

Geoffrey Cyril Bingham

6th January 1919–3rd June 2009

1. Abba! Abba! Father God!
You have filled us with Your love,
Abba! Abba! You are dear:
How we feel Your presence near.
2. Thou great Heart—Eternal Love—
Pour upon us from above
Freedom from each bond and chain,
That we may be Yours again.
3. As that son returned from sin
To the father's arms of love,
So we turn, O Lord, to Thee,
Ever in Thy Home to be.
4. In the night-time of our soul,
You have healed and made us whole;
You have banished pain and dread,
With Your hand our spirits fed.
5. All the longings of our heart
Bid us from this life depart
That our eyes Your glory see,
That we may be one with Thee.
6. Abba! Abba! Father God!
You have filled us with Your love,
Abba! Abba! You are dear:
How we feel Your presence near.
7. Abba! Abba! Father dear,
You will bring us yet more near;
Take us to Your heart of love,
Make us one with You above.

*Geoffrey Bingham 1986
New Creation Hymn Book 42*

I AM the resurrection and the life, says the Lord; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. *John 11:25, 26.*

I KNOW that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. *Job 19:25, 26, 27.*

WE brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord. *1 Tim. 6:7, Job 1:21.*

Psalm 90

Lord, you have been our refuge: from one generation to another.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made: you are God from everlasting, and world without end.

You turn man to destruction: again you say, Come again, you children of men.

For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday: seeing that is past as a watch in the night.

As soon as you scatter them, they are even as a sleep: and fade away suddenly like the grass.

In the morning it is green, and grows up: but in the evening it is cut down, dried up, and withered.

For we consume away in your displeasure: and are afraid at your wrathful indignation.

You have set our misdeeds before you: and our secret sins in the light of your countenance.

For when you are angry all our days are gone: we bring our years to an end, as it were a tale that is told.

The days of our age are three-score years and ten; and though men be so strong, that they come to fourscore years: yet is their strength then but labour and sorrow; so soon passes it away, and we are gone.

But who regards the power of your wrath: or your indignation according to the fear that is due to you.

So teach us to number our days: that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Turn again, O Lord, at the last: and be gracious to your servants.

O satisfy us with your mercy, and that soon: so shall we rejoice and be glad all the days of our life.

Comfort us again now after the time that you have plagued us: and for the years wherein we have suffered adversity.

Show your servants your work: and their children your glory.

And the glorious Majesty of the Lord our God be upon us: prosper the work of our hands upon us, O prosper our handy-work.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Spirit;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Geoffrey Bingham: His Public Life and Ministry
Martin Bleby

Geoffrey Bingham: A Family Tribute
Liz Diment and Carol Leeder

1. Angel wings, beating my face,
Forcing me into grace.
Dear eyes, loving my soul,
Drawing me to the goal.

*Strong Word, piercing my brain,
Bringing me holy shame.
Pain's cry, welling within,
Lifting me out of sin.*

2. Red hands, clotted with blood,
Thrusting me up to God.
Angel wings, beating my face,
Forcing me into grace.

*Geoffrey Bingham 1943, 1981
New Creation Hymn Book 65*

A reading from *Bright Bird and Shining Sails*
Book 2, Chapter the Fifth

1 John 4:7–21
Jonathan Cannon

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was

made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because he first loved us. If any one says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.

John 14:1–18, 21, 26–27, 30–31
Mary-Grace Bingham

Jesus said: "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also;

henceforth you know him and have seen him.” Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves.

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you.

“I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you . . . He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him . . . If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him . . . the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid . . . I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.

Address
Ian Pennicook

1. Ah, strong strong love that binds my heart
In utter union with Thine own;
Which reaches down from glorious heights
And catches me unto the throne:
Ah, strong strong love, to Thee I fly,
Who catcheth me to dwell on high.

2. When birth had come and all was new,
When time on wings of glory flew,
When all around were those who loved,
And on my spirit breathed the Dove,
That strong strong love held me in pain
Till I had died and lived again.

