


GN

The Good News



THE
WAR
THAT
COULD
END
IT
ALL

DECEMBER 1975

GN

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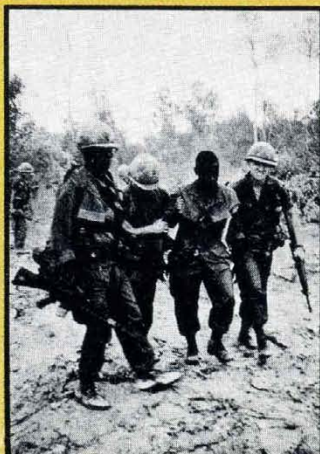
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ABOUT OUR COVER

Wounded soldier being evacuated, a tragic scene repeated many times over during the futile war in Southeast Asia. Is peace possible in our time? Bible prophecy has more to say about this subject than you may have realized. Be sure to read this month's article on "The War That Could End It All."

Pickerell — Black Star

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MILLIONS
DON'T KNOW
**THE REAL
JESUS CHRIST
OF
NAZARETH-**
DO YOU
?

by Garner Ted Armstrong

Let's suppose you're talking to a person about a mutual friend, discussing all about what a fine fellow he is. But you don't know approximately when he was born, his height, weight or what he looks like; you don't know to which race or ethnic group he belongs. You know nothing about his family — whether or not he has any brothers and sisters. You know nothing about his aims, goals or objectives in life; nothing about his nature, personality and character. You don't know where he is, where he's been or where he's going. That's quite a bit not to know about someone and still call him "friend," isn't it? Yet millions of professing Christians find themselves in exactly that predicament when it comes to how much they really know about Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

T rue or false? Jesus was born on Christmas Day. Jesus was resurrected on Easter Sunday. Jesus' Olivet Prophecy was all fulfilled in A.D. 70.

Believe it or not, all of these statements about Jesus Christ and what He said are completely false! Yet multiple thousands, the vast majority of professing Christians, believe them to be totally true. Why? Because they have never taken the trouble to examine the source of these beliefs and check up on them in their own Bibles without prejudice and without bias.

In this short series of articles on pagan doctrines, we have already seen how the ideas of men about a so-called "immortal soul," an "ever-burning hellfire," a Christian retirement plan in heaven and a "triune" God are all sheer fabrications — lacking any biblical basis.

Now the scene changes to focus on the false beliefs about the "person" of Jesus Himself and what He directly and personally taught in the New Testament.

When Was Jesus Born?

Did the three (?) wise men meet Jesus in a manger scene just like it's always pictured in Christmas plays and on various Yuletide postcards and paintings? You've seen it before: the wise men coming into a stable or barn carrying a cute little gold coffer, with goats and camels munching on a lot of hay scattered around. This nativity scene is repeated endlessly year after year so that it has become so firmly fixed in our minds it is very difficult, if not well-nigh impossible, to dislodge.

But flash back to another scene that supposedly occurred not long before. An angel suddenly appears somewhere just outside of Jerusalem on a rolling hill all covered with snow, very near to where men are shepherding their flocks, scares the daylights out of them, and announces Jesus' birth.

It's a pity nobody ever seems to stop to think about the difference between these Christmas plays,

postcards, or paintings showing a beautiful — albeit cold and uncomfortable — winter scene and the fact that it never snows in or near Jerusalem at the actual time of Jesus' birth.

Luke 2:8 tells us in no uncertain words that "there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." But these shepherds were not walking around in the midst of great drifts of snow as commonly depicted in the obligatory "white-" Christmas scene.

If it were wintertime, these keepers of the flock would have exhibited a little common sense; they would have penned their flocks, laid up plenty of hay and forage in the barns and carefully and painstakingly prepared the lofts, sheds and sheepfolds.

Sheep have to be meticulously cared for, fed and sheltered during the winter. The shepherds or the sheep could hardly have been out in the snow-covered fields. Yet Luke records the irrevocable biblical fact that they were out in the fields at the time of Jesus' birth (see Luke 2:8-12). Simple logic, then, tells us there was no snow and it was *not* December and in the middle of the winter when Christ was born — but much earlier in the year, by about *three months!*

Further Proof

In Judea, shepherds simply did not have their flocks in the field during December. They always rounded up the sheep and goats from the mountainsides and the fields — corraling them usually not later than October 15. Even if it did not snow, the cold, rainy season would have been too much for the sheep (see Song of Solomon 2:11; Ezra 10:9, 13).

Says Adam Clarke's commentary: "It was a custom among the Jews to send out their sheep... about the Passover, and bring them home at the commencement of the first rain; during the time they were out, the shepherds watched them day and

night. As the Passover occurred in the spring, and the first rain began early in the month of Marchesvan [Jewish sacred calendar], which answers to part of our October and November, we find that the sheep were kept out in the open country during the whole of the summer. And as these shepherds had not yet brought home their flocks, it is a presumptive argument that *October had not yet commenced*, and that consequently, *our Lord was not born on the twenty-fifth of December, when no flocks were out in the fields*" (one volume edition, abridged by Ralph Earle, p. 857, emphasis mine).

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's *Commentary on the Whole Bible* concurs (one volume edition, see pp. 991-992). Almost any authoritative commentary or encyclopedia will tell you that there is no evidence that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was born on December 25.

Myths About the Magi

Turn now to the second chapter of Matthew, where some diametric opposites about what is commonly believed about Jesus' birth will be found. Verse one: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men [Greek, *magi*] from the east to Jerusalem." First of all, as an aside, it nowhere says, either in this verse or elsewhere, that there were *three* wise men.

Verse 2: "Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen *his star* in the east, and are come to worship him." Do you actually believe that this was a real star — a celestial body in the heavens that is still there today? I don't!

Picture the scene. These wise men suddenly saw this "star" in the east and according to their calculations, "triangulations" and celestial navigation finally found Jesus in the manger. But is that the way it happened?

Check the context of the chapter — particularly verse 9: "When they [the wise men] had heard the king,

they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east [the same one mentioned in verse 2], *went before them*, till it came and stood over where the young child was." Have you ever seen a real star act like that? Obviously the star described in this chapter of Matthew is not a normal star in the classical sense of an astronomical body — that would be an illogical impossibility.

Turn briefly to the first chapter of the book of Revelation. Jesus Christ is pictured in a divine vision as having *seven stars* in His right hand (verse 16). Drop down to verse 20: "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand The seven *stars* are the *angels* of the seven churches" A star, in symbolic biblical language, can be a great angelic being. Lucifer — before he sinned and became Satan the devil — was known as "the Shining Star of the Dawn." The expression "Lucifer" literally means "Day Star."

Notice again Matthew 2:2. Employing a personal pronoun, the expression used is "*his star*." A similar expression — "*his angel*" — is also used in a number of biblical passages. For example, see the very first verse of the book of Revelation: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by *his angel* unto his servant John" (cf. Acts 12:11, 15; Dan. 6:22; Heb. 1:7; Ps. 103:20). A personal pronoun indicating possession is even used in connection with barely converted new babes in Christ. Jesus said: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones [newly converted Christians]; for I say unto you, That in heaven *their angels* [not necessarily implying a guardian angel for every single person on earth] do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18:10).

All the biblical evidence, taken together, clearly indicates that this star was indeed an angelic messenger of God.

How Long Did It Take?

Herod the Great was a vice-king in Jerusalem (tetrarch of Galilee, Luke 3:1) at the time of Jesus' birth. "When Herod the king had heard these things [about Jesus' birth and the wise men], he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently *what time the star* [angel] *appeared*" (Matt. 2:3, 7).

Herod sent the wise men on to Bethlehem (verses 5, 8-9). And believe it or not, this whole journey (from wherever they originally were east of Jerusalem, to Jerusalem, and then to Bethlehem) could have taken up quite a long period of time. Here's why.

Herod the Great had privately called the wise men and carefully tried to pinpoint the time of the star's appearance. Why? Because he guessed that it marked the approximate time of Jesus' birth (verses 1, 7). Now notice this important point in verse 16: "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, *from two years old and under*, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men" (the time at which the star, or angel, had appeared).

This was a horrible, bloody, unbelievable slaughter — one of the worst in history! What circumstances would make this puppet king, Herod, under the authority of the Roman governorship, take such a big gamble? He was obviously risking one of the most unbelievable riots you ever heard of in your life. Can you imagine someone actually assassinating all the male babies in an entire area?

Stop to think about it logically. If Herod had known that Jesus could not have been more than one month of age, why would he have risked killing all the other thousands of babies? Obviously there was a big question in his mind as to exactly

how old Jesus might be. He must have been guessing by at least as much as one full year. So he ordered mass death for male children two years of age and under.

A House or a Manger?

Commonly portrayed in literature and Christmas greeting cards is the scene in which Mary, Joseph and the wise men (*magi*) are all gathered around the manger. But is this a true portrayal or a completely false one? Let the Bible itself give the answer!

Verse 11: "And when they [the wise men] were come into *the house* [very definitely not a stable scene complete with a manger], they saw *the young child* with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

Since three categories of gifts are mentioned, people have *assumed* that there were three wise men; but there could have been two, or seven, or twelve, or even twenty — we simply don't know! Here's another one of those biblical opposites.

Jesus was *in a house* — apparently a rented home — when the wise men arrived. It could have been the home of a relative or friend, but more probably it was rented. When the family first came to Jerusalem, the biblical account says every available dwelling was filled and no remaining space was available (see Luke 2:7). Jesus' family had no abode of their own and apparently were not well acquainted with anybody in Bethlehem — being from the hill country in Galilee.

But the point is this: the common manger scene cannot possibly be correct, because by the time the wise men arrived Jesus was in a *house*, not a manger.

The Real Manger Scene

The companion chapter about the birth and boyhood of Jesus is found in Luke 2. Joseph and Mary journeyed from their home in Nazareth

(where Jesus later grew up) to Bethlehem for several reasons. First of all, it is very likely that Joseph knew from the prophecy of Micah that Jesus had to be born in Bethlehem (cf. Matt. 2:4-6; Micah 5:2-3). Secondly, the whole Roman world was being taxed at that precise time by a decree from Emperor Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1-5). Thirdly, there is every indication that this was also the time of the fall festival season. The logical time for taxes to be paid was at the week-long Jewish Feast of Tabernacles in the autumn – the highlight of the fall festivals.

Remember that “there was no room for them in the inn” (verse 7). Mass attendance at the fall feasts caused quite a housing problem in Jerusalem which spilled right on over into nearby “suburbs” like Bethlehem (about five miles from Jerusalem proper). The whole area was simply swarming with people – perhaps even up to two million in a region normally limited to about a 200,000 population. By the time Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem, “stable rooms” were the only available accommodations.

Now notice the entirety of verse 7: “And she [Mary] brought forth her *firstborn* son [there were *others* born later – see Matthew 13:55], and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a *manger*; because there was no room for them in the inn.” Here the actual account of Jesus’ birth is described by Luke. No calendar date is given. Apparently God very carefully obscured the exact date of Christ’s birth.

However, as stated before, the general time of the year is clearly indicated in verse 8: “And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field [an impossibility anywhere near December 25th], keeping watch over their flock by night.”

Verses 9-12: “And, lo, *the angel* of the Lord came upon them And the angel said unto them [the shepherds] For unto you *is born this day* in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this

shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

Two vital points quickly come to mind. First, it is stated plainly that *an angel* appeared to these shepherds and spoke the enunciation. It would seem very logical that God would use the same *modus operandi* to inform the wise men in Matthew’s account, though the language there is certainly cloaked in symbol.

Secondly, the angel appeared to these shepherds on *the exact date* of Christ’s birth (verse 11); yet Luke, the Gospel writer, does *not* bother to include a clarifying parenthetical remark complete with a calendar date (such parenthetical clarifications can be found in several places in the same chapter – verses 2, 4, 23, 35).

Peace on Earth?

Immediately after the enunciation, these same shepherds were startled by a large group of angels (verse 13) who were saying: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (verse 14). At least that’s the way the King James Version has it.

But was there much peace on earth in Jesus’ earthly lifetime? We read earlier of a mass killing of infants and toddlers; several attempts were made on Christ’s life prior to the crucifixion; secular history reveals there was unrest in the whole Roman world at that time.

Is there peace now? We’ve had sixty wars since World War II. You can see some of the tragic scenes from the war in Cambodia and Vietnam in the next article in this month’s issue (beginning on page 6), “The War That Could End It All.” Big nations around this world are armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons just in case we do, after all, have to fight the war that must not be fought. The truth is that there has been precious little peace on earth or good will toward men since the time Cain killed Abel.

