrist/man

of lawlessness (2 Thess 2:1-11) as well as antichrists around us now (1 John 2:22; 4:3; 2 John 7). No doubt too there will be a time when the gospel has reached every nation (Matt 24:14; Mark 13:10) – but who will know that except the Lord?

Yet the primary purpose of these signs is not to help us attempt to date Christ’s return, but to know *what kind of days we are in*, just as the signs which Jesus said pointed to his having come (the messianic signs) told those who understood them what kind of day they were in. This is what the Pharisees were supposed to be able to do but could not – interpret the signs of the times (Matt 16:1-4). Paul too is more interested in the kind of behaviour the thought of the coming Day should inspire in us than in knowing when it is coming (Rom 13:11-13) as is the Lord himself – ‘Be on guard, keep awake ... Therefore stay awake – for you do not know when the master of the house will come’ (Mark 13:33-37). We do well to focus on his priority.

So death is swallowed up in life, in victory (Isa 25:8, 1 Cor 15:54,55), the righteous judgment of God has been manifested, and the righteous and the wicked are assigned to their eternal dwelling place. What else?

7. New heavens and earth

If anything shows the inseparability of the Old and New Testaments in terms of our salvation it is this. God promises through Isaiah to ‘create new heavens and a new earth’ (65:17-25; 66:22). Paul takes over the idea of a new creation to speak of the spiritual ‘inner’ life in 2 Corinthians 5:17 as a description of a believer; but following the

Lord he and other New Testament writers are clear that this will be an ‘outer’ thing too and that the day of the regeneration of all things will be very much a cosmic and material reality (Matt 19:28, Acts 3:21, Rom 8:18-23, 2 Peter 3:10-14; Rev 21:1-5).

This reminds us that God’s purposes are to do with history and creation, not just about ‘our souls’ in a narrow sense. Our hope is not the immortality of the soul or even our souls being with the Lord forever, but the resurrection of the body and the renewal of all creation: ‘But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells’ (2 Peter 3:13).

Will there be a period of time between Christ’s return and the ushering in of the new creation? After all, there was a ‘surprise’ for the Jews – the Messiah came to bring in an intermediate age of grace, before final judgment/salvation. Could there be another surprise for us?

Some teach that the reference to the thousand years (‘millennium’) in Revelation 20:1-10 is such a period. Some (‘Dispensationalists’) root their teaching in a more serious aberration that affects their interpretation of the New Testament and the Scripture as a whole – the division between Israel and the church, coupled with a ‘literal’ interpretation of prophetic passages in the Old Testament. But others who are Reformed in theology see Christ returning to this earth for a period of 1000 years before the final judgment. Great men like Spurgeon, the Bonar brothers and Robert Murray McCheyne held this view. Typically, this view is associated with a high view of Israel and their ingathering at

the beginning of or during this period. This is called ‘Premillennialism’ (‘pre’ because Christ in this scheme comes ‘before’ the millennium). It is an honourable position but I remain unconvinced, partly because it entails the Lord returning from glory to a still imperfect world for 1000 years (or so) before the consummation.

Another view, more common among Reformed believers, sees Christ coming after (‘post’) the millennium, but these differ as to what degree of gospel prosperity one should expect before he comes. ‘Postmillennialists’ (who include such greats as Jonathan Edwards and most of the Puritans) would see it as considerable and call that period of gospel prosperity the millennium. Others would see the whole period between the first and second comings as the millennium (and are called ‘Amillennialists’ as if they did not believe in a millennium, which is nonsense), and they differ among themselves over how expectant we should be about gospel success before Christ’s return.

Whichever of these three last positions you take – it is not worth falling out with Christian brothers and sisters over it.

Conclusion

This is too brief a survey of a huge subject. Perhaps it has whetted your appetite (even when you do not agree with me on some issues) to study further. May we remember that the Bible is one book with one people of God, one Saviour and one hope. Above all, we look forward to Christ’s return in glory to bring salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for *him*, our blessed hope, our great God and Saviour. To him be the glory for ever and ever. ■

¹⁴ Donald MacLeod, *A Faith to Live By* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2002), p298.

New Books

The following books have been published recently and are recommended for your attention:



- Robert Strivens and S Blair Waddell (eds.), *Shepherds After My Own Heart: essays in honour of Dr Robert Oliver* (EP Books) ISBN 9781783971497
- Stuart Olyott, *What the Bible teaches about the Trinity* (EP Books) ISBN 9780852347461
- Stuart Olyott, *What the Bible teaches about the person of Christ* (EP Books) ISBN 9781783971565
- Basil Howlett, *1966 and all that: an Evangelical Journey* (EP Books) ISBN 9781783971275
- Eryl Davies, *Preaching—An Awesome Task. Wrath, Final Judgement, Hell and the Glorious Gospel* (EP Books) ISBN 9781783971572
- James M Garretson, *Thoughts on Preaching and Pastoral Ministry. Lessons from the Life and Writings of James W Alexander* (Reformation Heritage Books) ISBN 978-1-60178-413-1
- R D Smart, M A G Haykin, I H Clary (eds), *Pentecostal Outpourings. Revival and the Reformed Tradition* (Reformation Heritage Books) ISBN 978-1-60178-433-9
- Joel R Beeke, James A La Belle, *Living in a Godly Marriage* (Reformation Heritage Books) ISBN 978-1-60178-463-6
- Michael P V Barrett, *The Next to Last Word. Service, Hope, and Revival in the Postexilic Prophets* (Reformation Heritage Books) ISBN 978-1-60178-427-8
- Dustin W Bengé (ed.), *Sweetly Set on God. The piety of David Brainerd* (Reformation Heritage Books) ISBN 978-1-60178-452-0
- Joel R Beeke, Paul M Smalley, *One Man & One Woman. Marriage and Same-sex Relations* (Reformation Heritage Books) ISBN 978-1-60178-474-2
- Rhett Dodson, *Every Promise of Your Word. The Gospel According to Joshua* (Banner of Truth) ISBN 9781848716698
- W S Plumer, *Psalms. A critical and expository commentary with doctrinal and practical remarks* (Banner of Truth) ISBN 9780851512090

And a new DVD:

- 📺 **KNOX.** *The Life and Legacy of Scotland's Controversial Reformer* (Banner of Truth) ISBN 0797776073290

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JONATHAN BAYES

The Shandong Revival

Introduction

Shandong is a coastal province in the north-east of mainland China. It covers an area just a little bigger than England and Wales, and has a population of over 96 million – more than one and half times that of the entire UK. Shandong saw more than the average level of suffering in China's difficult twentieth-century history. It was severely afflicted during the war with Japan and the civil war, and during the dark days of the Cultural Revolution. The persecution of believers lingered longer in Shandong than in most other parts of the country.

The Christians in Shandong today are of a remarkable calibre. Many of their churches hold a prayer meeting at 5 o'clock every morning. The prayers are fervent, earnest, passionate, heartfelt, accompanied by many tears, as the believers weep for the lost, weep with longing to see the glory of Christ on display in his world. The churches of Shandong long to see revival in their province, and beyond.

This spiritual calibre and passion is, it seems to me, a legacy of God's blessing on the churches of Shandong province in an earlier revival, accompanied by the refining power of intense persecution.

