Morality

In a recent Sunday morning TV panel discussion, the topic was morality. The chairman opened the proceedings by asking each of the four people on the panel to give their personal definitions of morality. Each one said, ‘that it was the sum of human experience within a given culture, which determined acceptable behaviour for that particular group’.

God was not mentioned as the Creator and giver of morals.

This Godless concept is widely held these days, especially amongst the graduates in the social sciences coming from our universities.

We Christians believe that morality is the sum of the laws given by God that humans are expected to live by, and we are answerable to God for any breach of those laws—that is, the sins we commit.

Years ago, an atheist spent most of his time in debate, trying to prove that God did not exist. Today, the existence of God is not even debated. As far as the present generation is concerned, humanity is at the top, having evolved to that position over millions of years, and the sum of our experience over that time is all we need to wisely govern ourselves. In other words, ‘man is the greatest’.

This reflects the words in Daniel 4:30 uttered by King Nebuchadnezzar at the peak of his pride and arrogance, ‘Is not this great Babylon that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power for the honour of my majesty?’

‘Western civilisation is coming very close to this position. It is a civilisation that the Western nations believe they have built by their skill and investment, for their own honour and glory. God and his moral standards have little, or no place in it.

We have watched this decline in morality recently with the collapse of giant companies both here and overseas. These are not little local businesses that were hit by the downturn of the business cycle. These were multi-billion dollar companies with enough assets to ride out any economic downturn. Yet, because of corrupt management backed by corrupt auditors, they have become bankrupt and thousands of little investors have lost their savings.

As the group on the TV panel discussion agreed, ‘as humans we can pick and choose which experiences we personally adopt’. In other words, we can put together a morality to suit ourselves and we are not answerable to God or any-one else for what we do. We are gods in our own right.

Jesus gave us morality in a nutshell. It is, ‘to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind,’ then to, ‘love your neighbour as yourself’.

When man believes he is the greatest, he will not acknowledge the existence of God, much less love him. He feels no responsibility toward his fellow man because he does not believe that God created him.

So we have this modern world with its increase in abuse, exploitation and the stresses that follow.

For those of us who believe that Jesus is our Creator, Lord, Saviour and God, and love him and our neighbour, then we will enjoy the peace in our lives that Jesus brings—the peace that comes from the morality he has given us—not the turmoil that comes from our own experience.

May God bless you all

Roger Jones
Editor

Focus on the Gospel

September 2002
Shipwreck

‘The rest were to get there on planks or pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land in safety.’ (Acts 27:44)

There is much in this shipwreck that imitates life. None of us exist without at some time knowing brokenness. For example, time, though it is the stuff of life, is very easily fractured. Everyone who strives to achieve something has to hold to it through recurring breaks and interruptions. Most of the world’s work is done that way, not by those who are always at leisure—which is seldom fruitful—but by those who seize their moments, redeeming their opportunities and gathering up the fragments of time to make their way to the shore.

There are others who suffer from broken health. There is much they would gladly do if they could—they feel useless.

Yet there are many such sufferers still able to serve their fellows. Calvin was a sickly man. Pascal was all of his life an invalid. Paul had his thorn in the flesh and Spurgeon reeled under his terrible depressions. They all clung to their bits of the ship and came ashore.

Again, there are some whose faith is in ruins. Once they went out into life full of prayers and praise with strong assurance girding them up. Now, the certainty has evaporated, they feel sometimes that God is not even there; that the Scriptures are not to be trusted. They tremble on the borders of unbelief, yet, amid the debris of their once proud ship, something remains—they cannot let go of Jesus. And so they make it to land.

There are those whose character is all smashed to bits. They feel strongly that they have nothing left in them to buoy them up. Remember the Prodigal, far from home; Peter, after he had denied his Lord; Rahab and Magdalene who were battered by the fury of their passions. But the Prodigal came home and was welcomed. Magdalene was lifted out of the mire and given back her dignity.

We are all in bits and pieces, but in this way, everyone can reach land in safety. Such is the grace of God.

