

Awake!

December 22, 2001



Is YOUR FOOD SAFE?

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Is Your Food Safe?

3-12

How common are foodborne illnesses in the world today? How are they transmitted? And how can you protect yourself and your family?



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Learn about a woman who lost two of her children to Nazi gas chambers yet maintained integrity to God.



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How Safe Is Your Food?

DO YOU eat three meals a day? If so, by the time you are 70 years old, you will have consumed over 75,000 meals. For a typical European, that will mean eating—among other things—some 10,000 eggs, 5,000 loaves of bread, 100 sacks of potatoes, 6 sides of beef, and 2 sheep. Does all that eating amount to a chore? Far from it! How we relish hearing such expressions as “enjoy your meal” or “guten Appetit” or “bon appétit”! The head of a cooking school went so far as to say: “Food is the essence of life.”

Most of the time, we may tend to take it for granted that the food we consume is wholesome and healthful. But if just one of those 75,000 meals were to contain something harmful, we could get seriously ill. Can we be sure that what we eat is safe? These days, more and more people seem to have doubts on that score.

In some countries food safety has become a major concern. Why?

Causes of Concern

Each year, foodborne illness affects about 15 percent of the population of Europe. In the early 1980's, for instance, toxic cooking oil in Spain killed about 1,000 people and made another 20,000 seriously ill. In 1999 the population of Belgium was aghast when it was reported that such items as eggs, poultry, cheese, and butter were possibly contaminated by a poison called dioxin. More recently, Britain's consumers were horrified—and its beef industry was shattered—when cattle became infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (mad cow disease). Then there was an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, which required the slaughter and disposal of millions of cows, sheep, pigs, and goats.

Grave though such risks are, there are other factors that worry people when it comes to food. Consumers are troubled by new techniques that are now being used in the growth and processing of foodstuffs. The European Commission wrote in 1998: “Novel technologies like food irradiation and genetic engineering of food crops have caused a lot of controversy.” Do such modern scientific techniques improve our food or adulterate it? And what can we do to increase the safety of our own food?



What Are We Doing to Our Food?

MAKING changes to our food is not a new idea. In fact, for generations man has been skilled at altering foods. Careful breeding techniques have resulted in many new varieties of crops, cattle, and sheep. Indeed, a representative of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration stated that "virtually every food you buy has been altered by traditional breeding."

Breeding is not the only way to alter food. The food industry has developed many procedures to treat and process food, whether to enhance its flavor or color or to standardize and preserve it. People are accustomed to eating food that has been altered in one way or another.

But a growing number of consumers are alarmed at what is now being done to our food. Why? Some fear that modern techniques presently in use are compromising the safety of food. Is this

alarm justified? Let us examine three areas of concern.*

Hormones and Antibiotics

Since the 1950's, small doses of antibiotics have been added to the feed of poultry, pigs, and cattle in some places. The purpose is to lower the risk of disease, especially where an-

* What we eat is largely a matter of personal preference. *Awake!* does not make recommendations as to eating or abstaining from the various foods discussed herein, regardless of the technologies used in their preparation. These articles are intended to inform readers of the facts as they are currently known.



Awake!

Is the consumer affected by hormones and antibiotics fed to cattle?

Why Awake! Is Published *Awake!* is for the enlightenment of the entire family. It shows how to cope with today's problems. It reports the news, tells about people in many lands, examines religion and science. But it does more. It probes beneath the surface and points to the real meaning behind current events, yet it always stays politically neutral and does not exalt one race above another. Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things.

Unless otherwise indicated, *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References* is used.

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imals are kept together in close quarters. In some lands hormones are also added to animal feed to speed up animal growth. Hormones and antibiotics are said to protect animals against infection and to make intensive farming more profitable, with benefit to the consumer in the form of lower prices.

So far so good. But does meat from animals that are fed these additives carry any risk to the consumer? A report by the Economic and Social Committee of the European Communities concluded that there is a chance that bacteria will survive the antibiotics and be passed on to the consumer. "Some of these bacteria, such as *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*, may be a direct cause of severe human diseases via the food chain," the report found. Furthermore, what if the food chain contains not only bacteria but also residues of antibiotics? Fears have been raised that as a result, germs causing diseases in humans could gradually develop a resistance to antibiotics.

What about hormone-treated meat? A professor in Munich, Germany, Dr. Heinrich Karg, comments: "All experts agree that meat from hormone-treated animals is not harmful to health, provided that the substances are administered in accordance with the guidelines." However, the newspaper *Die Woche* reports that on the issue of the safety of meat from hormone-fed animals, "for the past 15 years, researchers have been unable to agree upon a common viewpoint." And in

France the question of hormones in meat has been answered with a resounding 'No! Hormones should not be used!' Clearly, the controversy is far from resolved.

Irradiated Foods

Since trials started in Sweden in 1916, at least 39 lands have approved the practice of exposing such foodstuffs as potatoes, corn, fruit, and meat to low levels of radiation. Why? Irradiation is said to kill most bacteria, insects, and parasites, thereby reducing the consumer's risk of contracting foodborne disease. It also increases the shelf life of the product.

Of course, experts say that ideally, the food we eat should be clean and fresh. But who takes the time to prepare fresh food regularly? "Ten minutes for breakfast and fifteen minutes for lunch and supper" is, according to *Test* magazine, the length of time the average person spends for meals. Not surprisingly, then, many consumers prefer food that is ready to eat and has a long shelf life. But are irradiated foods safe?

In 1999 the World Health Organization published a study carried out by an international panel of experts. They concluded that irradiated food "is both safe to consume and nutritionally adequate." Supporters compare the irradiating of food to the sterilizing of medical bandages—also done by irradiation—or to the passing of luggage through an electronic scanner at the airport. Critics, however, insist that irradiation reduces the

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natural goodness of food and may involve risks that are as yet unknown.

Genetically Modified Foods

Geneticists have for some time been able to transfer a gene from the DNA of one organism into the DNA of another within the same species. Today, however, geneticists can go much further. For example, there are strawberries and tomatoes that have been modified with a gene taken from a fish, making them less sensitive to low temperatures.

Much has been said both for and against genetically modified (GM) foods.* Proponents say that this type of biotechnology is more predictable and controllable than traditional methods of plant breeding, that it will increase crop yields and reduce human starvation. But are GM foods safe to eat?

A report on the subject was prepared by a team of scientists representing academies in England and the United States as well as Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and other nations of the developing world. Published in July 2000, the report stated: "To date, over 30 million hectares [70 million acres] of transgenic [GM] crops have been grown and no human health problems associated specifically with the ingestion of transgenic crops or their products have been identified." In some quarters GM products are held to be as safe as conventional foods.

Elsewhere, though, there is widespread uncertainty. In Austria, Britain, and France, GM foods are viewed with mistrust by some. A Dutch politician said of GM foods: "There are certain types of

food we simply don't like." Critics of such food also point to ethical questions and to possible dangers to the environment.

Some scientists feel that these are early days for GM food and that more testing ought to be done on the possible risks to consumers. For instance, the British Medical Association feels that genetic engineering promises great benefits for the population. Yet, it states that some areas of concern—such as the question of allergic reactions to GM foods—mean that "further research is needed."

Making Balanced Personal Choices

In some lands as much as 80 percent of the food eaten is processed. Often additives are used to intensify or standardize flavor and color, as well as to lengthen shelf life. In fact, one reference work notes that "many modern products, such as low-calorie, snack, and ready-to-eat convenience foods, would not be possible without food additives." Such foods are also more likely to contain genetically modified ingredients.



* Please see the April 22, 2000, issue of *Awake!*

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**It is wise to read the labels
on food carefully**

For years agriculture worldwide has depended upon practices that many people view as harmful. The use of toxic pesticides is just one example. Moreover, the food industry has for some time been using additives that may have caused allergic reactions in some consumers. Are new food technologies significantly more hazardous than these practices? Even experts cannot agree. In fact, weighty scientific reports support opposite sides of the argument and seem to help polarize opinion.

Because they view high-tech foods as hard to avoid or because they view other concerns as more pressing, many people today decide not to worry about the matter. Others, though, are quite concerned. What can you do if you and your family feel uncertain about eating processed foods that seem overly complicated by modern technology? There are practical steps you may choose to take, some of which are discussed in the following article. First, though, it may be wise to make sure that we have a balanced outlook on the issue.

Food safety is like health. There is no current way to achieve perfection. According to the German magazine *natur & kosmos*, even among people who are known to take the utmost care in the selection and preparation of food, nutrition is always a compromise. What is beneficial to one can harm another. Is it not wise, then, to cultivate a balanced attitude and avoid extremes?