3. When sin's morass brings horror dark,
When heart's engulfed in vision stark,
When soul's a-pant for sight of Thee,
Thou sendest pain of Calvary;
Ah, strong strong love that stoops from high
And bids me to Thy bosom fly.

4. When all around is sin and pain,
And death is near and life is vain,
Thy glory breaks from out the tomb
As new life issues from its womb,
And I am caught to You on high,
Where strong strong love can never die.

5. Ah, God of pain, ah, God of love,
Ah, Father, Son and Heavenly Dove,
Ah, strong strong love that binds with chain
And woos my heart from all that's vain;
My heart responds in love to Thee,
And ever shall, eternally.

*Geoffrey Bingham 1990
New Creation Hymn Book 30*

The Committal

MAN that is born of a woman has but a short time to live, and is full of trouble. He comes up, and is cut down, like a flower; he flees like a shadow, and never continues in one stay.

In the midst of life we are in death: of whom may we seek for succour, but of you, O Lord, who for our sins are justly displeased?

Yet, O Lord God most holy, O Lord most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death.

You know, Lord, the secrets of our hearts; shut not your merciful ears to our prayer; but spare us, Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, you most worthy judge eternal, let us not, at our last hour, from any pains of death, to fall from you.

FORASMUCH as it has pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear *brother* here departed, we therefore commit *his* body to be buried; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our lowly body, that it may be like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

I HEARD a voice from heaven, saying to me, Write, From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: even so says the Spirit: for they rest from their labours.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

OUR Father in heaven, Hallowed be your Name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, As we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. Amen.

ALMIGHTY God, with whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord, and with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity: We give you hearty thanks, that it has pleased you to deliver this our *brother* out of the miseries of this sinful world; beseeching you, that it may please you, of your gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of your elect, and to hasten your kingdom; that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of your holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in your eternal and everlasting glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

O MERCIFUL God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life; in whom whosoever believes shall live, though he die; and whosoever lives, and believes in him, shall not die eternally; who also has taught us, by his holy Apostle Saint Paul, not to be sorry, as men without hope, for them that sleep in him: We meekly beseech you, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness; that, when we shall depart this life, we may rest in him, as our hope is this our brother does; and that, at the general Resurrection in the last day, we may be found acceptable in

your sight; and receive that blessing, which your well-beloved Son shall then pronounce to all that love and fear you, saying, Come, ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world: Grant this, we beseech you, O merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer. **Amen.**

THE grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. **Amen.**

1. One day we'll see Him face to face,
And then our hearts will beat as one,
That day we'll know the glory of His grace,
As we on earth have never known.
2. Sometimes we are surprised by joy,
Sometimes a bliss unbidden comes,
And in that moment of enriching love
Come intimations of our home.
3. Our hearts are gladdened in this world,
When grace gives sudden sights of love,
But oh! how richer when our hearts in hope
Reach out to fuller bliss above.
4. 'Tis then the sights of heaven abound,
And flood our tired hearts of pain,
The tears of wonder flow in ecstasy,
And we are fully home again.

5. The years of sorrow and of strife,
The sin that brought a holy shame,
The guilt our hearts could never wholly hide
Will never visit us again.
6. Dear Lover, Saviour, Jesus Christ,
Our present life is hid in Thee,
But oh! the wonder when we are unveiled
In glory of our liberty.
7. Till then we live in present hope,
In patience of the coming sight,
And those who share with You Your glory now,
We then will meet with great delight.
8. Delight and bliss and joy and love,
As now our hearts cannot contain,
Will flood us as we see Him face to face
And we are wholly one again.