May His kindness satisfy you.

Ron J Allen

Third in a series of twelve

The Resurrection of the Dead in the Old Testament

All through the Old Testament, however, as a light that shines brighter and brighter until it reached its zenith in the first fruits from the dead—Jesus Christ was the hope that God himself would rescue his people from sheol.

This hope began with Job’s longing that he would, one day, be physically redeemed from sheol (Job 14:7-15; 19:25-27). Isaiah also spoke of the day when the Lord would ‘swallow up death forever’ (Isa. 25:8).

But your dead will live;
Their bodies will rise,
You who dwell in the dust,
Wake up and shout for joy.
Your dew is like the dew of the morning;
The earth will give birth to her dead’
(Isa. 26:19).

This growing Old Testament belief in a resurrection from the dead, found its fullest expression in Daniel’s words: ‘Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt’ (Dan. 12:2).

Daniel himself was told that he would rest (in death), but at the end of the days he would rise to receive his allotted inheritance (Dan. 12:13). In the second book of Maccabees, two Jewish brothers expressed their faith in the resurrection of the dead as they were about to be executed by Antiochus Epiphanes’ soldiers. The first confessed, ‘The King of the universe will raise us up to a life everlasting made new’ (2 Mac. 7:9 NEB24). The second added, ‘Better to be killed by men and cherish God’s promise to raise us again. There will be no resurrection to life for you!’ (2

(Continued on page 8)
Take a minute with Clem...

Exodus 20:12 Honour your father and Mother

ike the game of tennis, this commandment requires strength on both the forehand and the backhand. It is, as expressed elsewhere in Scripture, a ‘double-edged-sword’.

To honour one’s parents is only half the story, it is incumbent upon parents that they should be worthy of honour. Recent revelations in the Australian media remind us that this has proven a difficult thing for some parents. What we do not know from the media, is just how many parents face this difficulty—most of us in our honest moments know that parenthood, whilst enjoyable, has revealed our limitations.

The lives of desperation that many children lead, may move us to pity in extreme cases portrayed in the media. It is also true that a large number of children suffer quietly because of insensitivity or emotional neglect by parents and/or guardians. Well may we wring our hands at the antics of today’s youth, wondering where it will all lead to—but these things do not arise out of a vacuum.

One of the glories of the Gospel is that it frees us from judgement. However, it is also true it frees us from being judgemental. I suspect there has never been a better time for the exercise of this freedom than the present circumstances. How odd it is when people who have suffered pain and hurt, having been delivered, then turn aside in coldness from others in a similar situation. What a devil-possessed doctrine is this!

The fifth commandment, like the others, is full of the wisdom of God—even-handed, balanced, kind and edifying for the human family. One suspects that a proper understanding here, will indeed turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and vice versa. As the grace of God has come so freely and rescued us, may we, likewise, shed abroad the love of God in all our dealings both near and far.

God and Grandparents

A

n evolutionist friend who believes things are getting better and better, once said to me, ‘One of the unsolved mysteries in evolution is the role of grandparents in the bringing up of children, this does not occur anywhere else in the animal kingdom.’ I don’t agree with his ideas. I do not see the world around me evolving for the better, but declining.

As for grandparents, we discovered how much we were needed recently, when our son married for the second time and asked us to care for the children while he went on his honeymoon!

Happy Anniversary

Doris and Bill

Doris and Bill Lowe of Western Australia, have had a very happy and joyful few weeks lately, celebrating with family and friends their 63rd wedding anniversary and Bill’s 90th birthday.

We would like to congratulate them both on reaching these milestones in their journey through this life.

Bill and Doris, like many others, have been very faithful supporters of GNU for a long time. The support they have given to GNU has been greatly appreciated. We wish them many more happy years together.

Pat Jones

When a rail fell from the upper bunk, a pain formed in the tummy, or a cake had to be made ‘for tomorrow’s breakup’—all the things that never happen at our house—we were there to comfort, create, treat, or cook on demand. We were asked to make ‘pom poms’ and when I wanted to know where the wool was kept, was amazed to hear ‘No Grandma, not wool, paper! It is for our dancing.’ At times we had laughter, tears, tempers, exasperation, and most common—exhaustion. We were parents again. A role we thought we had left behind long ago.

