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Judgment to come

Knox, D. Broughton

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The writer of a feature article in the daily press this week complained "young people, surfies and students alike, believe that the church is answering a lot of questions which nobody is asking. They feel that Christianity has no relevance to space flight or social behaviour in our community". I do not question this description of present day society, but who is blame-worthy in this situation? Is it the church engaged in answering questions no one is asking, or is it the community which fails to ask the questions? It all depends, of course, on what the questions are. For example, I have a question I would like to ask the Lawn Tennis Association of Australia. My question is, to which I want a plain answer, "Is there a judgment after death with real rewards and punishments?" For if so, the L.T.A.A.'s disregard of the interests of the young players who followed its directions and obeyed its ban on overseas
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...because he will bring in more gate money. God will also judge the society that endorses this behaviour, for "God is not mocked".

A few years ago we had a similar example of Australian society preferring sport to principle when the Olympic Games were held in Melbourne. You will remember that a week or so before those Games Soviet Russia invaded Hungary with a terrible massacre of patriotic Hungarians. Only one nation, the Dutch, refused to take part in the scheduled sport with the representatives of the aggressor nation. Holland's action was derided at the time, but Holland's time of testing came a year or two later in the West Irian dispute when she alone of all the nations of the West was found to have the moral fibre to stand up to the test. Australia's time of testing with regard to her near north is still in the future, but are we to anticipate a reversal of national form? Unless we learn now to:

tours will come up for judgment. The L.T.A.A. made a rule earlier this year restricting the liberty of players to tour overseas. Some players kept this rule, doubtless at personal inconvenience, others followed their own self-interests and broke it. Now, because it means possible financial loss, the L.T.A.A. has gone back on its word, and the community as a whole condones this action. But Psalm 15 teaches plainly that those who make an agreement and then change it if it turns out to their disadvantage do not meet with the approval of God. Verse 4 is clear "He that swears to his own hurt and does not change he shall dwell in God's presence. But does it matter? That is the question that I would ask, and the answer is vital. For the Bible teaches God will certainly judge those who disregard His law and who put sport and money before principle; who disregard the interests of the weak player who has kept the rule and favour the law breaker.
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ousness and greed to sell manufactured products; or the use of God's gift of a healthy body in picture advertisements to sell health-destroying drugs, like alcohol, or nicotine in cigarettes. We may call this advertising, but God calls them lies and He will judge the individuals and the community which condone them.

Of course, God's judgment will go much beyond sport and advertising. Our whole life will come up for judgment. God is Sovereign Lord holding every detail of the universe in His mind; nothing escapes Him. Jesus said clearly that we will give an account of every idle word. Let me quote from Mt.12:36, "I say unto you, that every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment". This sounds like exaggeration, but of course it is not so, any more than the fact that God knows the number of the hairs of our head. The Creator of all is aware of all. It could put principle before sport or money we will fail nationally in the vital test of the future which is looming up. God's judgment will then overtake us, for God is not mocked, He distributes His judgments according to deserts.

There are many other illustrations in our community to-day of this blithe ignoring of the judgment of God, as though it will never happen. For example, the so-called 'Public Relations' activity which puts a gloss on truth, and purveys falsehood and lies, euphemistically calling them 'non-events'. But God will not regard our nomenclature, but will judge the thing by what it is. We are so used to this twisting of truth for financial advantage in the field of advertising that we hardly turn a hair when half truths are put out as truths and when frankly unChristian motives are used to sell products, such as the use of status seeking to sell a bank account, or the use of covet-
ousness and greed to sell manufactured products; or the use of God's gift of a healthy body in picture advertisements to sell health-destroying drugs, like alcohol, or nicotine in cigarettes. We may call this advertising, but God calls them lies and He will judge the individuals and the community which condone them.

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and us?" for this is the answer which all the Christian churches are agreed in affirming, as it is so clearly taught in Scripture, as well as in common sense. There is no difference between the Roman Catholics and the Protestant churches in their strong affirmation of the reality of God's judgment.