*Geoffrey Bingham 1986
New Creation Hymn Book 183*

Loved by his wife Laurel

and family

Richard and Susan

Carol and David

Anne and Erik

Liz and Geoff

Ruth (Alive in Christ)

Mary-Grace

grandchildren and great-grandchildren

Rubin

Lotus and Amon

Hugo and Benjamin

Jules

Timothy

Kate

Dan

Bente

Dayna and Alannah

Danielle and Paul

Ella and Chloe

Sarah

Jennifer and Michael

Grace

Karla and Daniel

GEOFFREY CYRIL BINGHAM

1919–2009

HIS PUBLIC LIFE AND MINISTRY

Funeral Oration 10th June 2009

Martin Bleby

with acknowledgements to Geoffrey Bingham and Lesley Hicks

Geoffrey Bingham was born in New South Wales on 6th January 1919—the Christian festival of the Epiphany, or the manifestation of Christ to the nations. Geoffrey proclaimed the gospel in twenty-six countries, and made a lasting impact on this nation of Australia. In 2005 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia ‘For service to the community through Christian ministry, encouraging cross-cultural theological education and as an author’. I have here a hand-written letter from Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, written to Tim Leeder:

Dear Tim,

Thank you for your thoughtfulness in letting me know about your grandpa’s funeral. I am very sorry that I am unable to join you in celebrating the life of a remarkable Australian, who gave so generously and so courageously in serving our country, a man who stood for the finest values and principles. You and your family are in my thoughts in your grief and sadness.

Yours sincerely,

Quentin Bryce.

As a boy, Geoffrey knew he was going to be a preacher of the gospel, even before he was converted to belong to Christ at the age of twelve. Always conscious of ‘the Presence’—the inescapable awareness of God—both in and outside the church building, he loved wandering in the bush around Wahroonga. Here he gained his early appreciation of God’s creation—particularly the birds, the animals, and the human creatures—which was to remain with him all his life. He would later say that the primary thing in all history is creation, as far as God is concerned. God goes to the trouble of redeeming, because He loves His creation, and is determined to bring it to the goal of His plan and purpose for it—the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells!

With his conversion at the age of twelve, he came into the total forgiveness of all his sins and the joyful freedom from guilt that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. He immediately set about trying to convert his whole family, in what he would later say was a presumptuous way, and he has never ceased since bringing people to that knowledge of God as Father that comes through our justification by God’s grace through faith in Christ’s saving death and resurrection and Lordship over all.

Geoffrey entered Moore Theological College, Sydney, in 1939, but in 1940 he enlisted for Army Service with the Australian Imperial Forces, serving until 1946. He became a physical training instructor and, as a Sergeant, was head of a cable-laying team in 8th. Division Signals. He was in Malaya from 1941. He was decorated with the Military Medal and a Mention in Despatches for bravery in the field. Badly wounded, he was a Prisoner of War

from February 1942 to August 1945 in Changi and Kranji Prisoner of War Camps on Singapore island. When partially recovered from his heavy wounding he was appointed Librarian in the hospital.

It was here in prison camp that Geoffrey's faith in God was confirmed, and much of his later theology was forged. Here, among prisoners as well as their captors, he saw human depravity at its worst, and so came to appreciate the depths plumbed by the action of the cross of Christ to redeem us. Ever since, as a keen observer of humanity, and as a participant in human life and action in many different settings, he has made it his business to see that human beings are accorded their true God-given honour and dignity. Along with this has come his fierce opposition to anything that would belittle or demean human persons. Here in prison camp was settled, in the oft-related incident of the rice cakes, his understanding of the eternal law of God as love, and of the universe as a moral entity. It was in Kranji hospital camp that Geoffrey experienced, with a group of men who met together around the Scriptures, the vital reality of true human community in God, that issued freely in practical acts of love. Here, at one time close to death, he heard God say: 'Thou shalt not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord'. A leaflet encapsulating the heart of Geoffrey's teaching is enclosed in the order of service—not for reading now, but for later!

Geoffrey returned to Sydney in 1945 and on being discharged in 1946 went on to be married to Laurel Chapman of Turramurra. For sixty-three years of married life together, Laurel has helped to make possible Geoffrey's unstinting ministry of preaching, teaching and writing, while exercising her own Christian ministry in the family and beyond. Their six children, eleven grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren are listed at the end of today's order of service. Geoffrey's teaching, counselling and writing on marriage, human sexuality and family living has been profound and far-reaching.