So why do grandparents take such care of their grandchildren temporarily, or sometimes even until the child is old enough to make a home of their own? The answer is love. God Almighty has put into grandparents a special love for grandchildren which creates a bonding with them from birth—in most cases. The Bible says in 1 John 4:8 ‘God is love.’ God is always with us—even though we can’t see him—to love, comfort, teach and guide us.

At the end of our ten days of looking after the kids, though it was enjoyable, we knew our job was not going to get better and better. We knew we only survived by God’s grace and now we can tell our evolutionist friend his theory is a fizzle.

(Pat is a member of the Presbyterian Church, Bega.)
Hello GNU

I’ve just finished reading the article, ‘The Fruit of Salvation’ by Francis Campbell. An excellent and scriptural article, except for the grievous mistake which I discovered in the last sentence of the twelfth paragraph:

’In Romans 8:5 Paul explained that, those who live according to the sinful nature, have their minds set on what the spirit desires.’ I believe the author meant to write, according to the Spirit, rather than, according to the sinful nature.

Your expeditious correction of this sentence will be more enjoyable and less shocking reading to your readers.

Thanks, and the Lord bless you.

J C Aust.

Dear Des

I am writing on behalf of a friend of mine who has a question.

On page 126 of your book Daniel 8:14 The Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgement, going up 4 lines from the bottom of the page, starting with the words, ‘that He thus, in his entering in for us, is at the same time our (Greek word), is what distinguishes him from the typical High priest of the law ...’

My friend needs to know how to pronounce the word in brackets and its translation in English.

Thank you

N F Aust.

Dear N

The English of the word in question is prodromos. It means, precursor, scout, someone who goes up ahead, forerunner.

In the context in which it is used, it serves to emphasise the meaning of Christ’s entry within the veil upon his ascension.

He has gone there ‘once for all’ i.e. his access to God is unlimited and permanent. This is the measure of the Christian’s security before God. It is unequivocal; eternal.

May God bless you

Ron.

Hi GNU

Enclosed a cheque for the Good News Australia magazine which you have been sending to me. What made me think of GNU was a strange experience I had recently.

I have had really bad headaches and neck pain for some time. I sought medical advice and referral to a specialist. This didn’t solve the problem—it just went on.

One night in bed, I prayed. I didn’t expect anything and I didn’t think much more of it until a week or so later, when for some reason the pain had just subsided fairly quickly.

I still have some pain, but I feel this will pass in time. All I can say is that it seemed like a strange coincidence that this happened—maybe it wasn’t a coincidence at all!

Kind regards

PB NSW

GNU

After writing to Des Ford and asking several questions, such as the relevance of Christmas and why don’t you teach the 4th commandment— to which he clearly thinks contrary to the early Church, I think your magazine could do someone else good, but I’ll not be reading it anymore.

Some of your writers and teachers sound like great people, but Grace and Law are one. The Lord taught this—even the Feast of Tabernacles is kept in the Kingdom of God after Christ’s return (see Zech. 14:16). The Church of God teaches this, and God willing, your teachers will have their eyes opened.

F McC Vic.

Dear Friends

Many thanks for a copy of Dr Ford’s talk on ‘September 11’. I shall enjoy passing it around. Ron Allen’s letters continue to be a source of great insight. I’m sure Good News Unlimited is really onto something special, it has to be, the way you present the Gospel.

God bless

W F SAust.

Dear GNU

I would like an answer to the question, that if Christ, acting as sacrifice at calvary, secured our salvation, then why his mediatorial role in heaven, for what is he mediating?

Respectfully

BF USA.

Dear B

The New Testament emerges from the religious culture in a framework of Judaism. The Jewish faith centered on the Temple and its rituals. At the heart of the ritual system was the idea of atonement by sacrifice and by mediation.

