

Awake!

February 8, 1999

DOES GOD REALLY EXIST?



- 4 Does God Exist? (Cover Story)
- 5 Super Seer Predicts Future
- 10 Is Christianity the Only True God?
- 12 Uniting the Hindu Gospels
- 14 Why Did Buddha Exist?
- 16 Crossword Puzzles
- 18 The Year 2000—Will Computers Crash?
- 20 George Westinghouse
- 22 Spreading Democracy in Central Asia
- 24 Who Owns the World?
- 26 From Our Readers
- 28 Sister Separation for Mental Health
- 30 A Decision You Will Not Forget

Average Printing 19,288,000
Published in 83 Languages

Does God Really Exist?

3-9

How can we know
if God exists?
What is his purpose?
How can he be identified?



From the book *Bildersaal deutscher Geschichte*



Should the Dead Be Honored? 10

What does the Bible say?



The Kind of Clothes We Wear 16

Does it really matter?

Does God Exist? —Some Scientists Answer	3
What Is God's Purpose?	4
Identifying the Only True God	7
Useful and Happy Despite My Blindness	12
Crossword Puzzle	20
The Year 2000—Will Computer Crashes Affect You?	21
Spanning Denmark's Great Belt	24
Watching the World	28
From Our Readers	30
'Stark Scenario for Mental Health'	31
A Decision You Will Not Regret	32

DOES GOD EXIST?

Some Scientists Answer

PHYSICS professor Ulrich J. Becker, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, stated when commenting on the existence of God: "How can I exist without a creator? I am not aware of any compelling answer ever given."

Did this contradict his scientific views? The professor's thought-provoking answer was, "If you discovered how one wheel in the 'clock' turns—you may *speculate* how the rest move, but you are not entitled to call this scientific and better leave alone the question of who wound up the spring."

Contrary to the opinion of some, many respected men of science do not rule out the idea of there being a God—a Great Mastermind behind the creation of the universe and man.

Consider two more examples on this point. When mathematics professor John E. Fornaess, of Princeton University, was asked for his thoughts on the existence of God, he replied: "I believe that there is a God and that God brings structure to the universe on all levels from elementary particles to living beings to superclusters of galaxies."

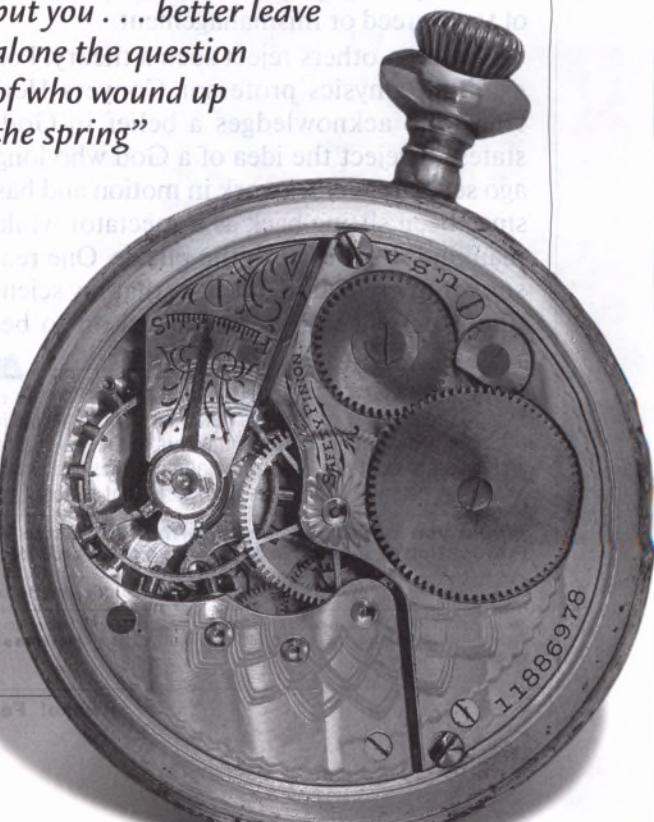
Physics professor Henry Margenau, of Yale University, said that he was convinced that the laws of nature were created by God, adding: "God created the universe out of nothing in an act which also brought time into existence." He then noted that in the book *The Mystery of Life's Origin*, three scientists explain that a Creator is a plausible explanation for life's origin. Supporting this view, astronomer Fred Hoyle has stated that believing the first cell originated by chance is like believing that a tornado ripping through

a junkyard full of Boeing 747 airplane parts dismembered and in disarray could produce a 747.

To these answers can be added the words of the Bible writer Paul: "[God's] invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship."—Romans 1:20.

Yes, God really does exist! But what is his reason for allowing the world's present sorry state? What is his purpose for the earth? Can we know exactly who the true God is?

"If you discovered how one wheel in the 'clock' turns—you may speculate how the rest move, but you . . . better leave alone the question of who wound up the spring"



What Is GOD'S PURPOSE?

MANY people who doubt the existence of an all-powerful, loving God ask: If God does exist, why has he allowed so much suffering and wickedness throughout history? Why does he allow the sorry state of things we see around us today? Why does he not do something to bring an end to war, crime, injustice, poverty, and other miseries that are escalating at an alarming rate in so many countries of the earth?

It is suggested by some that God created the universe, installed humans on planet Earth, and then left them to run their own affairs. According to this view, God would not be to blame for the trouble and misery that people bring upon themselves because of their greed or mismanagement.

However, others reject such a theory. For example, physics professor Conyers Herring, who acknowledges a belief in God, states: "I reject the idea of a God who long ago set a great clockwork in motion and has since been sitting back as a spectator while mankind wrestles with the puzzle. One reason for my rejection of this is that my scientific experience gives me no reason to be-

lieve that there is any 'clockwork' model of the universe that is ultimately and finally the correct one. Our scientific theories . . . will always be capable of greater and greater refinement, but I feel sure they will always prove imperfect. It is safer, I think, to have faith in the living force that makes this improvement always possible."

God Does Have a Purpose

God's original purpose was for planet Earth to be inhabited by righteous, perfect humans. The prophet Isaiah wrote: "This is what Jehovah has said, the Creator of the heavens, He the true God, the Former of the earth and the Maker of it, He the One who firmly established it, who did not create it simply for nothing, who formed it even to be inhabited."—Isaiah 45:18.

Rather than populate the earth through the direct creation of individual humans, God purposed to fill the earth by means of procreation by humans. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, this did not thwart his original purpose, but it did cause a necessary adjustment of some details in order for his purpose regarding humans and the earth to be fulfilled.

Awake!

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.

Would you welcome more information? Write Watch Tower at the appropriate address on page 5. Publication of *Awake!* is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.

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

Awake! (ISSN 0005-237X) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to *Awake!*, c/o Watchtower, Wallkill, NY 12589. Printed in U.S.A.

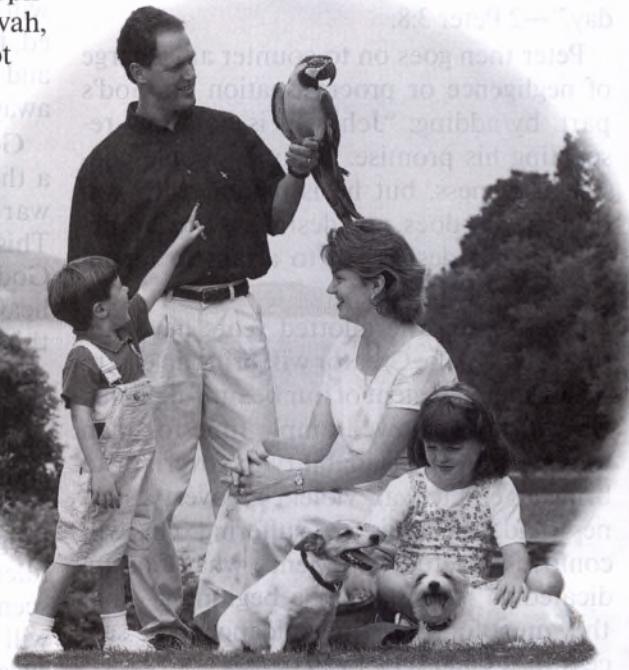
For about the first 6,000 years of this period, God has allowed mankind to operate independently of his direct guidance. That is what our original parents chose of their own free will. (Genesis 3:17-19; Deuteronomy 32:4, 5) This allowance of independence from God's guidance and the subsequent rule by humans instead of by God would show up man's inability to direct his own steps and his inability to govern his fellowmen successfully.

Jehovah, of course, had known this outcome in advance. He inspired Bible penmen to put it into words. For example, the prophet Jeremiah wrote: "I well know, O Jehovah, that to earthling man his way does not belong. It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step."

—Jeremiah 10:23.

In God's new world, people will live forever in happiness

After the flood, Noah sent out a raven, a dove, and a raven. The dove returned with an olive branch, indicating that the waters had subsided. Noah then built an altar to Jehovah and offered sacrifices. Jehovah accepted the offerings and blessed Noah and his family. He also blessed all the animals and birds. Jehovah said, "I will never again curse the earth because of man, though the inclination of man's heart is evil from childhood. Neither will I again smite every living creature, as I did you." — Genesis 9:11-17.



Semimonthly Languages Available by Mail:

Afrikaans, Arabic, Cebuano, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Croatian, Czech, Danish,² Dutch, English,³ Estonian, Finnish,⁴ French, German,⁵ Greek, Hungarian, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian,⁶ Japanese, Korean, Latvian, Malayalam, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,⁷ Swahili, Swedish,⁸ Tagalog, Tamil, Ukrainian, Zulu

Monthly Languages Available by Mail:

Albanian, Amharic, Chichewa, Cibemba, Ewe, Georgian, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Igbo, Kannada, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Malagasy, Marathi, Myanm̄ar, Nepali, New Guinea Pidgin, Portuguese, Sepedi, Sesotho, Shona, Sinhalese, Telugu, Thai, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Twi, Xhosa, Yoruba

² Audiocassettes also available.

© 1999 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved.

