

ESCAPISM

Escapism has become the biggest social problem of our times! With the future unthinkable, the present unacceptable, millions seek ESCAPE from the problems they can't face! And EVEN THIS was prophesied! See, in this article, what escapism is doing to the moral fiber of our peoples, and where God says it's leading.

by Garner Ted Armstrong

THE "4-F's" of our time are not just those unfit for military service; they're the frightened, fearful, futile and frustrated.

Said a syndicated columnist:

"Anyone who seeks to analyze and define this age in tangible terms is likely to experience a sense of bafflement.

"It is an age of contradictions, of challenging paradoxes. In a time when men are seeking to explore the stars, they are finding it increasingly difficult to solve the problems which affect them on this planet. And in a period when technology promises to usher in a new scientific Utopia in which everyone will be happy, millions are gripped with a feeling of insecurity. Small wonder someone has called this 'an age with a split personality'!"

And small wonder that, when a little boy was asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, he answered, "Alive!"

You're living in staggering times!

Probably, you refuse to admit to yourself how truly FRIGHTENING these days are. If you're like so many millions of others, the mere mention of hydrogen bombs, nuclear war, world famine, impending race riots, mass starvation, or the war in Vietnam gives you a sort of "willies" — and you turn instantly to something more comforting.

It's the "something more comforting" that has become a part of frightening reality!

Millions of our peoples are playing a desperate game of "let's pretend"! "Let's pretend" these shocking problems aren't REAL — and maybe somehow they'll go away. But the problems *don't* go away — and much GREATER problems are being created by the mil-

lions who won't face the ones that exist.

The fruits of this awesome fear we refuse to face are everywhere around us. Public preoccupation with sex, increased degeneration and lasciviousness among teen-agers, gambling, alcoholism, and drug addiction are some of the temporary *escapes from reality* being used today.

And we can't even face the LITTLE problems, let alone the big ones!

What ARE the "Big" Problems?

You immediately think of the dreaded spectre of environmental pollution — one of the greatest problems facing mankind today. Another awesome problem is the population "explosion" — the steady, irrevocable increase in the number of human beings on this crowded earth. *Still* more awesome and inevitable a problem than even the threat of nuclear war is the obvious *result* of overpopulation — impending FAMINE on a global scale!

Directly related to famines, DISEASE epidemics are still another problem of mammoth worldwide proportions.

Next comes the threat of extinction through THREE SEPARATE MEANS!

First and most widely publicized is the threat of NUCLEAR-BOMB WAR, and the *total annihilation of all mankind!*

Second, and perhaps even more staggering because of the prospect of a *lingering* death for multiple millions, is the possibility of CHEMICAL warfare, *nerve gases*, new chemicals which destroy the *will* of an enemy to resist, or which effect total changes in the personality!

Third, and equally as nightmarish in portent, is BIOLOGICAL warfare!

The public has been warned that even a *tiny* dose of certain germ cultures, such as botulinus toxin, into the water supplies or air of enemy nations would kill multiple millions before it was ever detected!

Staggering? Frightening? Awesome? These words lack the force and power to really describe such massive problems. We simply lack the *ability* to describe in terms real to OURSELVES the unbelievable FACTS of this modern age of ours!

Taking all these really BIG problems together, you must multiply their significance many times over when you realize the tremendous ideological struggle under way between the big powers today!

Seeing the imminent proliferation of atomic weapons, the decay of NATO, the emergence of dozens of new nations (each with a vote equal to that of the United States or USSR in the United Nations General Assembly), the deep and seemingly insoluble problems of race, culture, language, religion, and government — looking at the WHOLE picture — is it any wonder most seek ESCAPE?

Millions of us find these incredible facts UNACCEPTABLE! We simply "CAN'T" believe it's all that *bad*. "Don't WANT to" might be a better term!

Too Many LITTLE Problems to Worry About

Paradoxically, it's not these overpowering BIG problems from which most people seek escape.

When a former United States Secretary of Defense said in a casual, clinical,



Ambassador College Photo

An honest night club! This one ADMITS what it is — a temporary form of ESCAPE for its customers.

dispassionate way that “130,000,000 Americans would perish” if the Soviets attacked with missiles tomorrow — it scared no one. But an announcement by major tobacco companies about a hike in the price of cigarettes? It could touch off demonstrations!

People seek escape from their DAILY pressures more than any other thing! The high-tension living of our modern age of automation, mechanization, and impersonal dog-eat-dog competition drives many to drink!

And rising taxes, the boss on the job, the mother-in-law, racial tensions, the war in Vietnam, and the constant cry of the daily news is enough to make most people want to escape from it all!