Why, then, did a chorus of angels say such a thing at the enunciation

of Christ’s birth? The 1611 translation is the guilty party in this case. Almost all modern translations correct this flagrant mistranslation in the King James. The Revised Standard Version has it: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he [God] is pleased!” The Phillips translation renders it: “Glory to God in the highest Heaven! Peace upon earth among men of goodwill!”

Continue the story in verses 15 and 16: “And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us *now go* even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass And they came *with haste*, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.”

There are many important differences (but *not* contradictions) between the two accounts in the second chapters of Matthew and Luke. One is that, unlike the wise men as explained previously, the shepherds *immediately rushed* to the scene of Christ’s birth. By the time the wise men finally arrived, Joseph had already moved Jesus from the emergency accommodations of a manger *into a house* (Matt. 2:11).

The shepherds were apparently nearby “in the same country” (Luke 2:8); the wise men came “from the east to Jerusalem” (Matt. 2:1) – apparently quite a long distance away, as is obvious from the fact that Herod was so completely unsure of Jesus’ birth date.

Was Christ Born “B.C.”?

The biblical facts clearly show that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was not born on or anywhere near December 25th – the date of the pagan celebration called “Christmas.” Further, He was born not in the winter, but in the autumn or fall of the year.

You may also be surprised to learn that Christ was actually born in the year 4 B.C. But how could that possibly be? How could Jesus

have been born before He was born — “Before Christ”?

Think a moment! Did all the world suddenly begin to reckon time differently at the birth of Christ? Did everyone announce that from this point on, they would begin year A.D. 1 (*Anno Domini*, or “Year of Our Lord”)? Did the whole Western world suddenly begin counting time the same way you have always counted time?

Why, of course not. Many of the facts presented in this article clearly show the obscurity of the time factors surrounding Christ’s birth. Further, the Jews in Palestine were then counting time according to the regnal years of their rulers (Luke 3:1). The Chinese count time differently than we do, or than do the Jews. The Mohammedans, or the adherents of Islam, reckon time from the Hegira, or the flight of Mohammed from Mecca to Medina.

In the so-called “Christian” world, we are now supposedly living in the year One Thousand Nine Hundred Seventy-five After Christ. But are we really?

A Pagan Calendar

Believe it or not, our whole method of counting time is completely pagan. All your plans, your calendar markings, your “dates” with friends have always been set according to pagan, heathen days and seasons.

Did you ever analyze the very names of days? SUNDAY is the chief day of the professing Christian world — or the day specially dedicated to the *sun* god, not the *Son* of God! MONDAY is the second day of the week, and the day of the *moon* god. In other languages, such as in some of the Romance tongues, the word *lunes* (having the same Latin root as our word “lunar”) is used. When you use the term “looney,” referring to someone who is crazy, you are actually reverting to an ancient superstition that people became “moonstruck” or went crazy because of the influence of the moon. The remainder of the days of

the week all have similar origins.

But what about the months? The very same thing has happened. The Romans, and then the professing Christian world, adapted the same old pagan calendar, calling the names of the months not after the divinely revealed pattern of the Bible, but after the god “Janus” or “Juno,” or in honor of a pagan emperor, such as Julius or Augustus.

Even the Years Are Wrong

But what about today’s date? Are we really living in the One Thousand Nine Hundred Seventy-fifth year *since* Christ’s birth? No, we are not! Actually, until about September of 1976, we will have been living in the 1979th year since the birth of Christ.

Let’s understand. God did not instruct man regarding the manner of reckoning time according to A.D. or B.C. This is a devising of man’s. The present-day method of calculating years and epochs was first established by Dionysius the Little (a Roman Catholic abbot who lived in the sixth century) and began to be used only in *parts* of Italy — not reaching France until the eighth century.

The Florentines continued to use a totally different method of reckoning the passage of years, until even as late as the eighteenth century. Further, different peoples, according to location and religion, began the years on different dates, and in different months. It was Dionysius who began assigning the years prior to Christ as those *Ante Christum* (in English, “Before Christ”), and those following the supposed date of His birth as *Anno Domini* or “Year of Our Lord.”

Dionysius’ method of dividing the years with the *supposed* time of the birth of Christ has led to countless difficulties. For instance, astronomers, counting either backward or forward, insert a year “0” between A.D. 1 and 1 B.C. Chronologers and historians do not. Isn’t it a little confusing to use two totally different systems, the one the exact opposite of the other, when reckoning time?

Not only do historians and chronologers resort to a double manner of reckoning, but they must also remember that the cycles of the leap years are totally different in the years “B.C.”

Was Dionysius able to be completely objective? Was he completely honest with himself — driven only by the intellectual and philosophical pursuit of new knowledge and truth? Or was he striving to see how he could devise a method which would blend the pagan customs with the “Christian” ones?

To this Hislop replies: “The instrument in accomplishing this amalgamation was the abbot Dionysius the Little, to whom also we owe it, as modern chronologers have demonstrated, that the date of the Christian era, or the *birth of Christ Himself was moved four years from the true time!*” (Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, p. 105, emphasis mine.)

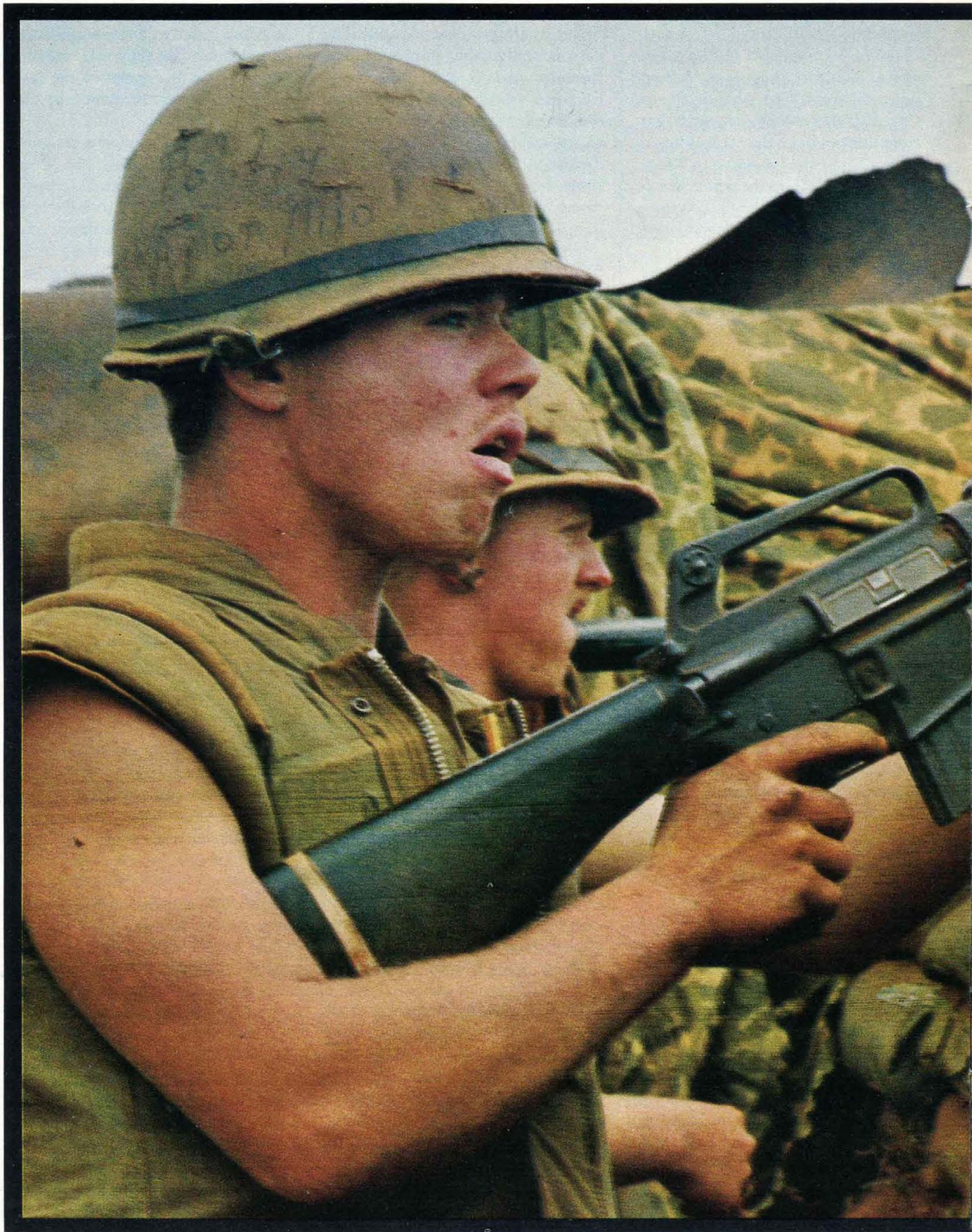
These ancient chronologers did not lose four years, as some have feared. They just misplaced Christ’s date of birth by pushing it forward four years on the calendar they had already devised.

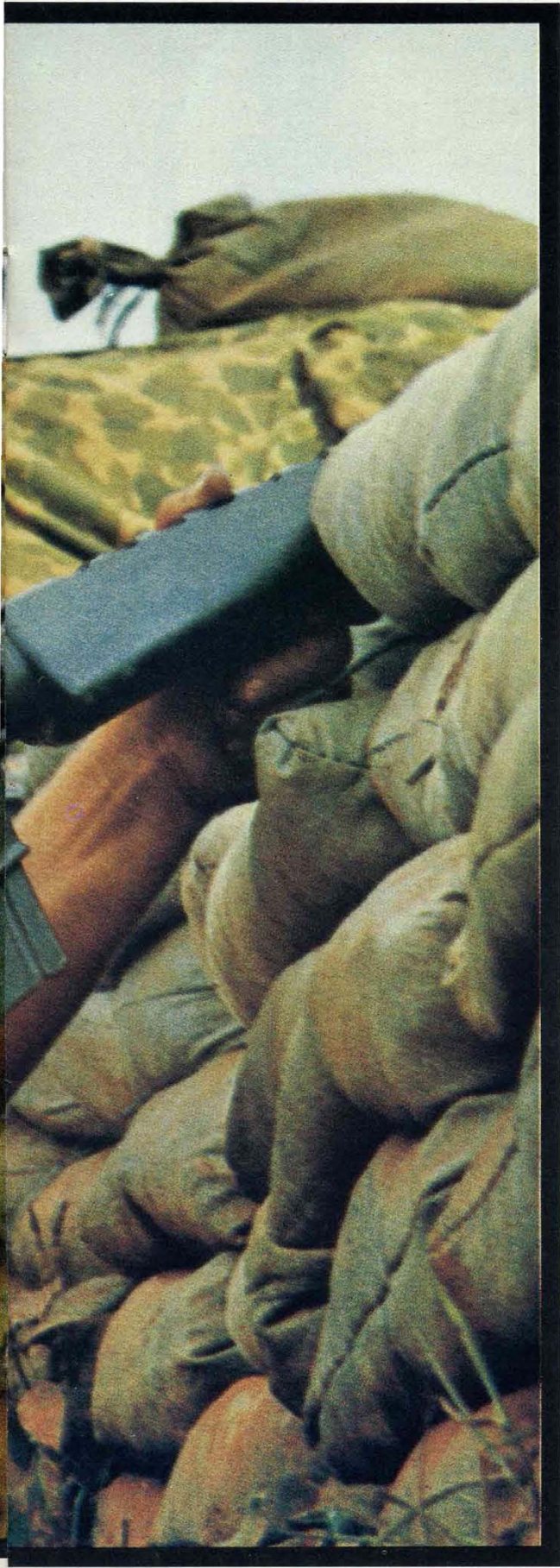
The Real Jesus

Perhaps many of the above points surrounding the birth of your Savior are relatively minor ones when compared to the major truths concerning salvation and entrance into the Kingdom of God. But if there are so many misunderstandings, untruths, myths and diametric opposites extant in the religious world about even His birth, how many are there concerning the really important things about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ?

They are legion! And that is absolutely true whether you are talking about the person of Christ or His teachings. When people hear the phonetic sound of the name “Jesus,” a mishmash of hazy concepts about a false Jesus that never existed comes into their minds. It would take a year’s worth of magazines for

(Continued on page 29)





U.S. Air Force



THE WAR

THAT COULD END IT ALL

by George Ritter

We have heard the overkill statistics repeated until we can almost quote them from memory. We know the great powers are armed to the nuclear teeth and in possession of ultrasophisticated weapons-delivery systems. We have seen more and more nations clamoring to become members of the nuclear club. How long can the human race continue to live under the nuclear gun before someone's trigger finger gets too itchy? Will the world someday erupt in the ultimate doomsday war that could erase all life from off this planet? What does Bible prophecy have to say about the future of peace on this earth?