Geoff and Laurel then went farming at Eungai on the north coast of New South Wales to put into practice the love that had come to them in God, particularly as Geoff had experienced this in the prison camp community, and to enable Geoff to continue his writing. Thirty-four of his short stories were published in *The Bulletin*, and some were included in other anthologies.

Geoffrey then returned to Moore Theological College where he obtained First Class Honours in the Australian College of Theology Th.L course, second class honours in the Moore College Diploma. He became Rector of the Garrison Church at Millers Point for four years, had a wide ministry in evangelism and teaching throughout Australia, and was the Honorary Vice-Principal of The Sydney Bible Training Institute. His church experienced something like a powerful revival. This came about after Geoffrey was shown by God the emptiness of anything built on the power of personality, and both he and Laurel received an empowering dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Geoffrey's thoroughgoing teaching on the Spirit of God has saved me and many from the superficialities and pitfalls that can accompany renewal movements.

Geoff and Laurel and their growing family then served for ten years in Pakistan with the Church Missionary Society where he was Founder Principal of the Pakistan Bible Training Institute, and a wide ranging speaker throughout West and East Pakistan, India and Ceylon. He was a delegate to the first World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin in 1966, and in 1968 to the South East Asian Congress on Evangelism at Singapore. He took many clergy conferences in different countries, and lectures in a number of theological seminaries and colleges. It was on one such occasion, taking studies on the Cross at a convention in Calcutta, that Geoffrey was given a rich and lasting apprehension of the personal reality of knowing God as Father. Geoffrey's subsequent teaching on the Father and His Family has been called his most distinctive contribution to theology, and to people's lives. Towards the end of his

time in Pakistan he witnessed a powerful revival—this in addition to two previous awakenings. These experiences of revival left him with an indelible impression of what true faith and life can be, and never allowed him to settle for anything less in the life of the church.

Perhaps because of this, it was not easy for him on his return to find his place in the life of the church in Sydney, and God had other plans for him. From 1967 to 1973 he was Principal of the Adelaide Bible Institute, later the Bible College of South Australia, in Victor Harbor, where the student body of seventy grew to one hundred and twenty in two years, and his Monday Night Lectures in Adelaide, and other ministries of missions and conventions, were palpably fruitful. Many lasting and powerful ministries across Australia and beyond have been the fruit of these years.

Sensing a wider ministry beyond Bible College campus he—in concert with a number of like-minded folk—founded the New Creation Teaching Ministry in 1973, becoming its Executive Director. The present site for New Creation at Coromandel East in the Adelaide Hills was provided in a remarkable way in 1975–76. Missions, teaching series and Bible schools in various venues followed, and others were drawn onto the team as the site grew into a large campus with a fully equipped teaching centre, library, publication, sales and administration facilities, and a print room. Geoffrey's published books number over two hundred—theology, Bible commentaries, short stories, novels, essays, poetry and hymns—along with materials he has encouraged others to write—all freely downloadable on the website. Thousands of teaching talks have been recorded on cassette, MP3, video and DVD to spread the teaching across the globe. True to the voluntary principle that Geoffrey learned from Roland Allen's writings, all of this has been funded by God through the unsolicited gifts of God's people. Wide-ranging as this New Creation Teaching Ministry has been, Geoffrey was never contained by it, but ministered far and wide. Remaining a loyal Anglican minister, he never sought to become a new church, but served across all denominations to supplement and strengthen their ministries.

We have received this message from Pastor Bill Vasilakis, writing on behalf of the Heads of Christian Churches here in South Australia:

Last Friday the Heads of Christian Churches in South Australia met for our bi-monthly meeting. Part of our discussion centred around the incredible legacy Geoffrey Bingham has left to the State of South Australia and the wider Australian and International community in the form of his inspirational preaching, and insightful writings around the centrality of the Cross of Christ.

