A PRINCE AND A GREAT MAN HAS FALLEN!

On 27 June 1970 I drove for the first time from my home in Weston-super-Mare to Witney, in Oxfordshire, for my first speaking engagements there. A rally in Welcome Hall on the Saturday night was followed by five ministry opportunities there on the following day before returning home. My hosts in Witney were Mervyn and Helen Snow; little did I know that this first meeting with them was to lead to many years of treasured fellowship in the gospel. Time and again I enjoyed their generous and thoughtful hospitality, and the links were strengthened even further when Mervyn was the driving force behind the West Oxfordshire ‘Outreach 75’ Campaign led by the Movement for World Evangelization team in March 1975.

Mervyn made a significant contribution to MWE as a member of its council while I was on its staff, including serving a term as the Movement’s treasurer, and when Peter Anderson, Derek Cleave and I formed Christian Ministries in 1980 he was one of the first men we invited to be a member of the CM Board. Almost immediately he offered to handle CM’s central administration, a responsibility he discharged with passionate precision for the whole of its twenty-three years.

When I wrote Does God believe in Atheists? in March 2000 I dedicated it ‘to Mervyn and Helen Snow with admiration, gratitude and affection’ – and I never once had cause to do other than hold them in the highest esteem. In January 2011 Helen went to heaven, and on 5 February this year the Lord called Mervyn to join her there. Two weeks later it was a privilege to drive to Witney again, this time to share in the remarkable Service of Thanksgiving for his life, and to join a large congregation in remembering our links with this spiritual giant.

The Old Testament narrative tells the story of Saul’s cousin Abner, a powerful figure among the king’s followers and a commander in his son’s army. He had a somewhat chequered career, but eventually committed himself to the godly King David. When Abner was killed by the ruthless Joab, he was honoured with a public funeral, at which David wept, and announced that ‘a great man and a prince has fallen’ (2 Samuel 3:38). On 5 February the same could have been said of Mervyn Snow. I thank God upon every remembrance of him, grateful for the privilege of benefiting from his fellowship, leadership, wisdom and example.
ALL CHANGE AT EVANGELICAL PRESS

For many years Evangelical Press (now trading as EP Books) has been my main publisher, and it has been a privilege to work with members of its staff. Unlike some other Christian publishers, EP has remained firmly committed to the production of soundly Bible-based material, and has not succumbed to the temptation to publish lighter work that would have greater commercial appeal. Over the years I worked productively with a succession of General Secretaries at EP, including John Rubens and Anthony Gosling, but in the last two years or so there have been radical changes in the company’s leadership.

The EP Board has seen some significant shuffling, with the result that the company has a ‘slimmer’, more dynamic profile, with two men in particular taking leading roles. One is Andrew Jack, who has become a very good friend of mine in recent years and is now EP’s CEO. The other is Graham Hind, who for many years has been a guide, counsellor and friend, for part of that time as my pastor, and is now EP’s Managing Director. These two men have put in a prodigious amount of work in helping to restructure EP and to move it out of the very difficult situation in which it found itself in recessionary times.

As a result, EP is moving ahead at a time when some other Christian publishers, and many Christian bookshops, have gone under. In the February issue of Evangelical Times Graham Hind wrote an article outlining the changes at EP, and he has agreed that I could share it in Newsline so that friends with a particular interest in my ministry could get an informed update on a work which I count it a privilege to support and to which I am strongly committed. Here it is:

There is a hymn that includes the phrase ‘and nothing changes here’. If Evangelical Press were to adopt a hymn to express the life of the company over the last three years it would not be that one, but perhaps these words would help: Change and decay in all around I see: O thou who changest not, abide with me! The wonderful thing is that in all that has happened the Lord has been with us, working things we had thought would not be possible and leading us in directions we could not have foreseen.

The publishing world is having to change rapidly all over the world as previously long-established patterns of reading are altered by competition from new ways of delivering content. For EP change was obviously necessary, but any change needed to reflect EP’s primary mission to serve the people of God by providing quality Reformed literature that accords with the historic Reformed confessions. We believe that EP has begun 2015 freshly equipped for the task the Lord has given us. Here are the changes summarized:
• For some time the main purpose of the Darlington office has been the preparation and administration of *Evangelical Times*, work which EP carried out under contract. By mutual agreement (EP and *ET* remain sister organisations) EP no longer has that contract, so the Darlington office has closed.

• For the past two years, EP’s main work of publishing has been done by staff working from home and by people working under contract. That will continue: we have staff in North Wales and Derbyshire, and valued friends working under contract in places as far apart as Scotland, Cumbria, Shropshire and the south of England. The Lord has graciously provided good folk who share our vision.

• EP has benefited from its distribution arrangements in both the USA and the UK. JPL Fulfillment in Grand Rapids also shares our vision and is an essential part of our continuing work in North America. IVP in the UK has been hard-working and professional, but our three-year contract with the company comes to an end in March this year. We are pleased to announce a new and close relationship with 10ofthose Ltd, who will carry the full range of EP Books.

