

The Good Newsletter

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER PRODUCED BY GOOD NEWS UNLIMITED

March 1997

EDITORIAL

EXCLUSIVIST OR PLURALIST

It has probably happened to all of us at sometime or another. You have been witnessing of your faith, when the person to whom you are speaking has intrupted and said, 'It doesn't really matter what you believe, whether it's Christianity, Islam, Buddhism or anything else, we are all going to heaven anyway. We are just travelling there by different roads.'

You have testified that Christianity is the only way, quoting Jesus when he said, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life'. At the time it fell on deaf ears and you have both gone your separate ways.

This old ploy was used on you once again by an acquaintance ho was avoiding having to come to grips with Jesus and the Gospel. A well tried tactic of convenience.

Imagine my surprise recently, when reading a certain Anglican diocesan newspaper, to find this debate alive and well in the Letters to the Editor column—but with a difference, this time it is being used by a certain minority of 'Christians' (how much of a minority we don't know) saying that Christianity is equal to all other religions. That our salvation is sure which ever one we

follow. Scriptually, their favourite text is John 14:2 'In my Father's house are many mansions.'

Those following this line of thought are **Pluralists** and those who, like ourselves, believe that Jesus is the only way, are known as **Exclusivists**.

It would seem this whole business is an outworking of the Government policy of multiculturalism, which has been part of life here in Australia over the past decade. Unfortunately, some seem to have made this policy part of their belief structure, making it more than equal to that famous text - Galatians 3:28 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, ... slave nor free, ... neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus.'

We should not confuse multiculturalism with the words of the Apostle Paul, '... for you are all one in Christ Jesus' for they have nothing in common!

Multiculturalism is based on humanist philosophy, which seeks to create a social and economic climate where business can flourish. To succeed, it needs a system of political correctness - backed up by an ongoing propaganda campaign. Whereas Christianity, is our love response to God's love for us in Jesus Christ—repentance of our sins and acceptance of Christ's death on the cross, which paid the penalty for them, followed

by the resurrection, in which Christ demonstrated to us the reality of eternal life with him. This is the Gospel—the only bonding force that can bring and hold together, every kindred, tongue and people in the world. Let us pray for discernment to recognise the counterfeits of the world, so that we do not lose sight of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. He and he alone, is the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father, but by him.

Salvation is by Him **exclusively**.

Holiness Of God

The topic of Church music brought quite a response. The general consensus was, that lively, happy music and singing is appropriate for the praise segment at the beginning of a church service, but as the service progresses, the tone of the music should become more dignified, befitting the time of prayer, and subsequently, the opening of the Word of God for the sermon.

We publish two more letters in this issue.



Roger Jones
Editor

Dear Friend

I am always deeply touched by the word picture in Revelation 3:20. 'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice I will come in and eat with him and he with me.'

If anyone hears my voice. It sounds as if the person on the inside might not be interested in opening up to the King of heaven. Does this strike you as an amazing thing? That Almighty God should be found politely tapping at the door to human personality, waiting to see whether or not He will be allowed to enter. Sometimes we wish Christ would assert himself more forcefully in the world of men. We find ourselves ready to cry out, 'Do something Jesus, batter down unbelief, dazzle Twentieth Century heathenism with your power. Break open the door!' But Christ does not. He does not burgle the house of personality. He will not violate his creatures. They must come to Him as sons, not as slaves.

Jesus says that **if** anyone hears him, he will come in. Whether Christ's knock will be answered appears to be uncertain, but there is no such uncertainty about his willingness to enter. 'I will come in.' It is quite unconditional. This is the glory of the Gospel.

The text says that He will come in and sup with any man. This is the reassuring part. How many people are there who dither about whether to open the door; whether to be Christians or not, because they are afraid he will not want to come in; that he would not want to be involved in their lives? Christ in my shabby life? If I could offer him a semi-devout faith or a respectable record of brotherly love. If I could set the place in order first. And so it goes on. But remember, Jesus was born in a stable, the barest and coldest soul could not be as cold and draughty as that stable. There was a house at Jericho, the threshold of which no one would cross because it belonged to a squalid little thief; a traitor and a collaborator. But Jesus went to eat in the house of Zacchaeus. 'If any man open the door (any one at all), I will come in and sup with him.' Such is the inevitability of God's grace.