I remember as a university student, and then as a young pastor at the Christian Family Centre, in the 1970's being deeply influenced by Geoff's ministry. For example a set of Geoff's audio tapes on the Book of Romans had a significant impact on my life and ministry for several years. I then, like hundreds of other pastors, devoured his books and they became fuel for my own teaching and preaching ministry. Geoff's work will be timeless and, as an example, our youth and young adults pastor shared from one of Geoff's books in our monthly staff chapel service a couple of weeks ago.

I, like so many others, had the privilege to sit under Geoff's ministry on many occasions and in recent years came in contact with him once again as he ministered at a small Greek Evangelical church, where he regularly helped this new congregation in their spiritual journey.

He was deeply loved and highly respected by everyone who got to know him and his fervency of faith, integrity of heart and intolerance of a cross-less Christianity shone out of him through to the end.

The Heads of Christian Churches wish to express their condolences to Laurel, his children and grandchildren, and also express their thanks to God for a 'good and faithful servant' now gone to his reward. Geoff's legacy will not be forgotten and his influence will continue to be felt through many generations.

The Funeral of Geoffrey Cyril Bingham, 10th June 2009

Rev Dr Ian Pennicook

I wish to draw your attention to the phrase used by the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 33:33, **‘they shall know that a prophet has been among them.’**

While what I say *may* have nothing to do with the context of Ezekiel’s ministry, this phrase, I believe, has great significance for us here today as we meet to publicly acknowledge the physical death, and then later reverently to inter the body, of a great man, Geoffrey Cyril Bingham, who was born on 6th January 1919 and who died on 3rd June 2009.

We know a lot about Geoff’s life from the many things he has written and said. Few men have so openly discussed their family life as he did. It is therefore important that I begin by saying how much I and all of us feel for *Laurel*, and for *Richard and Sue, Carol and David, Anne and Erik, Liz and Geoff* and *Mary-Grace* at this time, as well as for the grand-children and great-grand-children. No matter how much we may expect death, when it comes we are still struck with a great sorrow and a sense of loss. And that is *right*. Laurel and Geoff were married on 25th May 1946 and we cannot and should not treat 63 years of ‘one flesh’ as if it was unimportant. Far from it, their ministry *together* was highly significant. Geoff would never have done what he did without Laurel, while her own unique ministry has always had the stamp of their union upon it. I and many others will testify to that with great gratitude to them both.

We also know much of Geoff’s time as a soldier and prisoner of war. Those experiences alone make his surviving to the age of 90 an extraordinary matter!

But great age and great achievements are not the final issue for us this morning. And I am speaking now to the whole church of God represented here. There are things that can and must be said to the family alone, and there are things that should no doubt be said to Geoff’s many close friends, who also quite properly grieve. But to us as the church I say, **a prophet has been among us.**

Within the Scriptures there are many prophets presented. They came from different backgrounds and spoke to different times and situations. They did so because *God* spoke to them and set them in their places. **‘No prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God’** (2 Peter 1:21). God himself put his word in their mouths and God himself commanded them and energised them to speak it.

While not including him among the biblical prophets, nonetheless it is true that Geoffrey Bingham was a man called by God to bring a word to the church in this land – and across the world – in our times. Furthermore, his ministry was not limited to one particular topic or issue. He was a man outstandingly gifted as a leader and teacher in the church and also as an evangelist. But what

always came through his ministry was not just the power of his personality. That was without doubt very strong. What impacted men and women was the word of God himself. This is not the time for debate, but for saying that Geoffrey Bingham's knowledge of the Scriptures was quite amazing and his refusal to work outside those parameters was emphatic. Although he read very widely, he was never a man who dazzled you with his learning. He was a man through whom the living God spoke. Anyone who ever tried to copy him, so as to achieve the same effects, would soon be exposed, as were the seven sons of Sceva who are described in Acts 19.

There is a temptation at times like this to elevate a person in an inappropriate way. His words and writings can be treated as authoritative and our memory of him becomes almost like dreaming of a golden age. That is a mark of a cult and should be repudiated by us all. Right now!