Sins were atoned for by the death of an innocent victim and the priests constantly presented the blood of the sacrifices to God in the tabernacle. None of the common people could get any closer to God than the altar of sacrifice. After that, their religious destiny was in the hands of the priests, who represented them before God (see Leviticus 16).

According to the writer of
Hebrews, the Levitical system indicated something much greater than itself. It foreshadowed Jesus, who would become both sacrifice and priest—atonement for sin and representative of all the people—before God.

Jesus brought in eternal redemption for us at Calvary (Hebrews 9:12), but he is not a dead sacrifice, 'He ever lives to intercede for us' (Hebrews 7:25). This just means that Christ's achievements are constantly applicable to us, because he is alive. We are secured eternally—not by an historical fact, but by a living person, in whom the fact is expressed.

May God bless you

Ron

Dear GNU

Thank you for the tape by Dr Raymond Cottrell and Larry Chris-tofell. I wanted some relatives to listen to it also, who no longer belong to the SDA church, yet they still believe in the Sabbath and the Church. When I asked them if they would listen to it, the reply was 'No, we are sick and tired of church-bashing'.

Self arose and unchristian attitudes on my part, as I certainly did not feel that this tape is church-bashing and was hurt over this. I know there has been a lot of church-bashing over the years, but I have never heard GNU or Dr Cottrell ever resort to it. Could you give me some advice on how to respond to this comment. I hope you can find time to answer this email.

Thank you.

G C USA

Dear G

We were glad to share the Cottrell tape which the US Forum folk shared with us. Many people, who have been involved one way or another with religious disputations, grow weary of it and tend to think of any legitimate discussion in negative terms, because it evokes, for them, memories of years of argument and adversarial behaviour among church factions.

Your friends are mistaken about the tape in question, but it may not be possible for you to convince them of that. I would seek to maintain a good relationship with your friends, forgetting about the tape for the time being. They have developed a deep-seated aversion, and the best way to overcome that, is to develop your friendship to the point where they would entrust themselves to anything you might wish to share with them.

Do not be discouraged about this, it is a familiar problem, and as with all problems, love is the answer. Love will ultimately win the day.

Yours in service

Ron

Salt Of The Earth

As John Stott points out in his book The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, salt is used to prevent decay. The world, he says, 'is putrefying, it cannot stop itself from going bad. Only salt introduced from outside, can do this. The church, on the other hand, is set in the world with a double role—as salt to arrest, or at least to hinder the process of social decay, and as light to dispel the darkness.'

Notice, Jesus did not suggest or hint that any but his committed followers could arrest the decay of the world; not education, not world government, not social manipulation—only Christians. It is the big ask of Christ to put Him into the world.

How many and varied are the sprinklings of salt through our lives. Now in true Robbie Burns style, we have 'salt' from a nature story:

GARDEN SALT

Robert Price

In my ramblings through our garden, I often come across some interesting natural phenomena. The more so in the springtime. It may be a swarm of bees resting after leaving a hive or a corkscrew grass seed springing to action as the spring rains soften the ground. Rain stands the seeds on their sharp end and with a corkscrew action, they screw themselves into the ground.

It reminded me of a job we were working on many years ago, repairing a residence. In a peach tree some 1.2 metres from the ground was a Wagtail nest where the young had already hatched.

By bringing our building materials past the nest each day, the birds accepted us. In time, the young birds filled the nest and their heads were over the rim of the nest.

I stopped one day for a closer look, I was an arm's length away and the mother bird sat on the nest to cover the young. At that time of year the flies were bad and one could catch them easily, so I offered a fly to the sitting bird.

As I moved my hand in closer, she stretched her neck to take the fly, which was soon followed by taking another, then another.

Daily the bird trusted me not to harm her or her family.

Isn't that what we do daily—breathing air, eating good food, drinking clean water; trusting God and feeling good in his presence, thanking him for supplying our needs?

To put your trust in God overcomes fear, just as that little bird trusted me and had no fear of me.

(The above articles are from The Next Step magazine.)