Offices of the Watch Tower Society in selected countries

*America, United States of,
Wallkill, NY 12589*

Australia, Box 280, Ingleburn, N.S.W. 2565

Britain, The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN

*Canada, Box 4100, Halton Hills
(Georgetown), Ontario L7G 4Y4*

Ghana, P. O. Box GP 760, Accra

*Jamaica, Box 103, Old Harbour P.O.,
St. Catherine*

*New Zealand, P.O. Box 142,
Manurewa*

*Nigeria, P.M.B. 1090, Benin City,
Edo State*

*South Africa, Private Bag X2067,
Krugersdorp, 1740*

Zambia, Box 33459, Lusaka 10101

Zimbabwe, P. Bag A-6113, Avondale

Changes of address should reach us 30 days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label).

of years without intervening directly in the lives of the majority of mankind.

A Good Purpose Served

The past 6,000 years of human history may seem a long time when compared with our average life span of less than 100 years. But according to God's timetable and his view of the passing of time, these thousands of years are like six days—less than one week! The apostle Peter explained: "Let this one fact not be escaping your notice, beloved ones, that one day is with Jehovah as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day."—2 Peter 3:8.

Peter then goes on to counter any charge of negligence or procrastination on God's part, by adding: "Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance."—2 Peter 3:9.

Thus, when the allotted years have run their course, the Creator will bring an end to the mismanagement of our beautiful planet. He will have allowed ample time for man to demonstrate his inability to govern or to bring an end to war, violence, poverty, sickness, and other causes of suffering. This will confirm by actual experience what God indicated to humans in the beginning—that they must follow divine guidance to be successful.—Genesis 2:15-17.

According to the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, we now live in the final part of "the last days" of this ungodly system of things. (2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13; Matthew 24:3-14) God's toleration of human rule independent of him as well as of wickedness and suffering is nearing its end. (Daniel 2:44) Soon the greatest tribulation this world has ever witnessed will be upon us, culmi-

nating in "the war of the great day of God the Almighty," Armageddon. (Revelation 16:14, 16) This God-directed war will not destroy God's handiwork the earth, but it will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth."—Revelation 11:18.

God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years

There will be millions of survivors on earth when Armageddon has run its course. (Revelation 7:9-14) The prophecy at Proverbs 2:21, 22 will have been fulfilled: "The upright are the ones that will reside in the earth, and the blameless are the ones that will be left over in it. As regards the wicked, they will be cut off from the very earth; and as for the treacherous, they will be torn away from it."

God's purpose is that a special period of a thousand years will follow the righteous war of Armageddon. (Revelation 20:1-3) This will constitute the Millennial Reign of God's Son, Christ Jesus, as King of God's heavenly Kingdom. (Matthew 6:10) During this joyful Kingdom rule over the earth, countless millions will be resurrected from their sleep in death to join the millions of Armageddon survivors. (Acts 24:15) Together they will be restored to perfection, and then—at the end of the Thousand Year Reign of Christ—the earth will finally be filled with perfect men and women, all descendants of Adam and Eve. God's purpose will have been carried out gloriously and successfully.

Yes, God's purpose is to "wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away." And the One seated on the throne said: 'Look! I am making all things new.' (Revelation 21:4, 5) Without fail, that purpose will be fulfilled in the very near future.—Isaiah 14:24, 27.

Identifying the ONLY TRUE GOD

ALMOST as long as humans have existed, they have had many gods. There have been so many that it is difficult to put an accurate figure on the number of gods and goddesses worshiped throughout the earth—but it runs into the millions.

Having established that there is a God, we now ask, Which of all the gods worshiped throughout the earth, now and in the past, is the true God? That there is only one true God who can be identified as such is clearly stated in the Bible at John 17:3: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ."

An Identifying Name

It would be reasonable that any god who has personality would need a personal name to distinguish him from other gods with names of their own. It would preferably be a name designated by the god himself, rather than a name coined by his worshipers.

In this regard, however, a very puzzling fact emerges. While most well-established religions ascribe personal names to their gods, Jews and mainstream churches of Christendom have failed to identify by a distinctive personal name the god that they worship. Instead, they resort to such titles as Lord, God, Almighty, and Father.

Writing in the publication *Theology*, author David Cline stated the following: "Somewhere between the fifth and the second centuries B.C. a tragic accident befell God: he lost his name. More exactly, Jews gave up using God's personal name Yahweh, and began to refer to Yahweh by various

periphrases: God, the Lord, the Name, the Holy One, the Presence, even the Place. Even where Yahweh was written in the Biblical text, readers pronounced the name as Adonai. With the final fall of the temple, even the rare liturgical occasions when the name was used ceased, and even the knowledge of the pronunciation of the name was forgotten." However, no one can say for sure exactly when orthodox Jews ceased to pronounce God's name out loud and instead substituted the Hebrew words for God and Sovereign Lord.

It seems, then, that the very first essential in any quest to identify "the only true God" would be to get to know him by name. Such a search is not at all difficult, for the name of Almighty God, the Creator, is clearly and simply stated at Psalm 83:18: "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth."—*King James Version*.

Jehovah or Yahweh?

Whereas the name Jehovah appears in the *King James Version* and other Bible translations, some prefer to use the name Yahweh instead of Jehovah. Which name is correct?

The most ancient Bible manuscripts were written in the Hebrew language. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the divine name occurs almost 7,000 times and is spelled with four consonants—YHWH or JHVH. These four-consonant words are commonly called the Tetragrammaton, or Tetragram, derived from two Greek words meaning "four letters." Now the question of accurate pronunciation arises because early Hebrew writing

consisted of consonants with no vowels to guide the reader. So whether the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton becomes Yahweh or Jehovah depends on which vowels the reader supplies to the four consonants. Today many Hebrew scholars prefer Yahweh as the true pronunciation.

However, consistency favors Jehovah. In what way? The pronunciation Jehovah has been accepted in English for centuries. Those who object to using this pronunciation should also object to the use of the accepted pronunciation Jeremiah and even Jesus. Jeremiah would need to be changed to *Yir-mayah'* or *Yir-maya'hu*, the original Hebrew pronunciations, and Jesus would become *Ye-shu'a'* (Hebrew) or *I-e-sous'* (Greek). Hence, many Bible students, including Jehovah's Witnesses, feel that consistency favors the use of the already well-known English-language "Jehovah" and its equivalent in other languages.

Does It Really Matter?

Some may argue that it does not really matter whether you address Almighty God by a personal name or not, and they are content to speak of and address God as Father or simply as God. Both these terms, however, are titles rather than names and are neither personal nor distinctive. In Bible times the word for God ('*Elo-him*', Hebrew) was used to describe any god—even the pagan Philistine god named Dagon. (Judges 16:23, 24) So for a Hebrew to tell a Philistine that he, the Hebrew, worshiped "God" would not have identified the true God whom he worshiped.

Of interest is a comment in *The Imperial Bible-Dictionary* of 1874: "[Jehovah] is everywhere a *proper* name, denoting the personal God and him only; whereas Elohim partakes more of the character of a *common* noun, denoting usually, indeed, but not necessarily nor uniformly, the Supreme.... The

Hebrew may say *the Elohim*, the true God, in opposition to all false gods; but he never says *the Jehovah*, for Jehovah is the name of the true God only. He says again and again *my God* . . . ; but never *my Jehovah*, for when he says *my God*, he means Jehovah. He speaks of the God of Israel, but never of the Jehovah of Israel, for there is no other Jehovah. He speaks of the living God, but never of the living Jehovah, for he cannot conceive of Jehovah as other than living."

The True God's Qualities

Just knowing someone's name, of course, does not mean that we know him or her in any depth. The majority of us know the names of leading politicians. Even prominent men and women in other countries may have names that are well-known to us. But simply knowing their names—even how to pronounce them correctly—does not in itself mean that we know these people personally or know what kind of people they are. Similarly, to know the only true God, we need to get to know and admire his qualities.

Though it is true that humans will never be able to see the true God, he has kindly had recorded for us in the Bible many details about his personality. (Exodus 33:20; John 1:18) Certain Hebrew prophets were given inspired visions of Almighty God's heavenly courts. What they describe portrays not only great dignity and awesome majesty and power but also serenity, order, beauty, and pleasantness.—Exodus 24:9-11; Isaiah 6:1; Ezekiel 1:26-28; Daniel 7:9; Revelation 4:1-3.

Jehovah God outlined some of his attractive and appealing qualities to Moses, as recorded at Exodus 34:6, 7: "Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth, preserving loving-kindness for thousands, pardoning error and transgression and sin." Don't you agree that getting to know about these qualities of God draws us to him and

makes us want to know more about him as a person?

While no human will ever be able to see Jehovah God in his resplendent glory, it is recorded that when Jesus Christ was a man on earth, he actually reflected the type of person that Jehovah God, his heavenly Father, is. On one occasion Jesus said: "The Son cannot do a single thing of his own initiative, but only what he beholds the Father doing. For whatever things that One does, these things the Son also does in like manner."—John 5:19.

So we can deduce from this that Jesus' kindness, compassion, mildness, and warmth as well as his strong love for righteousness and hatred of wickedness are all qualities that Jesus observed in his Father, Jehovah God, while Jesus was with him in the heavenly courts before becoming a man on earth. Thus, when we truly come to know with understanding the full meaning of the name Jehovah, we surely have every reason to love and bless that sacred name, to praise and exalt it, and to trust in it.

Getting to know the only true God in this way is really a never-ending process, as is brought out clearly in the rendering of John 17:3 in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. Here the correct tense of the verb "to know" helps greatly, for the present continuous tense is used rather than the simple present tense. Hence, we read: "This means everlasting life, their *taking in knowledge* of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." Yes, continuing to take in knowledge of the only true God, Jehovah, and of his Son, Jesus Christ, is a process that should never end.