Elison — Black Star

Where is it all going to end? That was the question the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ posed in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. Christ's answer, known as the Olivet Prophecy, is quite revealing. "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars," Christ said, referring to one of the prophetic signals that would herald the end of an age (verse 6).

Certainly there have always been wars. And certainly Christ's words had particular meaning for that day and age. Within a few short decades Roman legions under the command of Titus sacked, burned and pillaged the city of Jerusalem.

But Jesus' warning about war was also applicable to another period in history. In the book of Revelation, Christ, speaking through the apostle John, amplified some of His previous prophetic statements. In the sixth chapter, John writes: "And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword" (Rev. 6:4).

John was not speaking about the fall of Jerusalem. That war was already some twenty years behind him. John was referring to future events that would bring 6000 years of human history crashing to a cataclysmic close.

The context of the book of Revelation alone demonstrates this. In chapter 9, verse 16, John writes of an army of 200 million men. There were barely that many men, women and children on earth in the days of Christ or the apostle John. Until the nineteenth century it would have been impossible to field an army this big, even if all the nations of the world had pooled their manpower resources. During the height of World War II the combined armies of both Allied and Axis forces were only a fraction of this total.

A Demonic War Maker

So John is referring to a time yet ahead of us when "peaceful co-existence" will be a thing of the past. But specifically what is it that leads to this intensified period of global wars and conflicts?

Griffiths — MAGNUM



T. Khoq — Black Star



In the twelfth chapter of Revelation, John gets right to the heart of the problem. He describes the fall of a great archangel, Satan the Devil: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast

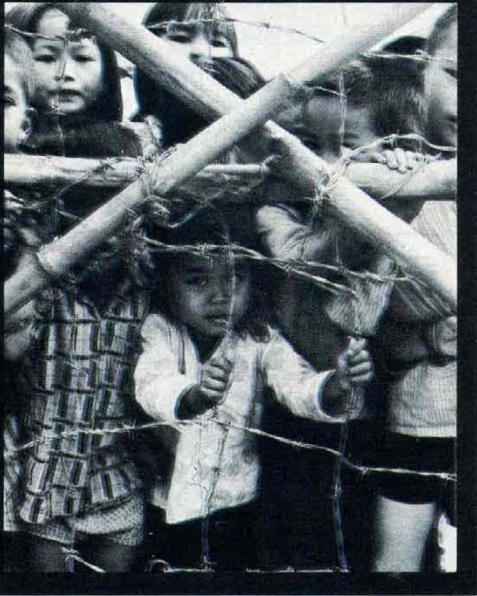
out with him" (Revelation 12:7-9).

This is the same great being who took peace from the earth back in the Garden of Eden. This is the same Satan who had a face-to-face confrontation with Jesus Christ over the eventual rulership of the world. In that particular encounter, the devil offered Christ rulership of "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them" (Matt. 4:8). Satan had them to offer and Christ didn't dispute that fact.

It is this super archangel known as "the prince of the power of the



Pickerell — Black Star



Wide World

get extremely hot for the inhabitants of this world. As John writes: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, *having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time*" (Rev. 12:12).

Unsheathing the Sword

But that's only the beginning of the devil's desperate eleventh-hour campaign. The following chapter continues the narrative of John: "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy . . . And they worshipped *the dragon which gave power unto the beast*: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? *who is able to make war with him?*" (Rev. 13:1, 4.)

Satan's last-ditch stand centers around his favorite instrument of destruction — a revitalized Roman Empire. It is the same system described in the seventh chapter of Daniel, now raising its ugly head for one final fling at world power. Like the ancient empires of old, this one will also be centered around the familiar church-state partnership with the nation, the ruler, and the governing system held in idolatrous esteem (Rev. 13:11-15).

THE TRAGEDY OF WAR: *casualties in Vietnam and Cambodia (opposite page and above). Left: Vietnamese boys peer through barbed wire of their refugee camp to watch U.S. Marines walk by. Children and their families were moved into the camp after their village, which had been a haven for the Viet Cong, was burned.*

Once it decides to wage war, virtually nothing will stand in the way of this gigantic military juggernaut. Like its predecessors, it will quickly roll up an impressive string of military victories with lightning-like thrusts, this time in the Middle East. Speaking of this yet-future campaign, the prophet Daniel wrote: "And *at the time of the end* shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind [referring to an attack from the air?], with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land [Palestine], and many countries shall be overthrown. . . . But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore *he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many*" (Dan. 11:40, 41, 44).

air" (Eph. 2:2) who stands as the power behind every national throne (see Dan. 10:12-13). He has been responsible for the war-making machinations that have gone on in virtually every world capital since the beginning of recorded history. But this time he pulls out all stops. Satan with his great perverted intellect can read the signs of the times. He knows that his six-thousand-year-old world dynasty is almost over, and he's not about to give it up without a titanic struggle.

That means things are going to

A Decidedly Unconventional War

Even more terrifying is the way these wars will be fought. Again the apostle John paints a grisly picture in the ninth chapter of Revelation: "And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months" (Rev. 9:3, 7-10).

Could John have been poetically referring to modern-day weapons such as jets, rockets, or missiles? Why would men be tormented and not die? (See verses 5, 6.) Could they be suffering from radiation sickness or the effects of germ warfare? What John was referring to is almost impossible to ascertain — but it certainly wasn't normal, conventional warfare.

Whatever it was, it was only the beginning of man's future wartime

woes. Using stark apocalyptic language, John goes on to describe a massive army of 200 million men in verse 17: "And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone."

Notice the awesome toll these weapons take: "By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths" (verse 18).

Could the lethal smoke John describes be radioactive fallout from future nuclear weapons? And could the fire be the thermal radiation effect? Again, all we can do at this point is speculate on what could happen. But the end results speak for themselves — *one third of all humanity dead.*

Battling on the Brink

Joel likewise graphically portrays an unprecedented period of chaos and war. ". . . There hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. The appearance of them is as

the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness" (Joel 2:2-6).

It's no wonder that Jeremiah, in referring to these tumultuous times, stated: "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble . . ." (Jer. 30:7).

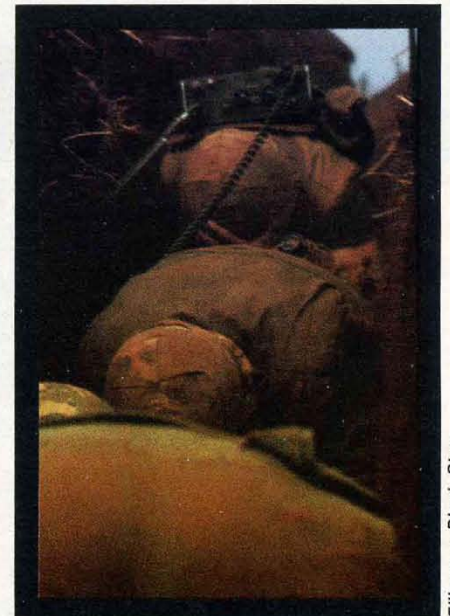
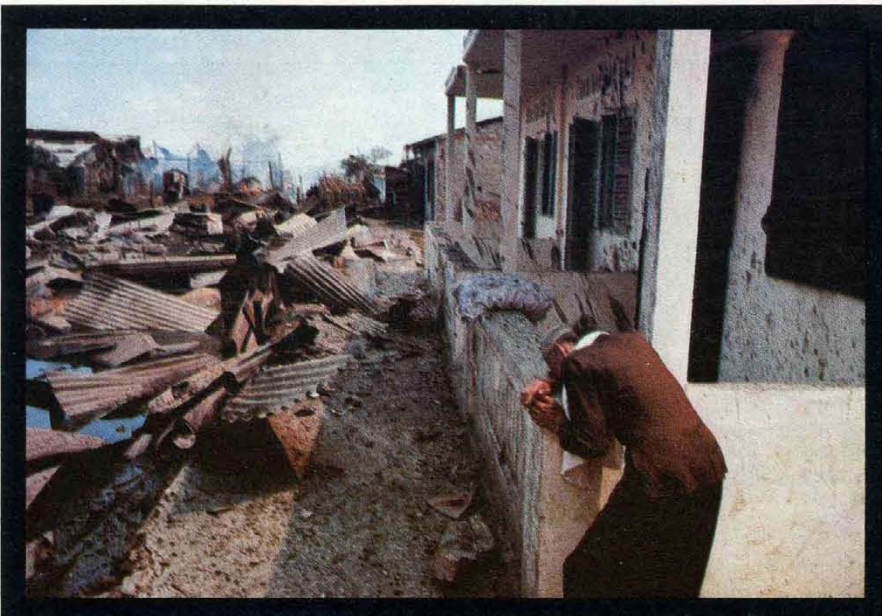
"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, nor ever shall be." And were this military madness allowed to continue on to its final bitter conclusion, Christ went on to say that "there should no flesh be saved [Moffatt adds 'saved *alive*']; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24:21, 22).

The Last Great Battle

Unless God put a sudden stop to man's misguided activities, Christ plainly states there would be no hope for the survival of the human race.

VIETNAM REVISITED: *woman weeps at destruction of her village; marines take cover in foxhole. Statue at United Nations Building (opposite page) bears ironic inscription in view of the arms race and nuclear overkill.*

Griffiths — MAGNUM



Ellison — Black Star

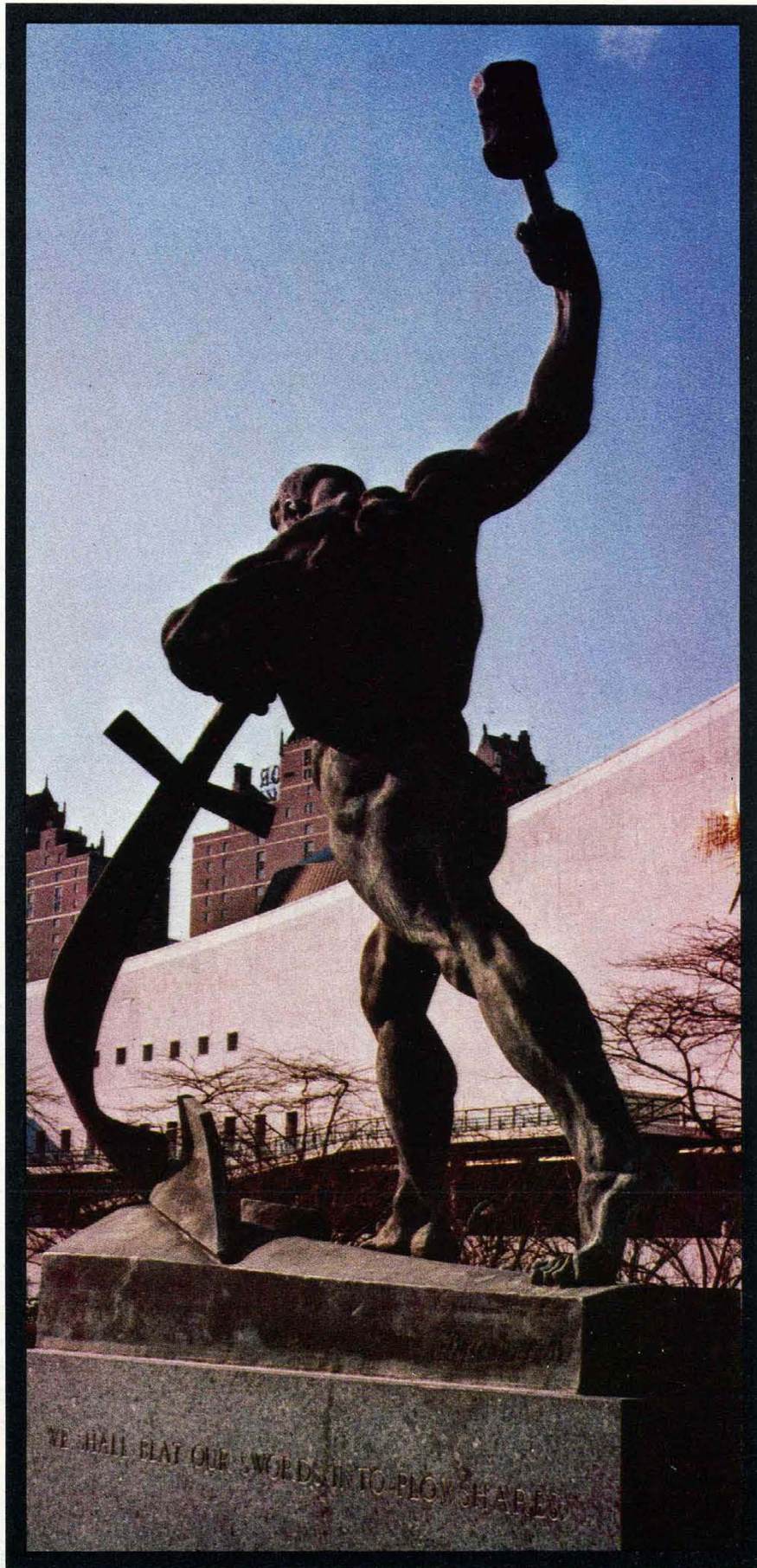
God's dramatic, eleventh-hour intervention in world affairs does not come without warning. It is announced by the blowing of the seventh trump in Revelation 11:15: "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.*" After 6000 years of human misrule, world power is finally restored to its rightful owner — Jesus Christ of Nazareth. At one stroke this event removes one of the basic factors that has led men to war throughout all of recorded history. It means the final end of divisive, petty, narrow-minded national sovereignty. It means the beginning of the end for human misrule, intolerance and misunderstanding. Here at long last is the real way to peace mankind has rejected.