George, of Wagga Wagga in NSW, regularly buys GNA magazines to distribute in his area. He is requesting that you would remember in prayer, those receiving these GNA magazines.
About Bread
Susan Bishop

Have you ever made bread? My family likes it so well I am forced to make it often to keep them happy.

Do you have any idea what is in bread? Unscramble the following letters to find out:

GRASU   AYETS
TAREW   LOI
STAL   ORFUL

Most of the time I make my bread without following my written recipe. I tell myself, ‘Now, you’ve made bread so often that you should be able to remember it.’ So... I try to make it without reading the recipe.

Sometimes I do it right... sometimes I leave something out! Every ingredient is important. Most often, when I do leave something out, it is the salt.

It’s hard to tell by looking at the mixture if you have left something out—except the dough rises faster—but you can sure taste the difference! The bread looks normal and feels normal, but with the first bite you know something is wrong.

Jesus talked about salt in some of his sermons. Let’s see if what he said goes along with what I’ve been saying: First, look up Luke 14:34. Write down what it says.

Now Mark 9:50. Write what it says. Next, look up Matthew 5:13 and write it down.

Now put on your thinking cap because you will need to do some thinking. All three of those verses talk about salt losing its saltiness. I don’t think I have ever tasted unsalty salt! Have you? The Bible says it isn’t any good, so throw it out and be rid of it.

Since I’ve never tasted unsalty salt, I’ll have to think up something that might be like that. Do you think... just maybe... that no salt would be like unsalty salt?

Have you ever tasted bread without salt? Or popcorn without salt? Or a cracker biscuit without salt on the top? Salt certainly changes the taste!

Jesus said we are like salt. What could he have meant? Could he have meant, ‘Those of you who follow me are like salt, you make the world taste good, the world is a better place to live in because you choose to love and serve me.’

Do you think Jesus could have meant that?

If you have another idea of what he meant, then write it down.

If you are a person who loves Jesus and you are like salt, what would make you unsalty?

Could it be:

Deciding you don’t love Jesus anymore?

Deciding you can be mean if you want to?

Deciding the Bible is just a fairy story?

Deciding that what Jesus talked about means nothing to you?

Can you add some more?

Just as salt is important in bread, you are important to Jesus. He wants you to be salt for the world—salty salt—the kind that makes a difference.

Now let’s talk about another ingredient in bread. Jesus said the Kingdom of Heaven is like this. A woman takes some yeast and mixes it with a bushel of flour until the whole batch of dough rises (Matthew 13:33).

One time when I was extra forgetful, I forgot the yeast when I was making the bread. What does the yeast do in the bread? If you said it makes it rise... you are right! The bread would be pretty hard to eat if it didn’t have yeast—it would be heavy and hard. Yeast affects the whole loaf of bread.

Let’s make yeast stand for two different things:

First, let’s make it stand for Jesus in your life. The first time you say, ‘Jesus, I believe you died for me and I want you to be my friend and be with me always,’ it is like putting yeast into the bread dough.

Jesus works his way all through your life, changing you from a hard lump, into one that is light and soft. When you first come to Jesus you need him to fill your life with love, joy and patience... things like that. As the yeast (Jesus) works in you, you begin to change. You begin to be a much nicer person. You will notice the difference and so will others around you.

Now let’s look at yeast from another way. Let’s pretend it stands for sin (those unhappy things we all do).

When we keep sin in our lives it works slowly and steadily until our whole lives are influenced by it. It spreads to every part of us. Just as yeast changes the bread dough, we are changed by sin. No one may notice at first, but they soon will! You can’t hide it, it changes you.

If you let sin fill your life, what changes would you see?

The one I think of is selfishness, which means all the time thinking of and doing only what pleases me... Me! Me! Me! ‘Me first!’ ‘That’s mine!’ ‘I want that!’

This is what sin can do. Let’s make Jesus our yeast!
This patchwork-quilt diagram contains 15 Bible words or names all mixed up. Two patches form one word—use each patch only once. See if you can piece together the names and words and write them on the lines below.