Jesus says, 'I will sup with him, and he with me.' In other words, the guest will become the host. When Christ enters the life as a guest, it is not long before he has prepared a table for us and we have become guests at his table. This is the glorious communion that the believer has with his Lord. Life becomes a feast in the which, Christ himself is the chief fare.

There are some folk who want Jesus to come into their lives, but feel themselves unable to open the door. They think themselves so enmeshed in evil, that they cannot turn the lock. Years ago the poet, preacher, John Donne envisaged this very situation when he wrote the following lines:

'Batter my heart, three- personed God! For you as yet but knock, breathe, shine and seek to mend; that I may rise and stand. O'er throw me and bend your force to break, blow, burn and make me new. I am betrothed unto your enemy, divorce me, untie, or break that not again. Take me, imprison me, for I except you enthral me, never shall be free, nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.'

You or I may not be as poetic in our prayers, but we can pray in the same sense. Anyone who prays thus may be assured that Jesus will enter. He will break the lock. He will come in, establishing fellowship, ravishing the soul with love.

May you sup with God this day, and he with you.

Yours in Jesus

Ron J Allen





Louis F. Cunningham

Does the teaching that the wicked don't die but remain alive forever burning in flames, come from the Bible, or from the Greeks?

I have my doubts about hell. Not that I believe evil will go unpunished. It isn't that. But how will it be punished—and when, where and why—bring up questions that, for me, are not answered in the popular teaching of the subject. 'Eternal death, or everlasting punishment, is the unavoidable consequence of unforgiven sin' says Harold Lindsell, a respected Bible scholar. 'The doctrine of eternal, conscious punishment is well established in Scripture.'

This is where I begin to have my doubts. In their punishment, are the people who are not Christian, both eternally dead and eternally conscious?

Does the Bible *really* teach they are both dead and alive at the same time? Will the wicked *never* perish According to John 3:16, only those who believe in Christ will live forever. 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not *perish*, but have everlasting life.' KJV

If the wicked live forever, as some insist, how could they be said to 'perish'? And if they perish, where did the idea of immortal sinners get its start?

The problem may be better understood when we remember that Christianity was born in a pagan world. There was always the possibility that Christians might borrow ideas of life and death, that had their roots in paganism—which they did.

Plato popularised the belief that

death is not death at all, but rather, the entering into a new consciousness independent of the body. In effect, death becomes life—instantaneous and everlasting life.

But now we are about to get into difficulty. For if we accept what the early Greeks taught about death, it needs to agree with what the Bible teaches about the resurrection of the dead.

H. E. LowelL -Cocks says there is no such agreement: 'Nowhere in the Bible is the human soul regarded as naturally immortal. The only way in which a person can live again after death is by resurrection—a miracle ... not a natural immortality of the soul, but resurrection from the dead by the power of God.' (Handbook of Christian Theology)

The Bible writer and friend of Christ, Paul, was unmistakably clear when he wrote that 'God only, hath immortality.' (1 Tim. 6:16 KJV) No person is immortal. An immortal sinner? Now we may choose to reject what Paul says, but in doing so, we then project a picture of unspeakable human misery and divine predicament. What will God do with an immortal sinner?

Leslie Weatherhead recognised this when he wrote, 'A god driven to employ an endless hell would be a god turned fiend himself, defeated in his original purpose.' (*The Christian Agnostic*)

No doubt God does have a purpose in everything he does, even in his punishment of sin. But shouldn't the process bring honour to the name of a just and allwise God? As the patriarch Abraham said, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' (Genesis 18:25 KJV)

God is a judge. And justice demands that the judgement precede the punishment of the accused. 'He [God] has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness.' (Acts 17:31 RSV) Also, 'By the same word the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men.' (2 Peter 3:7 RSV)

But what if the sinner is immortal? He must be punished from the moment he dies. He cannot wait for trail and later sentencing.

Surely there must be a better way to approach this subject of the sinner's fate.

An alternative. Why not consider the alternative—that humans are indeed mortal rather than immortal.