Of course, the Bible does not tell us what decision to make regarding today's high-tech foods. But it does teach us about a quality to cultivate that will help us in this matter. Philippians 4:5 says: "Let your reasonableness become known to all men." Reasonableness can help us to make balanced decisions and avoid extremes. It can hold us back from dictating to others what they should or should not do in the matter. And it can keep us out of pointless, divisive debates with those whose thinking on the subject may differ from our own.

It must be admitted, though, that many of the hazards connected with food are not so controversial. What are some of these, and what safety precautions can you take?

**There are advantages to purchasing
fresh food regularly**



How to Make Food Safer

IS EATING dangerous? Some statistics might lead you to conclude that it is. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 130 million people in the WHO European Region are affected by foodborne disease each year. In the United Kingdom alone, over 100,000 cases of food poisoning—causing about 200

deaths—were reported in 1998. It is estimated that in the United States, some 76 million illnesses result from foodborne disease each year and that of those cases, 325,000 involve hospitalization and 5,000 end in death.

Globally, careful estimates are harder to come by. However, WHO reports that in 1998, approximately 2.2 million people died



water," suggests *Test* magazine, to get rid of insects and pesticide residue.

In many cases skinning, peeling, and boiling are the best ways to cleanse foodstuffs. With lettuce or cabbage, remove and throw away the outermost leaves.



STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

■ **Wash.** Be sure to wash your hands in hot soapy water before preparing each dish. Always wash after using the bathroom, dealing with a baby's or a child's hygienic needs (such as changing a diaper or wiping a nose), or handling any animal, including household pets. Wash any utensils, cutting boards, and countertops with hot soapy water after preparing each dish—especially after handling raw meat, poultry, or seafood. "Wash fruit and vegetables in lukewarm

■ **Cook thoroughly.** If the internal heat of food exceeds 160 degrees Fahrenheit, even briefly, almost all bacteria, viruses, and parasites will be killed. Poultry should be cooked even more than that, to 180 degrees Fahrenheit. Reheated food should be brought to a temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit, or it should be hot and steaming. Avoid eating poultry that is still pink inside, eggs with runny yolks or whites, or fish that is not yet opaque and that you cannot readily flake apart with a fork.

■ **Keep foods separate.** Keep raw meat, poultry, or seafood separate from other food at all times—when shopping for it, storing it, and prepar-



from diarrheic diseases—1.8 million of them being children. The report notes: “A great proportion of these cases can be attributed to contamination of food and drinking water.”

Those figures may sound staggering. But should statistics cause you to panic about the safety of your own food? Probably not. Consider another example. In Australia, there are some 4.2 million cases of foodborne illness every year—or about 11,500 every day! Now that may sound like a lot. But look at it from a different perspective. Australians eat about *20 billion* meals a

ing it. Do not let the juices flow or drip onto each other or onto other foods. Also, never put cooked food onto a dish that formerly held raw meat, fish, or poultry, unless that dish has been thoroughly washed with hot soapy water.

■ **Store and chill food properly.** The refrigerator can inhibit the growth of dangerous bacteria, but the temperature should be 40 degrees Fahrenheit. The freezer should be 0 degrees Fahrenheit. Put perishable food items away within two hours. If setting out food before the meal, cover all dishes to keep flies away.

■ **Be cautious when dining out.** By one estimate, from about 60 to 80 percent of the cases of foodborne disease in some developed lands originate in meals that are cooked and bought outside the home. Make sure that any restaurant you visit satisfies the health standards required by law. Order meat well-cooked. When it comes to take-out food, make sure to eat it within two hours of the time you buy it. If more time elapses, reheat the food to a temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit.

■ **Throw out questionable food.** If you are in doubt as to whether some food item is good or spoiled, err on the side of safety and throw it out.

Granted, it is unwise to waste good food. Still, getting sick from bad food may prove even more costly.

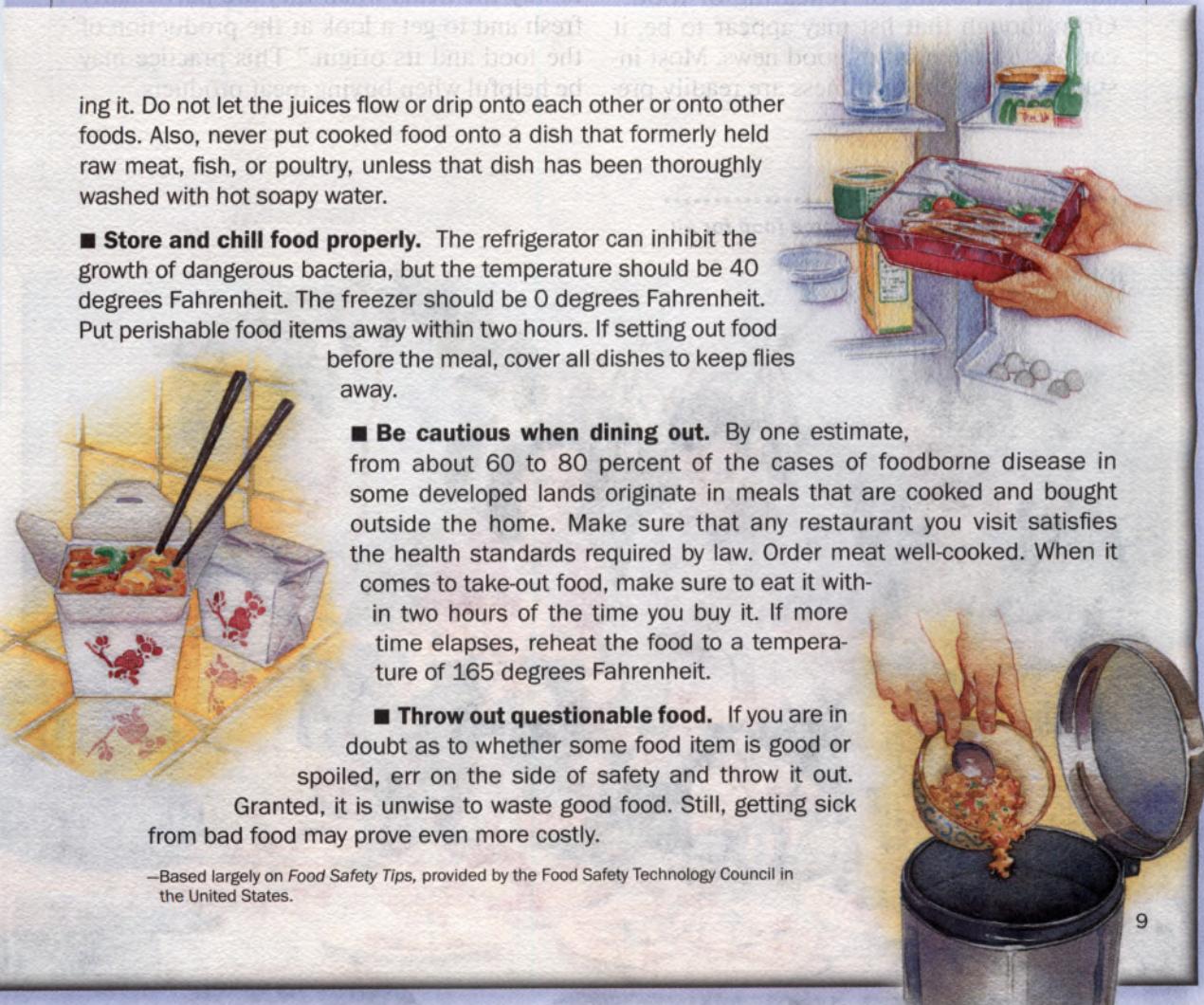
—Based largely on *Food Safety Tips*, provided by the Food Safety Technology Council in the United States.

year; of those meals less than one fiftieth of one percent lead to illness. In other words, the risk involved in each meal is really very small.

Nonetheless, the risk is real and sobering. What causes food to bring on illnesses, and what can be done to reduce the risk?

Causes of Foodborne Illness

A remarkable number of diseases can be passed along in food—more than 200 of them, says the journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases*. But the culprits causing all those diseases are not so numerous. According to



Dr. Iain Swadling, food information officer for the International Food Information Service, about 90 percent of all cases of food-borne disease are caused by "probably less than two dozen" species of microorganisms. How do the various disease-causing agents—the viruses, bacteria, parasites, toxins, and so forth—find their way into food?

Dr. Swadling lists five of the most common ways that food is contaminated: "Using contaminated raw foodstuffs; infected/ill people preparing meals; inadequate storage combined with preparation of food several hours before consumption; cross-contamination during food preparation; insufficient cooking or reheating of food." Grim though that list may appear to be, it conveys a potent bit of good news. Most instances of foodborne illness are readily pre-

ventable. To see what you can do to ensure the safety of the food you consume, note the box on pages 8 and 9.

