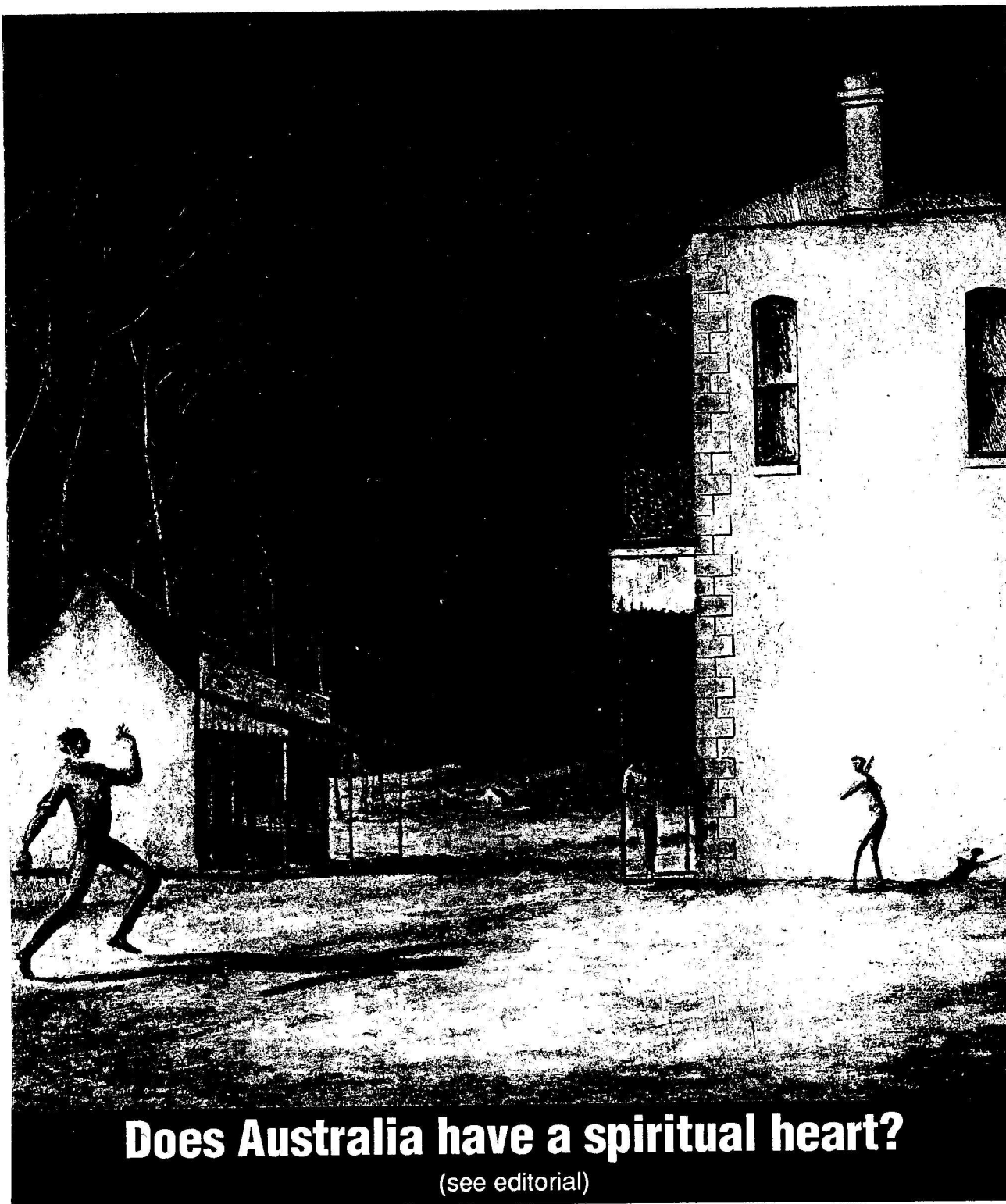


GOOD NEWS

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A U S T R A L I A



Does Australia have a spiritual heart?

(see editorial)



Editorial

Few Australians seem to recognize a spiritual dimension in their lives. A recent casual survey of coffee table books about Australian history and culture revealed a notable exclusion of images of worship and religion.

Visual images of early worshippers were absent. Images of drinking, shearing, prospecting, droving, playing and gambling occurred repeatedly. Christianity, when represented at all, was revealed through architectural images rather than of Australians worshipping.

Does this reflect the secular nature of the authors of such books, or does it reflect accurately a national, spiritual vacuum? Perhaps, it reflects both.

Christianity is challenged to merely register on Australia's Richter scale of social consciousness. Can Australian lives be changed if they are oblivious to the need for change? Have Australians been conditioned into becoming totally secular beings?