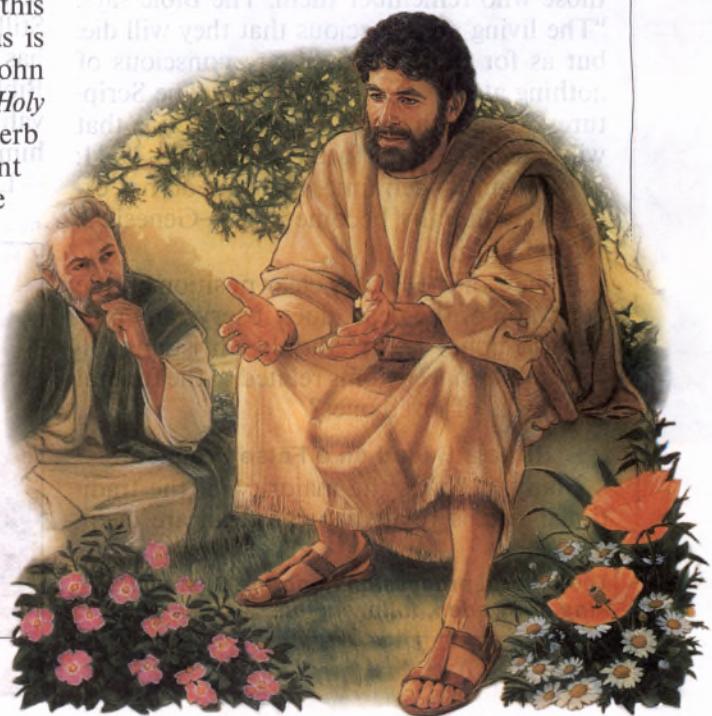
Jesus Christ Identified Jehovah as the only true God

The True God Revealed

Thus, the true God is readily distinguishable from the many false gods. He is the almighty Creator of the universe, including planet Earth and mankind upon it. He has a unique personal name—Jehovah, or Yahweh. He is no part of a mysterious triune god, or Trinity. He is a God of love, and he wishes only the best for his human creation. But he is also a God of justice, and he will not forever tolerate those who insist on ruining the earth and fomenting wars and violence.

Jehovah has revealed his determination not only to rid the earth of wickedness and suffering but also to make it a paradise where honesthearted people can live forever in happiness. (Psalm 37:10, 11, 29, 34) Almighty God has now installed his Son, Jesus, as the heavenly King of God's Kingdom, and soon Jesus will usher in that new world of righteousness and restore Paradise conditions to our earth.—Daniel 2:44; Matthew 6:9, 10.

We hope that you are now more easily able to answer the question, Does God really exist? and to identify the true God.



Should the Dead Be Honored?

"A DEEPLY ROOTED FEELING PROMPTS MOST PEOPLE TO TREAT A DEAD HUMAN BODY WITH A RESPECT THAT IS NOT FELT FOR A DEAD ANIMAL."—*ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA.*

MOST people honor their dead loved ones in one way or another. The dead are honored with obituary notices in newspapers, and they are praised in eulogies. In some lands elaborate funerals with religious or traditional rituals are common. Ceremonies for the dead can last for days, weeks, or months. Schools, airports, streets, and towns are named after famous people who have died. Monuments are erected and holidays established to commemorate heroic personages.

According to God's Word, however, the dead are totally unaware of any honor conferred on them. (Job 14:10, 21; Psalm 49:17) The dead are alive only in the memory of those who remember them. The Bible says: "The living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all." (Ecclesiastes 9:5) The Scriptures do offer the hope of a resurrection that will take place in the future. (John 5:28, 29; 11:25) But until such time, the dead do not exist. They literally become dust.—Genesis 3:19; Job 34:15.

In view of the Bible's clear position on the condition of the dead, does it serve any purpose to honor them? Should Christians follow traditional customs related to the funeral and burial of loved ones?

Rituals Based on a False Premise

Many, perhaps the majority, of the traditional rituals related to the dead are deep-

ly rooted in non-Biblical religious teachings. Some rites purport to "protect the deceased from demonic attack; sometimes the purpose of the rites has been to guard the living from the contagion of death or the malice of the dead," says the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Any such custom based on the false premise that the dead live on in an unseen realm is in direct conflict with Biblical truths.—Ecclesiastes 9:10.

Many people venerate their dead. This type of worship includes the offering of sacrifices and prayers to dead ancestors. Some who engage in such rituals do not view their actions as worship but, rather, as expressions of reverence or deep respect for the dead. Still, this kind of devotion to dead ancestors has religious underpinnings and clashes with Bible teachings. Jesus Christ said: "It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service." —Luke 4:8.

From the book *Bildersaal deutscher Geschichte*



The funeral procession honoring Gustav II, king of Sweden, following his death in 1632

A Balanced View

Showing honor and respect for dead ones is not always linked to false religious teachings. For instance, a Bible account relates how faithful King Hezekiah was honored after death. God's people "buried him in the ascent to the burial places of the sons of David; and honor was what all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem rendered to him at his death." (2 Chronicles 32:33) Another example is that of Jesus. The Bible says that his disciples "took the body of Jesus and bound it up with bandages with the spices, just the way the Jews have the custom of preparing for burial."—John 19:40.

The Scriptures contain many other cases in which special procedures were followed relative to the body and the burial of dead ones. These practices were not ancestor worship, nor were they based on the mistaken belief that the dead continue to influence the affairs of the living. Rather, the mourners manifested deep respect for those they loved. The Bible does not object to such respect, as it is based on natural human emotions, although the Bible does not endorse lavish or hysterical displays at funerals. On the other hand, it does not encourage Christians to be stoic and impassive when faced with the death of a loved one.

Hence, when they attend the funeral or the burial of their loved ones, Jehovah's Witnesses render proper respect and honor to the dead. (Ecclesiastes 7:2) When it comes to the matter of flowers, funeral services, and other local customs, Christians make careful personal choices in order to avoid practices that clash with Bible teachings. In this, good judgment and balance are needed. The *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* explains that "a rite changes its significance and value from time to time, so that the meaning attached to it in later times may be quite different from that which it had originally, and the popular

explanation of it may throw no light on its origin."^{*}

Is It Wrong to Eulogize?

The principle of being balanced applies also to the matter of eulogizing the dead. At funeral services, Jehovah's Witnesses strive to comfort the bereaved. (2 Corinthians 1:3-5) A formal program may include one or more speakers. But it would be inappropriate to convert the occasion into a long parade of eulogizers extolling the deceased. Rather, the funeral affords an opportunity to extol God's marvelous qualities, including his kindness in providing us with the hope of the resurrection.

This does not mean, however, that it would be wrong to remember the good qualities of the deceased during a funeral discourse. (Compare 2 Samuel 1:17-27.) When the dead one has been faithful to God until death, he or she becomes an excellent example to be imitated. (Hebrews 6:12) It is good to ponder over the integrity-keeping course of God's servants. Sharing these positive thoughts with others during a funeral service provides comfort to the living and honors the memory of the dead.

True Christians do not worship the dead. They do not engage in popular rites that conflict with Bible truths. On the other hand, God's servants reject the extreme view that because the dead are merely dust, all funeral customs are purposeless and unnecessary. They mourn and remember their dead. But their pain and sorrow is tempered with the Bible truths that the dead do not suffer and that there is the hope of a resurrection.

* The October 15, 1991, issue of *The Watchtower*, page 31, provides the following direction: "A genuine Christian should consider: Would following a custom indicate to others that I have adopted unscriptural beliefs or practices? The time period and location could influence the answer. A custom (or design) might have had a false religious meaning millennia ago or might have such today in a distant land. But without going into time-consuming investigation, ask yourself: 'What is the common view where I live?'—Compare 1 Corinthians 10:25-29."

Useful and Happy Despite My Blindness

I was playing with three siblings and a cousin
when a small object flew in the window.

It was a grenade, and when it exploded all
three of my siblings were killed and I
was left completely blind.

THE date was July 16, 1942, when I
was a young girl only five years old.
For days I was in and out of a coma.
When I regained consciousness, I sought my
brothers and sister. Upon learning that they
had died, I wished I had died too.

When I was born, my family was living on
the Greek island of Salamis, near Piraiévs,
the port of Athens. Despite our poverty,
we enjoyed a peaceful life. All of that was
shattered with the start of World War II, in
1939. My father was a seafarer in the Medi-
terranean. Often he had to dodge the sub-
marines, frigates, torpedoes, and bombs of
both the Axis and the Allied powers. Greece
was living under the boot of Fascism and
Nazism.

Taught to Hate God

Because of the terrible conditions during
the war, Mother lost a fourth child in death.
She suffered crushing depression, developed
tuberculosis and, after giving birth to her
sixth child, finally died in August 1945. Reli-
gious neighbors began to say that we were
being punished by God. Trying to be encour-
aging, but only making things worse, some

Greek Orthodox priests said that God had
taken my brothers and sisters to heaven to be
little angels.

Father was indignant. Why would God
snatch four little children from a poor fam-
ily when he has millions of angels with
him? These beliefs of the Orthodox Church
fanned strong anti-God and antireligious
sentiments in him. Thereafter, he wanted
to have nothing to do with religion. He
taught me to hate and despise God, stressing
that God was responsible for our pain and
misery.

Like a Beast in a Cage

Shortly after the death of my mother in
1945, Father also developed tuberculosis and
was confined to a sanatorium. My baby sister
was taken to a public nursery. Later, when
Father got out of the sanatorium and went
to the nursery to get her, he was told that
she had died. I was placed in a school for the
blind, where I spent the next eight years of
my life. At first I was heartbroken. Things
were particularly desperate during visiting
days. Most of my blind schoolmates had
someone to visit them, but I had no one.



As told by Polytimi
Venetsianos

I behaved like a beast in a cage. I was called the menace of the school. As a result, I was beaten and would have to sit in the 'naughty chair.' I often thought of putting an end to my life. Yet, in time, it became clear to me that I had to learn to be self-sufficient. I came to find satisfaction in helping blind schoolmates, often assisting them to dress or to make up their beds.

Priests told us that God had made us blind because of some terrible transgression of our parents. This only stirred up more hatred of God, who seemed to be mean and malicious. A religious notion that made me fearful and resentful was that the spirits of the dead go around harassing the living. Thus, despite my love for my deceased siblings and mother, I was afraid of their "spirits."

Helped by My Father

In time, Father came in contact with Jehovah's Witnesses. He was amazed to learn from the Bible that Satan, and not Jehovah, is the source of pain and death. (Psalm 100:3; James 1:13, 17; Revelation 12:9, 12) Soon my enlightened father started attending meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses, made spiritual progress, and was baptized in 1947. A few months before that, he had remarried and now had a son. In time, his new wife also joined him in worshiping Jehovah.

At 16 years of age, I left the school for the blind. How comforting it was to return to a

warm Christian family! They had what they called a family Bible study, which I was invited to attend. I attended out of respect and politeness, although I was not really paying any attention. My strong feelings against God and religion were still overwhelming.