Making Balanced Choices

In view of the various risks and concerns about food, some people today decide to take the time to buy, prepare, and eat more fresh food. If that option appeals to you, seek out stores or markets in your area that sell fresh, untreated commodities. One consumer guide explains: "Many consumers seek contact with the producers—either at weekly markets [where fresh produce is sold] or where the food is produced—so as to buy the items when they are particularly fresh and to get a look at the production of the food and its origin." This practice may be helpful when buying meat products.

God promises safe, wholesome food for all



In a similar vein, it may be best to purchase local foodstuffs in season, since they may be the healthiest. Realize, however, that if you adhere to such a standard, you will forfeit having a global selection of fruit and vegetables year-round.

Should you switch to organic food? That is a personal decision. Organic food has many enthusiasts, some no doubt motivated by distrust of new technologies used in the food industry. But not everyone agrees that organic farming offers safer food.

Whatever your preferences in food, carefully examine what you buy. "Where food is concerned," laments one expert quoted in the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*, "the consumer looks only at the price." Being price conscious is laudable, but inspect the list of ingredients as well. It is estimated that near-

ly half the people buying food in Western lands do not take the time to read the nutritional information printed on labels. Granted, in some lands labeling is not comprehensive. But if you want safe food, then do what you can to examine the ingredients.

Whatever decisions you make regarding the foods you eat, you will probably need to be willing to bend at times, adapting to the realities of the land in which you live. For many people in this day and age, it is simply impossible—too expensive, too time-consuming, too problematic—to make sure that they eat only foods that are verifiably safe in every respect.

Does that strike you as a rather grim assessment of today's world? It is simply realistic. The good news, however, is that things will soon change for the better.

Safe Food for Everyone

EATING wholesome food is a delight. But as we have seen, such food is not always easy to come by. Worse yet, there are millions of people who do not have the luxury of worrying about whether their food is sufficiently safe or healthful. They are preoccupied with finding *enough* food just to survive. Can it be that God intended for things to be this way?

Think about it. When God put man and woman on the earth, did they have any cause to worry about food? No, not at all! The account in the Bible book of Genesis says: "Jehovah God made to grow out of the ground every tree desirable to one's sight and good for food." (Genesis 2:9) So Adam and Eve had a delightful variety of foods as well as

an abundant, endless supply. The God who created them knew precisely what they needed nutritionally; he also knew what would bring them joy. Granted, we are not in the garden of Eden today. But has God changed his original purpose for mankind and the earth?

We have sound reason to believe that soon everyone on earth will enjoy healthful, wholesome food in abundance! This belief can be a powerful aid to our keeping a balanced attitude on the issue of food safety today. Such a hope, if sure and reliable, can help us to avoid developing fanatic or extreme views.

Why can we be so sure that life will soon be different? Keen students of the Word of God know that we are currently living in

"the last days" of this system of things. The present system is governed by human wisdom, which in many fields of life is uncertain and relies on trial and error. When it comes to techniques of processing food, there is considerable uncertainty as to whether they are safe or hazardous. Such uncertainty breeds fear, discord, and disunity.—2 Timothy 3:1-5.

Mankind's Creator has promised to replace this present system of things with a completely new one. His original purpose—for the entire earth to be a paradise like the garden of Eden, populated with a happy and healthy human family—will be fulfilled. The unifying force of perfect godly wisdom will then fill the earth. (Isaiah 11:9) Uncertain human wisdom will no longer prevail. The new system of God's making will dispel all need for doubt about the safety of our food. Is it not logical to conclude that the God who created humans would also understand our nutritional needs?

Perfect Food From the Creator

The Bible contains vivid prophecies about living conditions under the coming sys-

tem of things. The prophet Isaiah wrote: "[God] will certainly give the rain for your seed with which you sow the ground, and as the produce of the ground bread, which must become fat and oily. Your livestock will graze in that day in a spacious pasture. And the cattle and the full-grown asses cultivating the ground will eat fodder seasoned with sorrel, which was winnowed with the shovel and with the fork."

Isaiah's prophecy also states: "Jehovah of armies will certainly make for all the peoples, in this mountain, a banquet of well-oiled dishes, a banquet of wine kept on the dregs, of well-oiled dishes filled with marrow, of wine kept on the dregs, filtered." *The New American Bible* renders that

last phrase, "a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines."—Isaiah 25:6; 30:23, 24.

Does that sound appealing to you? Isaiah's prophecy assures us that everyone living under God's new system will have more than enough physical food. Will it be safe to eat? Without a doubt. Another prophecy assures us that God's people "will actually sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and there will be no one making them tremble." (Micah 4:4) Such utter security will be guaranteed by God's Messianic Kingdom, which will take up ruling over all the earth in the near future.—Isaiah 9:6, 7.

Never again will there be uncertainty about whether food is safe or not. On the contrary, we will delight in saying to one another: "Enjoy your meal" or "guten Appetit" or "bon appétit."

**Soon
everyone on
earth will
enjoy healthful,
wholesome
food in
abundance**

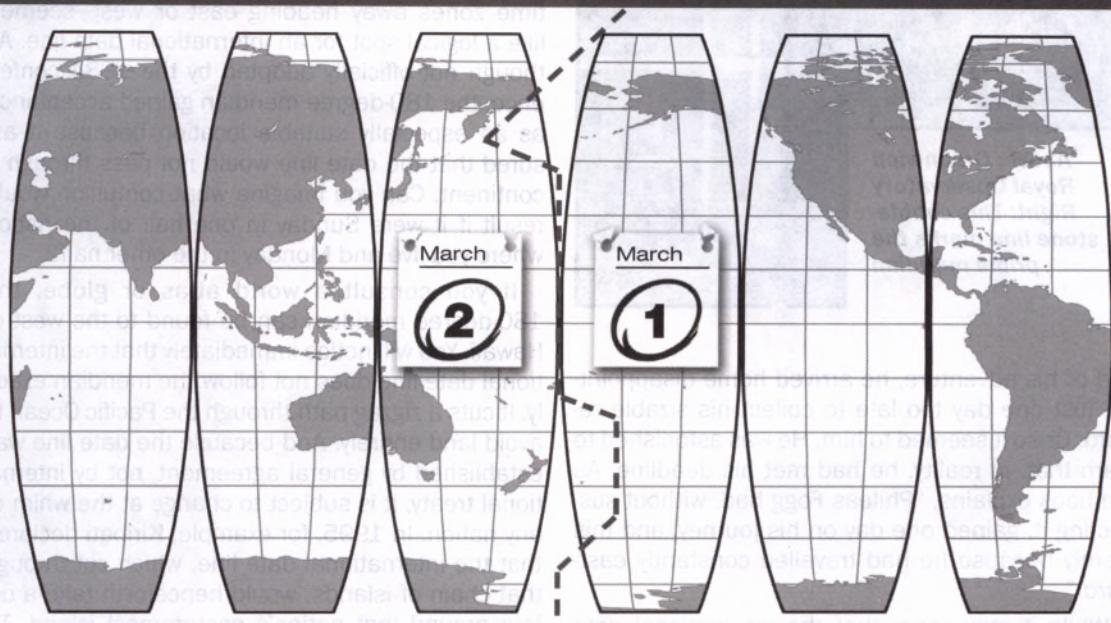
IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Courage in the Face of Disaster

In Search of Dolphins Down Under

**Should Christians Share in
New Year's Festivities?**

CROSSING THE LINE



MAN HAS LONG DREAMED OF TRAVELING through time to relive the past or to see the future. So would it surprise you to know that in a sense people travel through time every day? Consider the businessman from Tokyo who jets to New York for a meeting. If his flight departs at noon, then after flying nonstop nearly halfway around the world, he will land at his destination that same morning, seemingly earlier than he left.

Is it really possible to take a long trip and yet arrive *before* you leave? No, not really. But distant cities are in different time zones. In fact, crossing the international date line, an invisible line on the globe, means crossing an agreed upon boundary that separates calendar days. Talk about a disorienting experience! Depending on which direction you travel, it's like gaining or losing one day in an instant.

Suppose that for his return flight, the Tokyo businessman leaves New York late Tuesday evening. When he steps off the airplane some 14 hours later, it will already be Thursday in Japan. How strange it feels to skip a whole day! One seasoned traveler,

recalling her first trip across the international date line, confessed: "I could not understand where that missing day went. It was so peculiar."

Because the date line can befuddle travelers, some may wonder why such a demarcation was ever contrived.

Sailors Make a Discovery

The need for a date line is evident if we look back to 1522, when the crew of Ferdinand Magellan completed the first circumnavigation of the earth. After three years at sea, they reached Spain on Sunday, September 7. According to their ship's logbook, however, the date was Saturday, September 6. Why the discrepancy? By sailing around the world in the same direction as the sun, they had witnessed one less sunrise than the people of Spain.

