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### Questions Youth Are Asking Today

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# Questions Youth Are Asking Today

Mervyn Maxwell



ERIC EREVE

## WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

Writers in "Signs of the Times" are always talking about God as though He had feelings and bodily parts like a human being. Making any image of God, even a mental image, is idolatry; but would you believe, sometimes they talk about Him as if He had arms and legs? They're so ridiculously anthropomorphic!

Would you like to try comparing God to something other than a human being?

Shall we call Him a "power"? If so, what kind of power? A hydrogen bomb perhaps? Does that help?

Or how about a "substance"? Then what kind of substance? Vanilla pudding? A radioactive isotope?

What about "prime mover"? The Mayflower Company?

Without doubt God is a powerful intelligence, the ultimate source of all things. But would *you* believe that it was precisely because man had conceived God as merely a substance or a power or an intelligence or as any number of other subhuman things that Jesus Christ came to show us that God after all is best compared to a gracious and courteous person, that He desires to be thought of as "Heavenly Father"?

Or perhaps you really do want to visualize God as something that can't be visualized? Try that again, slowly.

Is it possible for the human mind to think of God without forming some type of mental image of Him? If it is not, if the mind must form some sort of image—even an image of a being who has no image—shouldn't we extrapolate God beyond the most marvelous thing known to us? And isn't this "most marvelous thing" *man*, at his best?

Intelligent anthropomorphism does not belittle God; it is the best way ever devised to conceptualize Him as He really is.

## THANKS FOR CHRIST

Some time ago I wrote and told you about the many unkind things people were doing to me. In your answer you spoke of how intensely unkind people were to Jesus—and this reminded me that the Bible long ago warned us that the enemy is going about "as a roaring lion, . . . seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8. People are afraid and are running away from their problems and trying to solve them by doing unkind things to one another instead of turning to Christ. He is the answer. Thanks for your enlightening letter.

"Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows; but cheer up, for I have overcome the world." John 16:33, *Living Bible*.

## IS GOD INCONSISTENT?

I'm a boy 13 years old. I like to read the *Living Bible* and the *King James Version*. I like especially the history parts. I've got two questions. Can you answer them?

1. 2 Chronicles 18 talks about a "lying spirit" that went from God to tell lies to King Ahab. Please explain this.

If you'll read the story again, you'll see that the "lying spirit" volunteered for the job. And if you'll read the first two chapters of Job, you'll learn that Satan himself once asked God for permission to tempt Job—and after he got permission, went away from God to tempt him.



So the spirit who went from God to tell lies to Ahab was an evil angel who, like Satan, came to God for permission, then went away from God to the king. God did not tell a good angel to tell lies.

**2. Over and over the Bible says that God will "judge the earth," or "judge His people," and things like this, but the Sermon on the Mount says that we are not supposed to judge. How can God do something He tells us not to do?**

Did you know that in Matthew 19:28 and Luke 22:30 Jesus said that after the resurrection at the end of the world His followers will sit on thrones "judging"?

And did you know that 1 Corinthians 6 says Christians may judge small matters that pertain to this world, and that John 7:24 says we are to judge righteously and not by appearances?

It seems that in order to judge righteously we first need to know a lot about loving people. Because God is love, He can judge people now; and after we have learned how to love properly, then in heaven God can trust us to judge as He does. In the meantime, in so far as we have learned something about what love is, we can judge things even now, with Christ's help.

Perhaps the Living Bible translation of the Sermon on the Mount catches the intent of what Jesus meant by not judging. Instead of saying "Judge not, that ye be not judged," it says "Don't criticize, and then you won't be criticized." Matthew 7:1.

#### **WHY DOESN'T GOD PROTECT?**

**What does Isaiah 54:17 mean? It says, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." I always used to think it meant that if you had faith in God He'd keep you from getting killed by a gun or bomb or things like that. But I just read about missionaries getting shot to death in Nigeria and Bangladesh. Why didn't this promise work for them?**

God does at times work miracles to save people from enemy weapons. On Okinawa in World War II Medical Corpsman Desmond Doss,

a conscientious objector, calmly rescued 75 wounded men while a whole enemy battalion fired at him for hours and couldn't hit him.

But other people, equally dedicated, have not always been protected. (Doss, for that matter, was himself wounded in a later battle.) In Matthew 10:28 Jesus said, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul"; and in John 6:47, 54 He said, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." "And I will raise him up at the last day."

God lets believers be killed only if and when He knows it is all right with their souls. No enemy weapon can keep them from eternal life.

#### **WHERE'S THE CHURCH?**

**I am a Filipino and have an American husband. We've been married about eight months. He is in the U.S. Navy, and his ship is stationed in Vietnam. I'm always praying to God to stop that situation over there so all the soldiers can come home again. My husband is a Protestant. I have not been baptized into any religion, but I would like to know more about the Seventh-day Adventists. I am living with my husband's relatives in Coronado, California, near San Diego. It is hard for me to find the Adventist church because I don't know my way around here. Could you help me?**

I am happy to tell you there are several Seventh-day Adventist churches in and around San Diego. The one apparently nearest your address is at Point Loma, 4425 Valeta, San Diego 92107. The minister's name is Pastor Gerald Wood. If you don't know where this address is, phone him and I'm sure he'll tell you the best way to get there or arrange for someone to take you until you get acquainted.

And talking of phoning, you can find Adventist churches in the yellow pages. Look under either CHURCHES, Adventist, Seventh-day, or under CHURCHES, Seventh-day Adventist.

#### **YO-YO GOD?**

**The minister in our church is always talking about our need to pay tithes and offerings. His favorite**

#### **DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION?**

Would you like to ask Mervyn Maxwell to help you find an answer? If so, send your question to:

**Mervyn Maxwell  
"Signs of the Times"  
1350 Villa Street  
Mountain View, California 94040**

It is not possible to answer all letters in the "Signs"; and publishing procedures being what they are, answers published in this column may not appear until several months after you send in your question. If you want to be sure of receiving an answer to your particular question, be certain to give your address when writing.

**argument is that the tithe is the Lord's anyway, and so when paying it we are only "returning unto the Lord His own." When we withhold our offerings, he says, we "rob God." If this is true, what kind of person is God. An "Indian giver"?**

The Bible does say (in Leviticus 27:30) that "the tithe is the Lord's," and (in Malachi 3) that when we don't pay it we "rob God." But that God asks us to give anything "back to Him" is another matter that needs to be thought through.

God doesn't need our money for Himself. He's rich enough without it. "If I were hungry," He says, "I would not tell thee: for the world is Mine." Psalm 50:12. He emphatically does not give us money and then ask for it back, only to give it to us again, so we'll return it to Him once more, in an endless game of "celestial yo-yo"!

What He does ask is that we give money to people on earth—tithe to His full-time ministers as their wages, and offerings to the underprivileged for their needs.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these," He says, "ye have done it unto Me." Matthew 25:40. God is a Person who has so identified Himself with human beings that when you take some of the money He has given you and share it with people, He is as happy as if you had given it directly back to Him. In fact, He prefers it this way.