I want to tell the story of the two years of revival in Shandong, which lasted from the autumn of 1931 until the middle of 1933. What I say is based on three books. Two are both entitled *The Shantung¹ Revival*. They were written by missionaries from the American Southern Baptist Convention who were present in Shandong during those glory years. The first book was written in Shandong by Mary Crawford in the midst of observing the revival as it took place. The other was written by Charles Culpepper after he had retired and was back in the USA. His work represents mature reflection on the events of the 1930s from the perspective of 35 years later. The third book is entitled *The Awakening*. It was written in 1959 by Marie Monsen, the missionary who had been the Lord's key instrument at the beginning of the revival.²

¹ Shantung is an older spelling of the name of the province before the Romanisation of the language was standardized in Pinyin.

² M K Crawford, *The Shantung Revival* (Shanghai: China Baptist Publication Society, 1933); C L Culpepper, *The Shantung Revival* (Dallas: Evangelism Division, Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1968); M Monsen, *The Awakening: Revival in China, 1927-1937* (Shoals: Kingsley Press, 1959 [Kindle Edition, 2011]).

The revival brought mighty blessing to churches right across the board, not only the churches linked with the Southern Baptist Convention. However, it is the Southern Baptists who most fully documented the wonderful works of God which left them marvelling, in what has been called 'one of the greatest revivals in modern history.'³



coming to them to initiate conversations about the way of salvation. Sometimes souls began crying out to God for mercy before a preacher had finished his message. More than one missionary noted how, previously, they had asked God to help them in their work, whereas now they stood at the side and saw him mightily at work.

1. What actually happened?

The missionaries repeatedly described 1932 in superlative terms. The spiritual temperature, both in the life of the churches and attending their gospel efforts, had never before risen so high. The results of their evangelistic labours were greater in that single year than in many previous years put together. Souls were being saved on a daily basis. In one area of the province an average of 100 people were saved every week. Overall, 'countless thousands'⁴ were converted and baptized. Monsen writes: 'The attentive crowds that filled the large chapels are unforgettable. It was wonderful to watch so many being gathered in like ripe fruit.'⁵

Missionaries and Chinese Christians were amazed and encouraged as people started

One missionary wrote home with this news: 'There are now villages in which every family has one or more saved persons, and in some villages nearly everyone has accepted the Lord.'⁶ Soon the revival had spread right across Shandong. Consequently, church attendance multiplied many times over in a few months. One missionary wrote in his report for 1932: 'This past year has been worth all the others spent in China.'⁷

The place where the revival began was Pingdu. Here a series of evangelistic rallies was held. Two friends, Jiang and Li, attended the meetings, and afterwards they would amuse themselves by making fun of the preacher and the message, and by mimicking the reactions of those who had come under conviction of sin.

One time Li left the meeting, acting in a really weird fashion, and Jiang laughed, assuming that Li was, as usual, mocking the event. However, Li said, 'No, I've got the real thing this time.'⁸ Over the next couple of days, Jiang felt rather lonely as he no longer had anyone with whom he could make a mockery of the revival. He continued to attend the meetings, but turned a deaf ear to the preaching until the very last rally, when he felt the power of God and bowed the knee to Christ.

Also in Pingdu a group of believers set up a tent in which to hold gospel meetings. A local gang of bandits plotted to go to one of the meetings, break it up, and steal the tent. Some other Christians got wind of this, and advised the group to move their meetings elsewhere. However, they refused, and committed themselves to pray for the salvation of the bandits. God answered prayer in a strange way. Before the evening came when the tent was to be ransacked, the bandit leader went blind, and his face became swollen. This made him very frightened: he knew deep down that God had done it. That night he came to the tent ready to confess his sins, and was converted. Soon the swelling went down, and his sight returned. Significantly, this young man had heard the gospel as a child, but had resisted the invitation to come to Christ, and consciously chosen to serve the devil. Now the seed sown years before had borne fruit. That ought

to encourage us all to persevere; we never know how or when the harvest will be reaped.

At Huangxian a student who had joined the Communists and become involved in great sin became so convicted that his body became rigid and he thought he was going to die. He was in that state of agony for half an hour. He then cried out to God for mercy and began confessing his sins. He had

They were convinced that the conclusive evidence of the reality of the revival was transformed lives resulting in transformed communities

plotted to kill those students who were better off than he was. He had tried to convince his fellow students that there was no God. 'For an hour he poured out his heart to God,' until God graciously forgave him, and he 'received peace and salvation.'⁹

This explosion in the number of conversions was associated with a compulsion to reach the lost on the part of believers. Christians suddenly woke up to the fact that their friends and relatives were eternally lost. They were filled with a great burden for unconverted souls, and went out to seek them for Christ, finding a new joy in witnessing. Previously, churches had used various 'soul-winning programmes,' which had never had much success; these now became superfluous, as Christians simply witnessed with a new-found spontaneity.

While God was at work in this powerful way a few miracles of healing and some demon-expulsions took place. However, the missionaries and the Shandong Christians were always careful to stress that they did

³ Culpepper, p8.

⁴ Anonymous introduction, *About the Author*, in Culpepper, p7.

⁵ Monsen, Loc. 975. ⁶ Crawford, pp34f. ⁷ Crawford, p93.

⁸ Crawford, p60.

⁹ Crawford, p30.

not seek such things, and certainly did not regard them as the main thing. The main thing was always lives changed by the preaching of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. As one missionary put it, they had no desire for manifestations, only for God. They were convinced that the conclusive evidence of the reality of the revival was transformed lives resulting in transformed communities. Where sins were confessed, where opium was given up, where idols were torn down, where quarrels were made up, where village hooligans were turned into 'children who had experienced the power of the cleansing of the blood, and instead of spending their days in fights and vile talk were praising the Lord who had saved them,'¹⁰ where places once notorious for banditry were now at peace – there was the proof that God had truly been at work.

Alongside the many conversions, the churches themselves were revolutionized. Spiritually lifeless churches were revitalized. Works that had been discontinued were recommenced. Churches whose prayer meetings had died out reintroduced them, and the prayers were passionate. Communion services took on a new depth of sacredness. Everywhere a new love for Scripture was apparent. Attendance at Bible classes increased dramatically, and people began listening far more eagerly to the preached Word.

There was also a greater unity than ever before, especially between the missionaries and Chinese believers, who were moulded together in Christian love, as God removed pride, envy, jealousy, and mutual criticism.

Moreover, a new generation of national Christian leaders emerged. By 1931 the number of students in training at the province's seminary had dwindled to a mere four, and all four were due to graduate the following year. The threat of closure was looming. It seemed as if God had stopped calling Chinese young men to full-time ministry. However, over the next few years, enrolment increased each year, eventually reaching 150 towards the end of the decade, and the seminary was reinvigorated spiritually. This was no doubt providential preparation for the day, twenty years later, when the missionaries would be expelled from the country.