Author Jules Verne utilized the reverse of this phenomenon as a plot twist for his novel *Around the World in Eighty Days*. To win a large sum of money, the main character in that book had to travel completely around the earth in 80 days. At the



Above: Greenwich Royal Observatory
Right: This cobblestone line marks the prime meridian



end of his adventure, he arrived home disappointed, just one day too late to collect his sizable reward. Or so it seemed to him. He was astonished to learn that, in reality, he had met his deadline. As the book explains, "Phileas Fogg had, without suspecting it, gained one day on his journey, and this merely because he had travelled constantly eastward."

While it may seem that the international date line gave Mr. Verne's story a happy ending, the line did not actually exist in its present form when the famous novel was published in 1873. Sea captains of that time would routinely make a one-day calendar adjustment while crossing the Pacific Ocean, but the present date line did not appear on their maps. This was prior to the adoption of a universal system of time zones. Thus, when Alaska was a possession of Russia, people there followed the same calendar day as the residents of Moscow. But in 1867, when the United States purchased the territory, Alaska adopted the calendar date of the United States.

Historical Developments

In 1884, amid this timekeeping chaos, representatives from 25 nations met in Washington, D.C., for the International Prime Meridian Conference. They established a worldwide system of 24 time zones and agreed upon a prime meridian—the longitude line passing through Greenwich, England.* It

* For more information about time zones and longitude lines, see the March 8, 1995, *Awake!* article "Those Useful Imaginary Lines."

became the starting point for measuring east-west positions on the globe.

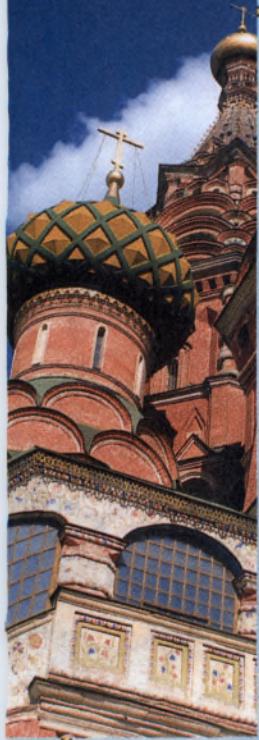
Halfway around the earth from Greenwich—12 time zones away heading east or west—seemed like a logical spot for an international date line. Although not officially adopted by the 1884 conference, the 180-degree meridian gained acceptance as an especially suitable location because it assured that the date line would not pass through a continent. Can you imagine what confusion would result if it were Sunday in one half of the nation where you live and Monday in the other half?

If you consult a world atlas or globe, the 180-degree meridian can be found to the west of Hawaii. You will notice immediately that the international date line does not follow the meridian exactly. It cuts a zigzag path through the Pacific Ocean to avoid land entirely. And because the date line was established by general agreement, not by international treaty, it is subject to change at the whim of any nation. In 1995, for example, Kiribati declared that the international date line, which cut through that chain of islands, would henceforth take a detour around that nation's easternmost island. Today's up-to-date maps therefore show all the islands of Kiribati on the same side of the line. Thus, they share the same calendar day.

How It Works

To illustrate why a day is either lost or added when crossing the date line, imagine that you are sailing around the world. And let's say that you are heading east. You might not be aware of it, but you are considered to be gaining one hour for each time zone that you travel through. When you finally complete your trip around the world, you will have traveled through 24 time zones. Without an international date line, you would be considered a day ahead of local time. The international date line corrects this discrepancy. It's a little confusing, isn't it? No wonder that Magellan's crew and the fictitious Phileas Fogg miscalculated the date they completed their journeys around the world!

Those who have crossed the line are acquainted with the strange feeling of suddenly losing or gaining a day. But travel would be even more confusing if it were not for the international date line.



HOW WORK WINS PRAISE IN MOSCOW

IN 1998 a civil suit calling for a ban on the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses was brought before a municipal court in the Golovinsky district of Moscow. You may find it ironic, therefore, that the Witnesses were recently praised by local officials in the Golovinsky District Administration.

Why did the Witnesses receive praise from Moscow officials when, at the same time, attempts were being made by some people to eliminate them from the city? A brief review of the activity of the Witnesses there will provide answers.

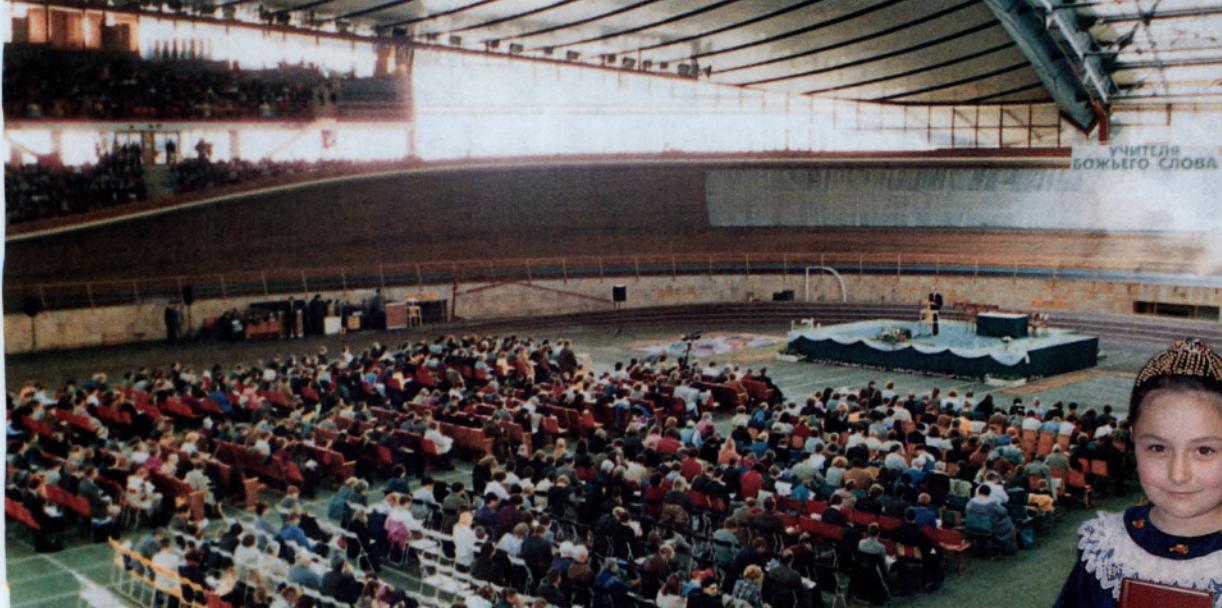
The Witnesses in Moscow

In the mid-1950's, Moscow was one of the few capital cities of the world where not one of Jehovah's Witnesses lived. The reason? Because the Witnesses in Moscow had been deported, even as thousands of others in the Soviet Union had also been. Where to? Most were taken to Siberian slave-labor camps.

As years went by, a few Muscovites began to study the Bible with the aid of Witness publications, which at the time were banned in Russia. In the mid-1970's, the few who had by then become Witnesses were meeting for Bible study in the Moscow apartment of Murat Shakirov. In the 1980's, the members of this small group were able to interest many others in Bible study.



*A reunion of those
who met in Murat
Shakirov's apartment
in the mid-1970's*



When the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Soviet Union was legalized in March 1991, a large congregation of Witnesses in Moscow began functioning openly. Thousands of people were eager to learn why the Witnesses had been persecuted. And they wanted to know what the Bible really teaches. So when a convention was held in Kiev, Ukraine, in August 1991, more than 2,000 from Moscow traveled about 550 miles to attend. Many of these were among the 1,843 who were baptized there.

When in 1993 a large international convention of Jehovah's Witnesses was held in Moscow's Locomotive Stadium, 23,743 persons from over 30 countries were in attendance. By the end of that year, the number of congregations in the Moscow metropolitan area had increased to 21. Today, some eight years later, there are 104 congregations in the same area.

During June and July of this year, 18,292 persons attended four district conventions of Jehovah's Wit-

Four conventions held in Moscow this year had a total attendance of 18,292

nesses in Moscow, and 546 were baptized. The dramatic growth in the number of those joining the Witnesses in Bible study has caused leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church to try to influence Moscow officials to ban their activity.

In the early part of 1998, the court case seeking to ban the Witnesses came before the Golovinsky court. Finally, on February 23, 2001, the judge ruled that the Witnesses were innocent of the charges leveled against them. However, when the prosecution appealed the case to a higher Moscow court, it was remanded for reconsideration by the original court.

Yet, why, despite attempts by some people to ban the Witnesses, did local city officials of Moscow's Golovinsky District Administration praise the Witnesses?

New Meeting Place Involved

In December 1998, the Witnesses purchased a large, two-story building adjacent to Mikhalkovsky Park. It had previously served as a cultural center. Some time ago Witness workers began renovating this large facility. It includes five Kingdom Halls, or meeting places, for 22 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses.