Our modern plays, book titles and music illustrate the point! “Stop the WORLD, I Want to Get Off,” they cry.

Or, “HELP!” Or, at the very bottom of the barrel of incredible loneliness is the cry of “I Want to Hold Your Hand.”

Take a look at the myriad forms of escape we’re using.

Get Away From It All!

How many times have you heard someone say, “I’ve just gotta GET AWAY from it all for a while!?” And how many times have YOU felt the same way?

The most obvious form of escape is literally getting away, LEAVING the scene of your personal problems.

In Britain, “HOLIDAY” is a colorful, exciting, pulsating word of fun, frolic and fancy! And business, enterprise, service, emergency or birth can WAIT when “holiday” is around the corner.

Millions of Britons who can little

afford it rush frantically to the dozens of “holiday” camps, to Scotland or Wales, to Europe or America.

The millions who want to see the world before it blows up (as one teenager put it, “I want to get to Europe this summer, because who knows whether Europe will *be* there next year?”) provide the *most important industry* in many nations. Without *tourism*, Mexico, Denmark, Switzerland and *many other* nations would find their national economies *seriously* injured!

The sales of airline and steamship tickets, of leased and rented cars, of train and bus tickets, and the “go-now, pay-later” plans being offered so prolifically today are mounting into HUGE sums — but this is only a part of the picture.

Sales of various types of travel and camping equipment have boomed into

the multiple millions of dollars per month!

People are traveling today as NEVER BEFORE IN HISTORY!

This massive onslaught of tourists is related directly, of course, to increased wages, more leisure time, and the impulse to rush forward to capture the pleasant experiences of life before they disappear forever.

So, at this time in world events when technological knowledge has led mankind to the brink of nuclear insanity, man tries to *escape* the frightening world of his own devising by frantically running "to and fro" — thinking a change in physical environment can somehow blot out the fears and worries of day-to-day living.

Travel *can* be broadening and educational. It *can* be recreational in the *right* sense — well-earned travel to carefully selected places for specific and right purposes is NOT mere "escape."

But the nagging, driving URGE to travel, to LEAVE the scene of one's own

frustrations — travel for the *purposes* millions admit they travel — is pure escapism.

However, travel is by no means the greatest form of escape, and is probably the least harmful of all.

Entertainment Mania

In our calloused, "shock-proof" societies, entertainment has taken on new and sinister meanings.

An almost unbelievable avalanche of sex, perversion, pornography, "blue" films, sadism, masochism, bestiality, murder, rape, and brutality has flooded into the public view through the modern "boob tube" of television, or the movies and lurid novels.

In British television, almost unbelievable references to lewdness, perverted sex and depravity are as open and unabashed as a news report.

Pornography alone, in the United States, is BIG BUSINESS! Enough pornographic books are sold each year to more than fill the Empire State Building

five times over; and many of these books find their way into the hands of children.

How many hours of your life have been spent watching ready-made day-dreams in the movies, or on television? Probably, an incalculable number. And the *effect* these hours have had on your *personality*, your *attitude* toward life, and your very *character* is also incalculable!

People today seem gripped by a form of INSANITY when it comes to their favorite form of escape.

In 1966 when astronauts Armstrong and Scott were tumbling wildly in their space capsule, which had become uncontrollable after their "docking" with the unmanned Atlas-Agena space vehicle, the major networks interrupted television programs across the United States to give the latest conditions.

Station switchboards were immediately swamped with angry callers.

"Why did you interrupt my favorite program?" they demanded! Later, it was

Huge sports events draw mammoth crowds. Even the players sometimes must seek escape from their own "fans."

Wide World Photo



revealed thousands of the callers were angry because their favorite program had been preempted.

Can you *believe* it? Here, over their heads, was a REAL-life drama of LIFE AND DEATH being enacted: the greatest space achievement yet in the making and a sudden emergency occurring which caused the aborting of the mission, and which *could* have caused the first *disaster* in space for the United States!

I was really concerned — and subsequently relieved when they returned safely.

And, while I have no personal involvement with the space program, and feel no chauvinistic motives in man's space race — I am, nevertheless, very much in admiration of the great *courage* of these men, and sincerely hope no more of them ever meet disaster in this headlong race into outer space.

And yet many Americans were so "plugged in" to their modern society — so completely ENRAPTURED and ENSLAVED by their favorite method of ESCAPE FROM REALITY that they became *enraged* when ANYTHING disturbed it!

Incredible as it seems, it's all sickeningly true! Self-indulgence today has reached new lows!