You would think with this monumental announcement the nations of the world would throw down their arms, shout hallelujah, and receive Christ with open arms. At long last here is the peaceful solution they have desperately needed, but haven't been able to find.

But nothing of the kind — they do just the opposite. "And the nations were *angry*" (Rev. 11:18). Satan the Devil is angry. He knows he's about to lose his cherished seat of power. He figures his only recourse is to fight God. So he gathers his forces for one final all-out battle with the returning Jesus Christ. Again John writes: "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils [demons], working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. . . . And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Rev. 16:13-16).

The Battle of Armageddon

The location for this last climactic battle will apparently be well-chosen for its strategic value. Armaged-



UPI

Is Doomsday at the Door?

Adlai Stevenson: "No physical peril greater than atomic war has confronted mortal man since the Flood."

Sir Bertrand Russell: "Never since human beings first existed have they been faced with so great a danger as that which they have brought upon themselves by a combination of unrivaled skill and unrivaled folly."

John F. Kennedy: "Together we shall save our planet — or together we shall perish in its flames!"

Gen. Douglas MacArthur: "We have had our last chance. If we will not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at the door."

Kenneth E. Boulding: "I believe the present international system to be one which has a significant probability built into it of irretrievable disaster for the human race."

Dr. W. H. Pickering: "In half an hour the East and the West could destroy civilization."

Dr. Albert Einstein: "There is no defense in science against the weapons which can destroy civilization."

Dr. Herbert F. York: "... The arms race is a steady open spiral down toward oblivion."

Charles de Gaulle: "... The great powers are facing their 'last moment' ..."

Barbara Ward: "The greatest institutional gap in our world is created by an inescapable, planetary interdependence which breeds common grievances and creates common needs and opportunities, yet is matched by virtually no instruments of worldwide order and welfare. And it is through this gap that mankind can tumble into annihilation."

don, or the "mount of Megiddo," sits astride three important mountain passes that allow for quick access across the length and breadth of Palestine. It was at Megiddo that Josiah was slain attempting to block passage of Pharaoh Necho of Egypt northward to fight the Babylonians. Gideon and Barak won impressive battles here during the period of the Judges. And General Allenby's forces surprised the Turkish armies at Megiddo in 1918.

But this time there is no real contest. John records in Revelation

19:19 and 17:14: "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse [Christ], and against his army. . . . and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings. . . ."

Other prophets described the battle in more graphic detail. Zechariah, for instance, states: "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle. . . . And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have

fought against Jerusalem; their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth" (Zech. 14:2, 12).

At the same time, Jesus Christ will put a final end to the power-hungry church-state system that has wracked the world with war for 6000 years. John records this earthshaking event in the fourteenth and eighteenth chapters of Revelation. It's interesting that in speaking of this resurrected system John writes: "And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth" (Rev. 18:24).

Peace at Last

Jesus Christ will then go about the business of establishing real world peace. With Satan the Devil bound (Rev. 20:2), his destructive church-state combine out of the way, and with the nations no longer governed by fallible men, remarkable things will begin to happen. Isaiah writes: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain [government] of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: *nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more*" (Isa. 2:2-4; see also Micah 4:1-4).

For the first time the vast majority of people will learn what it means to live according to God's laws. No longer will they be motivated to fight and quarrel, but will learn to love their fellowman. There it is — the final solution to war.

For the sake of all humanity, the sooner it arrives the better. □

QUESTION: "Just how should a Christian's love be expressed toward his enemies? Are we to ask God's terrible justice and vengeance upon them, as David did in some of the Psalms? Are not these contrary to Christ's prayers for God's mercy on those who crucified Him? In short, what form should our prayers for our enemies take?"

Anonymous,
Lagos, Nigeria

ANSWER: Christ Himself is the foremost example of love for one's enemies. He was beaten and crucified, yet He prayed for His tormentors: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). The martyr Stephen showed the same forgiveness (Acts 7:60) before he was stoned to death.

The book of Hebrews tells us to "Consider him [Christ] who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood" (Heb. 12:3-4).

When we pray for our enemies, then, it should be in an attitude of forgiveness, asking that God's will for them be carried out with the same mercy we would want for ourselves if we were in their shoes (Matt. 7:12). Sometimes God's mercy might include punishment or death such as David asked for his enemies. Such people will be resurrected into a utopian world full of the knowledge of God and grow into His salvation free from the influence of Satan the devil.

True godly love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). We receive God's Spirit through repen-

tance, baptism and the laying on of hands (Acts 2:38; Heb. 6:2). Once a person has gone through the process of being forgiven by God, he is better equipped to forgive others and feel Christian love even for his enemies.

Q: "The scriptures seem to indicate that the apostles observed 'the first day of the week' (namely the eve of Sunday) as the 'Lord's Day,' the regular day of worship. I don't have the historical background to know for sure if the above was a fact or not."

Raymond D.,
New Haven, Connecticut

A: Historical records concur that the "early church" kept the Sabbath (Saturday), and that even well past the fourth century some kept both the Sabbath and Sunday side by side. *A Critical History of the Sabbath and the Sunday in the Christian Church* by A. H. Lewis, D.D. (The American Sabbath Tract Society, Alfred Center, New York, 1886) presents a very good picture of what occurred regarding the Sabbath and how it was replaced by Sunday when Constantine converted to "Christianity."

The more modern *Catholic Encyclopedia* states on page 336 that "The obligation of rest from work on Sunday remained somewhat indefinite for several centuries." The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* adds that "There is nothing to indicate that the practice of coming together on Sunday... was regarded as obligatory... during the first three centuries of the Christian Era" (p. 800).

Sunday observance came to be added to Sabbath observance in the professing Christian world (and later superseded it) due to the belief that Christ was resurrected on Sun-

day. (For more on this, write for our free booklet, *The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday*.)

Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics states: "Although Jewish Christianity disappeared from the West before the end of the 2nd century, there is plenty of evidence that some of its traditions persisted in the Eastern Church for two hundred years more. The Apostolic Constitutions (vii 23, 26) recognized a parallel observance of the Sabbath and Sunday. [During the second, third and fourth centuries, many documents appeared purporting to be written by the apostles. Among these were the spurious 'Apostolic Constitutions.' They were circulated to create the impression that man-made tradition had apostolic blessing. Although deliberate frauds, these documents nonetheless express some of the religious teachings during the centuries after the death of the apostles.] And the Council of Laodicea [about 365 A.D.], while condemning a Judaizing observance of the Sabbath, marked it as a festival and a day of worship" (vol. 12, pp. 104-105).

The twenty-ninth canon of the Council of Laodicea reads as follows: "Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather, honoring the Lord's day, and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ" (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. XIV, p. 148).

So the Sabbath was still observed on Saturday centuries after the original apostles died. For more information, write for our free booklets *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?* and *Which Day Is the Sabbath of the New Testament?* □

WATS in a Number?

Pasadena, California:

This is the story behind a number and a free service more and more of our readers are discovering. The number is 1-800-423-4444, and it enables readers and viewers in the contiguous United States to make a toll-free call to our office in Pasadena, California.

Many of you in the United States have probably seen the number flashed across the screen during the *Garner Ted Armstrong* television show; you've come across it in the *Plain Truth* and *Good News* magazines, as well as some of our booklets. It's our WATS number — the fastest, most convenient way to request our literature or services.

WATS is an acronym for Wide Area Telephone Service. It has been a boon to such businesses as motel chains and airlines, enabling customers to make reservations for rooms or flights at no charge from anywhere in the country except the state where the WATS line is located. In that case, callers must use local toll-free numbers (*Good News* readers in California, Alaska and Hawaii may call 213-577-5225 collect).

In 1970 several men in the Mail Processing and Media Divisions of the Work raised the possibility of using the WATS system so that viewers of the TV program could call in their literature requests. The idea was kicked around for several months and it was finally decided to try out the idea on a local basis first. If the concept proved feasible, it could be expanded across the nation and WATS lines could be installed.

In December, a special local number of Ambassador College was advertised on local radio (KFI) and local TV (KWHY). The test continued for some months, expanding to a sprinkling of radio stations outside the Los Angeles area. The results were very encouraging. Enough people used the local phone number to consider testing with a WATS line on a nationwide basis.

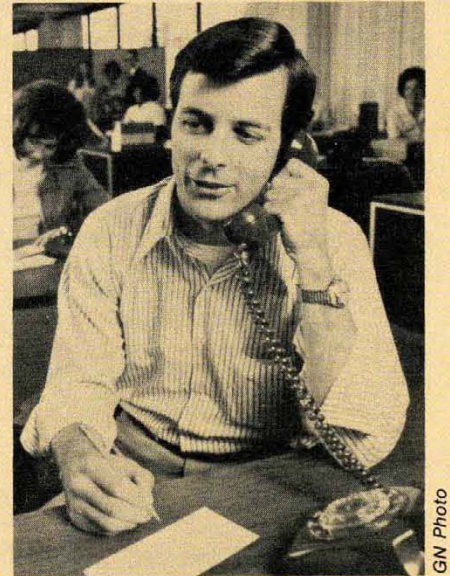
After a hiatus, WATS lines were installed. The first nationwide trial run began in the fall of 1972. This time the object was to compare mail response with phone response. The response from six stations advertising the WATS line and mailing address were compared with six control stations advertising only the mailing address. Additional tests of WATS/ mailing address were conducted on radio and in *TV Guide*.

"We found that using the WATS line increased response tremendously," said Larry Nelson, who was on the WATS project almost from the beginning, and is now supervisor of the WATS area. "Our net response increased 66% on the TV stations that ran the WATS number."

WATS proved itself an effective and efficient means of handling viewer response. In the fall of 1973, 20 students were hired and trained on the phones and literature as our WATS number began to be advertised nationwide on radio. In March 1974, the toll-free number started to be promoted on TV from coast to coast.

That summer two one-hour specials of Garner Ted Armstrong's personal appearance campaign were televised on some 50 stations. By the end of July over 14,000 calls had come in as a result of the specials alone.

During the 74-75 TV season,



GN Photo

STUDENT OPERATOR answers a call on the WATS line.

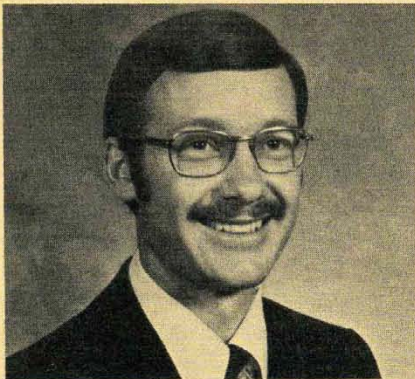
thanks to even more effective promotion of literature and the WATS number on TV, the volume of phone calls broke one record after another. During the last weekend in February, a new daily record of 3750 calls, plus 3200 feet of recorded calls, was set. March set a new monthly record — 35,000 live calls alone. Because of the heavy load four new lines were added. And just in time — another record was set in April when over 59,000 telephone literature requests were processed. In August over 60,000 phone calls came in.