Media images of Australian Christians are largely caricatures. The Reverend Fred Nile of Sydney is lampooned persistently; Archbishops struggle to achieve column inches; the Reverend Gordon Moyes was discussed incredulously when he moved to purchase Sydney's radio station 2GB.

Among the gloom there is hope. Increasingly, Australians recognize an emptiness in their lives. Yuppies search for meaning in martial arts, yoga and the New Age. Others turn to marketing organisations whose sales and motivational meetings provide substitute worship.

At the same time, parents question the absolute freedom they have given to their children. Teachers seek greater pastoral care for their students. Meanwhile kids search for meaning.

How can Christians fill their vacuum? How do we register upon a nation's conscience? Is it through expensive manipulation of the media? Or is it as it has always been?

Persons responded to Christ's teachings for several reasons. Firstly, he recognized the needs of people. Secondly, he met their practical needs either by healing, encouragement or rebuke. Thirdly, he lived what he preached.

Persons still respond to Christians who genuinely practise practical Christianity. Persons whose lives are redolent with the spirit of Christ convey to others a spirit of peace, hope and purpose.

Lives lived in the name of Christ which reflect the fruits of Christ's spirit evoke response. Christian witnessing grows out of the consistent, daily practice of being in the presence of Christ.

Should we dare to live lives which deny our calling?

— Rob Cooper

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LOVE'S ETERNAL TIE



Desmond Ford

What an opening for a book! "I have loved you," says the Lord.

These are the first words of the message of the last book of the Old Covenant (Testament). The rest of Malachi mourns the lovelessness of that people to whom God had married himself in covenant relationship centuries before.

The Bible a Book of God's Love

The whole Bible is about the love of God. Though the Old Testament tells of an era of sin, yet it reminds us of the primeval glory.

See how creation first tells the story of God's love. God creates beauty and the senses to enjoy that beauty. God creates myriads of creatures which all in one way or another speak of him. Then God made man and

woman and performed the first wedding. What choruses of ecstasy there must have been that day from angels and from nature – animate and inanimate.

There was nothing without meaning in that time of glorious beginnings. Adam and Eve's union was a reflection of the union of hearts between God and man – and both the shadow and the reality were forever. The beauty of Eve, the strength of Adam, the benediction of the sun's gentle warmth, the music of the whispering leaves, the joy of the animals, the ecstasy of physical union, and above all, fellowship with the great Father of all, each told of God's goodness.

The Old and New Testaments United

In the first chapter of Genesis,

humanity is made in the image of God. In the first chapter of the New Testament, God is made in the image of a man. As the books of the Old Covenant begin with the story of the first wedded union, so the first book of the New Covenant describes the union of God with humanity – the marriage of divinity and humanity in the incarnation. The angels, in wonder and delight must have sung song pervaded with reverential awe and sweeter than those of Eden.

John's Gospel begins like Genesis, "In the beginning..." Then, following his prologue (Jn 1:1-18), John numbers off days until on the sixth day (see the three days mentioned in John 1:29, 35, and 43; then add "the third day" of 3:1). On this sixth day there is a marriage just as there had been on the sixth day of creation in Genesis. But at the wedding at Cana,

as at the Fall in Eden, the wine runs out. In Genesis, sin caused all life, joy, and love to deteriorate and fade. So, in the record of Cana, "the wine of joy ceases to flow."

The ultimate sadness of life is that nothing lasts. Neither beauty nor strength nor health nor personality itself. Because of sin, all things deteriorate and fade. The wine runs out. But the loving Christ, at Cana, teaches us that it takes three to get married. Jesus shows us that only God is sufficient to meet the needs of his fallen creatures. Christ's presence at Cana is a token or sign of the incarnation. God has not only pitched his tents by the tents of humanity but become one of us in order to transform our lives.

The Symbolism of Marriage

The last book of the Old Testament speaks of God's love to man as typified in the marriage relation. The last book of the New Testament closes with the same message. There we read *"the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready"* (Rev 19:7). Lest we should misunderstand the reference to the bride making herself ready, it is made clear in the following verse. In actuality it is God who makes her ready. The *"fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear"* (v.8). The imputed righteousness of Christ becomes fully imparted in the last great day when all sin's taint is removed.

Paul, the chief writer of the New Testament, knew the meaning of the symbolism of marriage:

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband (Eph 5:31-33, see vv.21-33).

Thus Paul tells us that every husband is a figure of Christ and every bride a figure of the church. For that to be possible, God had to become

human. Bethlehem and its incarnation tells of the marriage of divinity with humanity – the mysterious adoption of humanity into the Trinity by the closest of all unions. So God and redeemed humanity become one for all eternity. Every wedding we attend reminds us of Bethlehem and the miracle of a new creation which there transpired.