**This former cultural center
was renovated to accommodate
five Kingdom Halls**

This past April 15, one administrator of the Golovinsky district requested that on April 21 the Witnesses clean up Mikhalkovsky Park. In Russia it is common for residents and community groups to share in communal spring cleaning of parks and highways. On April 17, the Witnesses met to plan for the work. At the meeting it was decided that about 700 workers would be needed.

Accomplishing the Work

On April 18 when the Witnesses notified the Golovinsky district officials as to how many rakes and other tools would be needed, the officials did not believe that anywhere near 700 workers would respond. Yet, by 9:30 a.m., April 21, when administration employees arrived at the park, hundreds of Witnesses were already on hand, but there were only 200 garden tools for them to use. In time, some 200 additional rakes were obtained for use. Those without tools worked with their hands to collect garbage and put it into plastic bags. Witnesses even brought high fishing boots and a boat for cleaning out the large pond.

Administration representatives were amazed at



the work being done. They noted that the people labored as if they were cleaning their own property, doing the job with joy and enthusiasm. Altogether, about a thousand of Jehovah's Witnesses shared in the work at Mikhalkovsky Park, and more than 250 tons of garbage was removed. Those living in the area said that they had not seen the park so clean in a very long time.

As noted at the outset, the officials were impressed by what was done and were very appreciative. One official in the Golovinsky district wrote: "The Golovinsky

District Administration of the North Administrative Region of Moscow thanks the religious community of Jehovah's Witnesses for their participation in the cleanup of the Mikhalkovsky Park." An associate official expressed similar words of appreciation, concluding: "This noble and necessary work brings benefit and joy to all park visitors."

Although Jehovah's Witnesses are pleased to beautify areas around their properties—and to engage in such projects as here described—their principal work today is sharing with people the good news of God's Kingdom, the government that will bring Paradise conditions earth wide. (Matthew 24:14) As they were cleaning up Mikhalkovsky Park, some were heard to remark that what they were doing was good training for the post-Armageddon work of beautifying the whole earth.—Revelation 16:14, 16.

Indeed, all lovers of the Bible look forward to the time when the entire earth will be a parklike place of beauty, even as God intended it to be when he created the first human pair.—Genesis 1:28; 2:8, 9, 15; Revelation 21:3, 4.

Over 250 tons of garbage was removed



SUSTAINED BY CONFIDENCE IN GOD

AS TOLD BY RACHEL SACKSIONI-LEVEE

WHEN A GUARD REPEATEDLY HIT ME IN THE FACE BECAUSE I REFUSED TO WORK ON PARTS FOR NAZI BOMBERS, ANOTHER GUARD SAID TO HER: "YOU MIGHT AS WELL STOP. THOSE 'BIBELFORSCHER' WILL LET THEMSELVES BE BEATEN TO DEATH FOR THEIR GOD."

THIS occurred in December 1944 in Beendorff, a woman's labor camp close to the salt mines in northern Germany. Let me explain how I came to be there and how I was able to survive during the closing months of World War II.

I was born into a Jewish family in Amsterdam, in the Netherlands, in 1908, the second of three girls. My father was a diamond polisher, as were many Jews in Amsterdam before World War II. He died when I was 12, and afterward Grandfather came to live with us. Grandfather was a devout Jew, and he saw to it that we were brought up in accordance with Jewish traditions.

Following in Father's footsteps, I learned the diamond cutting trade, and in 1930, I married a colleague. We had two children—Silvain, a lively and adventurous boy, and Carry, who was a sweet, placid little girl. Unfortunately, our marriage did not last long. In 1938, shortly after the divorce, I married Louis Sackioni, who was also a diamond polisher. In February 1940, our daughter, Johanna, was born.

Although Louis was Jewish, he did not practice his religion. So we no longer celebrated the Jewish festivals that I had found so fascinating as a child. I cer-



tainly missed that, but in my heart I continued to believe in God.

A Change of Religion

Early in 1940, the year the Germans began their occupation of the Netherlands, a woman called at our door and talked with me about the Bible. I did not understand much of what she said, but I accepted literature from her whenever she came by. However, I didn't read what she left because I didn't want to have anything to do with Jesus. I had been taught that he was an apostate Jew.

Then one day a man came to my door. I asked him questions such as "Why didn't God create other people after Adam and Eve sinned? Why is there so much misery? Why do people hate one another and wage war?" He assured me that if I

had patience, he would answer my questions from the Bible. So a home Bible study was arranged.

Still, I resisted the idea that Jesus was the Messiah. But then, after praying about the matter, I began to read Messianic prophecies in the Bible, seeing them through different eyes. (Psalm 22:7, 8, 18; Isaiah 53:1-12) Jehovah enabled me to see that those prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus. My husband was not interested in what I was learning, but he didn't interfere with my becoming one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Hiding—Yet Still Preaching

The German occupation of the Netherlands was a dangerous time for me. For not only was I a Jew, whom Germans were putting into concentration camps, but I was also one of Jehovah's Witnesses, a religious organization that the Nazis were trying to eliminate. Yet, I remained active, spending an average of 60 hours a month telling others of my newfound Christian hope.—Matthew 24:14.

One evening in December 1942, my husband did not come home from work. As it turned out, he had been arrested at work along with his colleagues. I never saw him again. My fellow Witnesses advised me to go into hiding with my children. I was able to stay with a Christian sister on the other side of Amsterdam. Because it was too dangerous for the four of us to stay at the same address, I had to leave my children with others.

I often escaped capture by the skin of my teeth. One evening a Witness was taking me to a new hiding place on his bike. However, the light on his bike was not working, and we were stopped by two Dutch policemen. They shone their flashlights in my face and could tell I was Jewish. Fortunately, they simply said: "Keep going quickly—but on foot."

Arrested and Imprisoned

One morning in May 1944 as I was about to start my ministry, I was arrested—not because I was a Witness but because I was a Jew. I was taken to a prison in Amsterdam, where I stayed for ten days. Then I was transported by train, along with other Jews, to the transit camp of Westerbork in the northeastern part of the Netherlands. From there, Jews were transported to Germany.

In Westerbork I met up with my brother-in-law and his son, who had also been picked up. I was the only Witness among Jews, and I constantly prayed to Jehovah for him to sustain me. Two days later my brother-in-law, his son, and I sat in a cattle train that was about to depart for either Auschwitz or Sobibor, death camps in Poland. Suddenly, my name was called out, and I was taken to a different train—a regular passenger train.

Aboard were former colleagues from the diamond trade. About a hundred diamond workers were transported to Bergen-Belsen in the northern part of Germany. Later, I learned that my trade had saved my life, for the Jews who went to Auschwitz and Sobibor usually went straight to the gas chambers. That is what happened to my husband, two of my children, and other relatives. At the time, though, I did not know what had happened to them.

**Jews being taken to Germany
from the camp in Westerbork**
Herinneringscentrum kamp Westerbork



With my children Carry and Silvain, both of whom perished in the Holocaust



In Bergen-Belsen we diamond cutters were accommodated in a special barrack. To spare our hands for our delicate work, we were not required to do other work. I was the only Witness in our group, and I boldly told fellow Jews about my newfound faith. However, they viewed me as an apostate, much as the apostle Paul was viewed in the first century.

I had no Bible, and I craved spiritual food. A Jewish doctor in the camp had one, and he gave it to me in exchange for a few pieces of bread and some butter. I spent seven months with that 'diamond group' in Bergen-Belsen. We were treated relatively well, which led to ill-feelings toward us on the part of other Jewish prisoners. Finally, though, it turned out that no diamonds were found for us to work on. So on December 5, 1944, about 70 of us Jewish women were transported to a women's labor camp in Beendorff.

Refusal to Make Weapons

In the mines near the camp, some 1,500 feet below ground, prisoners were put to work making parts for bombers. When I refused to do this work, I received a few hard blows. (Isaiah 2:4) The guard snarled that I had better be prepared to work the following day.

The next morning I did not report for roll call, remaining in the barracks. I felt certain that I would be shot, so I prayed that Jehovah would reward me for my faith. I kept repeating to myself the Bible psalm: "In God I have put my trust. I shall not be afraid. What can earthling man do to me?"—Psalm 56:11.

The barracks were searched, and I was brought out. That is when one of the guards hit me repeatedly, asking: "Who is it that does not allow you to work?" Each time,

I said that it was God. That is when another guard told her: "You might as well stop. Those *Bibelforscher** will let themselves be beaten to death for their God." Her words strengthened me enormously.

Since cleaning toilets was assigned as punishment and was the filthiest work I could think of, I offered to do it. I was happy to receive that assignment because it was work that I could conscientiously do. One morning the camp commander, who was feared by everyone, came along. He stood in front of me and said: "So, are you the Jew that doesn't want to work?"

"You can see that I am working," I replied.

"But you will not work for the war effort, will you?"

"No," I answered. "God does not want that."