As we noted earlier, if you live in the contiguous United States (that is, excluding California, Alaska and Hawaii), the WATS line is the fastest and most convenient way to request literature. But you may also use it to ask about the Worldwide Church of God. We welcome inquiries via the WATS number about the Church — the location of local congregations, the phone num-

ber of ministers in your area — whatever you want to know about us, our operators will be happy to answer — or suggest someone who can help. Right now, for example, over 600 requests a month for the services of our ministers are being handled by our WATS operators.

“We’re open 24 hours a day to receive messages,” Larry points out. “We have operators on the lines from 8 to 5 California time. During the evening and early morning hours the messages are recorded.”

So give us a call anytime you have a literature request or an inquiry. Remember, it’s free of charge and obligation. We’re happy to provide this service for the benefit of our readers and viewers. □



Mel Dahlgren

Congregation puts Parable into Practice

London, Kentucky:

“For it will be as when a man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted to them his property; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he

went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them; and he made five talents more. So too, he who had the two talents made two talents more” (Matt. 25:14-17).

The parable of the talents is a familiar one. It illustrates that Christians should make profitable use of their talents and opportunities. Many a sermon has been preached on this theme.

But practiced?

Mel Dahlgren, pastor of the London, Kentucky, congregation of the Worldwide Church of God, decided to do both. “Many of us have no idea how many ‘talents’ we do have. We need to look into our own lives and see what we can do. So I thought it would be a good idea to offer each individual [in the congregation] a \$5 check and let them use the money in any way — buy materials to make something, purchase gas for errands, or whatever — to see how much they could accrue.”

So he preached a sermon to his congregation one Sabbath, citing Matthew 25, Luke 19 and related scriptures. Then he threw out the challenge. He offered an envelope containing the \$5 check to anyone who wanted to participate and to see what they could do with the sum in one month. “One hundred and five families — practically the entire London, Kentucky, church took up the challenge!” he exclaimed. “Even children got involved.”

What could you do with \$5 in four weeks in these inflationary times? Here are some of the money-making ventures the London members tried: made quilts, dresses, capes, cushions; antiques furniture; recovered chairs; baked bread, pies and cookies; sold razors; cleaned offices; made bird houses and dog

houses; cut and hauled wood; made arts and crafts; etc.

Mrs. Scotty Moses, for example, made profitable use of her talent as a seamstress. “I made capes and pillow cases. Some of them I sent to school by my children, and they sold them. I also told some friends what I was doing, they told others and the word got around.” At the end of the month her \$5 had earned \$150.86.

Mrs. Anna Lee Hoskins decided to crochet hats in between helping customers in her grocery store. “I crocheted one and let a girl take it to work. She took orders for me — 10-12 at a time. By the time I’d finish one order another would come in.” Her \$5 earned \$100. “It was quite a challenge — I set the goal and made it.”

Mr. Fred Farmer sold birdhouses. “I got the pattern out of an encyclopedia. I had the lumber already — just had to buy the paint.” He earned \$29 for his efforts. “But my wife outdid me! She and a neighbor bought foam rubber for stuffing and quilted and sewed cushions together. They sold \$43 worth.”

Even Mrs. Dahlgren took up the challenge, baking 80 loaves of bread. With promotional help from her husband, she made \$27.

At the end of the month, accounts were reckoned. Altogether the congregation made some \$2500. An offering of \$2100 was made to the Church headquarters in Pasadena, and the rest was retained for use in local church activities. “I had heard of another church trying it over a three-month period,” said Mr. Dahlgren. “They got a threefold increase. The average increase for just one month was some fivefold. I thought that was extremely good for only one month.” □

"JUDGE NOT ACCORDING TO

We live in a superficial world where a person's worth is judged mainly on the basis of looks. Our icons are youth, beauty and the toothpaste-ad smile. Although not many of us would be deliberately cruel or callous, the daily judgments we automatically make can have a devastating effect on those who aren't "beautiful people." Hopefully this article will make us all more aware of our power to help or harm others by the way we react to their appearance.

by Carole Ritter

Shopping, in a hurry, I practically tripped over the wheelchair. A big-eyed face looked up and grinned, and I smiled back automatically. Then my smile froze and I turned away in disgust. The pleasant face was attached to a head twice as big as it should have been, to a body with no legs and stubby arms with no hands. I hurried away, careful not to look back.

My face was burning and I almost lost my lunch. It was an unthinking, automatic reaction, something I couldn't control — revulsion, fear, near panic — brought on by another friendly human being who happened to be cursed with a very ugly body.

A Common Reaction

My feelings weren't unusual. We all share the universal tendency to be repulsed by someone else's appearance if it is grotesque or different. If I had stopped to talk, I might have really liked the person. She seemed friendly and intelligent in

spite of her handicaps; but I never got that far.

Of course this is an extreme example, but this sort of automatic people-sorting goes on to a greater or lesser degree all the time. Everybody does it.

It is easy to make superficial judgments, to quickly reject the unattractive people around us and receive the beautiful people with open arms. In our society tanned, trim WASP's have life handed to them on a silver platter; the Toulouse-Lautrecs in our midst have their troubles in spite of whatever admirable talents they might possess.

Dr. Vincenzo Conigliaro has studied the effects of physical ugliness on the personality. He made this sobering observation in a recent article: "Think for a second about the child who is considered ugly, that helpless victim of unbelievable cruelties suffered at the hands of his friends or even his parents. If they don't attack him with ridicule and sarcasm, they savage him with indifference and neglect. When you begin to realize that this behavior is not an angry reaction to a child who has been bad or destructive but, rather, is an unthinking, insensitive attitude toward a child whose only crime was to be born ugly, the effect is chilling. And it is usually because of this traumatizing treatment in childhood that the ugly person may have to stand alone at the sidelines of life through all his years, forever scarred by the slurs of his youth" ("The Tyranny of Looks," *Cosmopolitan*, July 1975, p. 133).

Outside the In-Crowd

Automatic judgment on the basis of looks affects all of us to one degree or another. But normally its most damaging effects are felt by people who differ from the cultural

norm. The "uglies" among us — the fat, the old, the acned — face painful indifference or rejection. The handicapped or retarded are ignored or neglected. Racial minorities face something more malignant — inbred prejudice carefully handed down for generations. Many find their intelligence, ability, and even their humanity automatically called into question because of a genetic variation they happened to inherit.

We have the power to destroy peoples' lives by our unthinking responses to their appearance. One woman, an intelligent journalist, spent time in New Mexico living among the Navajos. After her stay she "passed" for an Indian, working for a white suburban couple in Southern California. The only difference between her and her employers was her outward appearance, her "Indianness." Here are some of the thoughts she put down afterwards: "Morton [her employer] is still in the kitchen... I feel [his] intense gaze on me. Perhaps I am trying too hard, but I fumble and drop the tray. 'Betsy! I never saw anyone so dumb!' he shouts harshly. 'Can't you ever learn!' Since our self-esteem tends to depend on what others think of us, I am depreciated and depressed by the remark, even feeling it justified. I can sympathize with Rosemary Yellowhair's [a Navajo friend's] appraisal of herself as 'retarded' after a white instructor placed her in a class for retarded students. And if I stay here for a year, won't I in fact become the 'dumb Betsy' Morton presumes me to be? My self-respect is draining from me" (Grace Halsell, *Bessie Yellowhair*, p. 173). This woman soon couldn't take it any longer — she ran away from her white family and resumed her own identity. But

APPEARANCE”

what if she had really been an Indian servant? Where could she have run?

Every day people who can't escape bear the brunt of thoughtless remarks and automatic classification into comfortable stereotypes. "They're all stupid and shiftless." "He'd probably steal something if I turned my back on him."

Judging Your Local "Ugly"

You don't have to be the wrong color to be looked down on, either. You might be a divorced woman. Or make that a poorly dressed, fat, divorced woman with several small children on welfare.

Picture someone in the above condition, walking into a new church for the first time. The minister is nominally polite; the people say hello, perhaps, or maybe they are too involved with their own particular clique of friends to even notice her arrival. Her children are bored and misbehave, but nobody offers to help.

Maybe that wouldn't happen in your church — perhaps you would invite somebody like her home for dinner. Possibly. But there are enough people who wouldn't do so to inspire the apostle James to write the following admonition to some Christians he knew: "My brethren, show no partiality . . . For if a man with gold rings and in fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, 'Have a seat here, please,' while you say to the poor man, 'Stand there,' or, 'Sit at my feet,' have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? . . . But you have dishonored the poor man . . . if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by

the law as transgressors . . . For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy; yet mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:1-13).

Maybe it would help to stop to consider *why* someone might find themselves in such a situation as the divorced woman described above. Was it because she sinned far and above the average woman? Maybe so, but maybe not. Perhaps family circumstances forced her into an early marriage to someone less than ideal. Maybe her husband was laid off; maybe his unemployment check stopped coming; and maybe he had to "desert" her so she could go on government aid. Maybe her clothes are old because she can't afford new ones and keep the kids in shoes too. Maybe she is fat because she can't afford to buy anything but starchy, filling foods that go a long way.

Get the picture? It is easy to denigrate someone with an obvious sin or failing: "The sins of some men are conspicuous . . . but the sins of others appear later" (I Tim. 5:24). Does the fact that a person's sins are obvious make him less of a worthwhile human being than the person who can cover his up because he has the means?

God takes all of this into account when He looks down at us. He is so objective that He can say things like: "It shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom (full of degenerate deviants) than for you (upstanding citizens who refused to believe the gospel)" (see Matt. 11:24).

Judgment Without Mercy

Christ warned us to "Judge not, that you be not judged. For *with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged*, and the measure you give will be the measure you get" (Matt.

7:1). Realizing this, can any of us afford to look at people in a way we wouldn't want God to look at us?

The apostle Paul said he didn't even know how to judge *himself* (I Cor. 4:3). Only God could know how well he measured up internally — how well he fought with the weapons he was given (verse 4). God is not a respecter of somebody's gorgeous face or outward goodness (Acts 10:34-35). He looks on the *heart* (I Sam. 16:7).

Again James writes: "Do not speak evil against one another, brethren. He that speaks evil against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But *who are you that you judge your neighbor?*" (James 4:11-12.)

None of us have been given the responsibility to judge our fellow human beings, to talk about their failings behind their back, to pick apart their appearance, to correct them to their face, to even take notice of their failings or omissions. We are supposed to be too busy with the "beam in our own eye" (Matt. 7:4) to be unduly preoccupied with the speck in someone else's. Our responsibility is merely to treat each and every human being as we would Jesus Christ Himself — no matter what they look like, how they are dressed, what color their skin is, or how "sinful" they appear to us on the surface.

God will deal with us as we deal with our brothers and sisters — the judgment we render is the judgment we are going to receive. Christ reminds us that "As you did it to one of the *least* of these my brethren, you did it to me . . ." □

**ARE
YOU A
SPIRITUAL
ISOLATIONIST?**



Exactly what is "worldliness"? To what extent does God expect Christians to separate themselves from the rest of society? Must God's people become spiritual isolationists?

by Brian Knowles

What does the Bible reveal about spiritual isolationism? Is God's Church intended to be a "closed shop" — an isolated oasis of "true believers" who embrace esoteric doctrines and bizarre secret rites?

Not at all. The Church of God is to be a "light in a dark place" as Jesus Himself was (John 9:4-5). The Church is Christ's body in this age. Wherever Christians exist they are to shine as an example in the midst of society.

In the *midst* of it — not apart from it!

Jesus prayed concerning His disciples: "I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one. . . . I have sent them *into* the world" (John 17:15, 18).

Christ did not expect His followers to separate themselves *physically* from the rest of society. He did not expect Christians to form isolated communities apart from the rest of the human race. Nor did He advocate unique clothing styles, liberal or conservative hairstyles and grooming habits. Jesus did not command His servants to grow beards or to shave them off. He said nothing about the use of white or black shoes, color of clothing, length of dresses, mustaches, sideburns or spiked heels.

The Inward Man

In short, Christ did not give His followers a *uniform* to wear that would set them apart from the rest of society. Instead, He taught through the apostle Peter: ". . . Be clothed with *humility* . . ." (I Peter 5:5, KJV).

Clothes don't really make the man. It's what comes from the *heart* that makes you what you are (Mark 7:15, 18-19). It's what is *inside* that counts. But unlike God who looks on the heart, man looks on the outward appearance (I Sam. 16:7). Man wears "badges" and "uniforms" of righteousness. God measures righteousness in terms of inward character and pure motivation. Man's measure of character is often superficial, but God looks on those intrinsic, inner qualities to determine just who His true children really are.