Divorce

In the middle chapter of Malachi, God rebukes his people for their lovelessness. He says they *"have violated the covenant with Levi"* (2:8). Levi means "joined" and reminds us how Leah once longed, worked, and prayed, to win the love of Jacob that he might be joined to her (see Gen 29:34). Jacob's name became Israel. His partial, imperfect love portrayed the failures of Israel through all the centuries to follow.

In Malachi 2:11 God accuses his people of being faithless and profaning the covenant by *"marrying the daughter of a foreign god"* (2:11). Because of their faithlessness to the covenant union with God, family units were suffering.

Divorce was becoming widespread in the days of Malachi.

The Lord is acting as a witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant . . . So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. "I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel . . . So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith (2:14-16).

Sinful man, unfaithful to God, how can he be faithful to his fellow creature? Some divorces may be preferable to a domestic chaos which is beyond repair and is killing both parties. Yet the modern rash of divorce testifies to the impiety of twentieth century humanity. The prophet goes on to predict the coming of the messenger of the covenant. The messenger will purify the sons of Levi that they may be joined to God

in purity once more and become as precious as resplendent jewels (see 3:1,3,17).

Loving Marriage Restored

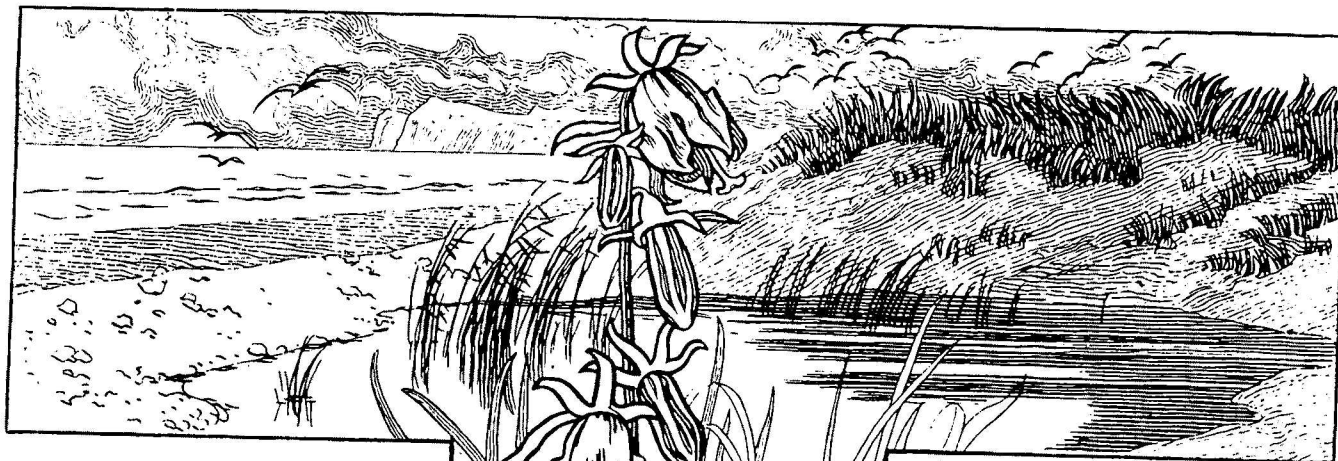
The fulfillment of this climactic Old Testament prophecy is found when we turn the page and enter the New Testament. There, immediately, we are confronted by the story of Bethlehem. God marries humanity through the incarnation! Wonder of wonders! Theme for the most profound meditation! That the holy God should unite himself forever to a race of rebels. God comes down that man might one day go up. God is begrimed by the filth of a cowshed that defiled humanity might be cleansed.

Not only every Christmas, but every wedding should remind us of Bethlehem where Deity united with the fallen race forever. We repeat, "forever". John 3:16 says God gave his Son. Jesus was not lent for thirty-three years and then, flinging away manhood, resumed his former estate. Christ is still the son of man. Today, as during the days of his ministry on earth, he is still as much human as though not at all God (as well as still as much God as though not at all human). When Revelation pictures the Second Advent, it is the "son of man" who is returning (see Rev 14:14).

Two Views of Marriage

Malachi and John (chapter 2) both tell of the unstable joy of human marriage. It's the same today. Let us consider that tragedy. Thus, we might better appreciate – by stark contrast – the reality to which marriage points.

At every wedding we attend there are romantics and cynics. Some hear the nostalgic thrilling peals of a silver bell as they witness the ceremony. Others hear the croaking of a raven as it hovers over a wilderness or cemetery. To some, the word "marriage" is deliciously sweet. To others, it is repulsively bitter. To most, it is bittersweet. And then there are those who hear the word as a



trumpet call to battle, fierce and prolonged.