"But you would not be taking part in killing, would you?"

I explained that if I took part in making weapons, I would be violating my Christian conscience.

He took my broom and said: "I can kill you with this, can't I?"

"Oh, sure," I answered, "but a broom is not made for that. A gun is."

* The name by which Jehovah's Witnesses were then known in Germany.



002689

VOORLOOPIG IDENTITEITSBEWIJS		CERTIFICAT D'IDENTITÉ PROVISOIRE	
De repatrieringsafdeling van de Nederlandse Legatie Le département de la Réparation de la légation des Pays Bas			
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Coleur des cheveux			
Bijzondere kenmerken			
Signes particuliers			
Malmö den 9/5	1945		
Repatrieringsafdeling der Nederlandse Legatie Département de la Réparation de la légation des Pays Bas			

**Temporary identity card
for my repatriation**

While in quarantine in Sweden

We talked about Jesus' being a Jew and about the fact that even though I was Jewish, I had become one of Jehovah's Witnesses. When he walked away, fellow prisoners came up to me, surprised that I had the nerve to speak to the camp commander so calmly. I told them that it was not a matter of nerve but that I could do it because my God had given me the strength to do so.

Surviving the War's End

On April 10, 1945, as Allied forces approached Beendorff, we had to stand for roll call in the courtyard almost the entire day. Afterward, about 150 of us women were crammed into cattle trains, without food or water. The trains left for an unknown destination, and for days we traveled back and forth between the front lines. Some strangled their fellow prisoners in order to make more room in the cars, and as a result, many of the women suffered a mental breakdown. What kept me going was my confidence in Jehovah's care.

One day our train stopped near a men's camp, and we were allowed to get out. A few of us were given buckets to fetch some water from the camp. When I got to the tap, I first had a long drink and then filled my bucket.

When I returned, the women charged at me like wild animals. All the water was knocked from the bucket. The SS (members of Hitler's elite guard) just stood there laughing. Eleven days later, we ended up in Eidelstedt, a camp in a suburb of Hamburg. About half our group had died as a result of the rigors of the trip.

One day while in Eidelstedt, I was reading from the Bible to a few of the women. Suddenly, the camp commander stood at the window. We were really frightened because the Bible was a forbidden book in the camp. The commander came in, took the Bible, and said: "So this is a Bible, eh?" To my great relief, he returned it, saying: "If one of the women dies, then you have to read something aloud from it."

Reunited With Fellow Witnesses

After our liberation 14 days later, the Red Cross took us to a school near Malmö, Sweden. There, we were kept in quarantine for a while. I asked one of our caregivers if she would let Jehovah's Witnesses know that I was in the refugee shelter. A few days later, my name was called out. When I told the woman that I was a Witness, she began to sob. She was a Witness too! After she calmed

down, she told me that the Witnesses in Sweden had always prayed for their Christian brothers and sisters in the Nazi concentration camps.

From then on, a sister came every day with coffee and something sweet. After leaving the refugee shelter, I was transferred to a place near Göteborg. There the Witnesses organized an elaborate afternoon gathering for me. Even though I was not able to understand them, it was heartwarming to be surrounded once again by my brothers and sisters.

While in Göteborg, I received a letter from a Witness in Amsterdam informing me that my children Silvain and Carry and all my relatives had been picked up and had never returned. Only my daughter Johanna and my youngest sister had survived. Recently I saw the names of my son and my daughter in a register of Jews who were gassed in Auschwitz and Sobibor.

Postwar Activity

Back in Amsterdam and reunited with Johanna, who was then five, I immediately took up the ministry again. Sometimes I met those who had been members of the NSB, the Dutch National-Socialist Movement, the political party that had collaborated with the Germans. These had assisted in massacring virtually my whole family. I had to overcome negative feelings in order to share the good news about God's Kingdom with them. I kept thinking that Jehovah is the one who sees the heart and that ultimately he is the one who judges, not I. And how I was blessed for that!

***With my daughter
Johanna today***

I started a Bible study with a woman whose husband was in prison for his collaboration with the Nazis. When I walked up the stairs to their house, I would hear the neighbors saying: "Look! That Jew is visiting the NSB people again." But in spite of serious opposition from her imprisoned anti-Semitic husband, this woman and her three daughters all became Jehovah's Witnesses.

To my delight, my daughter Johanna later dedicated her life to Jehovah. She and I moved to serve where the need for Kingdom proclaimers was greater. We enjoyed many spiritual blessings. Now I live in a small town in the south of the Netherlands, where I share in the preaching work along with the congregation as often as I can. Looking back, I can only say that I have never felt abandoned by Jehovah. I have always felt that Jehovah and his beloved Son, Jesus, are with me, even in the worst of times.

During the war, I lost my husband, two of my children, and most of the rest of my family. However, my hope is to see them all again soon in God's new world. When I am alone and think back over what I have experienced, I reflect with joy and gratitude on the psalmist's words: "The angel of Jehovah is camping all around those fearing him, and he rescues them."—Psalm 34:7.



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND *A DIVIDED HOUSE*

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN GREAT BRITAIN

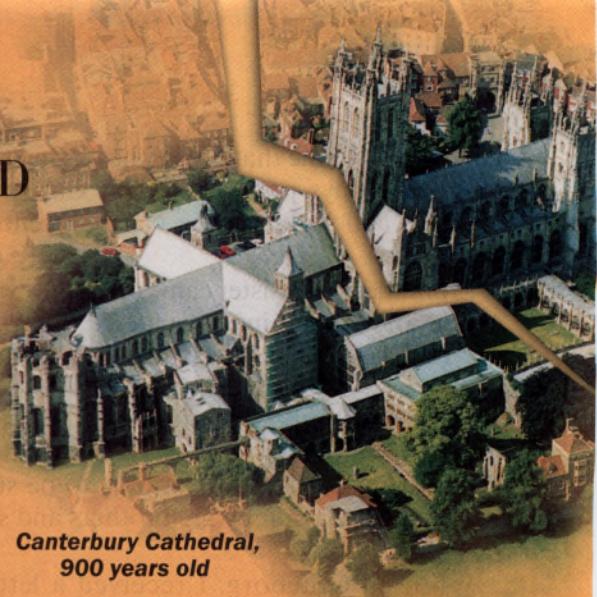
THE 13th Lambeth Conference of the Church of England was held at Canterbury in 1998 under the shadow of its 900-year-old cathedral. Addressing the conference, Bishop William E. Swing made the telling observation: "Religion has to stop being the problem and start providing the solution. There is never going to be peace among nations unless there's peace among religions."

The division that exists among religions is dramatic, as is the division among parishioners and clergy of the same religion. One bishop refused to attend the conference, which has been held every ten years since 1948, because female bishops were present. Some who attended were opposed to participation in Bible discussion with these women.

While the question of ordaining women had dominated the proceedings of the 1988 conference, homosexuality was the principal subject of controversy in 1998. In the end, the bishops resolved that homosexuality is "against scripture." What prompted the decision?

One factor may have been that Anglicans were eager to strengthen relations with the Roman Catholic Church. And they realized that their church could not expect to pursue dialogue between the two organizations if they continued to take "a pro-gay-clergy line." Another underlying reason for the decision may have been fear of Islam. To have passed a resolution condoning homosexual priests would have been, as African bishops put it, "evangelical suicide" in Islamic states.

Regarding another divisive issue at the conference, *The Sunday Telegraph* reported: "In parts of Africa, the central missionary question is po-



**Canterbury Cathedral,
900 years old**

lygamy." Reflecting on the dilemma facing Anglicans in Africa, one bishop observed: "If someone makes a huge contribution to the Church but has more than one wife, what do they do?" Noting the predictable outcome of the debate, *The Times* of London reported: "Anglican bishops will keep silent on polygamy."

For the first time, Anglican bishops debated their relationship with Islam. "There is a deep rooted hatred between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria," reported the bishop of Kaduna, Nigeria, claiming that more than 10,000 lives had been lost in religious conflicts in his country. Only by building up a knowledge of Islam, it was said, could a holy war in Africa be averted.

What lies ahead for the 70 million people worldwide who, according to one disputed claim, are members of the Anglican church?* The situation is not encouraging, for as *The Times* reported: "The conference has astonished many observers and participants because it has at times borne a closer resemblance to a party political gathering than a Christian church at prayer."

Not surprisingly, *The Sunday Times* concluded that 'rancor and ill-feeling characterized the meeting.'

* This figure of 70 million "sounds impressive," says *The Times*, but "what is rarely stated is that of these, 26 million are in the Church of England. Barely one million now go to church here [in Britain], the remainder being only nominal Anglicans."

YOUNG PEOPLE ASK . . .

"Lately, some of the boys at school have been asking me out or to be their girlfriend."
—Becky, 11 years old.*

"Most of the kids in our school date. In fact, it is not unusual to see boys and girls kissing right in the hallways."
—Liana, a 10th-grade student.