The Bible is replete with examples to illustrate the aforementioned points. David, one of the sons of Jesse, was selected as king not because of his age, stature, vocal qualities, good looks, I.Q., or any other outward quality, but for what was in his heart and mind. He was the last to be considered by Samuel, but God knew his heart and selected him to rule Israel (I Sam. 16:1-13). He was called "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22).

Abraham also was chosen because of his inner qualities — not his outward appearance. Speaking of the father of the faithful, God said: "For *I know him*, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment . . ." (Gen. 18:19, KJV).

In selecting His New Testament disciples, Jesus commented on the character of Nathanael: "Behold an Israelite indeed, *in whom is no guile!*" (John 1:47, KJV.)

God is little concerned about those outward qualities of appearance and personality that seem to be so important to human beings. Therefore it is a false standard to measure righteousness or unrighteousness solely on the basis of appearance.

Don't Sit in Judgment

Christians were not called to sit in judgment of each others' clothing styles, haircuts, hairstyles, cultural

tastes and preferences or any other thing. Paul wrote to the Romans: "Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? . . . Why do you pass judgment on your brother? . . . *Then let us no more pass judgment on one another . . .*" (Rom. 14:4, 10, 13).

We are all the servants of God, and we will have to account to Him for everything — even the idle words that we speak (Matt. 12:36). Too many professing Christians have made it a vocation to sit in judgment of their brethren! God utterly and unequivocally *condemns* this damnable practice. Jesus said: "*Judge not*, that ye be not judged . . ." (Matt. 7:1, KJV).

What does all this have to do with "worldliness"? Simply this! You and I were not called to accuse other Christians of "worldliness" because they chose to wear white shoes, grow sideburns, wear red dresses (which some have said is the color of harlotry!), or listen to country-and-western music! We were not called to study, criticize and condemn our fellow Christians for what we *arbitrarily* define as worldliness! The only legitimate standard is God's Word — the Bible.

Relating to the World

Let's allow God to define our relationship with the world. In oft-quoted John 3:16, we read: "For God so *loved the world* that he gave his only Son . . ." And in verse 17: "For God sent the Son *into* the world, not to *condemn the world*, but that the world might be *saved* through him."

Should Christians oppose *God's* view of the world? The citizens of this earth were *all* created in the image of god (Gen. 1:26, 27). He loves every last one of them. Each was created for the ultimate destiny of being added to the very family of God.

What makes Christians different from the rest of humanity? Nothing but the truth of God. Jesus said in His prayer to the Father: "And for their sake I consecrate myself, *that*

Worldliness Vs. Godliness

The Way of the World

Adultery and fornication (Gal. 5:19)

Hatred and murder (Gal. 5:20-21; I John 3:15)

Envy and jealousy (Gal. 5:21)

Covetousness (II Tim. 3:2)

Lying and false witness (Matt. 15:19; Rev. 21:8)

Thefts (Matt. 15:19)

Morbidity and gloom (Prov. 15:15)

Bragging and boasting (II Tim. 3:2)

Talebearing (Prov. 11:9; 18:8; 20:29)

Pride (Prov. 16:18; I John 2:16)

The Way of God

"Flee fornication" (I Cor. 6:18); don't commit adultery (Matt. 19:18)

Love (Gal. 5:22; I Cor. 13); don't murder (Matt. 19:18)

"Let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3)

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:4)

"Speak every man truth with his neighbor" (Eph. 4:25)

"Let him that stole steal no more" (Eph. 4:28)

Joy (Gal. 5:22; John 16:20-22)

"Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth" (Prov. 27:2)

"He that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (Prov. 11:13)

Meekness and humility (Num. 12:3; Ps. 35:13; Micah 6:8)

they also may be consecrated in truth" (John 17:19). The possession of truth is the result of God's grace — not anything anyone did of themselves. No one can truly come to God unless He first takes the initiative in calling the person (John 6:44, 65). We love God only because He first loved us (I John 4:19). Therefore we have *no right* to feel superior to the rest of humanity! God loves every human being in His creation.

So we see that Christians are set apart by the truth which they possess as a result of God's grace. They are *not* set apart by peculiar cloth-

ing styles, odd rituals or rites, or by geographical separation.

What Is Wrong With the World?

God does love the world. That much is plain. *But the world does not love God!* The world has marched to the beat of a different drummer — Satan the devil, the god of this present age or society (II Cor. 4:4). Having deceived the whole of humanity (Rev. 12:9), he is the enemy of the true God. When the Bible speaks of the "spirit of the world," it refers to the spirit of its leader — Satan. His philosophy has permeated every strata of society. True

values have been turned upside down. The devil has led his disciples away from the truth and into error.

When God talks about not loving the world, He is not referring to the people, but to *the way* which is contrary to His way. The apostle John wrote of this in I John 2:15-16: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world."

"Worldliness" is the adoption of the world's standards and its values. These standards are based on *lust* and *greed*. The world, like its god, seeks to assuage its ego. The world's way is the way of *get*. It is egocentric and exploitative. War in human society is the direct result of the factors mentioned by John: lust, pride and the desire to get for self (James 4:1-2). Nations practice the law of the jungle — survival of the fittest. Do it unto them *before* they do it unto you. Negotiations between nations are based on relative positions of strength and weakness — not on what is best for everyone.

True Religion

On an individual basis, the mind of Satan encourages us to satiate, massage and feed our own egos. The apostle James provided the antidote for selfishness in describing the essence of true religion: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world" (James 1:27).

How does one keep oneself unstained from the world? By practicing selfless service. By being concerned for the welfare of others ahead of the self. By exercising compassion upon those who are suffering or afflicted whatever the cause. James is not speaking of lifting up one's skirt in righteous indignation over the amount of makeup someone else is wearing, or the length of

their skirt or the cut of their clothes!

The spirit of the world is the spirit of selfishness and vanity. It is great, toadish, swelling ego. True religion is exactly the opposite!

II Corinthians 6:14-18 in Context

But what about scriptures like II Corinthians 6:14-18? "Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you....'"

The key to understanding this passage lies in the context. Paul is illustrating a *principle* by loosely quoting a number of Old Testament passages (Ezek. 37:27; Lev. 26:12; Isa. 52:11; II Sam. 7:14; etc.). The principle is that Christians cannot "dabble" in false religion. Christians cannot bridge the gap between truth and idolatry. Christians cannot be "fellow travellers" with those who worship idols and serve false gods.

Apparently some of the Corinthians were still trying to straddle the fence between the old pagan religions of Corinth and true worship as taught by Paul. They were entertaining false teachers who brought in erroneous doctrines. Paul insisted that they come *completely out* of such superstitious nonsense, not dragging vestiges of it with them into the body of Christ. (Corinth was a city notorious for its idolatry!)

Satan the devil is the author of a complex system of religion which embraces a little bit of everything. It has something for everybody. He has ministers who claim to represent God, but in actual fact serve Satan (II Cor. 11:13-15). The final mani-

festation of this great church/state system is called "Babylon the Great" in the book of Revelation. Speaking prophetically to the Church of God, Jesus Christ warns: "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; for her sins are heaped high as heaven" (Rev. 18:4).

Christians are not to be a part of this world's (Satan's) religions. They are to come out and be separate in practice and in deed.

A Light to the World

The Church of God is to be a light to the world — an example — *a model*. Jesus spoke of the Church as "a city that is set upon a hill" which cannot be hidden from view (Matt. 5:14). Its members are to shine with

You and I were not called to accuse other Christians of "worldliness" because they choose to wear white shoes, grow sideburns, wear red dresses (which some have said is the color of harlotry!), or listen to country music!

the light of the fruits of God's Holy Spirit. They are to preach the gospel of God's soon-coming Kingdom (Matt. 28:19-20).

But to accomplish all of these great works they must go out *into* the world. Those of us who are privileged to be called of God in this age have an awesome responsibility. We must not hide behind the skirts of "Mother Church." We must go out and meet the rest of the world on its own terms. As Paul said, we must be "all things to all men" (I Cor. 9:22). We should adopt the social customs of whatever society we live in so long as they do not conflict with the higher laws of God (see Rom. 13:7; Acts 4:19; 5:29).

Christ never intended His Church to be a collection of freaks and odd-

balls in some kind of ecclesiastical sideshow. Our way of life should not be so foreign, so alien and odd, that it *repels* those who would come to Christ.

Jesus did not come with a gospel of health foods. Instead, He taught that the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink (Rom. 14:17). (This does not mean Christians should not be cognizant of good, *commonsense* dietary habits as part of a balanced way of life, but food and diet are not essentially spiritual matters.)

Nor did Christ come with a message about makeup, birthdays and skirt lengths. He said nothing about dancing and music in Church. He did not address Himself to the question of whether men should wear white shoes or sideburns. (Paul and Peter did teach the use of modest, as opposed to flamboyant and pretentious apparel — I Timothy 2:9-10; I Peter 3:3-4.)

The Epitome of Balance

Jesus was at once liberal and conservative in His tastes. He did not insist on some form of "Victorian morality" and prudishness — which is contrary to biblical teaching. Yet He was *not* hedonistic and permissive in His sense of morality. He was balanced!

He did not come with a gospel of abstinence and intolerance. He did not preach against drinking — only against the *misuse* of alcohol.

What Christ commanded His Church to come out of was *sin*. He insisted that they abandon false religion and pagan worship. He preached against the hypocrisy of His day. He told His followers to be separated by the truth — not by their hairstyles and manner of dress. He warned His people to come out of "Babylon the Great" — the satanic system of church and state whose powers will someday be unleashed on this earth.

Neither was Jesus against the honest acquisition and possession of material wealth — only the misuse of it. He was in favor of free enter-

(Continued on page 29)

HOW WILL GOD JUDGE YOU?

by Dennis G. Luker

An ancient patriarch once asked God: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Would you have had the courage (or the foolhardiness) to ask God such a seemingly presumptuous question?

The truth is that a very good friend of God's did, indeed, ask him that very question! And believe it or not, God wasn't at all upset with this righteous man. But my point is this: the Bible leaves no doubt that God is indeed the Judge of all human flesh (Ps. 75:7; Gen. 18:25; Ps. 96:13).

Christ Will Judge

One of the most basic biblical teachings is that Jesus Christ will return to this earth and establish the government of God to rule all nations. The prophet Isaiah wrote: "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2:4). This hasn't happened yet, but it is going to — and very possibly in our generation (see Matt. 24:3, 21-22, 30).

Isaiah's prophecy continues: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. . . . And I [God] will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughti-

ness of the terrible" (Isa. 13:9, 11). "The day of the Lord" refers to the time when Christ returns with fierce anger to rebuke the nations.

We are admonished: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come . . ." (Rev. 14:7). Why fear God? Because "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:14).

Isaiah also declares: ". . . For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusa-

Righteous judgment takes into consideration the knowledge and understanding a person possesses. It is fair, just, impartial judgment — one standard for all — considering attitude, ability, and any number of other factors.

lem" (Isa. 2:3). At Christ's return, the laws and principles of the Bible will be His guide for judgment — the standard of truth and righteousness (Ps. 119:142, 172; John 17:17).

How Christ Will Judge

Jesus Christ of Nazareth said: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). What is "righteous judgment"? Samuel, who judged Israel, wrote: ". . . For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart"

(I Sam. 16:7). Righteous judgment takes into consideration the knowledge and understanding a person possesses. It is fair, just, impartial judgment — one standard for all without respect of persons — considering attitude, ability, and any number of other factors.

The apostle Paul explained: "For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law" (Rom. 2:11-12). He is explaining here that those who know the law shall be judged by it when Christ returns. But, those that "have sinned without [knowledge of the] law shall also perish without [being judged by the] law." They will be resurrected to physical life later in God's plan, be given the knowledge of God's law and then "judged according to their works" (Rev. 20:12).

Is God Fair?

Even though all people will not have the knowledge of God's spiritual law at the time of Christ's return, they will still be dealt with "every one after his ways" (Ezek. 33:20) — according to how they have lived by what they understood. "He will punish sin wherever it is found. He will punish the heathen when they sin, even though they never had God's written laws, for down in their hearts they know right from wrong" (Rom. 2:14-15, *The Living Bible*).

God is fair! When Christ returns, each person will be dealt with justly and honestly according to how he has lived. Jesus said: "And that ser-

vant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. . . ." (Luke 12:47-48). So even those who have not yet been called to know the will of God when Christ returns shall be punished for the things they did wrong — but with fewer "stripes" than those who *knew* God's will and didn't do it. Christ will deal with all people according to what they know and understand and how they act upon it.