Apart from the miraculous gift of redemption, marriage is God's greatest gift to mortals. All good things are intended to develop from true marriage: companionship, family, character development, and the foundations of a wholesome society.

But the better a thing is, the worse it can become. Lilies fester worse than weeds. There are a million divorces every year in the USA.

Love and Passion

Many marriages fail because the love which originally united the partners is not the love which endures. Too often the love prompting the union of two people is love's counterfeit. It is but a biological twitching, a chemical reaction on the rods and cones of sight, rather than the reflection of the secret that lies at the heart of the universe.

Animals, too, have sex. Is true love only that? One thing we do know: many marry not because they are in love with a person but in love with love. This is the worst form of egotism and is closely related to emotional and mental instability. Furthermore, this egotism paves the way for that death from which there is no return. Such love makes a particular man or woman unnecessary – any one sufficiently physically attractive will do. Therefore, its nature is revealed to be lust not love.

Marriages founded on passion alone last about two years (though the outward fabric may still stand). After getting married, it is not ab-

normal to feel the pull of physical attraction to others. But spiritual sanity detects the temptation as temporary madness. It is lust rather than Christian love. Only the latter endures despite life's inevitable storms of trial.

Love is not passion, love is not pride;
Love is a journeying side by side.
Not of the breezes, nor of the gale –
Love is the steady set of the sail.

Deeper than ecstasy, sweeter than light,
Born in the sunshine, born in the night,
Flaming in victory, strongest in loss,
Love is a sacrament made for a cross.

– Author unknown¹

Marriage and Sex

Christian love recognizes physical attraction as a genuine God-given ingredient, but only as the frosting on the cake – it's not the cake itself. It's not life, it's only a garnish to life. Who wants to live on just garnishes?

We have been brainwashed about love by novels and movies. Remember, these are money-spinners for the most part, and often lie. For example, nearly 90 percent of sex shown in the films is not between married partners! Yet it is unbelievably rare for any story ever to mention the possible aftermath of a sexually transmitted disease. The fact is one in every four people in the United States between the ages of





fifteen and fifty-four contracts an STD!

To base a marriage on sex alone is similar to entering into a lifelong business partnership on the basis of both parties liking Ping-Pong. Now the fact is, no one wants to play Ping-Pong all the time. No one is able to play all the time. Sometimes, we want to play something else. Or, worst of all, want to play with someone else!

Such a marriage would be like a masked ball where everybody seemed sweet, fair, and romantic till the ball reached a crisis and the masks were removed.

Yes, I answered you last night
No, I say to you today
Colours seen by candlelight
Do not look the same by day.

— Author unknown²

Marriage Problems

The sad truth is most people marry a stranger. They do so in an attempted escape from life. But when Apollo loses his looks and strength, and Venus her beauty, the masks slip. The ugly reality remains and cannot be endured. The only person ready for marriage is the one who can live without it. Marriage is a school for character. The trouble is, you must be ready to graduate before you enroll.

In most marriages contracted for the wrong reason, possession brings indifference. Whoever gets thirsty at the borders of a well? Jewellers get used to handling even the most precious gems.

Perhaps you have heard of the

golfer who is supposed to have gone to hell after death. To his surprise he found himself at a well-appointed golf course. There was a beautiful clubhouse, long fairways, velvety greens, enticing rolling hills. The set of clubs given to the visitor were perfectly well balanced. The devil and the golfer moved to the first tee. "What a course! Give me the ball," said the golfer. The devil answered, "Sorry, there is no ball."

The Eternal Triangle

If the love that leads to marriage lacks the one essential thing, then marriage can be hell. What is that essential?

We hunger for the answer. We are tragically aware that any moron can get married, but it takes a near genius to remain married. We know that the mere signing of a contract to construct a great building is a long way from the building itself. So again we ask – what is the essential element for marriage?

The answer is: a third person. No, not the cursed triangle that preludes disaster. Rather, the third person is Christ who, as the second member of the Godhead, is already married to humanity.

The wedding story of John 2 shows this truth beautifully. As A B Simpson wrote long ago:

We see the failure of our natural life, joy, and love, in the exhausting of Cana's wine. Beautiful, indeed, is the bridal scene with its fair and fragrant blossoms, the freshness and beauty

of youth, the vigor and nobility of young manhood, the sympathy of innumerable friends, and the bright and sunny hopes and prospects of future happiness. But oh, how soon the vision fails! How quickly the goblet of pleasure is drained, and how often the serpent is left in the dregs, and all that remains is a memory more bitter because of the joy that has turned to sadness!³

But Christ was there. How he changed things! Soon all was not only joy, but much, much more joyous than before. Every project – and especially marriage – needs him. In him everything is renewed, strengthened, and preserved.