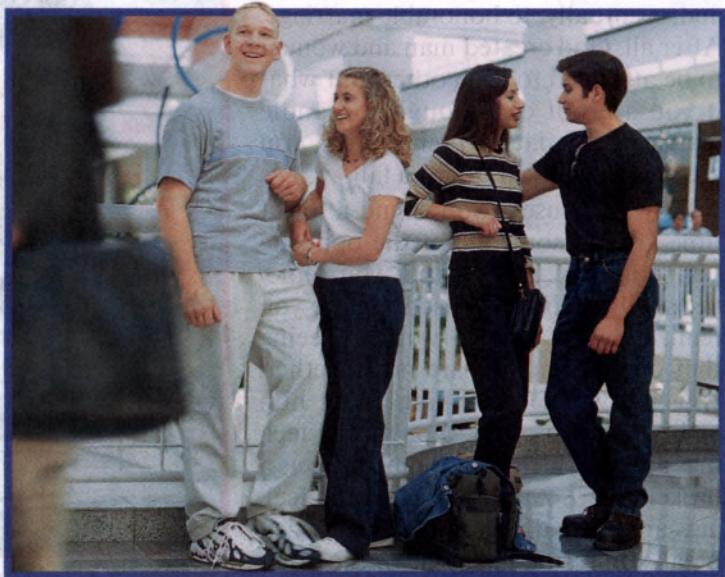
MANY youths begin to date at a very young age. The media promote this practice as normal—as if it were harmless recreation. Twelve-year-old Oneyda relates: "Almost everyone in school has a boyfriend or a girlfriend." A young woman named Jenifer recalls: "I remember kids in the third grade who were going steady." She adds: "I started to feel the pressure to date when I was 11 years old."

Understandably, then, if you are not dating someone, you may feel left out. Indeed, you may even get teased and ridiculed for not doing so. Feeling that she was too young to date, Jenifer turned down boys who asked her out. Their reaction? Jenifer recalls: "They made fun of me and joked about it." No one likes to be ridiculed. But should you date just because others are doing so? Just what is dating? And what purpose does it serve?

What Is Dating?

'We're not dating. We're just friends,' many youths claim, even though they are spending

* Some of the names have been changed.



Young Dating —What's the Harm?

a lot of time with someone of the opposite sex. But whatever you call it—dating, going together, or just seeing each other—when a boy and a girl single each other out and start spending time together socially, more than friendship is usually involved. And dating does not have to be in person. Discussions in Internet chat rooms, on the telephone, through the mail, or by E-mail can also be forms of dating.

The question is, Just how serious is it to spend time almost exclusively with someone of the opposite sex?

Dating—The Dangers

At Proverbs 30:19, the Bible speaks of "the way of an able-bodied man with a maiden." This expression suggests that male-female relationships tend to follow a pattern. When

both parties are mature and hold to godly morals, dating can lead to love and, eventually, to honorable marriage. After all, God created man and woman to be attracted to each other. But what if you are not old enough to handle marriage? By dating prematurely, you are setting yourself up for a fall.

Why? Because if you spend a lot of time around someone of the opposite sex, it is only natural that your emotions will become aroused. Before you realize it, you look forward to seeing that one. When you are not together, you find yourself thinking about him or her. All too often, though, the feelings are one-sided—and someone gets a broken heart. And even when the feelings are mutual, frustration and heartbreak still result when one or the other is not mature enough or old enough to get married. Really, where can such a relationship go? A Bible proverb says: “Can a man rake together fire into his bosom and yet his very garments not be burned?”—Proverbs 6:27.

Consider a youth named Nina. She relates: “I met a boy on-line. We talked in a chat room for hours every day. I became emotionally attached to him, and my life revolved around him. The relationship didn’t last for long. When it ended I became very depressed. Then he called me and told me that he was going to kill himself because of the breakup. That made me even more depressed.” Looking back, Nina concludes: “It was not worth it! The relationship ended two years ago, and I’m still suffering from depression.” Nina was simply too young to become emotionally involved with someone.

Interestingly, when the Bible speaks of “the way of an able-bodied man with a maiden,” it may refer to sexual relations. In today’s world, dating is often a prelude to sexual relations. It may begin innocently, just



Acts of affection often lead to trouble

by holding hands. A quick hug and a kiss on the cheek may be next. It is one thing for two young adults who have made a serious commitment to each other to make such expressions of affection. But when two people are too young to get married, such behavior does little more than needlessly inflame sexual desire. Acts of “affection” can become increasingly inappropriate or unclean. They can even lead to some form of fornication.*

The fruits of fornication are bitter. Some who engage in it contract sexually transmitted diseases. Others suffer a loss of self-esteem and damage their conscience. Some young girls find themselves pregnant. No wonder that the Bible gives this command: “Flee from fornication”! (1 Corinthians 6:13, 18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3) Avoiding

* The original Greek word for fornication is *por-nei'a*. It refers to sexual activity involving the use of the genital organs, carried on outside the bonds of marriage. This includes the manipulation of genital organs and oral sex.

premature dating will help you to heed this command.

When to Date

This does not mean that you will never be able to date. But if you are a teenager, you are probably in what the Bible calls “the bloom of youth.” (1 Corinthians 7:36) You are just beginning to blossom into the man or the woman that you will eventually be. During this period of time, you begin to mature physically, emotionally, and sexually. Your feelings—including sexual desires—may be as strong as they will ever be. However, those feelings may also be subject to rapid changes. For this reason, teen romances tend to be very short-lived. “When I’d date,” recalls one teenage girl, “it was usually on one week and off the next.”

Clearly, it doesn’t make sense to date during “the bloom of youth.” It is best to wait until you know who you are, what your likes and dislikes are, and what goals you wish to pursue. Also, you should be old enough to carry out the responsibilities of marriage. For example, Jehovah expects a husband to provide for his family—physically, materially, and spiritually. If you are a teenage boy, are you prepared to get a job and care for a wife and possibly children? Are you in a position to assist them in maintaining their spirituality? And what if you are a young girl? A wife is required to love and respect her husband; she must support the decisions he makes. Are you really prepared to do so on a long-term basis? Also, are you ready to manage a household day in and day out—to prepare meals and take care of children?—Ephesians 5:22-25, 28-31; 1 Timothy 5:8.

To illustrate: In Western lands young people dream of driving the family car. But what does a youth have to do before he or she is allowed to do so? In most lands you have to get some training and take a test before you are given that license. Why? Because driving is a

serious responsibility. Your life and the lives of others will be in your hands when you get behind the steering wheel. Well, marriage is also a very serious responsibility! As a teenager, you may simply not be ready for it yet. In that case, you would be wise to resist the temptation to date, since dating is a step toward finding a marriage mate. Put simply: If you are not ready for marriage, you shouldn’t date.

To make a wise decision in this regard, you need what the Bible calls “knowledge and thinking ability.” (Proverbs 1:4) It might be a good idea, then, to take advantage of the knowledge and experience of someone older. Christian parents are usually in the best position to help you assess your readiness for marriage. And you may also want to get some advice from mature members of the Christian congregation. If your parents do not want you to date, you do well to cooperate with them. Their desire is to help you “ward off calamity.”—Ecclesiastes 11:10.

If they feel that you are not ready to date, they may recommend that in the meantime, rather than restricting your attention to one person, you widen out your circle of friends. Associating with people single and married, old and young, as well as with those your own age, can help you to round out your personality and get a more realistic view of life and marriage.

Waiting until you are ready to date will not be easy. But it is worth the wait. By using “the bloom of youth” to grow up into a mature, responsible adult, you will spare yourself a host of problems. You will give yourself the time to develop into the kind of person who can handle the pressures and responsibilities of marriage. You will also allow yourself time to grow into a spiritual person. That way, when you are finally ready to date, others may very well see you as someone really worth getting to know better.

WATCHING THE WORLD

Dirty Money

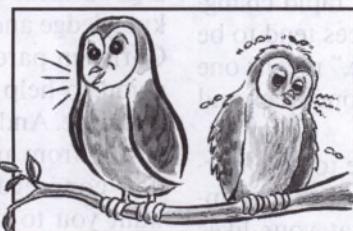
"Paper money is crawling with bacteria," says *The Globe and Mail* of Canada. Recent research in the United States showed that almost all bills in circulation are contaminated with streptococcus, enterobacter, pseudomonas, as well as other germs. These germs, says *The Globe*, "can be dangerous to immune-compromised patients such as the frail elderly or people with HIV-AIDS." Some bills bear even more dangerous bacteria. Researchers suggest that it may be time for some literal "money laundering." In Japan consumers can already get cash from "clean ATMs" that "dispense yen that have been heated to 200 C (392 F)—hot enough to kill many bacteria but not burn the money." After handling money, advises *The Globe*, "wash your hands!"