The family was studying the booklet *God's Way Is Love*. At first, I did not take an interest, but then I heard Father discussing the condition of the dead. This captured my attention. Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10 was read from the Bible: "As for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all . . . There is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol, the place to which you are going."

I began to realize that my fear was unjustified. My dead mother, brothers, and sisters were not able to harm me. The discussion then moved to the topic of resurrection. My "antennas" were fully deployed. Joy welled up in my heart when I heard the Bible's promise that under Christ's reign the dead will come to life! (John 5:28, 29; Revelation 20:12, 13) Now the study was very interesting to me. I eagerly anticipated the day of this family discussion, and despite my blindness, I would prepare well.

Gaining Spiritual Eyesight

As I progressed in Scriptural knowledge, misconceptions about God and his dealings vanished. I learned that neither I nor anyone else was made blind by God but that the root of all evil is his Adversary, Satan the Devil. How regretful I was that because of my sheer ignorance, I had blamed God! With unquenchable thirst, I increased in accurate knowledge of the Bible. I attended and participated in all the Christian meetings, although we lived many miles from the Kingdom Hall. I also actively participated in the preaching activity, not letting my vision impairment hinder me.

How happy I was when, on July 27, 1958, a little more than 16 years after that tragic moment that left me blind, I was baptized!

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Half a Century Under Totalitarian Tyranny

What's So Bad About Gossip?

The Use of Chemical Pesticides —Is There a Better Way?

I had a fresh start and was full of hope and optimism. Now my life had a purpose—to serve my loving heavenly Father. Knowledge of him had set me free from false teachings and had given me the courage to face my blindness and its difficulties with determination and hopefulness. I regularly devoted 75 or more hours a month to preaching the glorious good news to others.

Marriage Breakup

In 1966, I married a man with whom I shared the same goals in life. It seemed that together we would enjoy a happy marriage as we both worked toward increasing our activity in the preaching work. Some months we would devote scores of hours to that lifesaving work. We moved to an isolated area near Livadiá, central Greece. During the years we were there, from 1970 to 1972, despite the oppressive military junta then in power in Greece, we were able to help several people learn Bible truth and become baptized Christians. We were also happy to assist the small congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in that area.

In time, however, my husband began to neglect Bible study and attendance at our Christian meetings, and he finally abandoned Bible teachings altogether. This caused a lot of tension in our marriage, which ended in divorce in 1977. I was utterly devastated.

A Happy, Productive Life

At this very low period of my life, Jehovah and his organization again came to the rescue. A loving Christian brother explained that if I let the situation caused by my former husband rob me of joy, then in essence I would be a slave of him. He would be holding the key to my happiness. About this time, an older member of the Christian congregation asked for help to improve her preaching ability. Soon I was fully absorbed in what brought me the greatest joy—engaging in the ministry!

Then another Christian offered this suggestion: "You can continue helping in places where you are needed most. You can be a lighthouse used by Jehovah God." What a thrilling thought! A blind person being "a lighthouse used by Jehovah God"! (Philippians 2:15) Without delay I left Athens and went to live in the village of Amárinthos, in southern Évvoia, an area with very few Bible teachers. With the help of friends there, I was able to have a house built and to care for my needs sufficiently.

So for more than 20 years now, I have been able to devote several months each year to some form of increased preaching activity. With strength from Jehovah, I manage to share in all forms of the ministry, including calling on people at their homes, conducting Bible studies with interested ones, and speaking with people on the streets. Currently, I have the privilege of conducting four Bible studies with persons interested in our Creator. How happy I have been to see three congregations spring up in this area from just a handful of brothers 20 years ago!

Two times a week, I travel more than 20 miles each way to attend Christian meetings, determined not to miss even one of them. When—because of the lack of visual contact with the speaker—I catch my mind wandering during the meetings, I use my special Braille notebook to take brief notes. In this way I force my ears and my mind to pay close attention. Furthermore, I have the privilege of having one of the congregation's meetings conducted in my home. People come from the nearby villages to attend what is called the Congregation Book Study. Instead of always expecting others to visit me in my house, I take the initiative to visit them, something that results in mutual encouragement.—Romans 1:12.

When I lived with my father as a teenager, he never treated me like a blind child. With



*My father, who studied
the Bible with me*



In my kitchen



*With a friend
in the ministry*

patience and persistence, he spent much time teaching me to do things with my hands. This practical training has enabled me to take good care of my garden and my limited livestock. I work hard at home, keeping the house clean and preparing meals. I have learned that we can find enjoyment and happiness in the simple things of life, in what we have. I have been able to accomplish many things with my four remaining senses—hearing, smell, taste, and touch—and this gives me immeasurable satisfaction. This has also been a marvelous witness to outsiders.

Sustained by My God

Many wonder how I have managed to be positive and self-sustained in spite of my limitations. Above all, credit must be given to Jehovah, “the God of all comfort.” (2 Corinthians 1:3) After I lost my vision, I often thought of suicide. Thus, I do not believe that I would be alive today if it were not for Jehovah and Bible truth. I have come to realize that our Creator has given us many gifts—not only vision—and that if we utilize them, we can be happy. Once when Witnesses preached in my

village, a woman said to them about me: “It is the God she worships who helps her accomplish all these things!”

All my trials have drawn me closer to God. This has been very faith strengthening. I am reminded that the apostle Paul also suffered from what he called “a thorn in the flesh,” possibly an affliction of his eyes. (2 Corinthians 12:7; Galatians 4:13) This did not prevent him from being “intensely occupied” with the good news. Like him, I can say: “Most gladly, therefore, will I rather boast as respects my weaknesses . . . For when I am weak, then I am powerful.”—Acts 18:5; 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10.

Above all, my Bible-based hope that in the resurrection I may see with my own eyes my dear mother, sisters, and brothers definitely has a positive and beneficial effect on me. The Bible promises that “the eyes of the blind ones will be opened” and that “there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.” (Isaiah 35:5; Acts 24:15) Such prospects fill me with optimism and eager anticipation of the glorious future under the Kingdom of God!

THE KIND OF CLOTHES WE WEAR

DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

"I DON'T know what to wear!" Does this appeal for help sound familiar? Today's fashion houses are, of course, always eager to help you—or to confuse you even more—with their latest offerings.

To make decisions still more difficult, these days you may be encouraged to dress, not up, but down. Of this reverse trend of the '90's, a fashion editorial says: "It can be reassuring to learn not only is it okay to look a little distressed, aged, worn and generally washed out, but it is desirable."

Yes, in recent years high-powered advertising, TV role models, peers, self-promotion, and also the craving for identity have worked their wardrobe wizardry, especially on the young. Some of them even steal to have the right look.

Many popular styles of the '90's find their seeds in such fringe cultures of yesteryear as the hippie movement in Western society of the '60's. Beards, unkempt long hair, and bedraggled clothing announced a rejection of traditional values. But the dress of rebellion also kindled a new conformity, a new peer pressure.

Clothing has become a broader and more expressive tool of identity. Clothes, especially T-shirts, have become billboards silently advertising popular sports and sports heroes, humor, disenchantment, aggressiveness, morality—or a lack of it—and commercial products. Or they can shock. Consider a recent *Newsweek* headline: "Brutality as a Teen Fashion Statement." The article quotes a 21-year-old speaking about his T-shirt: "I wear it because it tells people what state of mind I am

in. I don't take mess from anybody and don't want to be bothered."

What is paraded on chests and backs may vary from one person to another. Yet conformity—to a group identity or to the prevailing spirit of rebellion, me-ism, wantonness, or violence—is evident. One designer shoots holes through clothes to his customers' specifications. "They can choose handgun holes, rifle holes, or machine-gun holes," he says. "It's just a fashion statement."

What Does Fashion Express?

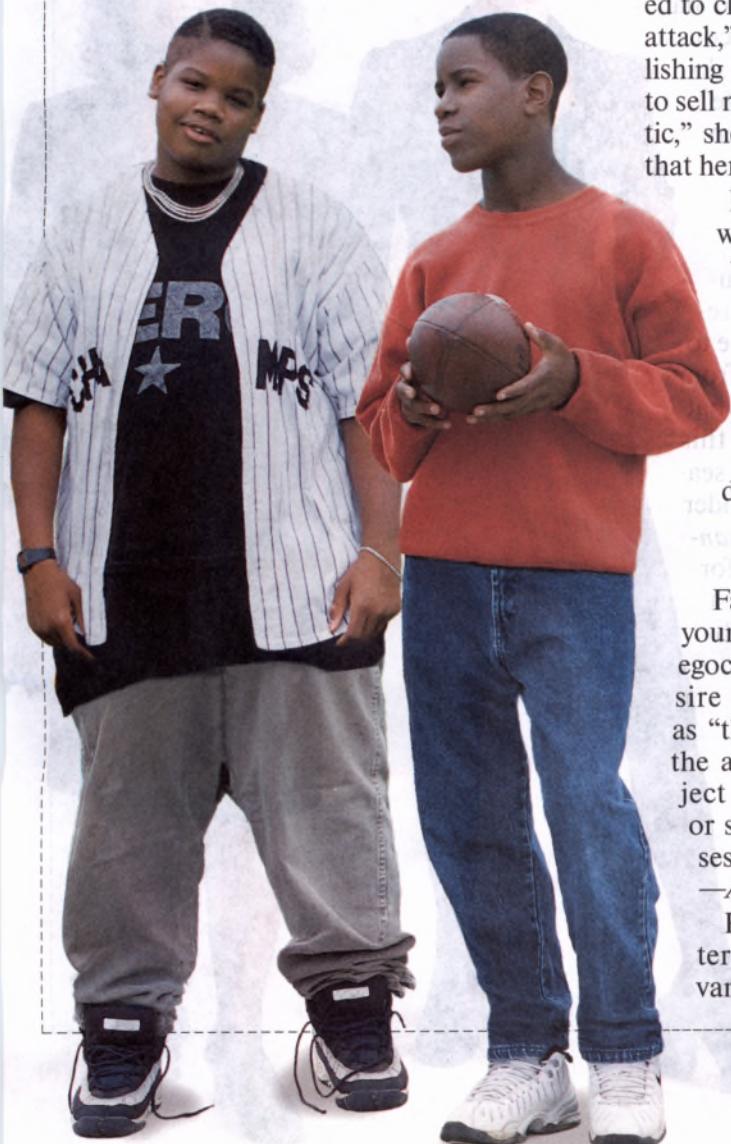
"Generally clothes are a way of identifying yourself with a particular tribe in society," says Jane de Teliga, a fashion curator at the Powerhouse Museum, in Sydney, Australia. She adds: "You choose the tribe you wish to be identified with and dress accordingly." Dr. Dianna Kenny, a psychology lecturer at Sydney University, stated that as a means of classifying people, clothing is as important as religion, wealth, employment, ethnicity, education, and home address. According to *Jet* magazine, racial tension at one nearly all-white school in the United States "erupted over White school girls wearing braids, baggy clothes, and other 'hip-hop' fashions because they are linked to Blacks."