At Bethlehem the greatest marriage of all time was consummated. This was the only marriage entirely prompted by perfect love, when divinity united with humanity.

All the wedding unions of every day (and their anniversaries) tell the same message as Bethlehem. Every human project, every human institution, depends for its success on the unselfish love only the child of Bethlehem can bring.

Blessed be God. He so loved the world that he gave . . . So must we. Let us give and forgive in every human relationship till the Bethlehem choirs start all over again. □

Footnotes

1 and 2 Sadly I could not find the name of the authors of these poems.

3 *Power from on High*, vol 2, pp 54-55. (From Good News Unlimited, Dec 1989)

Consider the following scripture. "...I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you . . . So then it was not you who sent me here but God." Genesis 45:4,5,8.

Joseph was a man who had spent long years of frustration in which he had clung doggedly to the thought that God would bring good out of monstrous evil. He had been a victim of savage injustice. We would probably sympathise with him if he had soured a little and replaced faith with some cynicism. But he never did. He steadfastly refused to give up the idea that the very stuff of his own tragedy would become the material out of which good would arrive.

What is your interpretation of life? Do you have a verdict on events as did Joseph? At the beginning of his book, "Heretics", G K Chesterton writes: "It is foolish for a philosopher to set fire to another philosopher in

Smithfield market, because they do not agree on their theory of the universe. But there is one thing infinitely more absurd and unpractical than burning a man for his philosophy. This is the habit of saying that his philosophy does not matter."

Chesterton is right. One's interpretation of the universe is decisive for everything in life. It can mean the difference between a life of misery and one of meaning and achievement.

Is life a meaningless tangle or is it a product of a divine plan? Does God intersect our life even in those events that appear to deny his existence? Joseph maintained that this was so. While his view seemed unsupported by happenings in his life, we cannot deny that things did turn out pretty well for him in the end.

Of course, it might be argued that Joseph could hold to his theory only because things chanced to pan out the way they did. Such a view is an option for us. But we ought to remember two things before

choosing it. Firstly, Joseph's testimony is the testimony of all the bible writers and especially of the apostles who knew Christ personally.

They were prepared to call the tragic sequence of events that culminated at Golgotha, the might acts of God. Secondly, if we cannot believe that God is in control of history and that He does bring good to pass through history, then we are left to evil only – and despair.

The gospel avers that there is a deep truth in the sorry fabric of human affairs. The history of the world is not alone the chronicle of men's thoughts and deeds. It is also the tapestry of God. The one who believes this will be carried along by the same power that turned the death of Jesus into resurrection and victory.

Christian faith means there are no difficulties that cannot be transformed; no trials that cannot be made to yield a meaning; no sin that cannot be obliterated. And in the end, no shadow of death that cannot lead beyond to the morning of everlasting life. □

DISCERNING LIFE'S MEANING



Ron Allen

The phone rings. You say, "Hello". You listen to find out who is on the other end. Perhaps it's mother calling to wish you, "Merry Christmas". Perhaps it's a friend from church. Perhaps a next-door neighbour.

If it's someone you know, what happens when you recognise the voice? Do you get a picture in your mind of the person? Doesn't that help make the conversation more pleasant?

But what happens when the voice is some salesperson you have never seen? You have no idea what the person looks like, no past experience with the person. It's not the same as when you know the caller, is it? It's not as pleasant for you or the salesperson.

No one has seen God

What is it like when you pray? Do you close your eyes, fold your hands, and try to come up with a mental picture of God? Or are your prayers like a phone conversation with a stranger?

Many think it's more fun to pray to a god you can see. That's where idols began. Some idols were made in the form of humans or animals. Today, idols may come in the form of houses or cars, athletes or rock stars. No matter what shape our idols, we can be sure they are not God. The apostle John says, "No one has ever seen God" (Jn 1:18).

Isaiah says, "Truly you are a God who hides himself" (Isa 45:15), which is why no one has ever seen God. There is no way we can hide from God (as Adam and Eve discovered, see Genesis 3:8-11), but God can certainly hide from us.