The hallmark of the revival was a new-found joy in a mighty assurance of God's gracious love. It was a joy that was incomparable and overwhelming. Believers felt closer to the Lord, and were blessed with a deeper love for Christ, than ever before. One missionary wrote in the Mission's 1932 Annual Report: 'It is absolutely beyond the power of human tongues to express the sheer joy and rapture of this new, marvellous, intimate fellowship into which we were brought with the glorified Redeemer himself.'¹¹ Another spoke of 'a joy that I did not know could be felt in this world,' adding, 'It was joy because I was in his presence.'¹²

However, this was not a merely superficial joy. It was almost always preceded by a deep agony of conviction as the heinousness of sin impressed itself upon people as never before. People learned afresh that they were hell-deserving sinners. Hundreds of people experienced

a profound conviction of sin, including hidden sins, and then were released into ecstatic joy. A missionary based in Huangxian confessed that he was brought so low in conviction that he was in despair, but then, as he embraced again 'the blessed hope in Christ', his 'heart was filled with holy laughter and praise'.¹³

One church member, having been through the traumatic experience of discovering that she had never been truly born again, said, 'Oh, the floods of joy and peace as assurance of the forgiveness of sins came.'¹⁴ Another nominal Christian came under deep conviction, and felt that her case was hopeless; however, she was born again, and then commented, 'I had never been so happy.'¹⁵ Several missionaries were convicted of sins committed during their childhood, in some cases 30 years earlier; long forgotten 'little' sins were brought back to memory, and the Lord allowed no rest until they were dealt with. When they had dealt with them before God and put things right with other people, an experience of deep peace, and great heavenly joy ensued.

One professing Christian, a wealthy and influential man, had got involved in some shady financial dealings. As the revival began, 'he realised that he had not done right in getting mixed up in worldly affairs.' For several days the Holy Spirit worked more and more deeply in his life, until the day came when he broke down before the Lord. 'He said he wept more tears on

that one day than he ever had in all his life before.' As he confessed his sins and made things right with those whom he had wronged, his heart was filled with peace and joy. 'Great joy and floods of laughter came over him. He praised the Lord for nearly two hours.'¹⁶

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2. Lasting fruit

Although the manifest outpouring of God's Spirit in Shandong lasted for just two years, it was not a mere flash-in-the-pan. There was lasting fruit. The legacy of the revival was felt for many years, and, arguably, is still evident today. Charles Culpepper refers to a number of 'permanent results.'¹⁷ Perhaps most notable amongst them are the following. First, dead churches were brought back to life, and continued in that state of spiritual vibrancy. Second, the

spirit of prayer continued (and continues) to be a central feature of Shandong church life. Third, the changed lives of transformed Christians were so permanent that even unsaved people could not deny that something remarkable had taken place. Fourth, there was a multiplication of effective Chinese leaders and preachers, who travelled widely preaching the gospel, and their labours were attended with significant success.

Maybe the greatest lasting fruit from the revival was the sheer survival of the church in Shandong through the bitter years of intense persecution, which began after 1949, peaked in the 1960s and 70s,

¹⁰ Crawford, p77.

¹¹ Crawford, p25.

¹² Crawford, p51.

¹³ Crawford, pp42f.

¹⁴ Crawford, p10.

¹⁵ Crawford, p11.

¹⁶ Crawford, pp61f.

¹⁷ Culpepper, pp54-75.



📷 *Seafront at Yantai, Shandong*

and continued into the early years of the twenty-first century. Looking back some decades after the 1930s a Christian leader from a neighbouring province said something which could equally apply to Shandong: ‘We could never have been able to face the attack that came and the persecution, if the Lord had not sent us the revival of the years after 1930. Now, we are able to stand in the evil day. The foundation that was laid then stands sure.’¹⁸

3. The situation before the revival

Charles Culpepper compares the annual meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention for the years 1930, 1931, and 1932: the 1930 meeting ‘had sounded a note of despair. Gloomy reports had reflected a dissatisfaction among the missionaries who presented them. The 1931 meeting saw little change except that there seemed to be a desire for spiritual power. But 1932 was quite different.’¹⁹ By then the revival was underway. Already there were numerous reports of conversions, and of towns and villages being transformed.

The sense of despair and hopelessness articulated at the 1930 meeting, and the hunger for spiritual reality expressed in 1931, had been emerging in parallel over several years. In 1928 the Chinese Southern Army had reached Jinan, the capital of Shandong province, to wage war against the Japanese forces. The ensuing difficulties had exposed so much of the missionaries’ work as ‘hay and stubble’; the missionaries were forced to face up to the fruitlessness of their labours and the deadness of the churches. ‘There was too much mere lip profession. Liberal theology had weakened doctrinal convictions. Consequently, lower moral standards and worldliness had invaded the church. The grossest sins were not uncommon among church members. Even among the leadership of the churches there were many who could not give a clear account of their relationship with Jesus Christ. They were spiritually blind men leading their equally blind followers.’²⁰ Spiritual experience was shallow, service was merely mechanical, and spiritual power was completely lacking. Culpepper

writes, ‘Spiritual conditions were so bad that many missionaries resigned.’²¹ Monsen observed that ‘scores of missionaries were oppressed with this sense of failure,’ but interpreted this common state of mind as ‘a work of the Holy Spirit, part of the preparation for revival.’²²

All this had led to a longing for a deeper experience of the Lord, a longing to see more of the power of the Spirit in the work. One missionary analysed the situation like this: ‘Whenever we have been troubled in conscience about our spiritual impotence, we have added another wheel – a new committee or commission, a new plan or programme.’²³ However, this had resulted in no increase in spiritual power. Now there was an increasing desperation to see God at work. When the Southern Baptist Mission leaders met in June 1931 the meeting became four days of earnest prayer. ‘I had never heard such brokenness in prayer and such pleading to God,’ writes Culpepper.²⁴ ‘Something had to happen.’²⁵

4. How the revival began

The instrument whom the Lord used to initiate the Shandong revival was a Norwegian Lutheran missionary, Marie Monsen. She had first come to China in 1901, and fairly soon started to become concerned about the shallowness of her own spiritual life. She also wrote: ‘In those early pioneer years, I turned almost daily to the Book of Acts and found how little similarity there was between the work described there and the missionary work of our day.’²⁶ She began to long for the spiritual power necessary to witness effectively, and pledged herself to pray for revival.

During her fifteenth year in China Miss Monsen set aside a day for prayer, fasting, and the study of God’s Word. Burdened by her own sense of utter failure, she said, ‘I simply must have some kind of answer from the Lord.’ The day extended into the following night as she read the words of Galatians 3:13-14, ‘Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us: for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” – that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.’ Initially she focused on the promise of verse 14, and sought by faith to receive a fuller experience of the Spirit. However, the Lord pressed upon her the words of verse 13, and she was brought to focus exclusively on Christ and all that he had done, and was released into a rich time of praise.²⁷

Monsen began to worry that many Chinese church members, and even some of her fellow missionaries, had never been truly born again. She had been shaken ‘to realise how seldom we used the words “saved” and “born again”,’²⁸ replacing them with less challenging expressions, such as, “to believe in God” or “to believe in Jesus”. She therefore started boldly challenging people, missionaries and Chinese professing believers alike, about their real spiritual state. Are we not embarrassed about such terminology again today? ‘Come to faith’ seems to be today’s safe epithet, but I fear that coming to faith may often be a substitute for coming to Christ. Perhaps many of our contemporary professing evangelicals have never been truly born again and remain unsaved.