Multiple BILLIONS of dollars are spent by the lust-driven public each year to *satisfy the senses!* And multiple billions more are spent in an attempt to CURE the aches and pains resulting from such artificial and temporary "satisfaction." American adults alone swallow 16 billion aspirin tablets each year — enough to fill four 100-car freight trains.

"Relief" shouts one ad, "is just a swallow away!" So you are encouraged to overeat, smoke furiously, watch the "boob tube" until your eyes feel like they're coming out of your head, swill booze until you feel like you have *two* heads; and a nice, easy, form of escaping from the results of your escape lies conveniently at hand.

Which brings us to yet another form of escape — and perhaps most immediately destructive of all — escape through artificially induced moods, fan-

tasies, and a sense of well-being. Alcohol and drugs.

Alcoholism and Drug Addiction

Alcoholism is reaching disastrous proportions in America, Britain, Australia and Canada. It's a serious problem in Sweden, Denmark, and even Russia.

But the extreme form of escape through liquor, becoming an alcoholic, is only a small part of the picture. It's the multiple millions of steady, serious drinkers who simply cannot face the afternoon's work without that second and third cocktail at lunch — that is the big problem.

Drinking is part and parcel with the glamour and glitter of modern society. The cocktail party, the neighborhood piano bar, the cocktail hours in leading restaurants have become as familiar a part of life as the favorite television show.

If the statistics could ever be compiled to show how many accidents on the job, how many automobile accidents, how many acts of violence, how many divorces, how many cases of fornication and adultery, how many disastrous business decisions had occurred through overindulgence in alcohol, it would be staggering!

But today, people drink to forget! Or they drink to stifle *sheer boredom*. Or they drink for the hazy, rosy sense of "well-being" they receive to replace the harried, enervated, worried, fearful attitude of mind plaguing them most of their waking hours.

Thousands of jokes revolve around drinking — and around drinking to make the local scene appear more pleasant, more palatable. It's a wonder some whiskey company hasn't yet labeled their bottle, "ESCAPE."

But millions DO "hit the bottle" to escape. And this does *not* imply only a small segment of society, a tiny fringe group of irresponsible husbands who hate to go home to their wives, but an increasingly *large* and *growing* percentage of the population!

Government leaders in many nations are concerned about alcoholism among *youths*.

The futility imposed upon them by world conditions drives millions of

youngsters to seek the adult thrills and pleasure NOW. Millions of them drink regularly today, form lewd sex clubs, or protest violently against adult society by descending into the limbo of modern "beat" music and clothes.

From the "filthy speech" movement at Berkeley to the gang fights in Britain, our youth of today *revolts* against the unacceptable and frightening present. This, too, is only their own insane way of escape — a youthful yearning for yesterdays gone too soon, and tomorrows they suspect may never come.

But drinking is often only the beginning.

Soon the kicks and thrills of liquor are too mild. Soon the drinker hears whispers of something a little more "hip" — a goofball or thrill pill that can send him clear to "cloud 9" and back in only moments.

The stories of permanent brain damage, of weird, reckless acts perpetrated by youngsters on "glue" did little to discourage the wild fad of "glue-sniffing" that swept youthful society. Hospitals are still attending hopelessly injured teen-agers whose minds are simply *gone* because they so frantically sought escape from the unbearable pressures of life. And escape they did. Some are dead. Others are lying in mental wards, staring blankly at the ceiling, seeing nothing, their minds destroyed.

The use of drugs such as marijuana has skyrocketed in recent times.

Why?

Because word goes around about *heightened perceptions*, about feeling like "you're on top of the world," and about the delightful unrepressed urges you feel, and about the wild, wild times *others* claim they had.

And besides, each new drug user is convinced HE won't get "hooked." HE will succeed in taking only just a LITTLE, in taking just barely enough to get his "kicks," but not enough to "do any harm."

This fools' reasoning has made a "mainliner" out of many a high school student, transformed many a juvenile looking for thrills into a hardened prostitute or dope-pusher, because they just had to have the stuff, and had to

find some way to provide the money it costs!

The LSD Craze

LSD leaped into the news some time ago.

It's one of the worst of the hallucinatory drugs, supposedly sold only under prescription, and to be used primarily by psychiatrists in the treatment of mental patients.

Some of the most widely circulated weekly news magazines have told how LSD has permanently damaged the very personality and character of its users.

Still, the youthful, the fearful, the frustrated and futile, search for an escape from reality. Reaching out, they seize whatever means available to propel themselves swiftly *out* of this noxious world of fright and evil portent into a dreamland of "heightened perception."

So some have heard voices telling them to jump in front of moving trains. Others have been told to leap at the moon, and bark like dogs. And some have STILL not recovered.