1. _______  6. _______  11. _______
2. _______  7. _______  12. _______
3. _______  8. _______  13. _______
4. _______  9. _______  14. _______
5. _______  10. _______  15. _______

Tommy Tadpole

Just look at Tommy Tadpole
He wriggles and he squirms,
I'm sure he's more fidgety
Than half-a-dozen worms!

There he is all head and tail,
I'd know him anywhere
When I go to the pond in spring
He's always wriggling there.

But when I visit Tadpole pond
A little later on,
Tommy and his wrigglng friends
Have disappeared and gone!

Have gone ... don't you know?
Tommy's Tadpole days are over,
He's with his froggy friends,
Jumping in the clover.

(Marie Cleave Dainton.)
Resurrection of the Dead in the Old Testament

Mac. 7:14 NEB.

Among the Jewish sects, the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, but not the Sadducees (Acts 23:6-8; 24:15). The Sadducees based their faith on the first five books of Moses only, and because there is no clear mention of the dead being raised to life in any of these books, they rejected the possibility of the resurrection (Matt. 22:23).

The Resurrection of the Dead in the New Testament

Whenever Jesus gave people life after death, he gave them life in a physical body (Luke 7:11-17; 8:41-56; John 11:1-44). When Jesus himself experienced life after death, he did so only in a physical body (Luke 24:36-43). The only life Jesus spoke of, apart from this present life, is the resurrection life in a physical body refuting the Sadducees who denied it (Luke 20:27-40). Nowhere does Jesus speak unequivocally of a future life apart from the body.

What kind of life do the authors of the New Testament teach that the righteous will have after this life? Paul reveals that life beyond the grave will be resurrection life, 'By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also' (1Cor. 6:14). 'The trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality' (1 Cor. 15:52-53).

Paul tells us that because our current flesh and blood has been corrupted by sin, it 'cannot inherit the kingdom of God' (1 Cor 15:50), therefore, before we can enter God's sinless realm, the Lord will give us entirely new bodies (2 Cor. 5:1-10) similar to the body Jesus had when he rose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:21). Paul calls these new bodies 'spiritual bodies' (1 Cor. 15:44) to contrast them with our current 'natural bodies' that are anything but spiritual. In 1 Corinthians 15:16-20 Paul contrasts 'this life' with the future life.

The future life, according to Paul, is resurrection life—not life as a disembodied spirit.

Resurrection life will be experienced in the future at 'the last day' when Jesus returns to call the dead from their graves. John records Jesus as saying: 'Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned' (John 5:28-29 emphasis supplied) and 'My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes on him shall have eternal life and I shall raise him up at the last day' (John 6:40 emphasis supplied). In the book of Revelation, he sees the resurrection of the dead to judgement, as the event that marks the boundary between this age and the age to come. (Rev. 20:11-21:1).

When Jesus spoke of the general resurrection he made it very clear that his followers who had died, would be in their graves when he returned and would come forth at his command, to receive their rewards in the flesh (Luke 14:14; John 5:28-29). Have you ever wondered why Jesus would need to return to earth to reward the faithful dead if their spirits were already enjoying their reward with him in heaven above? If the dead are to receive totally new bodies, why not give them these new bodies in heaven?

Jesus is in heaven in a body, so it would be entirely possible for the elect to live there in new bodies also.

The general position of the New Testament is Kingdom life is Resurrection life—not Spirit life (John 5:24-29; Rom. 6:3-11) and the resurrection of all believers is guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus (John 11:25; 1 Cor. 15:12-23). All who are raised up by the Spirit to a new life in Jesus now, will be raised up by Jesus on the last day (John 6:39-40; 11:24) when he returns (1 Cor. 15:23).

'For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trumpet call of God and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thes. 4:16-17).

According to the New Testament there will be two classes of people who will come up in the resurrection—the good and the evil (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:14). The fact that the wicked are raised to be judged (John 5:29; Rev. 20:11-13) and the fact that this judgement will not take place until Jesus returns (Matt. 25:31-34, 46) indicates that the punishment of the wicked does not take place prior to that time.