¹⁸ Monsen, Loc. 1003. ¹⁹ Culpepper, p26ff. ²⁰ L T Lyall, *Historical Prelude, in Monsen*, Loc. 84.

²¹ Culpepper, p12. ²² Monsen, Loc. 504. ²³ Crawford, p104. ²⁴ Culpepper, p31. ²⁵ Culpepper, p12. ²⁶ Monsen, Loc. 176. ²⁷ Monsen, Loc. 1426. ²⁸ Monsen, Loc. 413.



Marie Monsen

Through Monsen's influence the theme of regeneration was the major note through which the revival was born. This is not surprising, because the recognition that we need to be born again inevitably credits God alone with the glory and power for imparting new life. In tandem with the truth of regeneration was an emphasis on the need for specific confession of sin, accompanied by restitution where necessary. One missionary, burdened about a theft which she had committed years before which she had covered up, tried hard to avoid making the necessary restitution. Finally she submitted and did what she

knew she had to do. She commented, 'Some things were hard, but he made it harder not to do it.'²⁹

Referring to Marie Monsen, Charles Culpepper writes, 'It became apparent that God had raised her up to expose the spiritual apathy and weakness that existed among the Christians of North China.'³⁰ However, the revival really began amongst the missionaries. It was when the missionaries faced up to their own sins that the power of God came down. Perhaps there is a lesson there for any of us who are in church leadership positions.

Since 1927, Monsen had been challenging her colleagues about 'the seriousness of sin and the importance of the new birth.' This resulted in deep personal realisation of sin and a search for a deeper spiritual life. Monsen challenged everyone, 'the Chinese and missionaries alike, with the probing question, "Have you been born again?"'³¹ Some were angry at this impertinence, but as their anger subsided, many realised that they had never experienced genuine regeneration. They sensed that

Since 1927, Monsen had been challenging her colleagues about 'the seriousness of sin and the importance of the new birth'

they had been hypocrites. They acknowledged that they lacked true power. They faced up to their pride, the realisation that they had tried to rob God of his glory. Missionaries confessed their jealousy and even hatred of other missionaries and of Chinese workers.

The next group to feel the impact of the revival was the leadership

amongst the Chinese Christians. Many of these found their nominalism exposed. One evangelist confessed 'that he had never before realised that he had any sin whatever. He was not afraid to meet God because he was unconscious of being unprepared.'³² For the Chinese, for whom fear of 'losing face' is a massive cultural issue, confession and restitution were profound obstacles. When they took place, there was conclusive evidence of a deep work of the Spirit.

5. Two key characteristics of the revival

It is worth highlighting specifically two key characteristics of the Shandong revival – the place of prayer, and the nature of the meetings.

(i) The place of prayer

'The revival was born out of prayer groups who were asking definitely for revival.'³³ Marie Monsen was convinced that 'an indispensable condition of revival is vital, continual, instant prayer, and that without that it is impossible to see a spiritual quickening.'³⁴ She was convinced that 2 Chronicles 7:14 remained God's covenant with his people, that if only those called by God's name would humble themselves, pray repentantly, and seek God's face earnestly, then his promise stood: 'I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.' She described the precursor to the full outpouring of gospel blessing in Shandong as 'a wonderfully quiet prayer-revival', and those who experienced it determined 'to make united prayer for revival a first

priority in the work.'³⁵

In Jinan a women's prayer group, specifically devoted to praying for revival, had been meeting since 1925. It seems that it had been raised up by God in advance of the general sense of desperation to pioneer explicit prayer for the outpouring of God's Spirit. That ought to encourage us to persevere in prayer, even for years, if God has planted the burden for revival in our hearts. Marie Monsen fulfilled her commitment to pray for revival through

It is the oneness of spirit that is important, not the numbers who gather to pray.

almost twenty years before the answer came; as she comments, 'Truly, God works unhurriedly.'³⁶

As the revival took place, prayer continued to be a central feature. The missionaries were well aware that gospel effort without constant prayer would soon revert to useless impotence. In many places prayer meetings

were held every evening. In one place three prayer meetings were held every day. Occasionally it proved impossible to finish a prayer meeting, as the Holy Spirit took over the leadership. Culpepper tells the story of one prayer meeting which began at 5 o'clock one Tuesday morning, and continued without interruption until mid-morning on Thursday, with 200 people participating. However, it is important to note Mary Crawford's explanation of such experiences: 'The long prayer meetings were only an expression of the hunger of hearts for the fulness of the Spirit.' She points out that there was no sense of dependence on the length of the meetings. Rather, she adds, 'The people were so

²⁹ Crawford, p7.

³⁰ Culpepper, p17.

³¹ Culpepper, p19.

³² Crawford, p21.

³³ Crawford, p7.

³⁴ Monsen, Loc. 619.

³⁵ Monsen, Loc. 924.

³⁶ Monsen, Loc. 194.

hungry that time became as nothing to them.³⁷ And Marie Monsen plays down the significance of the numbers attending: 'It is the oneness of spirit that is important, not the numbers who gather to pray.'³⁸

The prayer meetings were focused and precise. Definite intercession was made for specific people, especially key people in the communities. At times there was a sense of real struggling in prayer, as the Christians went into battle against the powers of darkness.

(ii) *The nature of the meetings*

Pointing out that there was no taint of sensationalism in the meetings during the revival, Crawford makes the amusing comment that 'the singing was the usual mediocre singing of the congregation.'³⁹

She also notes that when Miss Monsen was the speaker, she spoke very quietly, but with a conscious dependence on the promises of God, especially the promise that the Holy Spirit would convict the world of sin.

And it was biblical teaching on sin which the Holy Spirit especially used. Monsen emphasised the truth of Galatians 3:24, that the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Teaching was given on specific sins, not 'the fact that we are all sinners jumbled into one sermon'.⁴⁰ The Ten Commandments were used as a framework. The messages were structured along the following lines: what the Bible says about a particular sin, what that sin does to human hearts, the freedom that comes when Christ changes the heart and

that sin is forgiven. Each meeting focused on a different specific sin – hatred, lying, stealing, covetousness, adultery – all were covered in turn.

There were no 'altar calls'. Public confession was not made obligatory. There was only the pressing home of the urgent issue of regeneration. However, it was also the case that 'there was never a message given that did not also point the way to the cross.'⁴¹ The result was that widespread, deep conviction of sin, a terrible realisation of the righteousness and holiness of God and the certainty of judgment, leading on to a beautiful sense of peace with God in the knowledge that sins were forgiven through the blood of Christ.