Geoffrey Bingham was a man, a human being, and one who knew all the weakness that flowed from his being 'in Adam'. He was a man with a history, sometimes glorious for sure, but at other times his history was simply the chronicle of pain and suffering. He was, to a certain extent anyway, a bit like Jacob in the story in Genesis 32, when that man was given a painful limp so that he might learn to be a man of God. And, like the apostle Paul, Geoff's 'thorn in the flesh' never left him, so that he might learn the meaning of the phrase, '**My grace is sufficient for you**'.

This was also true in the experiences of daily life. Geoff and Laurel have never been wealthy, and it was only a few years back, when the Australian government gave an amount of money to former prisoners of war, that Geoff told me that for the first time he had been able to give a gift to his children. Yet always they knew God's provision to them — not 'prosperity' but the Father's generous 'providence'.

The knowledge that **grace is sufficient** was especially true in the matter of forgiveness. Like every other prophet Geoffrey Bingham was a sinner. Sometimes it was obvious to others, but always it was obvious to him. I can recall many conversations which we used to have, when he would tell me of the constant accusations that the evil one would level against him. It would seem unreal to me to be reminding 'the great Geoffrey Bingham' of the truths of forgiveness. But that is the way it is with sinners. And to quote him, when he last preached in public, 'We never get beyond Romans 7'.

If we are foolish enough, we can, of course, spend time remembering a person's failures. All the prophets had them. We can think of Abraham, Moses, David, Jeremiah, Jonah. But what we may *not* do is remember those failures as guilt! It was a prophet whose behavior had been particularly ugly who wrote: '**Blessed are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered**' (Ps. 32:1).

If nothing else, Geoffrey Bingham was a man who preached the Cross! The word of the cross came to me and to so many, with great power, through Geoff's proclamation.

Another feature of a prophet is that he or she is a *gifted* person. There is no doubt that Geoffrey Bingham had vast abilities. He was 72 years old when he was awarded his Doctorate in Theology! His capacity to 'out-think' others was renowned. And he was usually correct. He had an instinct for truth. (However, I should add that he was never a heresy hunter; that was never a priority.) His ability to read and absorb what he read was overwhelming to lesser minds. But in all that, he was, like the Apostle Paul, dependent on the word being *given*. So Paul wrote: **'Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a word may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel'** (Eph. 6:19). Years of experience, as well as vast, and what we might call, *natural* abilities, could never replace the constant need for the gift of God.

There is no place for pride in a prophet. And, to use his own quaint way of expressing it, Geoff knew — and taught *us* — that 'every thing comes to us *gift-wise*'. Or, in biblical words: **'For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?'** (1 Cor. 4:7). If there was fruit in Geoff Bingham's ministry, it came *through* him and not *from* him. He told us many times of his encounter with the promise of Jesus: **'If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, "Out of his inner man shall flow rivers of living water"'** (John 7:37-38). He believed the promise and the rivers flowed.

So, if there is an overriding mark of a prophet it is not his prosperity, or his ministerial success, or his suffering, or even his holy living. It is his *faith*. The prophet is a man (or woman) who has, and continues to have, a personal encounter with God and who therefore speaks because he believes God and so is *impelled* to proclaim.

It was faith-induced passion that we saw in Geoffrey Bingham: **'an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!'** (1 Cor. 9:16). Many of us had difficulty keeping up with him, but he was one who, like Peter and John, **'could not but speak of the things [he had] seen and heard'**(Acts 4:20).

Yet there is more, for **'faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen'** (Heb. 11:1). Some of us may know that over the last twelve months, Geoff Bingham continued to write. He wrote a sizeable work, entitled 'Finding the Father: Living in the *Telos*'. And he wrote it all by hand, too. Some of it is the retelling of stories of the past, but yet it is different, because there is that one element, knowledge of the purpose of God, that transforms the past from being a mere recounting of events into being an awareness of the *telos*, the goal of all things, and therefore an understanding

of the way all things have meaning in that. But Geoff's testimony is revealing, in that the goal of God can be known *now*. Living in the *telos* is the reality now brought to us through faith. The Apostle Peter put it: **'Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorified joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls'** (1 Peter 1:8-9).