Concerning the natural human mortality, Solomon wrote, 'The dead know nothing.' (Eccles. 9:5 RSV) As Carlyle B Haynes says, 'Death is not life at all, in any condition whether good or bad. To die is not to live.' (The Other Side of Death)

These statements describe not only the condition of humans following this life, but also that which results from their punishment. That punishment does not prolong life, but destroys it. (2 Thess. 1:9 RSV)

Because we are mortal and because eternal life is given only to those who are believers in Christ, others forfeit their lives altogether. God intends to uproot sin rather than perpetuate it.

'For behold, the day comes burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of Hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.' (Malachi 4:1 RSV)

Continued on page 5



Dear Roger,

I have just opened the Newsletter and read with interest your editorial and felt I should respond.

It sounds as though you experienced a 'reel cool' service.

I sympathise with you, but on the other hand am cautious of imposing my own expectations of worship on others.

I worshipped for forty years with one church and was involved in church music and worship much of that time. I beat my head against a brick wall in trying to move the church in worship, eventually conceding defeat and moved on-praise God for motivating me to get out of my comfort zone! I am now the worship director of a contemporary Baptist Church in Canberra and although we don't dance about, stand on our heads; wiggle our toes and utter 'utterances' in corporate worship, we have a wonderful time as a church, but take our worship very seriously.

Over the past four years we have seen the Spirit move this church in worship and believe that there are many forms of worship which are acceptable to God, so long as our motivation is to worship him in Spirit and in Truth and not just to have a selfish, happy time with Christian music and call it worship

No, I am not recommending all 'happy, clappy, rock blaaaah music, but I believe that there is a place in a worship service for lively and bright praise before our God. This time can be used as a time to be happy and joyful in praise for what God has done for us, (just as the Israelites praised, sang and danced after they had been delivered from the Egyptians) and even have some fun, also enjoyment in music, by singing praises before the Almighty God of the universe.

If that's where it ends, then we have missed the boat and fail to understand what God expects in our 'sacrifice of praise' to him.

We must move on in our worship to quieter and more reflective, worshipful music and other forms of worship, if we ever hope to 'touch the heart of God' in worship.

So often we have been brought up with concept that worship is what we come to church to **get**!

Wrong! We come to worship to give and that must be what motivates us to worship, or we will always go away empty.

I must impress upon my team of twelve worship leaders and thirty or so singers, musicians; prayer leaders, etc., the importance of 'flow and balance' in any worship time and to achieve this, I encourage a bright time of praise worship to commence, then move into a more serious time of confession (both in prayer and through music) and then into a deeper time of worship, where we really acknowledge the 'awesomeness' of God.

We try to achieve this by using many forms of music, including contemporary material as well as the powerful, traditional music that spans all generations. What is more powerful than the words of 'Guide me Oh thou Great Jehovah' or 'Crown Him with Many Crowns'—in the same vein, what is more powerful or can touch the heart than 'The power of Your Love' or 'I stand in Awe'.

This current generation is richly blessed with some amazing and inspired music and song writers, so it is appropriate that we offer them to the Lord in worship.

There is also a lot of rubbish available and as worship leaders and worshippers, I guess we must be discerning as to what we offer God.

This generation isn't unique either! How about the song, (er 'hymn') Almost Persuaded' - almost, but lost! Really! I say. Let's go find a bridge to jump off, 'cause clearly there's no hope for any of us! I hope that song has been allocated to the place it deserves. I have waffled on a bit Roger, but what I wanted to say was: 'Take heart, your experience (I hope) was an isolated occurrence—perhaps a lightweight youth service and does not necessarily reflect the worship pattern of that church in general.'

GR ACT

Thanks Guys

for a copy of 'Unlimited' for my program 'Wake Up To Praise'. I have been giving it regular air time and it fits into most themes.

The good news is that my program has been extended by one hour to 7-9am, which gives me greater flexibility in programming. If anyone is in Sydney on a Sunday, give me a call and I would love to interview you live on 'Wake Up To Praise' on 2CCR FM 90.5 'The Sound Of Style'.

I am also looking for any local artists on CD, as I am aiming at presenting a full two hours one day of Australian writers and artists. It now seems as if it is possible with the amount of good material that is coming available.

Thanks for your help ... Yours in Christ

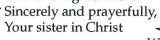
AC NSW

Dear Brother in Christ

I read with interest and appreciation your editorial in your current issue headed 'The Holiness of God'. Indeed, our coming apart to worship God—our God of our 'So Great Salvation' (Hebrews 2:3) is a very serious business.