Typical is this description of a meeting at Laiyang towards the end of 1931: 'Never shall we forget the night when the fire fell! The little church was transmuted into a veritable paradise, and we were transported into the heavenly realms, and caught a glimpse of their transcendent glory and splendour ... The very atmosphere of the church became electrified with power from on high. Several persons who had been under deep conviction of sin were released that night and found peace at the foot of cross. Glory to God!'⁴²

6. The wider and ongoing concern

It is obvious from their reports on the revival that the missionaries in Shandong longed to see similar outpourings of gospel blessing elsewhere, especially in their own

home country, but also throughout the whole world. For example, one missionary finished a prayer letter to his sending church in July, 1932 with these words, 'Pray that the fire may continue to spread, and that God will likewise bless his people in the homeland.'⁴³

In the autumn of that same year another missionary challenged his readers like this: 'Won't you hunt out the promises of revival in the Bible and claim them for the world? ... We are truly thankful for what we have seen and heard of revival here in Shandong this year, but we are not satisfied. We want more souls saved, more of the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and [in the life] of each Christian. We want an all-China revival, to be part of an all-World revival. We are praying for revival in America; are you praying for us?'⁴⁴

Charles Culpepper, writing nearly 50 years ago now, finishes his book with words which still have contemporary relevance: 'That is also my prayer for America. In the midst of riots, protests, and all the dissatisfaction produced by our complex society, my heart often returns to Shandong. My soul is renewed as I recapture the aura of spiritual ecstasy which epitomized that era in my life. Then the reflective glow fades away, and I find myself in the midst of a land, my land, which needs a second touch for its impotent churches hobbled with their lack of spiritual power.

Unless a great spiritual awakening overtakes our churches, there is little hope for our nation. Such a renewal need not take the exact form of the Shandong Revival. But all the revivals recorded in Holy Writ followed a general pattern. First there was a degeneration of spiritual

power among God's people. Then came the realization of desperate need. Deep conviction of sin and agonizing prayer always followed. A final action required turning away from all wickedness and worldliness. That's the way it happened in Shandong when God kept his covenant with his people. He is waiting for us to let him do it again in America.'⁴⁵

Let us commit ourselves to prayer that he will do it again, not only in America, but also here in the UK, and to the very ends of the earth. As a missionary in Shandong wrote in January, 1933, 'From the record of the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men, is not this what we should all look forward to and expect in the present dispensation?'⁴⁶ ■

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³⁷ Crawford, p55.

³⁸ Monsen, Loc. 1531.

³⁹ Crawford, p8.

⁴⁰ Crawford, p9.

⁴¹ Crawford, p22.

⁴² Crawford, p91.

⁴³ Crawford, p29.

⁴⁴ Crawford, p88.

⁴⁵ Culpepper, p78ff.

⁴⁶ Crawford, p101.



'Tis mystery all!

Hercule Poirot has solved the mystery of the disappearing banker – the little grey cells have performed their magic again. That is one type of mystery, the enigma which only exceptional intelligence can solve. The Bible also speaks about mysteries, most importantly the mystery of the gospel of Christ which he has graciously revealed to us.

Christian mysteries

There are possibly three nuances of meaning to the term 'mystery' when applied in the context of Christian teaching. The first is where it is used to describe amazing truths which appear almost too good to be true. An example is the atoning death of Christ in the well-known hymn by Charles Wesley:

*'Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!
Who can explore His strange design?
(from: 'And can it be', Charles Wesley, 1707-88).*

John Flavel (1628-91) also wrote of God's condescension and greatness in *The Mystery of Providence*: 'The greatness of God is a glorious and unsearchable mystery. The condescension of the most high God to men is also a profound mystery. But when both these meet together they make up a matchless mystery.' (*Works*, Vol. 4, p342, Banner of Truth, 1968).

There is also the 'amazing grace' which rejoiced the heart of John Newton, and God's love which appears in Kelly's stanza: *Their profit and their joy to know
The mystery of his love.*
(from: 'The head that once was crowned with thorns', Thomas Kelly, 1769-1855).

The second meaning refers to some doctrines which appear to lie forever beyond our understanding. *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (2001) defines this as, 'A religious belief based on divine revelation, especially one regarded as

beyond human understanding: The mystery of Christ.' One such doctrine is the Trinity:

*Thrice holy: Father, Spirit, Son;
Mysterious Godhead, Three in One.*

(from: 'Father of heaven', Edward Cooper, 1770-1833).

The third category of mysteries refers to the way the Scriptures use the term, which is different from the previous two meanings and certainly from the ordinary way the world around us uses the word. The Greek word *mysterion* very likely comes from the verb *muo*, which means 'to be closed'.

It is used especially of the lips and eyes, which might well have been closed during initiation into the secret cults known as 'Mysteries'. The New Testament employs the term to refer to truths that were initially hidden but have now been revealed by God. The word occurs in the New Testament in the Gospels, in the book of Revelation, and most often in the epistles of Paul. Although the distinctions are not always sharp, we can categorise the occurrences in the New Testament as follows:

- » Some texts refer to spiritual truth in general and the contents of our faith. Examples are 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 1 Timothy 3:9. We can take the references by Jesus to the secrets of the kingdom of heaven in the Gospels in a similar way (Matt 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10).
- » Paul especially uses the word a number of times in a more specific sense referring to the heart of the gospel

of Christ in Romans 16:25; Ephesians 1:9; 3:3,4,9; 6:19; Colossians 1:26,27; 2:2; 4:3, and 1 Timothy 3:16. He defines the mystery as 'Christ in you, the hope of glory' (Col 1:27).

- » A third group is formed by several, more incidental occurrences of the

The New Testament employs the term to refer to truths that were initially hidden but have now been revealed by God.

word where it refers to different subjects such as the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph 5:32; Rev 1:20), the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:51), the position of Israel (Rom 11:25), and the principle of evil or iniquity (2 Thess 2:7; Rev 17:5,7)

The mystery of the gospel

The most important mystery as far as we are concerned is

the mystery of the gospel of Christ, long hidden, but now revealed in the word of God (Rom 16:25-26, Eph 3:3-6; 6:19). Peter recognised he was living in 'the last days' (Acts 2:17), which is the period in which the mystery of the gospel has now been unveiled. The heart of the mystery of the gospel is Christ himself. Paul declared: 'God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory' (Col 1:25-27), and he sums up the whole mystery of the gospel as 'the mystery of God, namely Christ' (Col 2:2). Paul also wrote to Timothy, 'Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great,' and enlarges upon this statement in a hymn of praise:

*'He appeared in a body,
was vindicated by the Spirit,
was seen by angels,
was preached among the nations,*

was believed on in the world,
was taken up into glory.’
(I Tim 3:16, NIV)

This text inspired John Calvin (1509-1564) to preach his sermon, subsequently published as *The Mystery of Godliness*. Matthew Henry says, ‘This mystery, thus made known, is Christ in you (or among you), the hope of glory. Observe, Christ is the hope of glory. The ground of our hope is Christ in the word, or the gospel revelation, declaring the nature and methods of obtaining it. The evidence of our hope is Christ in the heart, or the sanctification of the soul, and its preparation for the heavenly glory.’

Edmund P Clowney (1917-2005) was also fascinated by the consideration of the gospel mystery, writing *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* in 1988 (Leicester: IVP).