Although he was physically weak and most often in pain, so that his body died, as it had to, I suggest that Geoff's departure from this mortal life into immortality was seamless. As Jesus said, **'He who lives and believes in me will never die'** (John 11:26). To be **'absent from the body and present with the Lord'** is an expression of confidence, that what we now know will not end at our physical death. As Geoff was present with the Lord in his physical life, so that reality has only been continued. 'More happy, but not more secure...', or in the words of Psalm 73:24, **'You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory'**

A prophet has been among us. Geoffrey Bingham was a man, a mortal man, who, with all the saints gone before, now awaits the resurrection of the body. He was a sinner whose only confidence was that his great high priest, whose name is Love, ever lives and pleads for him. He was a man who sometimes expressed doubts in the midst of his faith, even with the evidence of God's work through him demonstrated in the lives and ministries of so many.

But one thing is certain: Our response, as the church, and as individuals, must not be to the prophet *but to the word the prophet brought*. If we are to learn from Geoffrey Bingham, it will be as we *believe* the word of God and embrace that word — as it embraces us. To honor the man is good, but we must not forget that: **'All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord endures forever'** (1 Pet. 1:24-25).

We will *not* honor the man if we do not rise up in repentance and faith and respond to the word given by God through him. If we fail to *hear* that word, then the context of Ezekiel's word may *indeed* have application for the church today:

As for you, son of man, your people who talk together about you by the walls, and at the doors of the houses, say to one another, each to a neighbor, 'Come and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD.'

They come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words, but they will not obey them. For flattery is on their lips, but their heart is set on their gain. To them you are like a singer of love songs, one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; they hear what you say, but they will not do it. When this [judgment] comes — and come it will! — then they shall know that *a prophet has been among them* (Ezek. 33:30-33).

(Ian Pennicook
New Creation Teaching Ministry, 4th June 2009)

GEOFFREY BINGHAM: A FAMILY EULOGY

In those last dark, cold nights before someone you love dies, you think about what makes that person unique—how do you sum up what is was to be the wife, child, grandchild or great grandchild, of a life so dynamic, so vibrant that it defies description?

A life lived at such pace that sometimes we were left behind, a life that had so much love that we had to forgive his failings because we knew we were loved by someone who understood people, who though a stranger to small talk, could speak to people at the heart of their beings and change lives with what he understood. He watched and listened and knew. He always, always, saw the best in others and especially in his beloved wife, and family.

His marriage to Laurel, his bride in post-war 1946, was a great love story of 63 years although not always smooth sailing with two feisty strong spirits together. He could not have done what he did without her support of his ministry. They had an unswerving faith which made them leave the comfort of home and family to travel to Pakistan—to an unknown future with five children, with their sixth born there. Much later, along with Mum, he was devastated at the death of his fifth child Ruth in 1974. How fitting that some of his last words were, ‘Ruthie’ and ‘Abba! Father’! We believe he saw heaven and, as he would say, never felt the bump as he moved from this life to the next.

Yet for us, what made him the husband, father and grandfather we loved was his passion for life; whatever he did, he did. He loved his gardens—from the flower gardens he created from the desert at Hyderabad in Pakistan, to the huge veggie patch at Ackland Hill. The grandchildren remember him as ‘strawberry grandpa’—he delighted in taking them to what was surely the biggest patch ever and letting them pick their fill. Danielle recalls wondering how Grandpa knew when he would be walking ahead saying, ‘You think I can’t see you picking those strawberries’.

In the words of his grandchildren: ‘Thank you for letting us try and get fat in your strawberry garden. Thank you for allowing us to play for hours in your hot houses and on the big hill at your place. Thank you for slipping us an extra few dollars when Grandma wasn't looking. And for turning a blind eye to Kate and Jen feeding the biscuits to Soxy the dog’.