Tribalism is also evident in some subcultures, such as the music scene: "In many cases," says *Maclean's* magazine, "the clothing matches musical tastes: reggae fans wear the bright colors and caps of Jamaica, while those favoring grunge rock sport ski tuques and plaid shirts." But whichever variety, the thrown-on, dressed-down, waiflike look of poverty, dubbed grunge, can cost a bundle.

What Is Happening to Dress Codes?

"Everything is the opposite of what you might think," says columnist Woody Hochswender. "Men's fashion, once governed by strict codes, has gotten increasingly unruly... Everything should look as if thrown on with a pitchfork." This trend, however, may in some settings betray a couldn't-careless attitude. Or it may evince a lack of self-respect or a lack of respect for others.

In an article on students' perception of teachers, the journal *Perceptual and Motor Skills* explains that "although the teach-



er wearing jeans was seen as bringing fun into the classroom, his opinions were given the least respect and he was most frequently chosen as the teacher who does not seem to know anything." The same journal comments that "a female teacher dressed in jeans was seen as fun, approachable, not especially knowledgeable, commanding limited respect, not looking like a teacher, and generally preferable."

Meanwhile, in the business world, we have yet another fashion statement: power dressing. In recent years more women have wanted to climb the corporate ladder. "I dress to attack," says Marie, an executive for a publishing house. "I want to stand out. I want to sell myself as something that looks fantastic," she adds. Marie is honest in revealing that her focus is on herself.

Popular fashions inevitably find their way into the churches too. Some of the more fashion conscious have even used their church to show off their latest outfits. Yet, today, the clergy, while decked out in their flowing robes, often look down from the pulpit upon a congregation clad in jeans and sneakers or in faddish garb.

Why This Obsession With Self and Identity?

Faddish dress—especially among the young—psychologists say, is an aspect of egocentrism, in that it expresses the desire for an audience. They describe it as "the chronic tendency on the part of the adolescent to see the self as the object of others' attention." In effect, he or she is saying: "I think you are as obsessed with me as I am about myself."

—*American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*.

Philosophies that put man at center stage and discount God as irrelevant have also oiled the thinking (often

peddled by commerce) that you, the individual, are the most important person in the universe. The trouble is, there are now nearly six billion of these 'most important' persons. Millions in Christendom's religions have also crumbled under this materialistic onslaught, striving for "the good life, here and now." (Compare 2 Timothy 3:1-5.) Add to this the erosion of the family unit and genuine love, and it comes as no surprise that many, youths in particular, are grasping at anything for a sense of identity and security.

However, those concerned about their dress and their standing before God naturally ask: To what extent should I conform to changing dress codes? How do I know if my clothing is appropriate? Does it give out confusing or even wrong signals about me?

Am I Dressed Appropriately?

What we wear is essentially a matter of personal choice. Our individual tastes vary, as do our financial resources. And customs vary from place to place, from country to country, and from one climatic region to another. But whatever your situation, bear in mind this principle: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." (Ecclesiastes 3:1, *Revised Standard Version*) In other words, dress for the occasion. And second, "be modest in walking with your God."—Micah 6:8.

That does not mean dressing prudishly but, rather, in a way that is "well-arranged" and that reflects "soundness of mind." (1 Timothy 2:9, 10) Often, this simply means showing restraint, a quality the magazine *Working Woman* links to good taste and elegance. As a good rule of thumb, never allow your clothes to enter the room

first, to overwhelm others. *Working Woman* says: "Dress . . . so that people can look past your clothes and see your merits as an individual."

The journal *Perceptual and Motor Skills* says: "A body of literature examining the role of clothing in impression formation and non-



verbal communication indicates that clothing is an important cue used in making initial judgements of others." In this vein a woman in her 40's, who previously reveled in her power to attract by the way she dressed, says: "It created enormous problems for me because it blurred the line between the professional and the private. There were always business contacts wanting to take me out to dinner." A female accountant, describing a contrasting style, relates: "I've watched how men behave towards women who dress down, or dress in a very severe masculine style. They are assumed to be aggressive females who go for the jugular and they are given a harder time by men."

A young girl named Jeffie found that she was giving out confusing signals when she had her hair cut in a faddish style. "I just thought it looked 'different,'" she recalls. "But people started asking me, 'Are you really one of Jehovah's Witnesses?' and that was embarrassing." Jeffie had to ask herself some hard questions. Indeed, is it not true that "out of the abundance of the heart" not only our mouth but also our dress and grooming speak? (Matthew 12:34) What does your dress reveal—a heart intent on drawing attention to the Creator or to yourself?

Dress With "Soundness of Mind"

Consider, too, the effect your clothes have on *you*. Power dressing and overdressing may inflate your ego, slovenly dress might reinforce negative thoughts you have about yourself, and T-shirts advertising your favorite movie or sports star or some other hero might nudge you toward hero worship—idolatry. Yes, your clothes talk to others—and tell them about you.

What are your clothes saying about you if you dress to kill or dress to thrill? Are you reinforcing personality traits that you should in fact be struggling to overcome? Moreover, what kind of person are you trying to attract?

The counsel recorded at Romans 12:3 can help us conquer egocentricity, vanity, and negative thinking. There the apostle Paul advises us "not to think more of [ourselves] than it is necessary to think; but to think so as to have a sound mind." Having "a sound mind" means being sensible.

This is especially important for those in positions of responsibility and trust. Their example has a powerful influence on others. Naturally, those reaching out for privileges of service in the Christian congregation and their Christian wives would likewise display in their dress and grooming a modest and respectful attitude. Never would we want to be like the man Jesus singled out in his illustration of the marriage feast: "When the king came in to inspect the guests he caught sight there of a man not clothed with a marriage garment." Upon learning that this man had no valid reason for wearing such disrespectful attire, "the king said to his servants, 'Bind him hand and foot and throw him out.'"

—Matthew 22:11-13.

Thus, it is important that parents by word and example cultivate in their children wholesome attitudes toward, and good taste in, clothing. This may mean that parents need to be firm at times as they reason with their son or daughter. But how encouraging it is when we receive unsolicited commendation for the high standard of dress and conduct of our young ones and of ourselves!

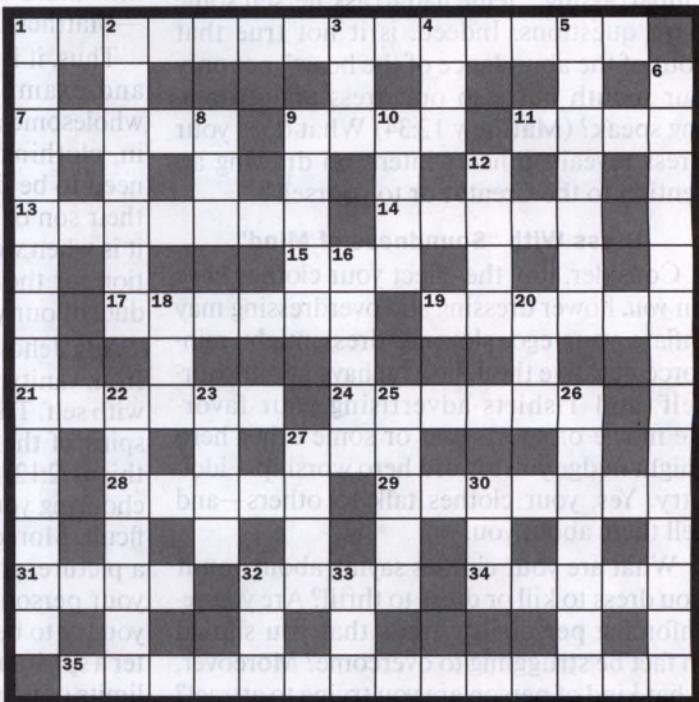
Yes, Jehovah's servants have been set free from vanity, expensive fads, and an obsession with self. They have divine principles, not the spirit of the world, to guide them. (1 Corinthians 2:12) If you live by these principles, choosing your clothes should not be too difficult. Moreover, like a well-chosen frame on a picture, your clothes will neither smother your personality nor insult it. And the more you try to be like God, the more you will foster a spiritual beauty that goes far beyond the limits of your wardrobe.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Clues Across