How did Paul acquire this special knowledge? How did God reveal the mystery of the gospel to Paul, given that he had not had the privilege of walking with the Lord like the other apostles? Paul writes of the ‘administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation’ (Eph 3:2-3). The other apostles had been taught by Christ himself, and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus were given special teaching as Christ expounded the mystery of the gospel from the Old Testament (Luke 24:27). The Holy Spirit also reminded them of everything Christ had spoken to them about (John 14:26). Paul was as one born overdue, so only saw the revelation of the resurrected Christ in glory (1 Cor 15:8; cf Acts 9:5; 22:8;

26:15-18). He was also caught up into the third heaven, where he heard some things he was not permitted to tell, but presumably other things which he could speak about (2 Cor 12:2-4). He describes these as ‘surpassingly great revelations’ in verse 7. Of course, he would also have received teaching from Peter when he stayed with him for fifteen days (Gal 1:18) and from others like James and Barnabas. This was the good news which, according to God’s plan, was now to be proclaimed to the Gentiles as well as to Israel. Besides revealing this mystery to Paul, God also gave him the grace to minister this mystery (Eph 3:9), which had been kept hidden throughout the preceding history of the church (Col 1:26).

The progressive revelation of the mystery of Christ, the Messiah

When we focus on Christ as the heart of the mystery of the gospel (see above) we can see how this mystery has been revealed progressively in history. Man had fallen into sin and ruined himself, Eden, and the rest of the world. How could God rectify the situation, save man and thwart the evil schemes of the devil, without compromising his holiness? This mystery was to be slowly revealed over several thousand years. First, God showed that the seed (singular offspring) of the woman would bruise the serpent’s head, or conquer him. This predicted the ultimate overthrow of the forces of evil. The seed would, however, be injured in the process – his heel would be bruised (Gen 3:15). In this story, we are not trying to discover who the perpetrators of evil are, rather who the Deliverer, or Messiah, will be. The villains have always been too well known: the lusts of man’s own sinful heart, and

the schemes of the devil, the Prince of this world, who, with his evil forces, seeks to thwart God’s own plans to redeem his creation.

Abraham was used by God to show some important spiritual lessons for believers. The apostle Paul exhorts us to consider Abraham: ‘He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness’ (Gal 3:6). In this manner ‘God ... announced the gospel in advance’ (v8). This was not only a blessing for Abraham, ‘but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness – for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead’ (Rom 4:24). This undergirds the vital truth that we are justified by faith.

Over 200 years were to elapse before God revealed through Jacob that this conquering king would come from the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10), and would reign over the nations of the world. Yet he would also ride on a donkey, showing humility, and stain his clothes with blood, anticipating Calvary.

Nearly 240 years after this, Balaam had a vision and saw this star and sceptre, or ruler, arise from the descendants of Jacob, but that this was still a long way off (Num 24:17-19). About the same time, God revealed to Moses that he would raise up a great prophet from Israel, who would, and should, be listened to (Deut 18:15-19).

Moving on a further 400 years, King David received the message that the Lord would build his house (his dynasty) through his

offspring (2 Sam 7:12-14 referred to in Heb 1:5). David wrote psalms under the inspiration of the Spirit which contain some remarkable details concerning the sufferings of the coming Christ. There was the vinegar Jesus was given when on the cross (Ps 69:21, Mk 15:36), the casting of lots for his clothing (Ps 22:18, Mt 27:35),

David wrote psalms under the inspiration of the Spirit which contain some remarkable details concerning the sufferings of the coming Christ.

and the cry of dereliction (Ps.22:1, Mt 27:46). Christ’s kingly rule is foreseen by David in Psalm 110 verse 1: ‘The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’ Our Lord quotes this verse in Matthew 22:44 when he is engaging with the Pharisees. In the same psalm God also promises that the Messiah will not only be king, but also priest for ever in the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4). This is explained by the author of the letter to the

Hebrews (Heb 7). This psalm together with Psalm 2 is one of the most often quoted Old Testament texts in the New Testament. The author of Psalm 2 spoke of the Son ruling with a rod of iron (Ps 2:9), which is echoed in Revelation 2:27, where Christ shares his authority with those who overcome and do his will to the end (v26).

Another 300 years were to elapse until Micah prophesied that Christ would be born at Bethlehem (Mic 5:2), and Isaiah saw God’s coming one as a gentle servant, yet one who would rule the earth in power and be a light to the Gentiles (Isa 42:1-7). Before this happens, however, Christ must suffer and be disfigured when he was lifted up on the cross (Isa 52:13-15). There his body was to be pierced with thorns, nails and a spear for our transgressions

(Isa 53:5), and he must become a sacrificial lamb as he bears our sins (vv7-8). He was buried amongst both the rich and wicked (v9), so identifying himself with all social classes, and crucified between two thieves, thus 'numbered with the transgressors' (v12). All these events could not possibly have been engineered by a mere human being in order to fulfil them. But Christ was in control all the way through (Matt 21:2; 26:53-56; 27:50; Heb 9:14; John 19:28)! It was the Sanhedrin, Pilate and the soldiers who could not have deliberately fulfilled these prophecies. They were predicted! These scriptures would have come to his mind and been a comfort to him (Heb 12:2), confirming that he was being obedient to the Father's will.

Was Christ expected at the time he came?

The Jews would have calculated the approximate time for the coming of the Messiah from Daniel's prophecy, especially the revelation from Gabriel in chapter 9 about the seventy 'sevens' or weeks of seven years each. The Messiah would enter his public ministry after 69 'weeks' or 483 years. Considering that the length of time is to be calculated from the edict to rebuild Jerusalem (BC458), this brings us to AD25, which is approximately correct. Adam Clarke's commentary states, 'The rabbis have endeavoured to degrade Daniel, and have placed his prophecies among the hagiographa, books which they consider to possess a minor degree of inspiration; and it is probable that he meets with this treatment from them because his prophecies are proofs too evident that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah, and that he came at the very time that Daniel said the Prince Messiah should come.' It

is uncertain if the Jews, such as Simeon (Luke 2:25), would have differentiated between Christ's coming in his birth and in his public ministry, but they knew that he could come anytime soon. We too should be just as expectantly awaiting his Second Coming (Matt 24:44). Simeon also saw that Christ was to be a light to the Gentiles, as well as the glory of Israel (Luke 2:32; see also Isaiah 49:6).

Christ's own revelation

Our Lord revealed much more about himself and his relationship with the Father, but it was only after his resurrection that he could fully explain the significance of Calvary. The two despondent disciples on the road to Emmaus had the great privilege of hearing as Jesus, 'beginning with Moses and all the prophets, explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself' (Luke 24:27). Not only that, but he also opened their hearts to believe, and their eyes to recognise that he was the same Jesus who had walked with them and taught them over the three years before the crucifixion. They had just been presented with the revelation of the mystery of the identity of the Messiah who was going to redeem Israel (Luke 24:21) – none other than our Lord Jesus Christ himself.

This, together with his later appearance to the assembled eleven and others, when he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (v45), reminds one of the typical Poirot or Miss Marple detective story where all the characters gather together in a room to hear the explanation of how the crime was committed. Mere human reasoning and intelligence are involved

in detective novels, but divine revelation is required to explain the purpose of the ceremonial law, and the need for the countless sacrificial lambs from the time of Abel to the last Passover. These things have now been fulfilled once and for all in the death of Christ. His resurrection meant that the Father had accepted his death in our place, for our sins, which thereby delivered us from all our guilt and opened the doors of heaven to us for all eternity.

The mystery of the gospel becomes apparent in the church

The New Testament church, with Christ as its head, was also a mystery in itself (Eph 5:32). Paul was seeking to make plain to everybody 'the administration of this mystery, which for ages was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms ...' (Eph 3:9-10).