While the Bible indicates that every-one's destiny is fixed permanently when their earthly body is finished with, i.e. at death or the second coming, the reward they shall receive in the kingdom of heaven or in hell, is not determined until the judgement that takes place when Jesus returns (Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; Rev. 22:12).

Those who believe that the spirits of the righteous dead go to heaven after death have not really considered the implications of such a belief for Christian eschatology. Two final events are robbed of their necessity if spirits go to heaven immediately after the death of the body—the resurrection of the body at the second coming of Christ and the judgement of the dead. If people are rewarded immediately after the death of their bodies for the good or the evil they have committed, then there is no need for them to pass through the final judgement at the return of Jesus, or to wait for Christ's final victory over sin and death, in order to enter into glory.

Such a view conflicts with Jesus' teaching that the righteous will be welcomed into glory and the unrighteous will be punished (Matt. 25:31-46) only after he returns to earth and raises the dead to stand in the judgement that will reveal their destinies (Rev. 20:11-15). Furthermore, to claim that Jesus will bring immortal souls back to earth from heaven and put them into new bodies, is not the teaching of the resurrection, but the teaching of reincarnation. According to the dictionary, reincarnation is 'the rebirth of the soul in a new body.'

When Jesus returns, the faithful who are then living, will, in the blink of an eye, exchange their current natu-
eral, perishable, mortal bodies that are imperishable and immortal (1 Cor. 15:51-54). For the final generation of the faithful there never will be a time when they will not be in a physical body. Furthermore, they will experience immortality only in flesh and blood.

If the spirits enjoy a higher form of life in heaven above, freed from the physical body by death, why will this final generation of Christians never know this experience? Also, why did God create Adam to live on earth in a body that would never die (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:22-23)? The weight of evidence indicates that God intended from the very beginning, that the highest form of human life would always be in the body.

If the spirits of the faithful go to heaven at death, what kind of heaven would it be for them? Spirit people in heaven would either be aware or unaware of events on earth. Consider what it would be like for them if they were kept unaware of what was happening to their loved ones.

Parents, whose children have gone missing without a trace, will tell you that not knowing what happened, is much worse than actually knowing. Even when they discover that the very worst thing imaginable has happened, there is rest and finality in just knowing. So how could heaven be total bliss if the redeemed are kept unaware of what is happening to their loved ones? Such enforced ignorance would not only be painful, it would also be out of harmony with the freedoms of eternity.

Alternatively, consider the anguish if the departed spirits in heaven above are fully aware of all that is happening back on earth. How could a young wife and mother, who was killed in a car accident, enjoy heaven knowing that her children are not only distressed at losing her, but their grief has been compounded by their unbelieving father, who not only vents his anger at losing his companion on them, but who now prevents them from going to church and associating with other Christians. What sort of heaven would that be for her?

The popular image of heaven that has been handed down to us is neither candid nor true. It will continue to survive in the minds of those who are unwilling to examine it closely.

From another perspective, if God is a God of love, why does he object to us continuing our loving relationships with our dear ones who have died and ‘gone to heaven’ (Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:9-13)? God is very definite on this matter. A person who ‘consults the dead’ is ‘detestable’ to him.

If our loved ones are alive in another form after death, God’s prohibition is difficult to understand. On the other hand, if they are not alive, but waiting in the graves for the resurrection, then the prohibition makes a lot of sense, it protects us from both human and demonic charlatans.

If believers go to heaven as spirits, why do they die? Does not the Bible mention their existence there? Donald Guthrie claims, ‘With regard to people being in heaven, the only direct reference is to the names of those written in heaven’... (Luke 10:20). The Bible is not only silent on the presence of people in heaven, it explicitly says, ‘No one has ever gone into heaven except the One who came from heaven—the Son of Man’ (John 3:13).