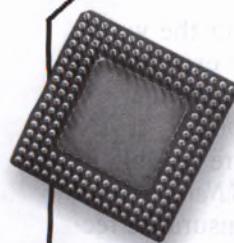
1. By means of God's spirit, first-century Christians could do this as a sign to unbelievers [3 words] (1 Corinthians 12:30)
 7. The dove returned to Noah with a leaf from this tree (Genesis 8:11)
 9. Perceived (Romans 1:20)
 11. This geographic name, possibly representing a city, a region, a series of border forts, or a mountain range, is located in the northwest portion of the Sinai Peninsula and is mentioned in the Bible six times (Genesis 25:18)
 13. Term applied to the wise woman who at Joab's direction appealed to King David in behalf of Absalom (2 Samuel 14:4)
 14. This land was the eastern limit of King Ahasuerus' empire (Esther 1:1)
 15. Something done voluntarily (Luke 4:7)
 17. In the restoration prophecies, it was foretold that this fragrant tree would replace the stinging nettle (Isaiah 55:13)
 19. The proconsul of Achaea who dismissed the Jews' case against Paul on the basis that there was no violation of Roman law (Acts 18:12-17)
 21. The Israelite wilderness campsite between Libnah and Kehelathah (Numbers 33:21, 22)
 24. How the Bible describes dead ones (Acts 7:60)
 27. A Jairite listed among King David's leading officers as "a priest of David" (2 Samuel 20:26)
 28. One of the two older men who, though selected as part of the 70 to assist Moses, did not go to the tent of meeting (Numbers 11:14-17, 24-26)
 29. A town on the boundary between Ephraim and Manasseh (Joshua 16:8)
 31. Recompensed (Job 28:16)
 32. Usually smaller than a city (Isaiah 22:2)
 34. Third letter of the Greek alphabet
 35. According to the Bible account, this was sacrificed on "the first day of unfermented cakes" [2 words] (Mark 14:12)
- cause his enemies did not do this over him [3 words] (Psalm 41:11)
2. Pharaoh Nechoh placed this man on the throne of Judah and changed his name to Jehoiakim (2 Kings 23:34)
 3. Some of the blood of the sacrificed ram of the installation was placed here on Aaron and his sons (Leviticus 8:22-24)
 4. Joshua's father (Nehemiah 8:17)
 5. Jezebel's father (1 Kings 16:31)
 6. Because of their inability to pronounce the password "Shibboleth," 42,000 of its members were identified and put to death [3 words] (Judges 12:1-6)
 8. High priest who rebuked righteous Hannah, mistakenly judging her to be drunk (1 Samuel 1:12-15)
 9. If one did this in Israel, he had to compensate as much as fivefold (Exodus 22:1)
 10. Egress (See Ezekiel 42:11.)
 12. Job acknowledged that not one was unattainable for God (Job 42:2)
 16. Tree used extensively in the building of the temple (1 Kings 6:9-20)
 18. You should mean this when you say it (Matthew 5:37)
 20. What God cannot do (Hebrews 6:18)
 22. Son of Gilead and great-grandson of Manasseh (Numbers 26:29-32)
 23. A descendant of David and an ancestor of Jesus (Luke 3:28)
 25. The chief Adversary of God (Zephaniah 3:1)
 26. In vision, Amos saw Jehovah holding this in his hand to show that Israel did not meet the test of straightness in a spiritual way (Amos 7:7-9)
 27. Head of the Nethinim temple slaves residing at Casiphia (Ezra 8:17)
 30. A beautiful woman who is not sensible is compared to a gold nose ring on this animal (Proverbs 11:22)
 32. The number of disciples that Jesus dispatched to get the colt that he rode into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1)
 33. Ruinous trouble (Revelation 12:12)

Crossword Solutions Page 22



Clues Down

1. David said that he knew that Jehovah had found delight in him be-



The Year 2000

Will Computer Crashes Affect You?

IT HAS been said that when the computer made its debut on the world scene, it was the greatest invention since man harnessed electricity. Today, several decades later, many people wonder how they ever managed without computers. This magazine that you are reading was prepared using them. Computers can retain information stored in their memory and retrieve it instantly. Ah, marvelous computers! How wonderful they are! What would the world do without them?

In modernized areas of the world, almost every aspect of people's lives is affected in some way by computers. If you rely on retirement income, disability checks from the government, tax and insurance refunds, or a host of other such payments, your receiving them is dependent on computers. If you are an employee, chances are that your payroll checks are computerized. Computers keep track of money deposited in banking institutions and the interest paid. They control countless devices in modern homes, such as those that generate electricity or purify water. They are a boon to doctors, clinics, and hospitals in diagnosing health problems—and saving lives. Computers are used to monitor weather conditions and to keep airplanes from colliding in the air.

How Smart Are They?

Computers are no smarter than the humans who program them. A computer solves problems only as instructed. It does not have any common sense. When wrong, it only reflects the imperfections of the humans who programmed or configured it.

When it is right, man takes the credit. The computer may perform tasks more rapidly than a man, but it cannot provide answers to problems unless man has supplied the method for coming up with the answers.

Man's foresight, for example, was short indeed when he first programmed certain computers in the '50's and '60's. Since computer memory was expensive then, programmers looked for ways to save on memory. In the computer each letter or number takes up space. So in order to save space when storing dates, early programmers devised a shortened code that left off the first two digits of year dates. For example, the year 1965 was shortened to "65," 1985 to "85," 1999 to "99," and so forth. It was a simple matter to add the "19" to the "85" to get 1985 when printing out dates. Over the past few decades, millions of programs have been written using this shortcut. Few programmers thought that this seemingly harmless shortcut would have serious consequences, since they did not imagine that their programs would still be in use at the turn of the century. However, a number of programs with this shortcut are still being used and will store the year 2000 as "00."

Some computers will interpret "00" to mean the year 1900! Now imagine the confusion in the computer program when the computer calculates a five-year loan starting in 1999 and projects the final payment as due in 1904! In other cases, date calculations will cause the computer program to halt with an error condition, and in severe cases, the program will crash completely.

"While the microchip has brought us an industrial revolution that rivals the invention of electricity," wrote the *Toronto Star* newspaper, "it has also made us more vulnerable than its inventors could ever have imagined." The *Star* also said: "Throughout the world there are computer systems and microchips that cannot distinguish between the year 1900 and the year 2000. Unless these systems are identified and changed, there could be global chaos."

What Some Experts Predict

"Everybody is guessing how bad it will be, including me," said U.S. Senator Robert Bennett, of Utah. "And no one will find out until New Year's Day 2000 or a week or two afterward." "There is some basis in fact for saying . . . there will be outcomes that will be extremely difficult for the economy and extremely difficult for people," said an assistant to the president of the United States.

"We're concerned about the potential disruption of power grids, telecommunications, and banking services," said a spokesperson for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. Ac-

cording to reports from around the world, some computers have already experienced problems when dates in the computer extended to the year 2000 or beyond.

"Experts are predicting more trouble in the health sector," reported *U.S. News & World Report*, "as patient billing and insurance records at hospitals or HMOs are vulnerable. Certain kinds of biomedical equipment, including patient-monitoring devices, are also in danger of malfunction. Because many electric utilities have gotten a late start, localized power outages are a threat." A Canadian newspaper echoes this same fear: "Our hospitals and medical technologies are all based on the all-pervasive microchip, so system failure could kill people." "Because of the business we are in," lamented one hospital administrator, "it puts this in a different arena. Other industries may not be in life-or-death circumstances."

The more pessimistic computer professionals are forecasting stock market crashes, small-business failures, and a run on banking institutions by fearful depositors. In the United States, the deputy secretary of defense called the worldwide computer bug the electronic equivalent to the El Niño weather pattern and commented: "I will be first to say we're not going to be without some nasty surprises."

"The effect on businesses in Russia will be catastrophic if computers are not fixed before January 1 in the year 2000," said the president of the American Chamber of Commerce. Reuters news agency reports: "German companies are sleep-walking towards millennium computer bomb disaster, and the fallout threatens chaos right across Europe." A research director said that "you could apply the same criticisms to Austria, Switzerland, Spain, France and Italy."

The *Bangkok Post* also calls attention to Thailand's computer problem: "National statistical offices in the region face a dual

CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

S	P	E	A	K	I	N	T	O	N	G	U	E	S
H	L				O	U		T		T			
O	L	I	V	E	S	E	E	N	S	H	U	R	
U	A	A	L	T	X	I		B		I			
T	E	K	O	I	T	E	I	N	D	I	A	B	
I	I				A	C	T	E	A	E			
N	M	Y	R	T	L	E	G	A	L	L	I	O	
T	E			D			I			F			
R	I	S	S	A	H	A	S	L	E	E	P	E	
I	H	D	I	R	A				L		P		
U	E	L	D	A	D	T	A	P	P	U	A	H	
M	M	I	D	A	I				M	R			
P	A	I	D	T	O	W	N	G	A	M	M	A	
H	D		W	O				E	I				
P	A	S	S	O	V	E	R	V	I	C	T	I	M

millennium challenge: heading off the year 2000 (Y2K) problem in their computer systems, and getting ready to process a new round of population censuses, according to the United Nations Information Service." Australia, China, England, Hong Kong, Ireland, Japan, and New Zealand all face the same problems. Indeed, it is a worldwide problem that begs for a solution.

The Staggering Cost

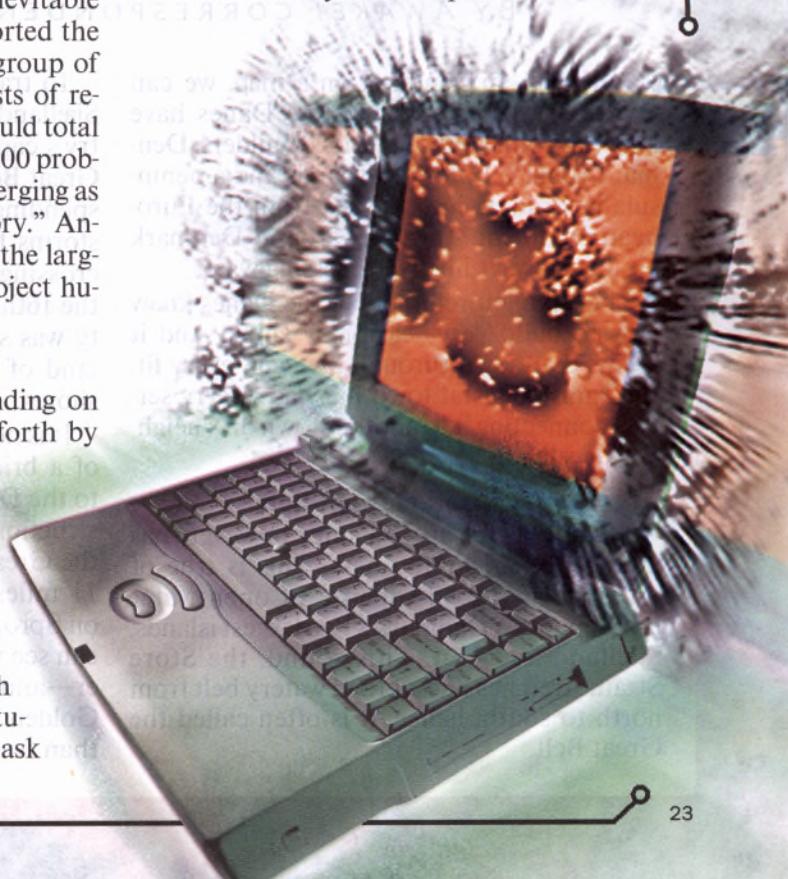
Some experts have set the cost for fixing the computer problems at a staggering amount. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget, for example, estimates that it will take \$4.7 billion to debug just the federal government's computers. One group of experts says that a more realistic estimate for overhauling the federal computers would be \$30 billion. What is the estimated price tag worldwide? A whopping "\$600 billion to fix software and \$1 trillion for the inevitable lawsuits when some fixes fail," reported the *New York Post* newspaper. Another group of experts has estimated that the "costs of repairs, litigation, and lost business could total as much as \$4 trillion." "The Year 2000 problem," wrote the *New York Post*, "is emerging as the most expensive in human history." Another report described it as "maybe the largest, highest-risk, most-expensive project humanity has ever faced."