Though out of our wondrous salvation in Christ, we redeemed of the Lord are meant to also express our gratitude and praise with much due fervour and joyfulness, withal, it should be a joyful, harmonious noise; with Godly holiness and inclusive of the awesome homage due—as to 'bowing before our Maker' and offering him worship in the 'beauty of Holiness' (Psalm 95:1-6 and 96:1-9). Also, always bearing in mind the need to be sensitive to the 'solemn assembly' part of worship (Zephaniah 3:18) to have its place, that all as needs be may 'learn and be comforted' by some particular 'Word of wisdom', etc. brought forth by the grace of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:31).

We actually cannot accept attitudes and manners of worship that we *see* are not purely holy and Scriptural, but simply respond with earnest petitions for the Lord to graciously bestow his further enlightenment.





WHERE ON BARTH IS MELL?

One reason for this complete destruction, is the location of the action. The Bible does not support the belief about some strange limbo, in which people will burn forever. Rather, they will die where they have committed their sins. 'Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.' (Proverbs 11:31 KJV)

The fire that destroys the sinners purifies the earth from the curse of sin, so that it may be fit for the eternal home of those who believe and accept Christ.

So then, if the earth is to be the place of punishment and also the eternal home of the saved, (2 Peter 3:13) one must happen before the other begins. The fires of utter destruction, will of necessity, burn out before 'the meek ... inherit the earth'. (Matt. 5:5)

God waits with divine patience while the rebellion continues, 'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' (2 Peter 3:9 KJV)

It is evil that God hates and seeks to destroy. Not people. Were it possible with justice to save sinners, (without dealing with their sins) God would do so. But that cannot be. To be true to himself, he must destroy sin and all its evil effects. Then shall be realised the promise, 'There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.' (Rev. 21:4)

When the fires of hell have completed their work of cleansing the earth of all that has defiled it, the Saviour's victory will be fully realised. Then 'there shall no more be anything accursed.' (Rev. 22:3 RSV) For God will have clearly demonstrated both his justice and his love for all the ages to come.

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Aenid, a former Schools Inspector and Ron Pettingill, retired builder and tiler, were married in 1964. They are blessed with a family of seven children, also daughter inlaws, son in-laws, and a number of lovely grandchildren, which makes for a grand reunion at the times when they can all manage to be together—which was the case just after Christmas, (early in the new year) when their second youngest son, Geoffrey, was married on North Stradbroke Island. Ron and Aenid lived in Mount Gambier, South Australia, until 1980, devoting much of their time and energy to their church and church school—Aenid teaching for some time and Ron helping to build the school and new church. From there they moved to Murwillumbah, NSW.

Both Ron and Aenid having a love for the Lord, spent many years worshipping with a church that emphasised Law instead of Grace, both in Mount Gambier and in Murwillumbah. Just before they left Mount Gambier they were studying the book of Hebrews and questions started to arise. Des Ford was writing his thesis on

Righteousness by Faith, and Hebrews started to take on a new meaning. Further study and listening to tapes of Des, also attending meetings conducted by Ron Allen, led Aenid and Ron to realise that acceptance of Christ means salvation—no strings attached! What rejoicing in the freedom of the Gospel. After much heart searching and yes, a little worry, they now worship with the Good



News Unlimited fellowship group on the Gold Coast.

One of the highlights they have enjoyed each year or so is the Bible Retreat. There have been several held at Ballina, however, last year it was held at Lennox Head which Ron and Aenid said had been a real blessing to them, as Christians from many different backgrounds joined together, and

they all found brotherhood in their acceptance of Christ.

The Pettingills have discovered that life has many twists and turns; one important thing they have come to know is, that as long as a person follows God's leading the peace we all long for, will be found.

I'M REDEEMED

I'm redeemed, yes I am, by the blood of the Lamb,

Jesus Christ has done it all for me, I am his, he is mine, I'm part of the Royal vine,

All my sins were washed away at Calvary,

Once I was lost, I had nowhere to go, My life was just a lonely round of sin, Till Jesus said to me, by my blood shed on the tree,

I've paid the price, bought you back, you're mine—Oh what a friend!
I'm redeemed, yes I am, by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ has done it all for me,

I am his, he is mine, I'm part of the Royal vine,

All my sins were washed away at Calvary.

