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Look At It This Way: Questions Youth Are Asking Today

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Recommended Citation

Maxwell, C. Mervyn, "Look At It This Way: Questions Youth Are Asking Today" (1973). *Faculty Publications*. 3930.

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Look at It This Way

Questions Youth Are Asking Today

WHEN MOTHER GOT MAD

My date and I had a real ball last night with several other couples at his sister's place. We didn't do anything bad, even by my mother's Puritan standards—except get home late. But did she ever get teed off! I can stand her jazz (I guess), but why does she have to sound so sarcastic all the time? We had a real dogfight.

Your mother is at fault. She hasn't figured out yet why it is that you are no longer the obliging little junior girl you were only a few years ago, and she is at a loss to know just how to treat you. Her uncertainty and nervousness about you show up in the tone of her voice.

So far as I know, family counselors have yet to deal adequately with the effect tone of voice has on the people we talk to. Your mother's voice betrays her tensions; and, unbeknown to her, this is a major cause of her irritating you.

But you are at fault too. If you had a dogfight with her, it's an easy bet you didn't sound very nice either.

Next time your radar picks up one of these storms developing, ask God to help you keep your own

voice calm and courteous—and do everything in your power to help your mother to sound at ease too. Ask her pleasantly why she wants you home earlier. Sit quietly and attentively while she answers.

More than likely you'll be amazed at the instant maturity your conversation assumes. You may also be amazed at how wise your mother seems under her new working conditions.

IS GOD ANTHROPOMORPHIC?

Writers in the "Signs" make God sound too much like a man. Would you believe, sometimes they give Him arms and legs! . . . The most adequate concept of God is person divorced from all anthropomorphic overtones.

If you're right, don't you think God made a mistake when He sent His Son to represent Him in the form of a man?

Was it not the case that God had so long revealed Himself through nature ("the heavens declare the glory of God," Psalm 19:1) that too many people had come to think of Him as a mere force, or power, or substance, or pure intelligence? If any of these concepts had been adequate, the omnipotent God could surely have revealed Himself by sending to man as His personal representative a "perfect power" or some sort of visible "pure intelligence." Instead, He chose to reveal Himself as a man.

As a man, indeed, who gave a lot of presents to people who asked Him for things. Who told stories. Who even set little children on His lap. At this His disciples protested. "No," they said in effect, "our God isn't like that. He isn't an anthropomorphic grandpa God. He doesn't have time for boys and girls." But Jesus rebuked the disciples and took the little children on His lap and later said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." John 14:9, NEB.

Of course, God isn't *just* a man. He is Creator and Redeemer too—but a Creator and Redeemer who, paradoxical as it may seem, has chosen to tell us that He can best be understood as a Person with a great many human characteristics.

IS GOD CONCERNED ABOUT AN INSIGNIFICANT FRESHMAN?

Does God really care about an insignificant little freshman like me? I've never been a class officer—not much more than a number that a computer adds a name to and sends to me on a bill. Does God care?

You'd trust God's own answer given through His Son Jesus, wouldn't you? Here it is in the Phillips translation:

"Two sparrows sell for a penny, don't they? Yet not a single sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. The very hairs of your head are all numbered. Never be afraid, then—you are far more valuable than sparrows." Matthew 10:29-31, Phillips.

HOW DID GOD START?

My chief problem thinking about God is how He can have existed forever, how there can have never been a time before He came to be. How did God "start"? I don't know how to relate to a being like that.

I don't understand it either. But then, I don't understand how my wife came to be either. Oh, I've read books on embryonic development and all that. They've *described* what happened, but they haven't *explained* it. Who knows how the first cell divided? I mean, who knows how the DNA and RNA masterminded the needed proteins and polypeptides, and so on and on and on?

I can't explain how my wife came to be—but I don't let this keep me from "relating" to her. I love her just the same.

It can be the same between you and God.

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.



D. TANK

CAN YOU TRUST BIBLE HISTORY?

I just can't see how people can still insist that the Bible is inspired. They may have had reason to think this years ago, but now New Testament textual criticism has shown beyond any doubt that the same incident is often described by different writers in as many different ways. The Bible is just an ordinary book to me. I say the Bible simply cannot be trusted for its historical contents.

The assassination of John F. Kennedy has been treated differently by every author who has dealt with the subject. For instance, some have seen a conspiracy; others, one lonely fanatic, causing the death of the President; and so on. All these reports leave some question as to the precise way in which the

President was shot, but they do not leave a shred of doubt about the historical fact that the President was indeed shot. Should time last until a thousand years from now, archaeologists finding a shelf of twentieth-century books on the Kennedy assassination would be all the more convinced that the assassination occurred by the very fact that people with different points of view all agreed on this at least, that he had been shot.

In the Bible different writers occasionally give different details about the same historical event. For example, in the Gospels Mark says that the second person who asked Peter about his friendship with Jesus was the same woman who asked him the first time. Matthew says it was a different person. Luke says it was a man. All agree,

however, on the fact that Peter responded three times by denying His Lord.

If all the writers gave identical word-for-word reports, critics could say we don't have three accounts but only one—and then ask with a sneer, how can we trust one witness? So God provided us with three or four witnesses, and permitted variations in historical minutiae in order to convince us that we do have different witnesses.

WHAT'S WITH MY CHANGING SISTER?

I guess your column is for bigger kids than me, but then my question is not about me. It's about my sister. It seems like she's always scrapping with Mother. Last night she had it out with Daddy too. I can't figure it. She used to like everybody at home, but not lately. She's a sophomore in high school. What's with her?

Somewhere between 13 and 18 something important happens to people, a change from being a child to being an adult. Parents sometimes call it "going over fool's hill." Doctors call it "adolescence." I'm sure you've heard about it.

Adolescence is nice in a lot of ways. A girl, like your sister, finds she is beginning to look and feel like a grown-up.

But it has its difficult side also. A person's nerves, muscles, bones, glands, and mind don't all grow up at the same rate of speed! Oh, in time they do catch up with each other, I'm glad to say; but in the meantime a teen-ager fumbles a baseball because his slowly growing nerves cannot coordinate his quickly growing muscles, and he is embarrassed to tears. His skin glands work *too* hard, and he gets pimples and is embarrassed some more.

All of this makes an adolescent feel awkward, troubled, irritable. Half of him says, "Treat me like a grown-up," while the other half says, "No, I'm not ready yet."

Be patient with your sister. In a year or two she will feel more calm at home. Besides, in a few years you may feel like she does now. Can you believe it?