

Dear Uncle Mike,

Enclosed is an article I received in the mail from (name withheld to prevent nondivine retribution). This born-again Christian lives about six blocks from me, but I have never met him. He sends me letters from time to time trying to convert me to Christianity, but I'm a heathen that does not believe the Bible is the word of God.

The article headed "World Events and Bible Prophecy" says that scientists have discovered the actual location of Hell which is nine miles below the earth. I think it is hog-wash, but I would like to have your expert opinion. I fully understand if you do not wish to reply to such a stupid article, but with you sense of humor and knowledge you just might want to.

I read your reply to a person that wanted to know about death, and I think it was magnificent. I look forward to your monthly column and the Upper Left Edge. Best regards from an old freethinker.

J.C. Sammons, Portland

Dear J.C.,

Uncle Mike is pleased that you look forward to his column and the Upper Left Edge, the only non-newspaper in the nation with the taste and lack of forethought to publish it. As soon as Uncle Mike finishes answering your letter, he plans to rummage through the back issues looking for signs of magnificence. He's pretty darned excited.

As for the discovery of hell, Uncle Mike must, even in the face of the startling new evidence you've sent along, suspend his judgment. This isn't to say he doesn't value scientific bulletins from The End Times and Victorious Living. He does, if only for the incredible leaps of faith they encourage. In their own way, they're inspiring.

According to the report, a group of reported scientists were, for reasons not reported, drilling a nine mile deep hole in "remote Siberia". At an undisclosed depth, the drill bit "started to spin madly." The scientists took this as proof that the Earth is hollow. The report says they were "dumbfounded". Uncle Mike fears it may have been worse than that. It certainly got no better when they measured the temperature and found it to be 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit (1,100 Celsius), much more than they expected. Echoing the understanding of many high school graduates: "It seems almost like an inferno of fire is brutally going on in the center of the earth." "Brutal" is a scientific term too sticky to get into.

So there they are, in "remote Siberia", with a wildly spinning drill bit and a fiery inferno from the pages of a geology textbook. Saints preserve us. Pushing their luck, the scientists lowered a microphone into the hole to listen for earth movements, a phenomenon of which they were miraculously aware. "What we heard turned those logically thinking scientists into a trembling ruins." No, not a paradigm shift. "We heard a human voice, screaming in pain. Even though one voice was discernible, we could hear thousands, perhaps millions, in the background, of suffering souls screaming." To their credit, it's reported that: "We could hardly believe our own ears." Sadly, they seem to have managed. "After the terrible discovery, half of the scientists have quit because of their fear." Of enduring another day in remote Siberia?

No. Having heard "screams of condemned souls" coming from "the world's deepest hole", the scientists "are afraid that they have released the evil powers of hell to the surface of the earth." As well they should.

Aside from being a heady spiritual responsibility, it would also be a subject of intense interest to someone's insurance company. On the bright side, it would be grounds for winning the first, and last, Nobel Prize for metaphysics.

Like you, Uncle Mike considers himself a freethinker and, in a strictly Pythagorean sense, a heathen. All things are possible, some of them are just infinitely less possible than others. If, as The End Times and Victorious Living deduces from the evidence, "Hell is No Joke!"; and if Uncle Mike is perched on the slippery edge of a fiery pit opened by some hapless nitwits in remote Siberia, so be it. There is a silver lining. As Uncle Mike's learned editor, Reverend Billy Bob points out: If the Earth is round, we're always nine miles from hell. If you live in Cannon Beach, Seaside is two miles closer. And there are bumper cars.

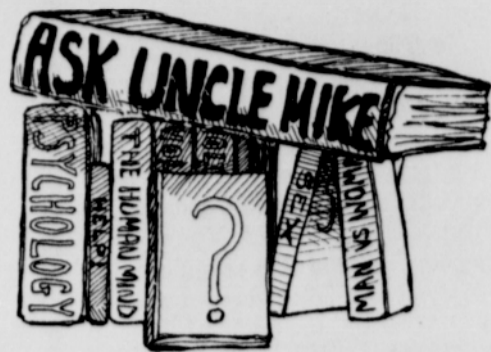
Dear Uncle Mike,

I get jealous about my boyfriend being around other women. Is jealousy a sin?

Jealous in Lincoln City

Dear Jealous,

Technically speaking, no. The sort of jealousy you're talking about is a mental imbalance suffered by those who confuse human beings with property.



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