T. Humphries



Hello

Thanks

I was wondering if you can help direct me. I live in Portland, Oregon in the US. I have an interest in ordering several items from you (Good News Unlimited) and need to know if I can order them closer to home.

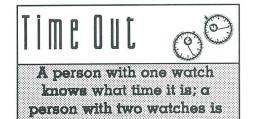
I attended Pacific Union College in 1979 when Dr Ford was there. I lost track of him for many years until a friend introduced me to your magazine 'Good News Unlimited'. I see that Dr Ford has not lost his gospel focus or the ability to give understandable answers to important questions. I look forward to reading and listening to much more of his material.

MW

December '96 Good News Unlimited USA Blue Paper

'Des and Gill Ford had a very successful weekend in Tucson, AZ. They really enjoyed themselves. Des was happy he was able to baptise Jerry Jones in the local SDA church. Jerry and Leora Jones arranged the weekend and worked hard with the preparations. Des says he gave a brief explanation of the gospel to the congregation before he immersed Jerry. Gill reports that what Des said was 'excellent. Des was in fine form and his talks are getting even better!' Gill also reports that the SDA Church was packed for Jerry's baptism, it was known that Des would be there.

Roy Gee



never sure

More Letters ...

Hi Everyone



I am very grateful to your organisation to have led me towards a better understanding about the message of love and grace. So much so, I've come to enjoy life in all its simplicity; as well as the people surrounding me.

Having known about my loving God and my purpose in life, I'd like now to be free of any directives as such and to guide my life the way I'd like it to take—would you take my name from your mailing list. Again, I'm very grateful of your leadership and sincerely hope you might bring the same to others who are searching. I have recommended your teaching to my friends and foes alike.

Thank you ever so much Peace and love

O. Vic

Many thanks Brethren

for your letters, tapes and magazine. Jesus our friend and Saviour is coming back soon, so keep up the good work about the Good News. We really like the music on the end of the Tape of the Month. Well done!

Our people here are fine and walking in the Truth ...

We love you in Christ.

J&JM NSW

Dear Ron

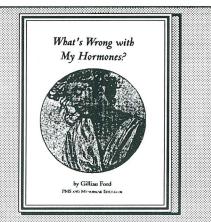
For many years we have appreciated Good News Australia. Not one copy has been thrown out, as in our church work we have found valuable material in these magazines

We look forward to Dr Des's return to Melbourne. Frightening to realise that twelve months have slipped away since his last visit! Your inspirational material is a breathe of fresh air when we are continually bombarded with doc-

trines, as the prerequisite to eter-

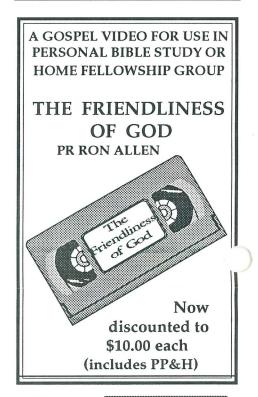
nal life. God Bless GNU

G&ME VIC



Millions of women suffer with symptoms that are hormonally caused. For some women, these problems are only temporary. For other women, there is a strong genetic tendency towards having hormonal problems. Women's symptoms vary and can be both physical and emotional. This book discusses each of the major hormonal problems. For some women who have trailed from physician to physician search of help, this book will be a gomine of helpful information.

Order form on page 7



Dr Ford's latest commentary on the book of Daniel now available \$29.90 Plus PP&H

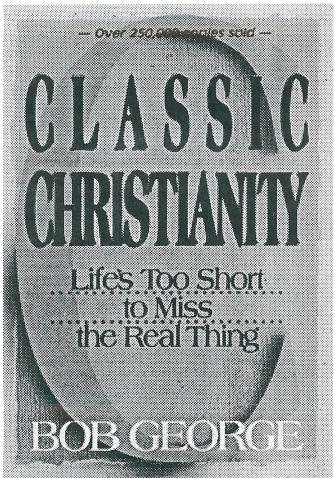
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March 1997

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GNU is not a church and does not seek to proselytise, but does believe in and encourage local church involvement. Its ministry includes radio presentations, preaching appointments, public seminars and the dispersal of audio and video cassettes and literature, emphasising the atonement of Christ.

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