The New Testament emphasizes three main principles of judgment which Christ will use to judge those of us *who know His will*.

1) Judged According to Our Works

The first principle of judgment is that "we shall be judged according to our works." Peter wrote: "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth *according to every man's work*, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (I Pet. 1:17). And Jesus said: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man *according to his works*" (Matt. 16:27). This is repeated many times in the New Testament (see Rom. 2:6; I Cor. 3:8; James 2:14; Rev. 2:23; 11:18; 20:12).

Our "works" means our "way of life" — our Christian overcoming, growing, serving — or lack of it. Our "works" also includes our part in helping do the Work of God today.

We are all privileged to have the opportunity to assist Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong and Mr. Garner Ted Armstrong in doing the true Work of God on earth. It should be very motivating to realize that we shall be judged and rewarded according to how well we do in our Christian efforts!

However, we are *not* saved by even our good works (see Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 3:5). The difference between being saved by grace and rewarded according to our works is explained in our booklet *What Will*

Christ will judge each one of us according to what we accomplished with all we have been given. But if we don't grow at all, we will be rejected and our reward given to someone who did overcome and grow spiritually.

You Be Doing in the Next Life? Be sure to request a copy if you do not have this vital publication.

2) Judged According to Our Ability

The second principle of judgment is explained in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 and Luke 19. Jesus explained: "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man

according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two" (Matt. 25:14-17). The words "traded with" in the original Greek language imply "working with" or "using." Jesus continued: "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them" (verse 19).

When Christ returns, He will call all of us to Him to find out how much we have grown or increased the "talents" He has given us. To those who have used and increased their God-given abilities, He will say: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (verse 21).

The servant who did not use or develop his one "talent" made excuses and said: "I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine" (verse 25). He *knew* Christ expected him to grow and bear fruit (verse 24), but he was lazy and didn't do it.

In Luke's account of this same parable, Jesus said: "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow. . . . And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. . . . For I say unto

you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him" (Luke 19:22, 24, 26).

So the second principle of judgment is: We shall be judged *according to what we do with what we have been given*. Christ will consider everything when He judges us — our heredity, environment, upbringing, educational opportunities, etc. Everyone is different. We all have different abilities and varying amounts of education. Some have inherited more "talents" than others. Some have had better and more opportunities in life. This is why Christ said: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required . . ." (Luke 12:48).

Christ will judge each one of us according to what we have accomplished with all we have been given. But if we don't grow at all, we will be rejected and our reward given to someone who did overcome and grow spiritually (Matt. 25:29-30).

3) Judged As We Judge Others

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. 7:1-2). In other words, "You shall be judged as you judge others."

James wrote: "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; *and mercy rejoices against judgment*" (James 2:12-13). If you are not merciful and forgiving toward others, God will not be merciful toward you in your day of judgment.

All of us need to remember these words of Jesus Christ: "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14-15). Do you want to be forgiven your

sins and mistakes and be judged with mercy? Then overlook the faults and mistakes of others and be merciful, humble and forgiving in dealing with others.

Finally, remember Paul's inspired words to the Christians in Rome: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:10-12).

A Merciful God!

Especially as we are merciful to others, God Almighty and Jesus Christ will be merciful in judging us. Jesus promised in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7). God says: "For I am merciful" (Jer. 3:12). Anyone striving to do his Creator's will can count on the mercy of God.

Many patriarchs, prophets and kings in past ages have experienced the incredible, almost unbelievable mercy of their Maker. The Almighty God forgave Abraham of his foibles in the flesh; He forgave David, upon real repentance, of the capital sins of adultery and murder; He forgave even the wicked king Manasseh when he finally came to himself.

There is no sin bigger than the mercy of God, so long as the real desire to repent is present within the sinner. Read Psalm 136.

You can be sure that God, in judgment, will take everything possible into account on your behalf. Never take yourself out of the realm of His mercy. God will never leave you or forsake you. Guard against ever forsaking Him and His way of life.

Don't you want to hear the words: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy lord"?

How will God judge you? □

If You'd Like to Know More

Many hundreds have written asking if we have representatives in their areas to counsel with them personally and to answer their questions.

The answer is yes, we do.

The Worldwide Church of God stations personal representatives (most are ordained ministers) in the United States and British Commonwealth and many other areas of the world. These men will visit you, if invited, directly in your own home.

So if you have spiritual matters to discuss or questions to ask about biblical topics such as repentance, baptism, etc., please feel free to write us and request a private appointment. Worldwide mailing addresses are as follows:

- United States: P.O. Box 111, Pasadena, California 91123 (Or simply dial this toll-free number in the *continental* U.S.: 1-800-423-4444. Readers in California, Alaska and Hawaii may call 213-577-5225 collect.)
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Other areas of the world should check the inside front cover (staff box) for the address of our office nearest you.

DID GOD CREATE MAN PERFECT?

When God put our first parents here on earth, were they as perfect as God? And if they didn't have God's perfection, in what respect were they imperfect? Also, if God did not make Adam and Eve perfect in character, how did He later intend that they develop that perfect character?

by Raymond F. McNair

Many Christians blindly assume God created Adam and Eve spiritually perfect. They, therefore, can only conclude that God was surprised, and even sorrowful, to discover that the "perfect" humans whom He had just created had sinned.

According to this reasoning, God then supposedly scratched His head and began thinking out a way to "repair the damage." This traditional but Satan-inspired doctrine of the "fall" of man actually makes God into an unknowing weakling.

What, then, is the truth? What really did happen?

"And God said, Let us [the Father and Son] make man in our image, after our likeness . . ." (Gen. 1:26). Since man was made in God's "image," man looks like God, and therefore *God looks like man*. God is not an amorphous entity or a mere sentimentality. He is not merely some ethereal essence of "good," "truth," "love," or "righteousness." God is real! But He is not composed of perishable matter. "God is spirit" (John 4:24); He is eternal, incorruptible. "God" (Heb., *Elohim*) is one of the names of the universe-ruling divine family of spirit-composed beings.

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27). Nothing in this inspired account of man's creation tells us that God made man as perfect as Himself. We cannot assume God created man in His perfect "spiritual image" when Adam and

Eve obviously later proved themselves to be imperfect.

Nevertheless, God was pleased with what He had created: "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was *very good*" (verse 31). Physically, Adam and Eve were perfect creations. They were not created in a state of sinfulness. Yet God surely understood that they had the *capacity* and potential for sin.

Just as man knows (through measurement and testing) the basic strength or capacity of the things which he manufactures, so God knew the strengths and weaknesses of His creation. God Almighty knew that Adam and Eve were *human*. God did not assume that Adam and Eve would live a perfect, sinless life. He knew better.

Proof That God Foreknew

Satan the devil — formerly a great superarchangel — was originally created *perfect* (Ezek. 28:15). Fully knowing that the devil *sinned* even after being thoroughly trained at the seat of God's Headquarters government in the third heaven (verse 14), and that he still remained on earth, God knew the inevitability of Satan tempting the first created man to disbelieve God and commit sin. If the superarchangel and all his holy angels had been led into rebellion (Ezek. 28; Isa. 14; Rev. 12; Jude 6), how much more certain that man, made lower than the angels (Heb. 2:7), *would also sin*?

So God knew the human weakness, the imperfection in character,

inherent in Adam and Eve. He not only foresaw the eventual entrance of human sin, but He also made provision for the eradication of the penalty for the mistakes which He foreknew our first parents (and all their offspring) would commit. Long before man was created upon this earth, the Creator planned that the member of the God family who would later be known as "the Son" would die for the sins of all mankind — including Adam and Eve.

Notice what Paul told the Ephesians: "According as he hath chosen us in him *before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption [Greek, *sonship*] of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Eph. 1:4, 5).

The Goodspeed translation reads: "Through him he chose us out *before the creation of the world*, to be consecrated and above reproach in his sight in love. *He foreordained us to become his sons* through [the death and resurrection of] Jesus Christ, in fulfillment of his generous purpose. . . ."

The Living Bible renders these verses as follows: "Long ago, even *before he made the world*, God chose us to be his very own, through what *Christ would do* [dying for our sins] for us; he decided then to make us holy in his eyes, without a single fault [or sin]. . . ."

From the Weymouth translation: "He chose us as his own in Christ *before the creation of the world*, that we might be holy and without blemish in his presence."

Clearly, these verses prove that God must have known, *before* the creation of the world, that man would indeed sin — and hence would need a Savior. God was not taken by surprise when man transgressed against Him.

Plan of Redemption Foreordained

Notice also Paul's explanation of this mystery to Timothy: "Who

[God] hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus *before the world began*" (II Tim. 1:9). The apostle Peter revealed that the saints had not been *redeemed* with silver and gold, "But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was *foreordained* [as man's Redeemer] *before the foundation of the world*, but was manifest in these last times for you" (I Pet. 1:19, 20).

The Jerusalem Bible renders this passage as follows: "Who [Christ], though known since *before the world was made*, has been revealed only in our time, the end of the ages, for your sake." And the Weymouth translation: "It was not with perishable wealth, silver or gold, that you were ransomed from the futile habits of life inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ — as an unblemished and spotless lamb. *He [Christ] was predestined indeed to this work, even before the creation of the world*, but has been manifested in these last days for your sakes."

So again we see that God planned that Jesus Christ would die for the sins of the world even before man was created. The apostle John wrote: "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him [the Beast], whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb [Christ] *slain from the foundation of the world*" (Rev. 13:8). (See also John 17:5, 24.)

The Father had said in effect (long before man was created): "We will create mankind in our image. But since they will have the power of choice, yet will lack godly character, they will chose to go the way of sin. They will, therefore, need a Savior. And since you [the one who later became Christ] will be my Spokesman [Greek, *Logos*] in dealing with humanity, it will be necessary for you to give your life for erring, sinning mankind." Before

the ages of this world began, Christ voluntarily agreed to lay down His life for these yet-uncreated sons of God.

Why an Imperfect Man?

Some ask: "Why didn't God create men so that they could not sin? Why didn't He create them perfect in character in the first place?" Well, the simple fact that God didn't do this is testimony to the fact that perfect, Godlike character is not created instantly. Rather, it is the end product of a *process* of development.

God can create sinless creatures; and He has, in fact, already done so. Horses, cows, dogs, cats, frogs, snakes, insects, birds, fishes — all are *sinless*. They always do exactly what they were designed to do.

But when God creates a being with its own Godlike mind, having its own free will, then that very power of volition inherently includes the ability to make wrong choices — the power to *sin* — to *will* to go the wrong way.

God is perfect. He has perfect character. And He can certainly create beings who have the capacity to develop perfect character. But this can only be done through the crucible of time, experience and free choice — which means that sin and suffering are always possible.

God did not want to fill the universe with dumb, mindless creatures devoid of willpower. Neither did He want to create mechanical automatons or robots. He could have done that, but He wanted to create sons — beings with abilities and power similar to His own. He therefore thought out a plan whereby He could first create these potential sons (as clay models) in His own image. The Creator knew they would have built-in weaknesses, and would at first unerringly choose the way of sin. Therefore God also knew that He must devise a means whereby they could *overcome sin* and become born of God as His spirit-composed sons to live and reign eternally in His Kingdom.

Since these "clay models" must necessarily have the power of choice, their free wills would permit them to sin and suffer. God had to devise a way whereby their sins could be forgiven.

God's Plan for Sin

Since God is a just and holy God, He could not just wink at sin. Men would need a Savior to save them from their sins. God knew that all men would sin (Rom. 3:23). He also knew that sin was bad for man — that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

How could the righteous and just claim of a perfect God and His perfect law be satisfied? If a member of the very God family (the *Logos*-Christ) would become human (made or changed into flesh — John 1:14) to die in the place of sinners, then that would satisfy the just claim of a holy, sinless God. This *Logos* (the "Spokesman" or the "Word," see John 1:1-3) member of the God family would have to die for the sins of the world.

"For God [the Father] so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). God the Father loved erring humans so much that He willingly gave His only equal to be born as a human, as His Son, to die for mankind. And Christ voluntarily gave Himself up to do the Father's will. Aeons ago, even before the creation of Adam and Eve, the God-Beings who later became the Father and the Son worked out this plan of salvation.

Humanly speaking, Christ didn't want to die, but He knew it was necessary if humanity was to be saved: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup [an excruciating death on the cross] pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39).

God's Purpose for Man

What, then, is God's purpose for mankind? It is simply this: to be

born into the very God family (John 3:1-7). Christ said we must be "born again" (verse 7). "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (verse 5).