Moses did not see God's face

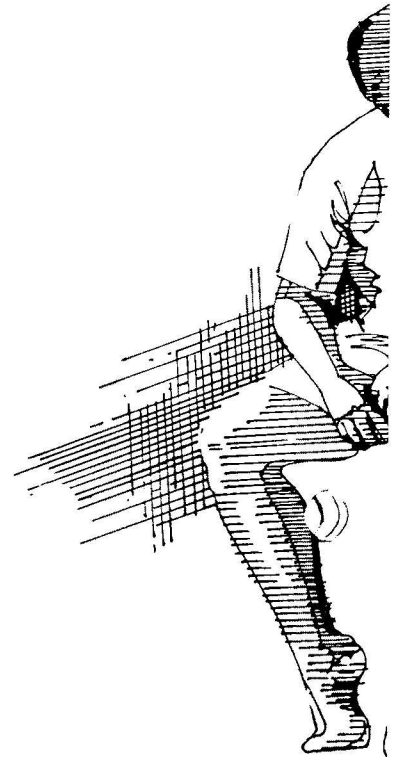
If anyone deserved to see God, you would think it would have been Moses. He spent forty days and forty nights alone with God on Mount Sinai. While there he had an interesting conversation with God:

Moses said, "Now show me your glory." And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord,

The unseen God who hides for our safety

WHAT IS GOD LIKE ?

Michael J Albrecht



in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." Then the Lord said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen" (Ex 33:8-23).

Sinners cannot see God

The reason why our God hides from us is that he does not want to destroy us. God knows that we are sinners. As sinners, we cannot come before him on our own. Which is why God says, "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live" (v20). Sin cannot survive the presence of our holy God any more than a piece of paper can survive a blaze.

y, safely reveals himself in Jesus.



ing fire. If we were ushered into the presence of God, we would melt like an ice cube in an oven. God wants that no more than we do.

God wants us to get to know him to the extent we can without disintegrating. Which is why God did not answer Moses with a flat and final "No". The Lord said, "You will see my back, but my face must not be seen" (v23).

Our English Bibles have cleaned up the Hebrew a little bit. The original language says, "You will see my back end." That was all the Lord could permit Moses to see. Moses asked the Lord, "Show me your glory," and all Moses got to see was God from the rear.

Why? A story in Exodus 19 helps explain.

Israel at Sinai

The entire assembly of Israel gathered at the foot of Mount Sinai. The

Lord spoke to them directly. Moses describes the scene: *On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him (Ex 19:16-19).*

How did the people react? Moses tells us:

When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die" (Ex 20:18-19).

That's what happens when sinful human beings get a glimpse of the glory of God. They still had not seen God's face. Nonetheless, they were scared to death. "Do not have God speak to us or we will die" (v19).

Notice that Moses does not try to calm their fears. Their fears are legitimate. They ask Moses to act as their representative to speak to God for them. They also want Moses to tell them what God has to say to them. Both Moses and God go along with the idea.

How we can see God and survive

Seeing is believing, we say. God knows that the eyes he has given us want to see in order to believe. God knows we want to see him. He wants to be seen. He hides himself for our sakes, not because he is a cosmic hermit. We cannot see God and remain alive, because we are sinners.

It is a tribute to God's great wisdom that he worked out a way to hide himself and show himself at the same time. "No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made him known" (Jn 1:18).

Now we can look God in the face. All we have to do is look at Jesus. Philip said to Jesus,

"Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:8-9).

Jesus makes it possible for us to see what God is really like. Jesus has come for us to actually see God.

Jesus reveals God

On the one hand, it is true God destroyed the entire population of planet earth (except for eight people) when he sent the Flood. God rained down fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah. These events tell us what God is like.

But there is a lot more to God than that. Flood, fire, and brimstone are an incomplete and inadequate picture of what God is like. God, the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has revealed that God is love.

Here is the wondrous good news: "The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory" (Jn 1:14). *Deus absconditus* [the hidden God] has become incarnate. And God came to us not as a stranger but as our Brother.

[Michael Albrecht is pastor of the Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Houston, Texas. He is the first pastor of this congregation, which dedicated its first church building in November 1987.]

From a Good News Study Group

In our daily encounters with others we tend to be critical and judgmental. We easily practise the art of making other people wrong. How often have we been caught not looking the other person in the eye or waiting to respond before the other person has finished speaking.

The scriptures say of Christ: "Face to face then shall I know even as also I am known," for "we shall see him

mutual respect helps us to foster this relationship.

With the benefit of hindsight, generosity is seen to be the main point in these examples of the kingdom of heaven. When we realise that the kingdom of heaven is open to all, no matter what time we enter, we transcend the literal below for the spiritual above.

Take for example, the kingdom of

as Jacob had deceived Isaac, Laban deceived Jacob in giving him Leah to wed.

Laban rewarded Jacob by giving him his first born, just as God gave his only begotten Son. Jacob, not realising his expectation, persisted despite the fairness or unfairness. Jacob had to learn generosity.

Some people received justification early in life, and others received the unconditional gift towards the close of life. But who is the closer to the kingdom of heaven?

There are several levels of interpretation of the concept of fairness and unfairness . . . literal, personal, spiritual.