Opinions Differ

How will this affect you? Depending on where you live and the effort put forth by the institutions that you deal with, it could range anywhere from being of no effect to mildly irritating to very difficult, especially in the first few weeks after January 1, 2000. If there are areas that are of concern to you, such as specialized equipment that you use for health care, contact the business or institution that provides the service and ask

what effect the year 2000 may have on the equipment or service.

Over the past few years, there has been no shortage of rhetoric about the year 2000 problem. Some say the problem is extremely serious; others counter that the scenarios are overblown. There are those who charge that banks will fail, whereas banking experts say that by the year 2000, most of their problems will be fixed. "No one believes the telephone network is heading toward catastrophic failure," said the head of the U.S. Federal Communications Commission. He conceded, however, that there will be telephone problems at the turn of the century, but he said they would be annoying, not disastrous. Many organizations are already doing date simulation tests in laboratory environments. This may preclude many problems. Yet, the world will have to wait to see how serious the year 2000 problem will be.





SPANNING DENMARK'S GREAT BELT

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN DENMARK

LOOKING at Denmark on a map, we can easily understand why the Danes have long been seafarers and bridge builders. Denmark is made up of 483 islands and a peninsula protruding into the sea from the European continent. Traveling around Denmark has thus always involved crossing water.

The Viking forefathers of the Danes knew how to build very seaworthy ships. And it seems that down through the ages, every little Danish coastal town has had a ferry service connecting it to another town on a neighboring island.

Across the Great Belt

Making a passage by ship, however, has always been risky business. This is true of crossing the broad expanse of open water that separates Denmark's two largest islands, Sjælland and Fyn. This sound, the Store Strait, stretches like a broad watery belt from north to south; hence, it is often called the Great Belt.

To travel between western Denmark and Sjælland, on which Copenhagen, the country's capital, is situated, you must cross the Great Belt. In the old days, this could mean spending days waiting for winds to change, storms to subside, or ice to break up. The crossing could be long and hazardous. In the 16th century, because of ice, a royal party was stranded for a week on the little island of Sprogø, midway between the two shores.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the idea of a bridge at this spot has long appealed to the Danes. But could any man-made construction span a body of water as wide as the Great Belt? It would have to be at least 11 miles long, including the portion built on Sprogø. It would extend farther than one can see with the naked eye in normal weather—and across open sea. San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, by comparison, is less than two miles long.

Planners' Headaches

Actually, the Danish Parliament began debating the subject of such a bridge in the 19th century. Over the years, planners were occupied with questions like these: Do we want a bridge or a tunnel? Should the connection be for trains, cars, or both? What's wrong with just using ferries?

Thousands of calculations were made, and millions of words were spoken. The expression "Great Belt debate" became synonymous in Denmark with a never-ending discussion. But finally, in 1987, an agreement was reached. The connection, joining the two large islands at their closest points, would be for trains *and* cars. The project would consist of two bridges and a tunnel—an 11-mile-long combination—together called the Great Belt Link.

The Western Bridge

From the island of Fyn—the birthplace of Danish storyteller Hans Christian Andersen—a combination railway and automotive bridge of reinforced concrete was the first part of the project. Completed in January 1994, it forms the western half of the link. It is now Europe's longest combined rail-and-road bridge. Standing 60 feet above the sea, it stretches more than four miles eastward from Fyn to Sprogø.

This Western Bridge, resting on concrete pillars in the sea, is composed of dozens of separate road sections, most of which are 360 feet long. These concrete sections were poured and finished ashore. But how did each part get out to sea to be joined to the previous section? For that, one of the world's largest floating cranes was used. This massive lifting instrument is over 300 feet long and can

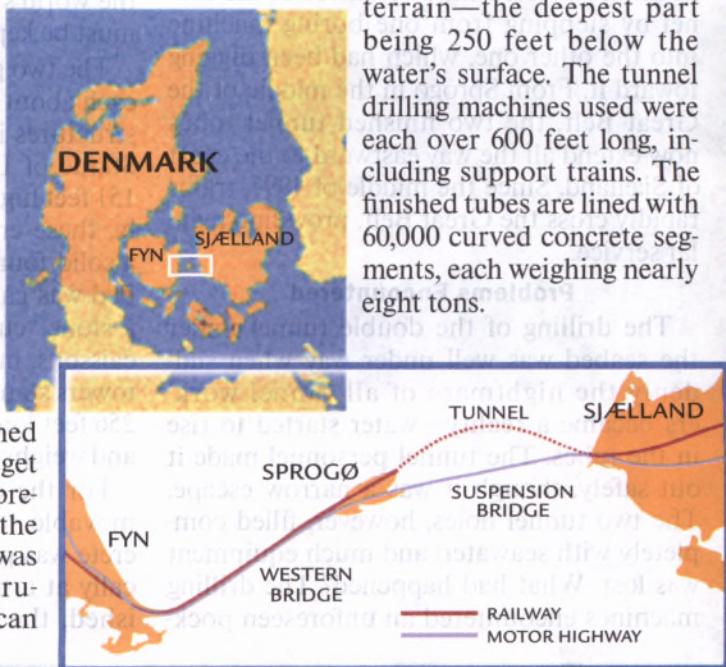
lift a load of 7,100 tons and carry it out to sea. That is more than the weight of a large car ferry plus 1,000 cars!

But building a dual railway and a four-lane highway to the tiny lighthouse island of Sprogø was not enough. From there, it had to connect with the next two parts of the project. At the end of the Western Bridge, the highway separates from the railway and continues eastward over another bridge. The railway, however, dives into a double tunnel and completes its journey under the sea.

The Double Tunnel

The tunnel, the second phase of the project, is a great accomplishment in itself. Twin tubes, each 25 feet in diameter, were built for trains. The tubes were bored through 4.6 miles of clay, rock, and marine deposits. And the tunnel builders were not able to determine in detail the nature of this underground material before they started drilling.

The tunnel lies between 30 and 130 feet beneath the seabed, depending on the undersea terrain—the deepest part being 250 feet below the water's surface. The tunnel drilling machines used were each over 600 feet long, including support trains. The finished tubes are lined with 60,000 curved concrete segments, each weighing nearly eight tons.





Opening evening for the completed suspension bridge

Starting the tunnel simultaneously from both ends, the builders masterfully succeeded in meeting in the middle with a deviation of less than an inch and a half. It was a long-awaited special occasion when, on October 15, 1994, Prince Joachim of Denmark officially connected the two halves of the tunnel by stepping from one boring machine into the other one, which had been digging toward it. From Sprogø in the middle of the Great Belt, the two finished tunnel tubes now extend all the way eastward to the coast of Sjælland. Since the middle of 1997, trains rapidly cross the Great Belt, providing regular service.

Problems Encountered

The drilling of the double tunnel under the seabed was well under way when suddenly the nightmare of all tunnel workers became a reality—water started to rise in the tubes. The tunnel personnel made it out safely, though it was a narrow escape. The two tunnel holes, however, filled completely with seawater, and much equipment was lost. What had happened? The drilling machines encountered an unforeseen pock-

et of water in the seabed. This chilling experience naturally set the whole project back, and new techniques had to be devised to get around the problem.

Then one day an explosive fire broke out, and one of the tubes quickly filled with smoke. As a foreman put it, "the smoke got so thick that Pinocchio couldn't have seen his own nose." The site was cleared, the fire extinguished, and the work stopped until the cause was determined—hydraulic oil had caught fire. These and other troubles meant that the whole project was delayed time after time.

The Suspension Bridge

The third and crowning piece of the Great Belt Link is the beautiful 4.2-mile-long automotive suspension bridge. The bridge includes a free span of approximately one mile, making it one of the world's longest suspension bridges. The roadway of this eastern part of the Great Belt Link is suspended 220 feet above the sea. Such a height is necessary because the Great Belt, one of the world's busiest international waterways, must be kept open for oceangoing vessels.

The two gigantic bridge towers, or pylons, each about 830 feet high, are now the tallest structures in Denmark. In comparison, the Statue of Liberty, in New York Harbor, is 151 feet high, not including its base. Naturally, these enormous towers in the sea need a solid foundation. To provide this, the seabed was carefully leveled and covered with a stone "cushion" that serves as a base for caissons, huge concrete boxes on which the towers stand. Each of the caissons measures 256 feet long, 115 feet wide, and 62 feet high and weighs 35,000 tons.

For the erection of the pylons, a special movable scaffolding form was used. Concrete was poured in sections—13 feet vertically at a time. When one portion was finished, the form was moved upward, and

13 feet more were added on top. It took 58 steps upward to finish each tower.

A fascinating feature of suspension-bridge construction is the spinning of the strong cables used for support. These cables are a carefully assembled bundle of 169 smaller cables, each of which, in turn, is made of 127 steel wires that are each two tenths of an inch in diameter. How did those heavy bundles get hoisted up in the air? They did not! Rather, they were assembled in place. Each individual wire was attached to a special trolley that drew it up to the top of the tower, back down the other side, then up the other tower, and finally on down to the base. Each trip made the cable a fraction thicker. After one year and about 20,000 of such roller-coaster rides, the cable was finally complete.

The Opening

Finally, in June 1998, all the parts of the link were ready for the official opening. The Great Belt Link was a bold and costly enterprise for a small nation, and the Danes followed the construction with fascination. For this reason the opening was planned as a festival for all who wanted to share in it.

Before the bridges were handed over to automotive traffic, pedestrians and cyclists got a never-to-be-repeated opportunity to cross them. On a sunny day in June, more than 250,000 people, including pedestrians, skateboarders, roller skaters, and cyclists, streamed through the colorful 'opening village' of hot-dog stands, bandstands, and souvenir shops and out onto the bridges to enjoy the exhilarating view of the sea and the coastline.