The apostle John also referred to the church as the mystery of the seven stars and seven golden lampstands. These were the seven angels and their corresponding churches (Rev 1:20).

How should we approach these mysteries?

Unlike whodunnit novels, we are not meant to try and work the solutions out from a mass of sometimes deliberately misleading facts. Rather, God has given a series of factual statements and predictions, which the prophets who wrote

them were often unable to understand at the time, but after the prediction came to pass, the Holy Spirit enlightened the reader's mind to see the previously hidden truth. So, we now have the privilege of seeing them. This should lead us to marvel at God's grace and wisdom (Rom 11:33-36). It should also make us very cautious when it comes to our understanding of prophecies concerning the future, which brings us to the next point.

THESE THINGS HAVE NOW BEEN FULFILLED ONCE AND FOR ALL IN THE DEATH OF CHRIST

The mystery of the gospel and the future: sealed and unsealed

Other mysteries still remain: the various prophecies in Revelation, and especially the mystery of Christ's return, the judgment, and the ushering in of the new heavens and new earth (Rev 21:1). We should remember that Daniel, a master of prophecy, was himself unable to interpret his own inspired writings, exclaiming 'My Lord, what will the outcome of all this be?' (Dan 12:8). The Lord replied that these words were sealed up until the time of the end (v9), the period when they would be fulfilled. Daniel was told to go on his way, content with knowing that at the end of time he would receive his allotted inheritance.

In contrast, the angel told John, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near' (Rev 22:10). Some prophecies have already been fulfilled, and some still remain, but there is a definite urgency throughout Revelation: 'Behold, I am coming soon!' (Rev 22:12).

Great confusion

We should remember that some prophetic mysteries will only be revealed by the Holy Spirit at the time of their enactment. Spending excessive time trying to produce a detailed chronology of future events at the end of this age, such as the idea of a rapture, and whether or not the millennium is a literal 1000 years, and if it is pre-, or post-Second Coming, is surely a distraction from the preaching of the gospel, which is our great commission in this age. It has been said that God gave Noah a job to do, not a timetable. Just consider the various plausible interpretations of 666, the number of the beast in Revelation 13:18. Schemes and interpretations are often asserted strongly using biblical proof texts, yet the fact is that godly men come to very different conclusions. This causes great confusion and perplexity among younger believers who hear addresses on such matters. I believe that God will show the correct interpretation at the appropriate time. Jesus' words, 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority' (Acts 1:7), are a caution to the overenthusiastic interpretation of John's revelation 'to show his servants what must soon take place' (Rev 1:1). Most prophecies (including the book of Revelation) have an immediate application and partial fulfilment, whether or not there is to be a future major accomplishment, and it is the former we should focus on. If we were in the predicament of the godly Bishops Latimer and Ridley, with the flames licking around our legs, arguments as to whether the

GOD GAVE NOAH A JOB TO DO, NOT A TIMETABLE.

Great Tribulation was yet to come would appear highly irrelevant. The greatest tribulation in their lives had arrived, and yet Latimer's burning desire, literally, was to see the light of the gospel advanced: 'Be of good comfort, Brother Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust never shall be put out.' And, indeed, reading the account of their ordeal by J C Ryle in *Five English Reformers* (Banner of Truth) contributed to my own conversion.

A sure word

We cannot afford to spend time speculating on these obscure matters; it is also probably in breach of Peter's warning in 2 Peter 1:20-21. We have been given by the revelation of Christ 'the word

of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts' (2 Peter 1:19). Let us thank God for revealing the mystery of salvation in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, the clarification in the writings of the apostles, and the work

of the Spirit in opening our minds and hearts to receive it. May he give us grace to pay attention to it so that we may grow in grace and godliness until he comes or we are called.

Nigel Faithfull is a retired analytical chemist and member of St Mellons Baptist Church, Cardiff. He is the author of Thoughts Fixed and Affections Burning (on Matthew Henry), and editor of Words of Encouragement (messages and Bible studies of Harold K T Faithfull), both by Day One Publications.



Recent Conferences

Conferences have been held in Zimbabwe and Nigeria for which we have received the following statistics:

COUNTRY	LOCATION	DELEGATES	NO. BOOKS Sold & Free
Nigeria	Karu, Abuja	163	810
	Kagoro	68	616
Total		231	1426

COUNTRY	LOCATION	DELEGATES	NO. BOOKS Sold & Free
Zimbabwe	Bulawayo	103	1244
	Harare	58	693
	Kwekwe	42	386
Total		203	2323

Next Conferences

The team leaves on Monday for the May conferences: Hazyview and Barberton, both in Mpumalanga, and then Manzini in Swaziland. Pastors Lawrence Lama (Zambia) and Joshua Bolaji (Welkom SA) are the speakers.

In June we have two parallel runs: Ndola and Lusaka in Zambia, and Kenya/Uganda at end June to beginning July. Cary Kimbrell (USA), Newton Chilingulo (Malawi) and Emmanuel Mpeni are the speakers for Zambia, and Pastors David Harding (UK) and Adamu Maga (Nigeria) are speakers for Kenya/Uganda. This will be an exciting month. Please pray for these conferences.

Nigeria Conferences

These two conferences were new APCs. The number of delegates attending each of these as well as the welcome the conferences received was most encouraging and far exceeded expectation. Book sales were excellent considering the number of books supplied – we had catered for 50 attendants at each!

Zimbabwe Conferences

These three conferences have been ongoing for many years. The theme this year was 'Christ building his church in Africa today'. There is a hunger for sound theological teaching and literature, both of which are gratefully received by the delegates. Despite the poverty in Zimbabwe, the book sales are always excellent and many budget in advance to be able to afford them. APC thanks the publishers who give us substantial discounts on the books enabling their low prices. Thanks, too, to the sponsors of the conferences who enable them to happen. All praise and thanks to God who blesses this ministry abundantly.

The minimum total number of books distributed since the inception of APC in 2006 now stands at 78975.

Sweden

Euro Evangelism: Effective Evangelism Conference, Gothenburg:



Flowing out of the work of the German Baptist Johann Gerhard Oncken and men connected to him, Baptists were at one time more numerous in Sweden in proportion to the population than in Great Britain. The situation has drastically changed. Sweden is the second most irreligious country in the world after Estonia. 65.9% of Swedish citizens are members of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, but only 16.5% of the nation's people consider religion of any kind to be important in their life, while reportedly only 18% believe there is a god at all. Liberalism and ecumenism have ravaged the majority of professing evangelical churches that remain. An example of this was a news story that recently circulated about a Swedish lesbian bishop who effectively called for turning church buildings into multi-faith prayer chapels.

With a view to encouraging faithful evangelism that flows out of biblical theology, ecclesiology, and methodology, Euro Evangelism hosted a free Effective Evangelism Conference in the Swedish city of Gothenburg from 5-7 April. Woven

throughout the conference's sessions (attended by almost 60 people) were two themes: getting the gospel right and getting the gospel out.

Ryan King (pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Wood Green, London) opened the conference with a message from Romans 1:16-17 on 'The Unashamed Evangelist'. If this session was about the evangelist in relation to the gospel message, the second session he led was about the evangelist in relation to God; day two began with a consideration of 'The God-dependent Evangelist' from Ezekiel 37.