Man must *repent* of his sins and accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior. Then God promises that man will receive the precious gift of the *Holy Spirit* (Acts 2:38). The Spirit of God imparts to man the very divine nature and character of God. When one receives the Holy Spirit he thereby becomes a son of God (see Romans 8:14).

The apostle Peter also spoke of this spiritual begetting by the Father into the very family of God: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which ac-

God must have known, before the creation of the world, that man would indeed sin and hence would need a Savior. God was not taken by surprise when man transgressed against Him.

ording to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (I Pet. 1:3, 4).

Through this new begetting by the Spirit of God, we become "partakers of the *divine nature*" (II Pet. 1:4). We drink in the divine nature and attributes of God — becoming more Godlike.

Man is made in God's "image" so far as form and shape, but he has to be renewed in God's spiritual image. To do this, the child of God must "put off the *old man* with his deeds" and "put on the *new man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the [spiritual] *image* of him that created him" (Col. 3:9, 10).

What is man's ultimate destiny?

At Christ's return to this earth, the righteous dead shall be resurrected to immortality. Those who remain alive at Christ's coming shall be instantly changed from mortal to immortal: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:53; see also I Thess. 4:16, 17). At that instant, Christ, through His mighty power, will "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things [including death] unto himself" (Phil. 3:21).

Why are we here? Why did God create humanity?

The apostle Paul answers: "For the creature [Greek, *creation* — including man] was made subject to *vanity* [empty, futile, fruitless lives], not *willingly* [not by any will or choice of its own], but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in [the] *hope* [of eternal life], because the creature itself [the universe, including man] also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption *into the glorious liberty of the children of God*" (Rom. 8:20, 21).

God made man for the purpose of developing godly character so that He can thereafter give him eternal life in the Kingdom of God forever. "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation [making known] of the *sons of God*" (verse 19).

Man's Potential Weakness

Did God create our first parents, Adam and Eve, perfect? Yes, in physical form and shape they were created as perfect specimens of humanity. They had no physical blemishes; neither did they, at creation, have any spiritual blemishes — any sin. But they were created with a capacity for potential weakness — with the power of choice — which God knew would permit them to go the wrong way.

Why didn't God create Adam and Eve with inherent, perfect, Godlike character? Because godly character, as explained earlier, is

something which can't be created instantaneously even by divine fiat! Godly character can only be created in beings who have Godlike minds with the power to think freely and to choose. This power of choice involves the ability to make wrong decisions. The wrong choice (sin) ultimately leads to suffering and death.

God Himself could not create beings with the power of choice and then give them instant godly character! To *develop* this Godlike character takes time and experience. This is why God created men with a capacity for weakness.

If God could have created man with inherent, perfect, Godlike character, He would have assuredly done so. Our Creator is a God of infinite love and mercy. He certainly would *not* have made the "creature" — and man — subject to "vanity" (to temptation) with the awful potential of sinning and suffering — if this could have been avoided! Had God Himself been able to short-circuit the mountain of sin and suffering which weak humanity has brought on itself, then He would have certainly done so.

How God Creates Perfect Character

Even God cannot instantly create perfect humans — beings so perfect in character they would always think and do the right thing — never yielding to the wrong course of action (never sinning!). Why then did Jesus Christ say to His followers: "Be ye [*become ye*] therefore perfect, even as your Father . . . is perfect"? (Matt. 5:48.) How can we possibly become perfect?

God is creating this perfect character in and through those who now *voluntarily* yield to Him and His process of salvation. This process (of repentance, acceptance of Christ, and of godly living) continues throughout our lifetime through the indwelling of the Spirit of God. In this way, we are to come "unto a *perfect* man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"

(Eph. 4:13). This process of developing godly character was something which the Creator thought out long before man was created.

Many scriptures reveal that God's "mystery" of salvation is now hid from the masses of humanity but that God will eventually offer *everyone* the opportunity to receive salvation, for God is "not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance" — in God's own time and way (II Peter 3:9).

The vast majority of untold billions who have lived and died have never known the true God — have never known His way of salvation. But this ignorance of God's way is God's doing — it is His responsibility.

Salvation Through Christ

What will God do about this? Cannot the Creator resurrect those who died in sin without ever hearing the name of Jesus Christ and without knowing what to do to receive salvation? Many scriptures do indeed reveal that God will resurrect the vast majority of all humanity in a great resurrection to occur approximately one thousand years after Christ's return to this earth. (See Rom. 11:15, 31-33; Rev. 20:11, 12; Ezek. 16:55; Ezek. 37; Matt. 10:15; 11:20-24; 12:36, 42.) "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have *all* men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:3, 4). For more information on this subject, request our free reprint "Is This the Only Day of Salvation?"

Jesus Christ, while upon this earth, revealed that it was only through Him that men could be saved. He said: "*I am the door*: by me if any man enter in, he shall be *saved* . . ." (John 10:9). "I am come that they [mankind] might have *life* [eternal], and that they might have it more abundantly" (verse 10).

Can salvation be obtained through any other being — other than through Christ? "Neither is

there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we *must* be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Created Perfect?

Did God create Adam and Eve "perfect"? Yes, insofar as being perfect specimens of *humanity*, and insofar as being without sin at the moment of their creation. But they were also created with a potential capacity for weakness — the ability to sin — to choose the wrong course of action.

But man, with the help of God, can also choose to develop perfect Godlike character. How privileged to be able, *now*, to understand, and to take part in God's glorious plan of salvation. His purpose is to create sons of God who voluntarily choose to develop perfect godly character in their lives. □

For Those Who Want to Help

Jesus said: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations," just before the end of the age. His true disciples were to announce His second coming around the globe.

He told them: "Freely you have received, freely give." But a price must be paid for giving this magazine *The Good News*, the Correspondence Course, booklets and other literature to as many as possible. Therefore, God expects every child of His to give generously as His means of paying the cost of carrying this gospel to others.

"It is more blessed to give," Jesus said, "than to receive."

ISOLATIONIST

(Continued from page 21)

prise, but against greed and exploitation.

Jesus and the World

He associated with "publicans and sinners" (Luke 5:27-29; 19:1-7; Matt. 9:10-13) and forgave the woman taken in the very act of adultery (John 8:3-10). He did not shriek in holy horror and run screaming in the opposite direction as some self-righteous modern "Christians" might do. Yet He did tell her: "Go, and sin no more" (verse 11).

Jesus was *big-minded!* He did not become preoccupied with the petty standards of "righteousness" that have become an obsession with many professing, modern Christians. He had no "hang-ups" about the world in which He lived, and He mixed and mingled freely with it. He was popular and well-liked wherever He went. His greatest persecution came from intolerant *religious* leaders!

Visually, Christ looked no different than other men of His age in that society. He wore no bizarre costume, had no "halo" around His head, wore His hair and beard in the contemporary Roman fashion, and dressed as any prosperous carpenter would have. In dress and appearance, Jesus was "normal"! (Write for our free booklet *The Real Jesus* and the free reprint "Did Jesus Have Long Hair?")

Christians are to follow the example of Christ! He instructs us: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24, KJV).

Let's learn to be tolerant of each other's tastes in clothing, music, personal grooming and hairstyling, and choice of movies, television or radio programs. Let's not make a mountain out of a grain of sand by adopting a rigid, Victorian, self-righteous standard of godliness. Let's look to the *weightier* matters of the law and develop *true* righteousness. □

JESUS CHRIST

(Continued from page 5)

me to even begin to clear up all the pagan traditions, false ideas and deliberate distortions about Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Fortunately, we publish a couple of booklets that will help get you much farther down the road to understanding the real Christ and what He did *and did not* teach. Write for your free copies of *The Real Jesus* and *What Is a Real Christian?*

The first booklet proves that Jesus did not have long hair; did not break the laws of the land; was subject to civil authorities; was *not* "anti-establishment," sometimes hobnobbed with the upper crust of society; was a "family" man with brothers and sisters as well as a mother and legal father. It also clearly shows that Jesus did have as many as two houses in different cities; was definitely *not* a vagabond who always slept out-of-doors; did pay taxes; and looked like any normal Jew of His day. Be sure to write immediately for this challenging booklet entitled *The Real Jesus*.

The other booklet — *What Is a Real Christian?* — shows the great yawning chasm between what Jesus really taught and what the Western world of religion "perceives" Him to have taught. It begins with the clearest and most fundamental of Christ's teachings in the "Sermon on the Mount" and proceeds from there to such basic subjects as repentance and water baptism.

You owe it to yourself to request these two attractively printed, color-cover booklets (and any others advertised in this issue). Even our longer magazine articles are of necessity limited in what they can cover by lack of space. But you can get a thorough, much more complete understanding of any of these vital biblical topics by simply requesting and reading these many, many booklets that we send out by the multiple thousands every single year. □

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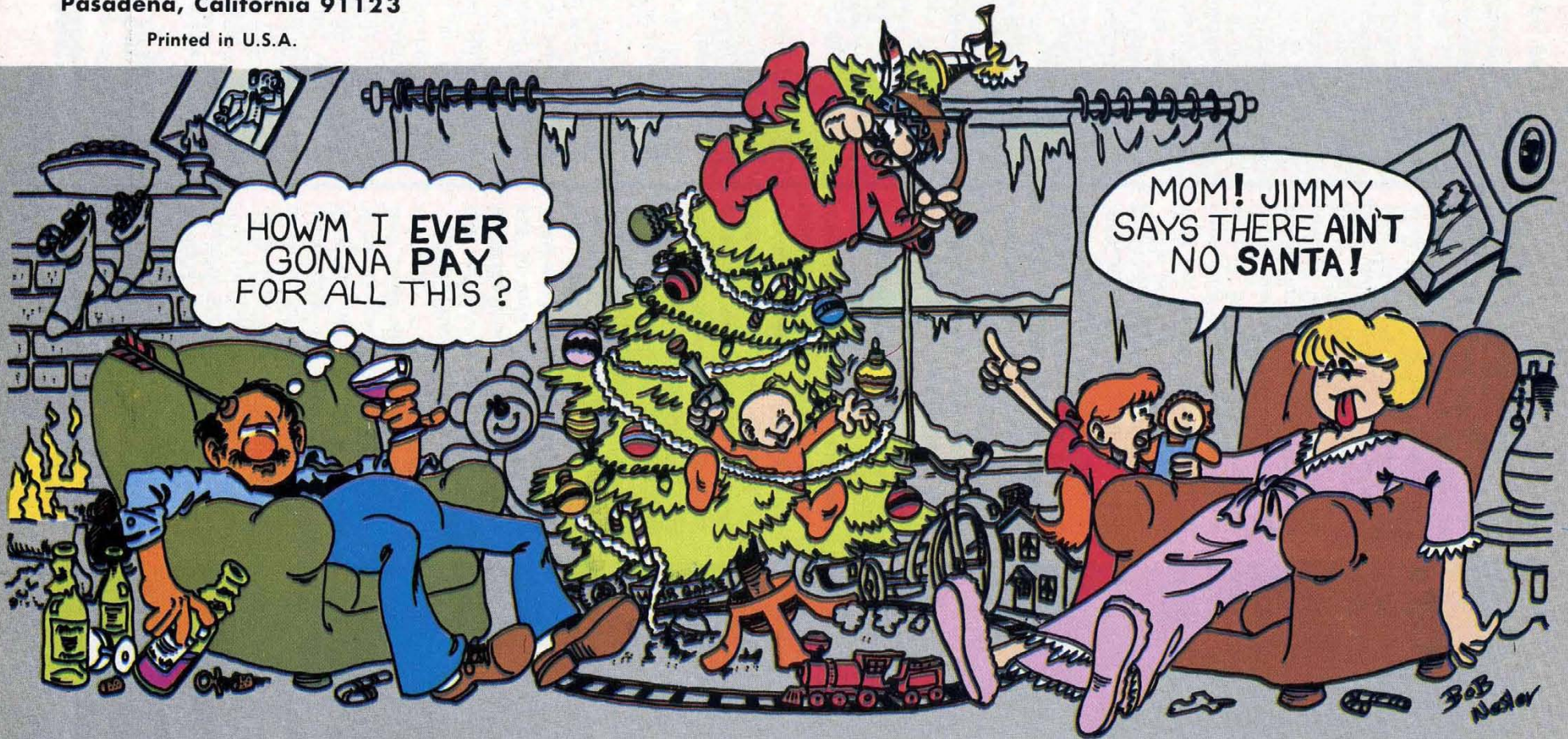
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