Yes, WHY? WHY do youngsters, or adults either, for that matter, go to such EXTREMES to blot from their minds the frightening realities around them?

Simply because they're frightened. They're scared. They're terrified of the present, and awe-stricken about the future. They see NO HOPE for the world, and NO SALVATION for mankind, or themselves. They've simply QUIT TRYING. They've given up — and, perversely, tried to sink down into the mire of their own personal physical experiences to blot the apprehensions from their brain.

But no one ever *really* escapes from reality.

Rather, they only compound their problems by creating new and different ones, and not solving any that do exist.

Believe it or not, this mad rush for physical satisfaction in the face of disaster was prophesied in a book few have studied — the Bible.

In this Book, Paul told Timothy, "This know also, that in the last days *perilous times* shall come. For men shall be *lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful,*

unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, *lovers of pleasures* MORE than lovers of God; having a *form* of godliness, but denying the *power* thereof: from such *turn away*"! (II Tim. 3:1-5.)

And you have witnessed, with your own eyes, this very prophesied SOCIAL REVOLUTION in the past two decades!

You have SEEN, and you KNOW you've seen, more degeneration, more public blasphemy, more trucebreaking, more SELF-LOVE, more disobedience to parents (juvenile delinquency), and more LOVE OF PLEASURE than at any other time in all history!

The Bible means what it says!

And, incredible as it seems, your Bible prophesied the paradoxical escapism of today. God said mankind simply WOULD NOT FACE the plain truth about world conditions. He prophesied men would turn to PHYSICAL PLEASURES in the face of imminent national DESTRUCTION!

He said men would become licentious, lewd, lascivious, filled with SELF-love as NEVER before — and during the exact time of the greatest collection of urgent problems this world had ever seen!

The Unacceptable Present

Britons just can't face the fact that their once-proud Empire is gone! The bitter fruit of becoming a third-class power is almost too much. And Great Britain has thoroughly CORRUPTED herself almost as NO other nation!

British television is shocking. Immorality, homosexuality made "legal" by the highest authorities in the land, mounting venereal disease, rampant gambling, wild, impassioned frantic "demonstrations" by weird, ghoulish-looking youths — these have become the familiar British scene.

British "humour" is becoming a sardonic, acidic, sarcastic, disillusioned, frustrated, abandoned type of carping at life. Public officials, royalty, religion, marriage, the courts, law, decency — *anything* that smacks of stability — is impugned, sniped at, ridiculed, mimicked, belittled, besmirched, and made the brunt of caustic "jokes" which are anything but funny.

It's as if the British public is embarked on a dizzying course of insane and inane fools' laughter at anything and everything that represents the "old-fashioned" terms: "honesty," "stability," "decency," or "morality."

And the *fruits* of this bizarre type of escapism?

Only further emptiness. An unsatisfied, gnawing feeling of unfulfillment, of hopelessness and futility.

Britain sees herself sinking slowly into national irrelevancy — and she hates every moment of it. So most Britons simply refuse to think about it.

They choose to play. They choose to watch idiocy on the "boob-tube," or carp at public officials, or take a "holiday," or gamble. They prefer a lively discussion at the local pub about football, or the latest sex scandal, or the latest lurid article in a yellow rag called a "newspaper" in which there is no "news" — only suspicion, scandal, or lewd and suggestive stories.

And in the United States, Australia and many other nations it's not much different.

Rising crime, spiraling divorce, mounting immorality, weakening religion, deepening racial tension, increasing economic difficulty, disappearing national resources and surpluses; it's enough to make anyone who doesn't know the true outcome TRY to escape!

Ezekiel Predicted It

Ezekiel wrote to OUR peoples! He meant the pleasure-loving Australians, the gambling, drinking Britons, the sex-obsessed Americans, the passion-driven Canadians and South Africans.

The peoples of the United States and British Commonwealth (Britain, Australia, Canada, etc.) are the descendants of the ancient Israel of your Bible. So our peoples are mentioned in Bible prophecy.

And Ezekiel wrote of future *calamities* to befall our peoples of ISRAEL!

Yet he wrote of Israel over one hundred twenty years *after* the peoples of Israel had already GONE into captivity! Ezekiel was a *slave*. He was inspired to *write* his messages, even though commanded to *give those warnings to the leaders of many great nations!*

But Ezekiel never *got* to the heads of state. *He never delivered* the messages!

Like the prophecies of Daniel, the message of Ezekiel has remained *closed*, HIDDEN from human understanding until NOW!

Notice the plain language in which Ezekiel spoke concerning this obsessive drive to ESCAPE THE IMMINENT REALITY of impending national destruction!