While there is considerable direct teaching in the New Testament on the resurrection, there is not a single line of direct teaching on a persons existence after death as a soul or spirit. The Dutch theologian, G. C. Berkouwer, says, ‘Scripture nowhere gives us a theoretical explication of the intermediate state’ (i.e. the persons existence as a spirit between death and the resurrection). He goes on to say, ‘To look for scriptural proof of the anthropological possibility of the doctrine is a vain effort.’ And H. Bietenhard insists that, as far as the New testament is concerned, ‘There is no doctrine of the beyond, or any geography of the beyond.’

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End Notes

25. This verse indicates that the condemnation of the wicked takes place after the resurrection from the dead and not immediately after death.
26. You may ask, how can I be me if I’m given a different body? It’s really no problem at all, you don’t have the same body you had when you were three years old and you don’t even have the same body you had ten years ago. But you are still you.
27. Eschatology is the branch of biblical studies that focuses on final events.

The Christian Lawyers Society Presents a Short Course in Theology with Dr Desmond Ford

Sessions start at 9.00am and finish at 11.00am on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month from July 13 until November 23, 2002 at St Francis’ Theological College, Milton Road, Milton, Brisbane (entrance off Baroona Road). Registration cost for the 10 seminars is $40 ($20 full time students, pensioners and unemployed).

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Baptist Church at the Kawana High School, Sunshine Coast QLD.
Dr Desmond Ford will be taking the church services for the Baptist Church, 9.30 am on the following Sundays:

- **Sept. 22**
- **October 6, 13, 20**
- **Nov. 3, 10**

The Baptist Church meets in the Kawana High School, Sportsman Avenue, Sunshine Coast. Just follow the signs.
Mission Statement

Christians united in offering to all meaning and direction in their lives by a knowledge of God's encounter with humanity through his Son, Jesus Christ.

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Hervey Bay: Phn. 07 41281261. Meets once a month at ‘Dan-Dinna House’ 459 Boat Harbour Drive, Torquay: QLD. For further information contact Evelyn O’Grady on 07 41281261.
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Dr Ford has been taking a series of meetings at the Kawana Baptist Church, Sunshine Coast, Queensland. The following are the topics covered in June 2002.

Tape 1. ‘A Sure Investment.’
‘Why Israel Will Never Know Peace.’ #2KA0001
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A set of two audio tapes $12.00 — 4 Topics
Single audio tape $6.50 — 2 topics

Dr Hugh Ross, Astrophysicist & Dr Desmond Ford

This was a telephone link-up between Dr Ross, USA, and Dr Ford, sponsored by Gordon Moyes.
A 2GB Broadcast on the 21 April 2002

Science Creation and the Bible
Audio tape $6.50 #2SCB001

Time Out

We could learn a lot from crayons: Some are sharp, some pretty, some dull, some have weird names and all are different colours... but they all exist very nicely in the same box. (Ken and Harriet’s Place)

RADIO OUTREACH

OPAL FM 89.7 Lightning Ridge NSW
Phn. 0268 292976 (Tony Fitzgerald).
RADIO RHEMA TAMWORTH NSW
Phn. 02 67612360 (Karen Barter).
Dr Desmond Ford
3rd Wednesday of the month
Chapter 1000 of Scripture:
The Key and Summary of the Bible
Alexanders Restaurant at the Metropolitan Motor Inn, 106 Leichardt Street,
Spring Hill, Brisbane. Corner of Upper Edward Street. There is parking under the Motor Inn.
Eat breakfast while Des speaks, cost $13.50 (No cost if not eating) finish approx. 8:15 am.

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The forces that shape belief structures are as important as the beliefs themselves. Once we understand why people believe the way they do, we can begin to see why modern Westerners find some beliefs implausible—and yet remain spiritually hungry.

Dr Martin Robinson has authored and co-authored a number of books including *A World Apart* and *Celebrating the Small Church*. He has many years of experience in Christian ministry and is Director of Mission & Theology at Bible Society. Dr Martin writes for those who are sympathetic to Christian faith and those who are hostile to that faith. He suggests ways in which Christians and Unbelievers can begin to communicate with each other.

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