Low-Salt Diet for Roads

Each winter, between 400,000 and 1.4 million tons of salt are poured onto France's roads to remove snow and ice, reports the nature magazine *Terre sauvage*. "All this salt has an environmental cost that is being discovered little by little." Road salt builds up in the soil and can pollute drinking wells, water tables, lakes, and ponds. It kills fragile plants within 200 feet of salted roads and burns the root tips of trees. When absorbed by tree roots, it hinders photosynthesis. With repeated exposure, trees weaken and die. Animals drawn to roads to lick the salt are often struck by vehicles or die because of tak-

ing in too much salt too quickly. Under some conditions salt can also contribute to the formation of dangerous "black" ice. On a snow-covered road, drivers are usually cautious, but many take risks on snow-free roads, unaware that such ice may have formed. Authorities recommend: "Salt better, salt less."

Owls' Hoots Herald Their Health



When tawny owls hoot, they give away the state of their health, says *The Economist*. "Stephen Redpath of Britain's Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and his colleagues studied 22 tawny owls in the Kielder Forest in northern England." The researchers "played hoots recorded from an unfamiliar male and measured the time that their subjects took to respond to the challenge." The owls with more parasites in their bloodstream took longer to hoot back—those with the most parasites taking more than twice as long as the parasite-free owls. Additionally, when the more parasitized tawnies did hoot, their pitch was lower than that of the healthy birds. "To the owls themselves this is, no doubt, a dead giveaway," says *The Economist*.

Rewards of Reading to a Child

"When [children] see that their mother and father read willingly, they try to imitate them," says the Polish weekly *Przyjaciółka*. In an era when children increasingly watch TV, says the article, it is worthwhile to read to children even as young as two years of age, drawing their attention to pictures and explaining them. Parents can ask a child about what they have just read to see if he or she comprehends the information. "And if the child suddenly gets bored . . . , try to enliven the reading with lively gestures and intonation changes." Parents are encouraged to get to know their child's likes and talk to him about these. "Talk about your favorite childhood books, suggest some interesting titles. . . . Do not give up reading to your children, even when they can do it themselves," says *Przyjaciółka*. "Sometimes it is enough to read a few of the first pages for encouragement, and the child will gladly read on."

Ailing Taste Buds

Each year in Japan over 140,000 people, including more youngsters than ever, lose their sense of taste, according to estimates by ear, nose, and throat specialist Hiroshi Tomita. Although medication and health problems can trigger the disorder, says the report in *The Daily Yomiuri*, Tomita believes that about 30 percent of the cases relate to a low intake of zinc, an essential trace mineral. "Zinc," says the article, "plays

a major role in generating new taste bud cells, and [zinc] deficiency leads to gradual desensitization." Junk food, processed food, and lack of variety in diet all contribute to the problem. The article explains that "additives like phosphate, which is contained in many ready-to-eat foods, deplete the body's zinc supply and impede its absorption." To those who find food tasteless, Tomita recommends zinc-rich foods. These include oysters, small fish, and liver. A varied and healthy diet can restore taste buds, but if a severe condition is untreated for more than six months, there is less chance of recovery, Tomita says.

Mosques Mushrooming in the United States

Indicating a growing Muslim population, "the number of mosques in the United States [has] increased by about 25 percent in six years, to more than 1,200," says *The New York Times*. John Esposito, director of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University, believes the current Muslim population to be "about four to six million." The figure may be even higher, according to a recent study sponsored by four American Islamic organizations. Whatever the case, "continuing immigration and the relatively large size of many Muslim families" will sustain the growth, Esposito commented. "Within a matter of decades Islam will be the second-largest religion in America." Attendance at mosques, says the *Times*, was found to be "overwhelmingly male." The study

also showed that "worshippers were ethnically diverse: one-third are South Asian, 30 percent African-American, 25 percent Arab."

Sick Homes



"Homes in Melbourne [Australia] less than a year old had up to 20 times the safety limit of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council," says *New Scientist*. One of these chemicals is formaldehyde, "which causes skin irritation and possibly cancer." Formaldehyde leaches into the air from such construction materials as floorboards and furniture. New carpets release styrene, another suspected carcinogen, "while paints and solvents give off a variety of toxic compounds," explains the report. "The chemicals aren't likely to pose a serious threat to most people's health. But they could lead to headaches and badly affect a small group of especially sensitive individuals."

World Leader in Milk Production

India is now the world's top producer of milk, states *The Hindustan Times*. "The environment-oriented Worldwatch Institute [in Washington, D.C.] has praised India's milk revolution," says the re-

port. "Since 1994, milk became India's leading farm product and in 1997, the country overtook the US to become the world's biggest milk producer." Lester Brown, chairman of the Worldwatch Institute, is quoted as saying: "Remarkably, it did so by using farm by-products and crop residue rather than grain for feed. India was able to expand the protein supply without diverting grain from human consumption to cattle."

Spending Made Easy

Advanced technology has turned shopping into a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week national pastime for many Canadians, reports the *Calgary Herald* newspaper. "Consumers can shop non-stop over the Internet, The Shopping Channel, via mail order catalogues or purchase items with a credit card instantaneously." Cards with high credit limits encourage people to overspend. Some credit cards offer additional inducements. Larry Wood, professor of finance at the University of Calgary, said: "People will have the cash to buy an item but put it on their credit card to get the rewards or points, thinking they will use the cash to pay it off at the end of the month. Then they consume the cash and have the credit debt as well." However, Wood believes that the problem goes even deeper. In trying to maintain a standard of living, consumers, he feels, will go into debt rather than cut consumption. According to a 1999 Statistics Canada survey, Canadian credit-card debt totaled more than \$14 billion.

FROM OUR READERS

Siberian Exile I want to express my deep appreciation for the story of Fyodor Kalin in the series "Religion in Russia—What Is Its Future?" (April 22, 2001) It was moving to read about the deportation of his family to Siberia and about how they remained faithful and joyful even during the most trying of circumstances. I had the privilege of visiting some of our Christian brothers in Moldova some years ago, and I will never forget their stories about their deportation to Siberia. Their trust in Jehovah and their faith encouraged me to remain faithful myself.

G. F., Sweden

Deaf and Blind Thank you for the article about Janice Adams, "Though Deaf and Blind, I Found Security." (April 22, 2001) I would never have thought that someone who is deaf and blind could have encouraged me so much. My husband and I have been going through many bouts of sickness, both physical and emotional. Articles like this give us renewed faith to endure right down to the end.

P.G., United States

We often take what we have for granted, perhaps missing a Christian meeting because of a simple headache. But even though Janice had reasons for staying home—such as her depression and the abuse she had suffered—she leaned on Jehovah to give her the necessary strength to lead a spiritually active life.

C. D., Italy

I am in excellent health, so my experience is different from that of Janice. But because of the bullying that I experienced in elementary school, I often suffer depression. I cry and cry and feel really awful. I receive encouragement from fellow Christians and support from my parents. Even so, I thank you

from my heart for Janice Adams' story. It gave me courage.

M. T., Japan

Grandparents Thank you for the article "Young People Ask . . . Why Should I Get to Know My Grandparents?" (April 22, 2001) My grandma and I had a very special bond. When my parents were divorcing, I was full of questions and tears. My grandma was always there for me. She would take me out preaching, inculcating in me a love for the ministry. I followed in her footsteps by becoming a full-time evangelizer four years ago. Even after she got Alzheimer's disease and didn't know who I was, her eyes gleamed when I read her scriptures about Paradise. She fell asleep in death in September 2000. Thank you so much for teaching youths the importance of our grandparents.

C. R., United States

My parents have been divorced for ten years. Because of a self-imposed feeling of loyalty to my mother, I cut off relations with my father's family. But after reading these articles, I see the importance and benefits of having a healthy relationship with my grandparents. Because of those articles, I now have some Bible-based suggestions for cultivating that relationship.

G. V., United States

Although my four grandparents are not Christians, I have a good relationship with them. I also have a "grandmother" in the congregation—a Christian sister in her late 60's. When I have a problem, she reads the Bible to me and encourages me. Sometimes she just holds my hand or puts her arm around my shoulders. At times, it doesn't feel as though there is any age difference between us.

M. K., Japan

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Proud of Her Father

"IT DOUBLED my pride in my father!" exclaimed a 12-year-old girl in a letter to the India branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses. She was referring to the item "Interested Fathers Have Happier Sons," in the "Watching the World" section of the August 22, 1999, *Awake!* It reported one study's conclusion that when fathers show personal interest in their sons, these become adults who are full of confidence and hope.

The girl said that she is grateful that she and her twin sister are blessed with a father who shows such personal interest in them. She noted that she enjoys the way *Awake!* reports on world events, adding that "it is a very useful magazine for students today."