"Then said he unto me, Son of man, these are the men ["spiritual" leaders of the nations] that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city: which say, IT IS NOT NEAR; let us build houses . . ." (Ezek. 11:2-3).

And today you're told about "gross national product," and glowing predictions about our marvelous glamour world of tomorrow, when wives can sneak down to the corner drugstore, and get an "anti-grouch" pill for hubby.

You're told "God is dead," and asked, "Who WAS Christ?"

You're besieged by cries of the "new moralists" who seek to strip from our societies the last vestiges of sanctity, chastity, decency and morality.

True to the prophecy of Ezekiel, the cry today is ESCAPE! Build new homes, buy a boat! "Any two-car family can afford a boat," says one ad. Drink, have new "experiences" with others, urge the "women's" or "girlie" magazines.

Emblazoned across the covers of thousands of our periodicals and magazines is the single word, "SEX," to keep your mind on *yourself* — to keep you primed with LUST and DESIRE!

And why?

Because of a nagging FEAR millions share. They FEAR World War III. They FEAR "the bomb." They FEAR when they hear of political and military clashes in the world.

Notice what God says about it. "And the Spirit of the Eternal fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak; Thus saith the Lord; Thus have ye said, O House of ISRAEL: for I *know* the things that come into your mind, *every one* of them. Ye have *multiplied your slain* in this city [there are more murders in Houston, Texas, each year, than in many European *countries*], and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Your slain

whom ye have laid in the midst of it, *they* are the flesh, and *this city* is the caldron: but *I will bring you forth out of the midst* of it"! (Ezek. 11:5-7.)

We talk of the "flesh-pots" of the world, the big, sprawling cities of gambling, vice, and crime. And people FLOCK to the Londons and Las Vegases of the world — in droves — by the millions! But God says He'll suddenly EMPTY the dimly lit, smoke-filled dens of foul rot and filth; says He'll pour their sallow-faced, unhappy-looking crowds out into the streets, and send them running frantically into the countryside for TERROR!

Notice it! "Ye have *feared the sword* [the very REASON for our frantic desire to blot out the present!]; and I WILL BRING A SWORD UPON YOU . . ."! (Ezek. 11:8.)

No one will ever escape the *certainty* of the coming calamities by kidding himself they don't exist. No one will *really* find protection, *real* escape, by refusing to face the awesome FACTS of this day in which we live.

But there is a way to REALLY ESCAPE! And I'm not talking of some type of "sanctimonious," "self-improvement" or "positive-thinking" course!

I mean LITERAL escape. Escape from the horrors of war. Escape from race riots, drought, famine, disease epidemics. I mean escape from the ravages of weather and other "natural" calamities that will soon strike this earth in increasing fury!

I'm talking of the escape Jesus Christ offered His only TRUE disciples — those who would be diligently performing His own WORK on this earth!

Listen to what *He* said about it!

"For then shall be GREAT TRIBULATION [including, in verses 5 through 7, wars, drought and famine, disease epidemics, and earthquakes!], such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be *shortened* [cut SHORT, by the supernatural intervention of Almighty God!], there should NO FLESH BE SAVED . . ."! (Matt. 24:21-22.)

NEVER before has mankind lived in a time when those words were so poignantly REAL! NEVER before have we

lived in times when the *total annihilation* of humankind was possible by THREE SEPARATE METHODS!

But Jesus said those days WOULD be cut short. He said God WOULD intervene! And He said that intervention would come so a number, called "the ELECT," WOULD ESCAPE!

Notice it! "... But for the ELECT'S sake those days SHALL BE shortened"! (Matt. 24:22.)

Jesus Christ of Nazareth said, "*Watch* ye therefore [and He meant watch world conditions — which He had just outlined to His true servants], and *pray always*, that ye may be accounted worthy to ESCAPE all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36).

He promised, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation [TRIBULATION], which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth"! (Rev. 3:10.)

THAT is the only *true* escape left to any human being!

God says these approaching calamities are SURE. They really WILL happen! Blotting them out of our minds will *not* make them go away — but facing them squarely, *admitting* conditions *really are* "that bad," and seeking our Creator for His protection in the times ahead *will* save us from them!

Jeremiah was inspired to write, "Alas! for that day is great, so that NONE is like it [the SAME times of which Christ spoke]: it is even the time of *Jacob's* [Israel's] *trouble*; but he shall be saved *out of it*" (Jer. 30:7).

Those of us who *know* God's true plan, and who know He has given us a part in His own Work are NOT fearful of the future. We face the future with a feeling of *security*, of *confidence* and FAITH.

It's about time *you* faced reality squarely — and found out how *you* may escape! □

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