• Bryntirion Press books are produced and distributed in association with EP. We value this relationship highly and we appreciate the opportunity it gives for EP to support the work of the gospel in Wales.

• Grace Publications have been associated with EP for many years. EP is no longer able to offer the facilities that Grace Publications require, and so, as 2014 drew to a close, it was agreed that the time was right for Grace to look elsewhere. We pray that the Lord will bless them in their new arrangements.

To contact EP please email sales@epbooks.org or telephone 0333 772 0214 (calls at normal BT national rate). Our mailing address from January is EP Books, Pistyll Hall, Pistyll, Holywell, Flintshire CH8 7SH.

EP and Bryntirion books are listed and available at [www.epbooks.org](http://www.epbooks.org)

The registered office is 140 Coniscliffe Road, Darlington, County Durham DL3 7RT.

Pam and I send our warmest thanks to the many *Newsline* readers who kindly sent us such lovely wedding cards. We treasure each one of them and are so grateful for the prayerful support of such special friends.
Saturday 11 April 2015 was a beautiful day in more ways than one. It was the day John and Pam were married. The service took place in Guildford Baptist Church where Pam has worshipped and worked for many years. The best man was Howard Williams who has travelled widely with John on his apologetics ministry for over 15 years.

The bride arrived in a chauffeur-driven Daimler and was given away by her son Duncan. The Matron of Honour was her best friend Fiona Jarman.

The church pastor, Ian Stackhouse, conducted the service and gave the message. John’s pastor, Dan Green, did a Bible reading and prayed. A second Bible reading was done by John’s son Stephen.

Over 250 family and friends gathered together to support the couple and to wish them well. Some had travelled many miles, including one of John’s granddaughters who flew in from America.

A tea reception was held afterwards in the church hall when John and Pam chatted with their friends and church families before cutting a wedding cake.

After this, the bride and groom travelled to Loseley Park where 120 guests awaited them. Built in the reign of Elizabeth I, Loseley Park stands in ancient Surrey Parkland close to the North Downs.
and the beautiful surroundings made a superb backdrop for photographs. The wedding reception was held in the Tithe Barn under its ancient oak beams with the marks of the original carpenters still visible.

Speeches were made by the best man Howard, John’s oldest son Chris and Pam’s son Duncan. Chris and Duncan spoke with humour and warmth, welcoming Pam and John into their respective families. Then John stood to his feet acknowledging the hand of our great God in bringing them together and putting his objective happily into the plural, ‘As much as we can, as well as we can, for as long as we can.’

Finally at around 10.00pm the bride and groom left for Heathrow airport and a secret destination.

Many people have prayed for either Pam or John for many years and they would greatly appreciate your continued support as they look forward to the privilege of serving the Lord together in the future.
I am constantly encouraged by readers of *Newsline* assuring me of their prayerful support, and it is especially heartening to know that some are friends who have stood with me in the ministry for many decades. If there is a delay in sending out *Newsline* I sometimes hear from those concerned that they don’t have details of preaching engagements for which to pray. I am always struck by this, though I assure all *Newsline* readers that I also value prayer support on days when I am not preaching. Writing assignments are always hovering over my study, sermon preparation is never far down the agenda — and my computer’s Inbox is always demanding attention. Here are a few examples of some of the email traffic on one particular day.

- Somebody asks how my book *Whatever happened to Hell?* differs from another author’s approach to the subject. As I have a copy of his book I am able to give my correspondent an overview of how the books differ in their approach but agree on the essential biblical facts.

- A man writes, ‘I am looking for something to help me present a Christian perspective to a non-believer who has experienced a lot of suffering in her family and with her children.’ I try to point him in the right direction and to refer him to literature that might help.

- A pastor on the Isle of Lewis writes to confirm that two days on the island can be included on a Popular Christian Apologetics tour in Scotland in June. We exchange further emails on what the likely travel arrangements and speaking engagements might be.

- Another email from Scotland, this time about an engagement later in the tour.

- There is a flurry of emails with estate agents and others relating to the sale of my present home and the buying of another that would be more suitable to the local ministry in which Pam and I want to be involved.

- There are several emails to and from a pastor in Brussels, trying to arrange a weekend of ministry there later in the year.

- A man moving to the Midlands asks for help in finding a solidly biblical church, and I am able to recommend three, one of which is quite close to where he lives. [A week later he wrote, ‘I was overwhelmed by joy at finally finding a Church of sound doctrine and the love of Jesus was tangible in those who greeted me. I can’t thank you enough.’]

The internet can be a curse as well as a blessing, but it is a privilege to be able to use it in the Lord’s service — and a great blessing to know that a team of prayer partners is helping me to do so.
GOING FORWARD…

For some years now I have had a meeting in January with leaders of Evangelical Press (now EP Books) to discuss all of my publications, reviewing their present use, considering any impending need for reprints, reporting progress on any current manuscript, and sharing my vision of potential future titles.