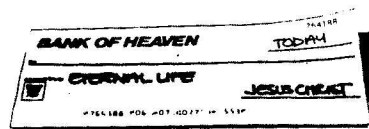
Generosity was Laban's attitude – refusing to prejudge, and accepting Christ's dictum that none understand until the gift of the Spirit is within, individually, for spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

The indwelling Spirit of charity is not time related – it has been since time immemorial. Abel understood the only true sacrifice is in the Blood. Since the beginning, in ancient times people were moved by the Holy Spirit. God spoke to the fathers by the prophets. Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

The kingdom of heaven, not then come to the known world at large, was dwelling within the prophets of Israel. Looking into their eyes, into their perception might enable us to see the magnanimity of Christ who said, "the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things."

Editor's note: I appreciate the creative efforts of this study group based in the Sydney/ Newcastle region. Other groups of readers may like to accept an invitation to also produce short devotional articles suitable for publication. The editor will gladly assist with suggestions, subediting, etc.

LEARNING GENEROSITY –



this and that way

as he is." This inspired attitude towards Christ applies also to fellow man. Does this imply that we shall be different from others?

Life would be much better if we could accept as legitimate the other person's viewpoint. Then we might say with Job "In my flesh shall I see God" and with David "I will behold thy face in righteousness".

More often than not, the need to be right or to win predominates at the expense of personal growth, and self-awareness.

Genuine communication is difficult at the best of times. But

heaven. It's described as being like this and like that. Consider the householder who paid his labourers "whatsoever is right", and the father of the prodigal son who received him back with open arms.

Hence, we need to look beyond the parabolic level if we are to know where we are going. Can we as servants of God look Christ in the eye? Can we too come face to face? True relationship at the interpersonal level, is often found amid the tares.

Early scripture gives us a similar illustration. Jacob spent seven years' wages, trying to please Laban. Just



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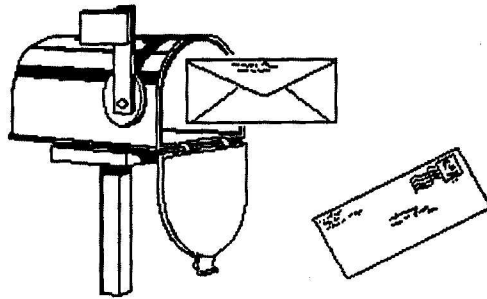
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NAM responses

Thank you for the edification afforded us regarding the New Age Movement (NAM) by way of the three articles (*Good News Australia*, September 1990).

Friends who have become NAM adherents have been seemingly helped considerably and impressively at least initially. But of course so too does one on the attainment of say a new good job, a home or even in some cases a wife.

However, my observations suggest that they are *not* forgiven but rather come to terms with guilt in much the same way as does a psychoanalyst or a Christian Scientist. That is by teaching that guilt is in one's own attitude to the so-called sin. The NAM group also tend to suspect that they are part of some sort of ongoing reincarnation process which seems to alleviate some of their fear of death and a judgment.

Incidentally, I may have missed your argument that logically we can hardly have redemption without the Creator to do such a stand-in job as we claim as Christians of Jesus.

— John Bromley
Samford, Qld

I was pleased indeed to see the theme of your magazine for September, 1990 on NAM. It is really amazing how widespread this movement is in our community.

I teach Scripture in two small country schools with approximately eighty-five pupils in each. A large number of the children come from families who live the alternative lifestyle and indoctrinate the kids with their beliefs in the NAM.

Frequently I have questions posed to me by some of the children which have a real NAM flavour. The questions have referred to things like Karma and reincarnation. A little boy once said quite confidently about reincarnation—“I know what that is, it is when you come back as a mouse.” Sometimes the questions really concern me as to what they are learning at home about the devil. The children have told me that ouija boards are in common use in a number of homes for social occasions. Another child is taken by his parents to India at least every two years for worship and training in some Eastern religions over there and yet he loves Scripture class. I have had to do a lot of reading into

the NAM in order to combat the beliefs that these children are trained in and to replace them with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The kids love to hear that there is a God called Jesus who loves them so much that He died for their sins. The NAM tells them that there are no sins, no evil, therefore you don't need a saviour. They do talk about Jesus in passing but He is not that important.

Another thing that pleasantly surprised me (yes, there are some good things to report) is that the children in both schools were absolutely wrapt in reading the ten commandments. These were printed on the back of their workbooks for a few semesters and although it was not in the curriculum to teach them, I got the kids to take a look at them and they were really interested that God did in fact have guidelines by which He wants us to live. Some of them had never heard of them. GNCM has, over the past ten years, given my husband and myself a fabulous grounding in the glorious gospel of Christ and this has stood us in very good stead. Through the study of God's Word the Lord himself has shown us so much of His love and the fact that pantheism has been from the very beginning. Pantheism being one of the foundations of NAM. The Bible is reiterating from Genesis to Revelation that God is our creator. “Maker of heaven and earth” is stated countless times and why? To combat pantheism right through history. NAM says we are all gods, we just happened, we all have a “Christ consciousness” and we don't know exactly where we are going because there is no death just a continuum.