Daniel Shwe is an evangelist, church planter, and now pastor of Grace Baptist Church in North Watford. Few if any in the United Kingdom have the breadth and depth of experience in door to door evangelism that Shwe has and so it was fitting that his first session dealt with 'How to evangelise your neighbourhood'. In it, Shwe gave biblical and practical advice for engaging people on their doorsteps and on the street with the good news of Jesus Christ. Daniel spoke again on the final day about 'How to evangelise your family', looking at the relevant biblical texts and speaking movingly from his own experience.

The evening sessions (days one and two) were led by Ali McLachlan. McLachlan is pastor of Grace Baptist Church, West Edinburgh and leads Grace Baptist Partnership Scotland. His task was looking at the gospel message from two angles: first, 'The Bad News: Man is a Sinner', and second, 'The Good News: Christ is a Saviour'. Gothenburg has a significant

Islamic population and has been noted as a fertile recruiting ground for radical Islam; it has reportedly contributed more men to ISIS per capita than any other European city. As a former missionary to the Middle East, McLachlan also has a wealth of insight into reaching Muslims with the gospel, and led a very helpful session on 'How to Evangelise your Muslim Neighbour'.

Speaking from the opening verses of Philippians, Barry King, who leads the Grace Baptist Partnership and is pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Edlesborough, addressed the question of 'What are we all about?' from the opening verses of Philippians, focusing on biblical theology, biblical ecclesiology, and biblical methodology. King concluded the conference with an exposition from Jeremiah 1:1-10 on Jeremiah's commission.

Days two and three began with times of open prayer. It was encouraging to hear clear, simple, and biblically informed pleas to God for him to work once again in Sweden, and indeed, across Europe. As a result of the conference, discussions are already underway to further the spread of the gospel in Sweden through evangelism and church planting.

Translation into Swedish was provided by members of the Gothenburg International Baptist Church, and videos of the sessions, together with those from other Euro Evangelism Conferences, are available on the Euro Evangelism website - www.euroevangelism.org, Euro Evangelism Facebook page, and Euro Evangelism YouTube Channel.

Montreuil (Paris) 2016

Hicham writes:



This annual week of evangelism took place recently in Montreuil (Paris). Once again the Lord showered us with blessing. Here are some reasons to give thanks:

1. About 500 Bibles + about 1000 Gospels were taken gladly by people (including Muslims) who came to us asking for one.
2. Team members had more than 500 significant conversations, particularly with people from France, China, North Africa, Portugal and much of West Africa.
3. As usual, the week built up to an evangelistic meeting. David Vaughn, pastor and professor of practical theology, was this year's speaker on the theme: 'Is the Bible True?' At least 30 non-Christians had responded to our invitation. The vast majority of them were from a Muslim

background. One of the people present was a young Chinese girl, who had been encouraged by her Muslim friends to become a Muslim. She was contacted during the week and invited to the conference. She had never heard the Christian message before. After the meeting she asked many questions about the Christian faith and wanted to know why I left Islam. At the end of the conversation I challenged her as to what her choice would be now, if she were to choose between Jesus' offer to save her, or Islam. Her reply was, 'I would definitely choose Jesus'.

4. As far as we know two conversions took place: another Chinese girl met during the week was introduced to a Chinese team member who spent two hours with her at our HQ. A Malian man moved by the message he heard asked what he could do



📷 Montreuil 2016

to be saved. A group of Christians prayed with him.

5. Four people present at the evangelistic conference now regularly attend the Sunday service.

Points for prayer:

- » That the Bibles and other resources distributed will all be read and not just left on a shelf.
- » Pray for the Lord of the harvest to bless the seed sown and make it grow.
- » Pray for the follow-up work, for those who will be re-visited, etc.
- » One of our goals is multiplication. Our hope is that those who participated in the outreach will take the vision back with them and share it with the leaders of their home churches. Pray

that this type of week of outreach will be repeated in many other places.

For a fuller report please contact me at: word.hope@gmail.com

Do you (or know of anyone in your church) speak FRANGLAIS ? So far there are eight weeks like this running in France, Belgium and Switzerland. Why not consider joining us at one of these weeks? This is your opportunity to try out your language skills, make new friends and serve the Lord with French Christians. You don't need a high level of French to be part of the team. For more, watch the following video: <http://www.files.ubm.org.uk/videos/MissionVacances.mp4>

(English) www.word-of-hope.net
(French) www.voix-des-prophetes.org

Fiji and the effects of the cyclone

This is an update from the Chandras after the cyclone which hit Fiji earlier this year. Our brother Vijay wrote:

We still do not have water or internet connection and power supply. It has been four weeks since the cyclone. We have run out of food and other stuffs. Our house has been damaged and repairs will cost \$2500. The power pole came over the roof of our home and it did some serious damage and the rain water was inside the four rooms. Six of our people lost their homes together with all their belongings and we have helped them with whatever funds we had. The Bible college has allowed us to use their internet free of charge. We do not know when things will be back to normal. In total 45 people died and hundreds of homes were destroyed. Our church building suffered damage as well.

Our people are farmers and some of them lost their cane crops and it will be hard for them.

Narsamma (Vijay's wife) has been sick. Her shoulder has been swollen by carrying water in plastic containers and it is very hard on our health.

We are not able to have Bible studies in villages because of lack of power but we meet on Sunday morning when we have Bible study plus the main service. Since we have no power supply it is hard for Narsamma to cook in the dark.

I have never seen a cyclone category 5 with wind speed up to 315 km per hour and for 6 hours it battered us. Please pray for us as we try to serve our living God.

Thank you so much and we appreciate your prayers.

In his grace, Vijay & Narsamma Chandra

Some words from our Founding Editor

In March, Grove Park Home in Leeds where Erroll Hulse has been staying ceased to provide nursing care. An alternative care home had to be found at short notice. Erroll has been able to move to Wetherby Manor in the lovely historic market town of Wetherby, halfway between Leeds and York, and just off the A1.

He is settling well. He and the family are very aware of God's good provision.

Erroll continues to pray for the glory of Christ throughout the nations. The ongoing work of the Africa Pastors' Conferences is especially close to his heart. He is delighted that the ministry of *Reformation Today* continues and he enjoys the new format! He sends Christian greetings to friends, his warm thanks for their prayers, and urges us all to pray fervently that 'the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea' (Hab 2:14).



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Could UK donors please let Phil Roberts know if they intend to use gift aid.



Further Details

Further details about individual APC conferences are available from Phil Roberts (phil@tentmaker.org.uk) or Frederick Hodgson (frederick.hodgson@gmail.com)

**'The Christian life is a life
of humble, submissive,
patient, persevering,
trusting , thanking,
thinking, wrestling,
waiting, working,
reverent, fervent,
constant, dependent,
contented and thoughtful
praying and living.**

**As we pray,
so we live and
as we live
so we pray.'**

(Author unknown)

*Published by Joachim Rieck, pastor of Eastside Baptist Church, Windhoek,
Namibia, on his Facebook page (27th May 2016) and copied with permission.*

Next Issue

**Theme:
Life and Legacy of John Owen**