Because of the radical changes in EP Books (see elsewhere in this issue of Newsline) this year’s meeting was not held in Darlington, but in the Worcestershire home of the publisher’s CEO, Andrew Jack. Joining us were Graham Hind, the Managing Director of EP Books; Roger Fay (a previous Chairman of Evangelical Press and the Editor of Evangelical Times); and Howard Williams, my constant companion on Popular Christian Apologetics tours in the UK and South Africa and on recent preaching tours in the United States. This made it a delightful ‘family’ gathering as well as a serious business meeting, and I am grateful to all of these men for their encouragement and for their prayerful support of my ministry.

We began by looking ahead to this year’s tours — in Scotland from 8-17 June, in the London area from 24-27 June, in South Africa from 17 September to 6 October, and in Northern Ireland from 31 October to 8 November. In thinking these through we discussed a number of practical issues, including local and national publicity and the potential ‘packaging’ of the many evangelistic booklets that are now published.

Present stocks, sales and reprinting plans made for an interesting session, when financial and other issues came into play. It was good to sense EP’s very positive approach, especially in conjunction with 10ofthose Ltd, which will be a major distributor of my titles from now on. Quite a number of titles need to be reprinted this year, and this is a good sign. Two major titles presently in the pipeline are a new, revised presentation of The Complete Gathered Gold and a major revision of Truth for Life, a devotional commentary on the Epistle of James, based on the ESV text.

The progress of the Classic Series was discussed, with the three present titles doing well and others identified as future additions to the series.

E-books are mushrooming these days, and EP has a number of my books, including recent titles such as The Hitch-hiker’s Guide to Heaven and Why are you here? on this platform, which is so easily accessible to readers far removed from normal print book outlets here in the UK and overseas.

Finally, it was good to look ahead to four or five other potential titles, though it is perhaps unlikely that because of the pressure of other work much progress will be made on writing these this year.
COMING ENGAGEMENTS 2015
At the time of going to print these are my engagements for the next four months. Please pray for God's enabling and blessing at these events — and plan to attend any scheduled to be held near you. It would be good to meet you and to thank you personally for your support.

**MAY**
3 PORTUGAL: International Evangelical Church of the Algarve, Varzada Mao, Vale Judeu, Portugal [Info: 8100-333 Loué or lecavi@sapo.pt]
15-17 SPAIN: Editorial Peregrino Conference in Valdepenas, Spain [Info: info_peregrina2@me.com]
30* BRIGHTON, E.Sussex: Ebenezer Reformed Baptist Church, Richmond Parade, Brighton, BN2 9QD [Info: timothydenning10@gmail.com]
31 BANSTEAD: Banstead Community Church, Banstead Junior School, The Horseshoe, Banstead, SM7 2BQ [Info: 07854 863618 or dan@bansteadcommunity.org.uk]

**JUNE**
7 WORKINGTON, Cumbria: Emmanuel Church, Vulcans Lane, Workington, CA14 2ND [Info: 01900 268 512 or pietersent@gmail.com]
8* WORKINGTON, Cumbria: Emmanuel Church, Vulcans Lane, Workington, CA14 2ND [Info: 01900 268 512 or pietersent@gmail.com]
10-11* ISLE OF LEWIS and ISLE OF HARRIS: Details to be announced [Info: 01851 782924 or dridec@gmail.com]
12* ULLAPOOL, Ross-shire: Lochbroom Free Church, Quay Street, Ullapool [Info: 01854 612370 or Alasdair@lochbroomfreechurchg.co.uk]
14 INVERNESS: Smithton Church, Murray Road, Smithton, Inverness, IV2 7YU [Info: 01463 793191 or dcmeredith@gmail.com]
15* ALNESS, Easter Ross: Capstone Centre, Alness High Street, Alness [Info: 01349 880776 or fiona.dolan@roskeen.freechurch.org]
16* ABERDEEN: Gilcomston Church, Union Street, Aberdeen, AB10 1TP [Info: 01224 647144 or dominic.smart@gilcomston.org]
17* AUCHTERARDER, Perthshire: Auchterarder Parish Church, 24 High Street, Auchterarder, PH3 1DF [Info: 01764 622399 or rob@miregimedia.co.uk]
24-27* LONDON AREA: Meetings organized by Grace Baptist Partnership at four locations. Details to be announced [Info: gracebaptistpartnership.org.uk]

**JULY**
Reserved for writing, though details of any invitations to speaking engagement that are accepted in the meantime will appear on my website — www.johnblanchard.org

**AUGUST**
9 BANSTEAD: Banstead Community Church, Banstead Junior School, The Horseshoe, Banstead, SM7 2BQ [Info: 07854 863618 or dan@bansteadcommunity.org.uk]
16 BANSTEAD: Banstead Community Church, Banstead Junior School, The Horseshoe, Banstead, SM7 2BQ [Info: 07854 863618 or dan@bansteadcommunity.org.uk]
23 BANSTEAD: Banstead Community Church, Banstead Junior School, The Horseshoe, Banstead, SM7 2BQ [Info: 07854 863618 or dan@bansteadcommunity.org.uk]

The rest of August is reserved for writing.

* Indicates a Popular Christian Apologetics meeting.

**JOIN THE TEAM**

Thank you for reading Newsline. If you would like to receive future issues (by post or email) please let me know at jbsarnia@gmail.com