I am pleased that GNCM is now addressing the NAM openly and it

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would be good, I believe, if you could be more missionary orientated in this field. It is good to remember that the very foundation of the NAM is the belief in the immortality of the soul. You don't die, you just flit off to Nirvana and in due course reappear as something or someone else.

Unfortunately, the immortality of the soul is almost universally held in the mainline denominations of Christianity. When you die you go

straight to heaven. Therefore, they have great difficulty in confronting the NAM, because they have this immortality belief in common with the NAM.

Knowing the founders of GNCM believed in a bodily resurrection when Jesus Christ returns to this earth, I believe that this puts GNCM in a wonderful position to lead a full frontal missionary outreach against this movement which is the greatest

threat facing Christianity today.

Pat Jones
Bega, NSW

Editors note: Pat, you and a number of other readers have made similar comments. NAM is very pervasive. GNCM is sponsoring a series of seminars addressing NAM as advertised on page 11. We hope these will help to educate many to the dangers inherent within NAM. Readers may wish to suggest other steps GNCM can take.

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Lotty was up bright and early on her day off. She planned to go for a long spin in her brand new car. It was a bright, shining, RED car. She was proud of it. Speeding all the way to the dam, she found a lovely shaded spot in which to park. There was plenty of space between two cars. She felt sure there was no danger of a 'band'.

After a few hours in the National Park watching the big cats feed, she returned to her dream car. But . . . when she got there she found the boot all squashed in!! Oh, who could have done such a mean thing? Neither of the other two cars was damaged. Just hers.

Just then the manager of the Park came up to her to explain. Three elephants had gone down to the river for their daily bath. On returning, the keeper went ahead to open the gate. He was quite sure that the elephants would follow quietly. The last of the three elephants had been a circus elephant at one time. He had been trained for years to sit up straight on a bright red barrel. When he spotted the bright red boot he remembered what he had to do, turned sideways and sat on the boot, quite proud of himself. It was squashed flat before the keeper could do anything. The manager promised to pay all costs to repair the damage.

Hurrying home she came to a red light where there was a pile-up of cars. She swerved a bit, got on the footpath, turned the corner and hurried home. Someone who had noticed her smashed boot, thought she had been in the accident and was running away, took her number and gave it to the police. Next morning there was a knock on her door. It was a policeman.

"Good morning, lady, do you own a car?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied.

"Is this the number of your car," he asked, showing a paper.

"Yes," said Lotty.

"Please may I see your car?" he asked.

As Lotty opened the garage door he spotted the squashed boot.

"How did the car get damaged?" he asked.

"Oh, an elephant sat on it," she said.

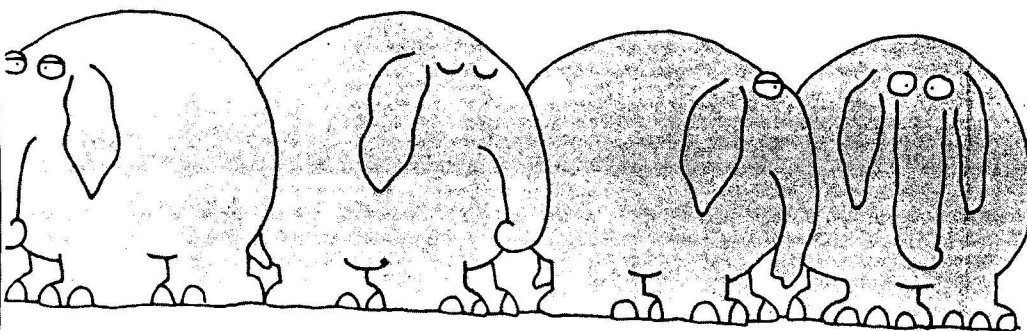
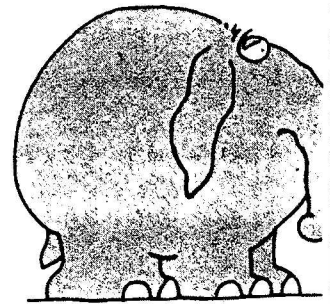
"An elephant what? I don't believe you," he replied angrily.

"Yes, but it's true. It is true," she said.

Jesus died and was buried, but he came alive on Sunday morning. He is alive. Jesus is alive. It's true, It is true. That's Good News for me and you. □

IT'S TRUE

Flora Mia



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