

Life Without Principle

James Cone

THE COMPLEXITIES OF civilization are numerous and baffling. Furthermore, these problems are never suspected by the general public; thus, people carry on an existence never realizing how their lives are promoted or inhibited by money.

It is fairly reasonable to assume that, somewhere at the beginning of commercial enterprises, which was only a few hundred thousand years ago, someone had a small collection of selected, colored rocks. Now, Jumbo-Mumbo, the smiling, used-weapons dealer, had a fine assortment of slightly cracked arrows and partially ruined bows. Our man with the colored rocks, whom we shall call Crow-Magnon, felt that he should have a bow and some arrows. After all, he could not let the Joneses, who lived in the cave down stairs, out-do-him.

So he ambled out one morning; and, throwing caution to the dinosaurs, he went to the business establishment of Jumbo-Mumbo, and traded his pretty stones for a bow with no string and four slightly cracked arrows.

However, Crow-Magnon's problems of finance cannot begin to compare with those created by the finance company or with those created by tax form 1040, not to mention the troubles caused by not keeping the checking-account in good order. To observe this point more clearly, let us single out two unsuspecting victims of the present time, and attempt to illustrate and elucidate, or perhaps to hallucinate.

Our society, under the impression that most uneducated people were born to be gypped, has proceeded to do so with amazing dexterity. For example, the long established firm of U. L. Betaken, dealers in used cars, used baby-carriages, and usury in general, has long been noted for its ability to wipe out the life-savings of any working man in less than seven weeks and not more than eight weeks, three days, and two hours. It is a simple plan of pecuniary mayhem. Merely let the dumb "rube" pick out what he doesn't need, doesn't want, or can't use; then convince him how necessary it is to his very existence. After that, have him sign his name to a paper with micro-printing spread throughout and you have him where you want him. He will twist and squirm for a time; but, nevertheless, he will have to pay—through the nose.

Now let us look at Iban Svindelad, a good husband, true friend, and a loyal worker in the salt mine. Iban came to America from the "old country" back in 1924. Since then, he and his wife, Lostma-shoessomuch, have been able to save five hundred, thirty-four dollars

and sixty-one cents. It is now time to buy a car—not a new one, of course. Iban lays off work for an afternoon, and we find him at the used-car lot of U. L. Betaken. The salesman, Hank Grabitall, has just found out Iban's financial status. Thereupon, he leads him to a 1926 Hackahack and begins his spiel about the superb upkeep the car has had, the actual mileage on the speedometer, the practically new tires, and the exquisiteness of the car's interior. Poor Iban signs the contract, pays his five hundred, and makes arrangements for the other one hundred and fifty dollars. The next day his car is delivered; but, when he attempts to start it, nothing happens. A quick glance under the hood tells the story—no engine.

There you have it, a complete, unbiased picture of life without principal, principle. It is obvious that if you have it, you do not need it; and if you have not got much, you will not have that long. Such is life, I suppose. Therefore, let us gather together all our greenbacks, set a match to the pile, and go find some colored rocks.

Study of a "Character"

Walter O. Carter

WHEN I USE the term "Character" in reference to this person, I am using it in the slang sense, to imply a person quite out of the ordinary. Bruce L. Hopin was his full name, but this was shortened to "Hoppie" by his intimates. He was the chief clerk of the G-2 section of Fifth Corps Headquarters. Our duty was divided into two twelve-hour shifts, and because we usually pulled duty together, we were also sack and foxhole companions. This relationship led to a very close friendship.

Hoppie was a short little fellow about thirty with dull yellow hair which he always kept cut very short so that it stood up about a half-inch all over his head. Because his eyes were bad, he wore very thick-lensed glasses. They were the G. I. type with metal rims and gave him a man-from-Mars appearance when he looked at you. He had worked as a typist all his life, which accounted for his stooped shoulders. He grew a mustache which, due to his nervous habit of pushing it up with his fingers, stuck straight out over his lip like an awning over a window. For some strange reason this mustache was red rather than the color of his hair.