However, as we think of judgment we must be careful not to de-personalise it, that is, we must not separate the thought of judgment from God, whose activity it is. We believe in judgment because we believe in a living sovereign Lord. The two concepts are inseparable; the New Testament always associates judgment very closely with the Person of God, for it is God's judgment; He is active in it. Thus it is God who gives up the sinner (Romans 1) is God who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell (Matthew 10:5) and it is the Lord Jesus Christ whom St. Paul speaks of as the one who will visit with vengeance not be otherwise. No detail is too minute for His infinite capacity. He controls the movement of every electron and every galaxy; He knows the thoughts and the deeds of everyone in His creation, and He takes His creation seriously; that is why He will bring everything to judgment. He created us and He sustains us. Every good gift comes from Him - He is interested in us, nothing escapes Him. He is willing to bless us if we honour Him in our thoughts but He does not treat us with indifference. That is why He will judge those who reject Him. The Bible is clear, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. Each one of us shall give an account of himself to God and receive the things done in the body whether it be good or bad" (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). In view of this clear word of God I would ask the feature writer whom I quoted earlier "Is it not relevant to know this, to know that God will judge the world
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However, as we think of judgment we must be careful not to depersonalise it, that is, we must not separate the thought of judgment from God, whose activity it is. We believe in judgment because we believe in a living sovereign Lord. The two concepts are inseparable; the New Testament always associates judgment very closely with the Person of God, for it is God's judgment; He is active in it. Thus it is God who gives up the sinner (Romans 1), is God who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell (Matthew 10:5) and it is the Lord Jesus Christ whom St. Paul speaks of as the one who will visit with vengeance not be otherwise. No detail is too minute for His infinite capacity. He controls the movement of every electron and every galaxy; He knows the thoughts and the deeds of everyone in His creation, and He takes His creation seriously; that is why He will bring everything to judgment. He created us and He sustains us. Every good gift comes from Him - He is interested in us, nothing escapes Him. He is willing to bless us if we honour Him in our thoughts but He does not treat us with indifference. That is why He will judge those who reject Him. The Bible is clear, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. Each one of us shall give an account of himself to God and receive the things done in the body whether it be good or bad" (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). In view of this clear word of God I would ask the sceptic who is the one who will visit with vengeance
But the Creator and Judge of all will not be ignored. He has declared clearly in His Word that He will bring every action into judgment. Whether we made a few thousand pounds in the Davis Cup round, or won the 1956 Olympics, or sold a few more washing machines or cigarettes will then be of very little importance. If we are to have a right attitude to these decisions of life we need to be more conscious of the reality of God's government of the world, that He is a Living Sovereign Lord. Jesus in the prayer He taught us, put first of all the honouring of God and the hallowing of His name. For if God is honoured as God, everything else falls into place. As we pray for others, so we should hallow His name, that is recognise and acknowledge Him as God, by our attitudes and our actions and our words; and we should ask our neighbours and our community to answer plainly this simple question: "Is there a judgment with real rewards and

His enemies at His second coming (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9). As the Epistle to the Hebrews (10:31) puts it "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God".

As with punishment, so with rewards. We must never think of rewards separated from the Person of God who gives them. It is God who makes Heaven by His presence, and our reward is always the reward of fellowship with Him. If you reflect for a moment you will realise that this must be so. Even in the sphere of human relations the highest happiness is simply to be in the presence of the one whom you love and to have personal fellowship and communion one with the other. So too, the bliss of Heaven consists of being admitted by God to His own presence and fellowship, to be with Him and with all His other children.

Both the punishment of Hell and the reward of Heaven are realities; but we must not
think of them as things-in-themselves, separable from God the Judge of all but always in relationship to God. Thus heaven is God's presence, hell the being given up by God because we refuse to have God in our knowledge (see Rom.1). If we depersonalise judgment and detach it in thought from God the righteous Judge, it is easier to ignore the doctrine or distort it. An example of this distortion is the way Roman Catholics think of punishment quantitatively and assess by nice calculations the number of days in Purgatory. Similarly by depersonalising the reward of Heaven it is easy to fall into the mistake of thinking that it is obtained by our own merit. However, the privilege of Heaven is only ours through a right relationship as though it were the reward given on totting up a good score card handed in at the end of life. In the Bible, salvation is not obtained by the acquiring of merits, as in Roman Catholic teaching, but comes to us
think of them as things—in-themselves, separable from God the Judge of all but always in relationship to God. Thus heaven is God's presence, hell the being given up by God because we refuse to have God in our knowledge (see Rom.1). If we depersonalise judgment and detach it in thought from God the righteous Judge, it is easier to ignore the doctrine or distort it. An example of this distortion is the way Roman Catholics think of punishment quantitatively and assess by nice calculations the number of days in Purgatory. Similarly by depersonalising the reward of Heaven it is easy to fall into the mistake of thinking that it is obtained by our own merit. However, the privilege of Heaven is only ours through a right relationship as though it were the reward given on totting up a good score card handed in at the end of life. In the Bible, salvation is not obtained by the acquiring of merits, as in Roman Catholic teaching, but comes to us through a change of our relationship with God. As sinners, we are the enemies of God, but the Gospel is a message of reconciliation. We are invited to enter into a relationship of sonship with God through repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. We are saved through a relationship, based on forgiveness, entered on and sustained by faith and not by our own works or deservings; and we will be judged for our neglect of that relationship, for our ignoring of God and the pursuing of our own interests. This judgment will be real and awful, just as Heaven is real and infinitely blissful, a reward of eternal relationship and fellowship with God and with one another. Both Heaven and Hell are as real as God is real, and there is nothing more real than God He is reality itself.

The modern world is asking the wrong questions and getting the wrong answers, because it is ignoring God. It is not hallowing His name.
Put the Creator and Judge of all will not be ignored. He has declared clearly in His Word that He will bring every action into judgment. Whether we made a few thousand pounds in the Davis Cup round, or won the 1956 Olympics, or sold a few more washing machines or cigarettes will then be of very little importance. If we are to have a right attitude to these decisions of life we need to be more conscious of the reality of God's government of the world, that He is a Living Sovereign Lord. Jesus in the prayer He taught us, put first of all the honouring of God and the hallowing of His name. For if God is honoured as God, everything else falls into place. As we pray for others, so we should hallow His name, that is recognise and acknowledge Him as God, by our attitudes and our actions and our words; and we should ask our neighbours and our community to answer plainly this simple question "Is there a judgment with real rewards and His enemies at His second coming (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9). As the Epistle to the Hebrews (10:31) puts it "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God".

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