For his children he was a strict disciplinarian—we knew we were in for it when he would line us all up! He never really understood teenage girls at all and mum often had to rescue us from his wrath. But he was keenly aware of his failures as a father. He set high standards for himself and others, and his family were no exception—that made it difficult for some of us growing up but we know now he loved each of us deeply.

He loved to visit our homes and help us establish our own gardens (or paint our houses), sometimes whether we liked it or not. He adored his birds—90 budgies and finches made it very difficult for boyfriends to sneak past late at night. He could spend hours watching his birds.

Daily devotions (which trust me was far more than a quick reading and prayer!) set the foundation of our faith and love of the scriptures—we were the sometimes-unwilling congregation but we listened and learnt so much! Anyone who used to go to his fiery preaching would have sympathy for his children and grandchildren when they were slightly inattentive during sermons.

The tradition of reading the Christmas story before opening the presents was invariably marked by trying to stop impatient, giggling younger grandchildren from getting the Grandpa look. Despite this, the grandchildren have said, and we quote, ‘Thank you for telling us to be quiet during the Christmas story, Thank you for praying for us everyday, Thank you for your Grandpa newsletter when we were growing up. And mostly Thank you for showing us what it means to love the Lord and love your Grandkids. We love you with all our heart. Love, all 11 of us!’

Truthfully he was for our early years often an absent father and husband, not only spending many weeks away preaching and teaching but hours in his study writing. He would inevitably have huge regrets for doing this and promise to reform but we would know that very soon he would be unable to resist what he had to do. After every meeting he would come home and be amazed at the way God had worked—each time was ‘the best we ever had’. We knew he could no more stop preaching and writing than breathing.

He was puzzled by our need to take time out for holidays because he said he was surrounded by God’s creation wherever he was. We did have a few memorable holidays at Murree—I remember Dad laughing uproariously at Mum sliding down the snow-covered slopes on metal trays; being woken in what felt like to us the middle of the night to watch the miracle of hundreds of tiny turtles hatch at Sandspit, a beach near Karachi; also trekking to a volcano near Zialet in the wild northern frontier of Pakistan, and a narrow escape when he took us walking in the Blue Mountains.

Driving with Dad, I have to say, was never a pleasure as he was often way too preoccupied to worry about other cars—we think the guardian angels in heaven assigned to his watch ended up on work cover and sang the hallelujah chorus when he could no longer drive. But I did like cycling behind him in Pakistan to the poorest Kooli outcast street sweeper villages where I learnt our Dad knew how to share the liberating love of God to people who were as important to him as any head of state.

He was incredibly generous and luckily for him Mum also believed in always sharing what they had with others—it was their way of life. Their meal times often included guests. He loved to tease and puns would come thick and fast at family times.

God always provided, Dad knew, but sometimes Mum had to do some creative accounting to make ends meet or he would have given away their last cent. He sometimes found it difficult to understand Mum’s preoccupation with worldly ideas, such as wanting a washing machine for six children in Pakistan.

You cannot fully encapsulate his life at a time like this but don't worry, in the last year of life when we thought the frailty of his mind and body had finally caught up with him, he handwrote his last book with incredible insight! We want to thank Gillian Borgas for her encouragement that made it possible.

On behalf of Mum and our family we want to publicly thank those, who made his last difficult years worth living. From his beloved family, to Martin Bleby, John and Beryl Skewes and all from New Creation who journeyed with him, and faithful friends like Peter Greeneklee and David Lines who weekly visited Dad to share scripture. Also his friends from Redeemer especially Jonathon Cannon who ministered to Dad in his last days and the wonderful staff at Burnleigh who treated him with amazing love and respect.

As his family we remember with love, tears and a lot of laughter his amazing ability to embrace life and live it to the full right until the end. In his last year he appreciated afresh the importance of his family and to walk into his room and see his face light up made this a precious time. For all who loved him this is a bitter-sweet day—as his family we remember him with love and we know that he would say with an air of complete surprise this has been 'quite indescribable really—the best ever'.