During the festivities, the Danish queen pointed out in a speech that the term "bridge builder" is one of the most beautiful expressions that can be used about any person. Jet planes in formation crossed the sky above the bridge. The newly composed work "Bridge

Cantata" was played. It included a farewell salute from one of the old ferries. As part of the music, when the conductor pointed his baton at a TV camera, a ferry waiting a mile out in the sea picked up the signal and sounded its loud foghorn for all to hear.

On the evening after the opening, the now superfluous ferries gathered beneath the suspension bridge and sounded their horns to lament that they were members of a dying species.

What the Link Means

Now that the efforts of the thousands of planners and workers are finished, what is the result? Certainly, Denmark has gained another attraction for visitors, since the bridges are indeed a beautiful sight from the land or from the sea. By car, it is a remarkable experience to roll across a bridge that is so big that one or both ends are often out of sight! And, of course, the crossing time has really been shortened. Whereas the ferry took over an hour, a train now zips across in just seven minutes!

The link is already changing several patterns in the population. Many more Danes are visiting friends, doing business, or seeking entertainment across the water. Urbanization and business development are being affected because it is now possible to have your job on one side of the belt and your home on the other. And goods can be moved across the country much faster than before.

But something has also been lost. The ferries that plied these waters represented a tradition that was centuries old, and many travelers rather liked the break a ferry ride gave them. "I shall miss the ferries," lamented one businessman. "Water and big boats are fascinating. I enjoy the feeling of being windblown on the deck." Still, there is no doubt that the new link will draw the different parts of the Danish island kingdom closer together and make traveling to and from northern Europe much easier.

WATCHING THE WORLD

Rescued Books

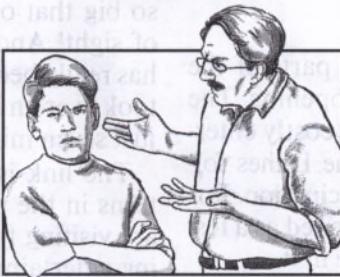
Many millions of books suffer from age, damage, or pollution. In Germany alone, some 60 million affected volumes have had to be withdrawn from use, notes the newspaper *Leipziger Volkszeitung*. Manual restoration is a painstakingly long process. "In the time it takes to restore one book by hand, four or five others decay," says Dr. W. Wächter, technical director of the Center for Book Conservation, in Leipzig. The center has concentrated on developing machines that can preserve books on a large scale. One is a deacidifier that can handle 100,000 books a year in single-shift operation. There is also a paper-splitting machine that strengthens the individual pages by separating the front side from the back and inserting a very thin high-strength paper in between. It can stabilize 2,000 sheets a day, compared with 100 to 200 sheets a day by manual operation—and at a 94-percent saving per page. Not only libraries and archives but also private individuals bring their books to the center for treatment.

Tunics for Pilgrims

Tourists visiting Catholic holy places in Italy are often turned away because they appear, especially during hot summer months, dressed in T-shirts and shorts. Now in some places they can enter if they use the "Pilgrims' Tunic," a knee-length, beige-colored robe. The unisex tunic, available in a single size, is already on sale in Venice and Rome. In Rome it has the add-

ed feature of the papal coat of arms and the phrase "Jubilee 2000." But can these tunics be used in all Catholic churches? While they are acceptable to the Venetian Curia, some male tourists visiting St. Peter's Basilica have been refused entry even though they bought and wore the tunic. "The personnel of the Holy See considered the garment suitable only for women," explains the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*. "Men were turned away—bare legs were considered 'indecent.'"

Relationships With Adopted Children



Parents planning to adopt a child sometimes idealize the relationship—thinking that the child will always be sweet and that difficulties will be easily overcome and understood. But that is not usually the case, reports the Brazilian newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*. Says psychologist Heloisa Marton: "In general, parents are unprepared to deal with conflict situations." Also in for a surprise are "couples who expect that the child will be eternally grateful," notes Professor Miriam Debieux Rosa, of São Paulo University. No one is happy all the time, she points out, adding: "Parents often attribute difficul-

ties to the lack of blood relationship, which is not true." Regarding the parents' need to show the adopted child affection and love, she states: "A helpful or professional relationship is not enough." An emotional relationship with the child is also needed.

Easy Fleece

How can fleece be obtained without the stress and cuts that accompany normal sheepshearing? In Australia this is done by injecting sheep with a protein that occurs naturally in the animals' bloodstream. The increased level of protein lasts for 24 hours and weakens the link between the wool fibers and the skin. The fleece is then shed in one piece, and the wool starts to grow again. Each animal is fitted with a net to catch its fleece, which will be cast off within a week. This process improves the quality of the wool and makes a second cut unnecessary. It also helps to reduce lice and dermatitis, without the use of chemicals, and is less stressful to the sheep. Demand for this new method of fleece removal is running high in Australia, reports *The Sunday Times* of London, but it may be less useful in lands like Britain, where the weather must be considered when shearing. A sudden dip in temperature after the protein shot will leave a flock of very cold sheep when the wool drops off, said an industry spokesman.

Melting Glaciers Yield More Surprises

Alpine glaciers continue to yield surprises as they shrink because of progressively warm-

er temperatures. In 1991, on the Austro-Italian border, the melting of ancient ice revealed the mummified remains of a prehistoric hunter. During August 1998, to remove other finds—remains of soldiers and unexploded hand grenades and artillery shells—the authorities in northern Italy had to declare certain mountain areas off-limits. All the items date back to the first world war, when the area was the theater of fierce fighting between Italian and Austrian troops. During clearing operations, "all residents, and particularly tourists and hikers, were warned to be extremely careful" and to check routes with the authorities, said the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, because there is "always the risk of explosions." Much of the material is highly dangerous and continues to kill or seriously injure people who find it.

Compacted Soil

Seventy million acres of soil in Europe is "completely degraded by soil compaction," reports the magazine *New Scientist*. Research undertaken by Germany's Kiel University reveals that when heavy tractors, exerting a force of five tons at each wheel, passed six times over a field, the density of small invertebrates such as arachnids and worms was reduced by up to 80 percent at a depth of about three feet. These small creatures help to keep soil fertile, so when they are destroyed, crop yields diminish accordingly. Plant roots cannot penetrate compacted subsoil, and thus plants suffer in dry weather. Rain cannot seep down; instead, it runs off the surface, eroding the topsoil. Regular plow-

ing actually makes the problem worse, allowing the pressure to be transmitted to lower levels. The German scientists claim that by using low tillage, breaking the topsoil to a depth of only three inches, the damage to the soil could be cut by one third.

Message Overload



"Today's technology-enabled communications tools are leading to a new workplace health hazard: message-induced stress," says *Computing Canada*, an information-technology management newspaper. A recent survey on workplace communication, conducted by the Stamford, Connecticut-based Pitney Bowes Inc., discovered that the average office worker sends or receives "an estimated 190 messages a day in a variety of formats," such as voice mail, telephone, fax, pager, beeper, and E-mail. "What that means," says the paper, "is that work is now, to a certain extent, shaped by the need to respond to messages, leading to increasing feelings of stress and of being overwhelmed." Most workers would like more live contact either face-to-face or on the phone, the study found. Researchers recommend that "all employees be provided a guideline on the acceptable use of their communications tools—and how to use them properly" and thus reduce the message overload.

More on the Folly of Smoking

A recent study in the Netherlands says that "smoking more than doubles the risk of developing dementia and Alzheimer's disease," reports the *International Herald Tribune*. The study of 6,870 persons over 55 years of age revealed that smokers are 2.3 times more likely to develop Alzheimer's than lifelong abstainers. The risk for those who had quit smoking was only slightly higher than for individuals who had never smoked. Alzheimer's disease, which involves the gradual destruction of brain cells, is "the most common form of dementia."

Defying Deciphering

"A Nobel prize possibly awaits the person who can decipher what the Indus people wrote," states the magazine *India Today*. "Along with the Etruscan of Italy, it is the last script of the Bronze Age that is yet to be deciphered." One reason is that no bilingual artifact has yet been found that could help break the code. Egyptian hieroglyphics were deciphered after Napoleon's men found the Rosetta Stone, with an inscription recorded in hieroglyphic, demotic Egyptian, and Greek. Sumer's cuneiform script was cracked when Henry Rawlinson discovered the Behistun Inscription, which contained the clues he needed to decipher it. So far, little has been established about the writing of the Indus people except that they wrote from right to left—indicated by the strokes—and that the writing may be based on syllables. The script, composed mostly of glyphs, has about 419 signs.

FROM OUR READERS

Are We Changing Our Weather? I am 17 years old and am preparing for my diploma. The examination includes geography, and the series "Are We Changing Our Weather?" (May 22, 1998) was of great help to me in preparing. After the exam, my classmates asked me where I had found this information on the weather, and half of them asked for copies.

A. G., Switzerland

I was pleasantly surprised by the analysis of the greenhouse effect in this issue of *Awake!* I am a staunch ecologist and a Christian. Jehovah's Witnesses don't always get good press. But the contents of your magazine are worth thinking about. Ecology and faith are at their lowest ebb. At last, religious people who are interested in God's creation!

M. C., France

I am 14 years old and want to thank you for the articles. I never gave much thought to the weather, but I have now thought seriously for the first time about what we may be doing to our planet. These articles ought to force many people to wake up, because who wants to destroy our environment? We shouldn't simply throw away a gift of God.

S. Q., Germany

It felt good to read something about the climate, in a magazine people consider to be religious. It just shows how much *Awake!* cares about people—not only religiously but also physically. Although we take it for granted, the weather really affects our lives.

M. F. M., Germany

Fingernail Care It is amazing that for nearly 52 years, apart from two brief periods, I have bitten my nails. Having read in the *Awake!* of May 22, 1998, the article "Your Fingernails—Do You Take Care of

Them?" I have stopped. Why? Because Jehovah God is the Designer of them and wants us, as with everything else, to take care of them. Thank you for your lovely reminders.

D. H., England

Since I take care of both house and garden and look after my crippled mother-in-law, you can imagine that I have more to do than simply care for my hands. My nails have been bothering me for some time, as they are broken and cracked. So the article came at just the right time.

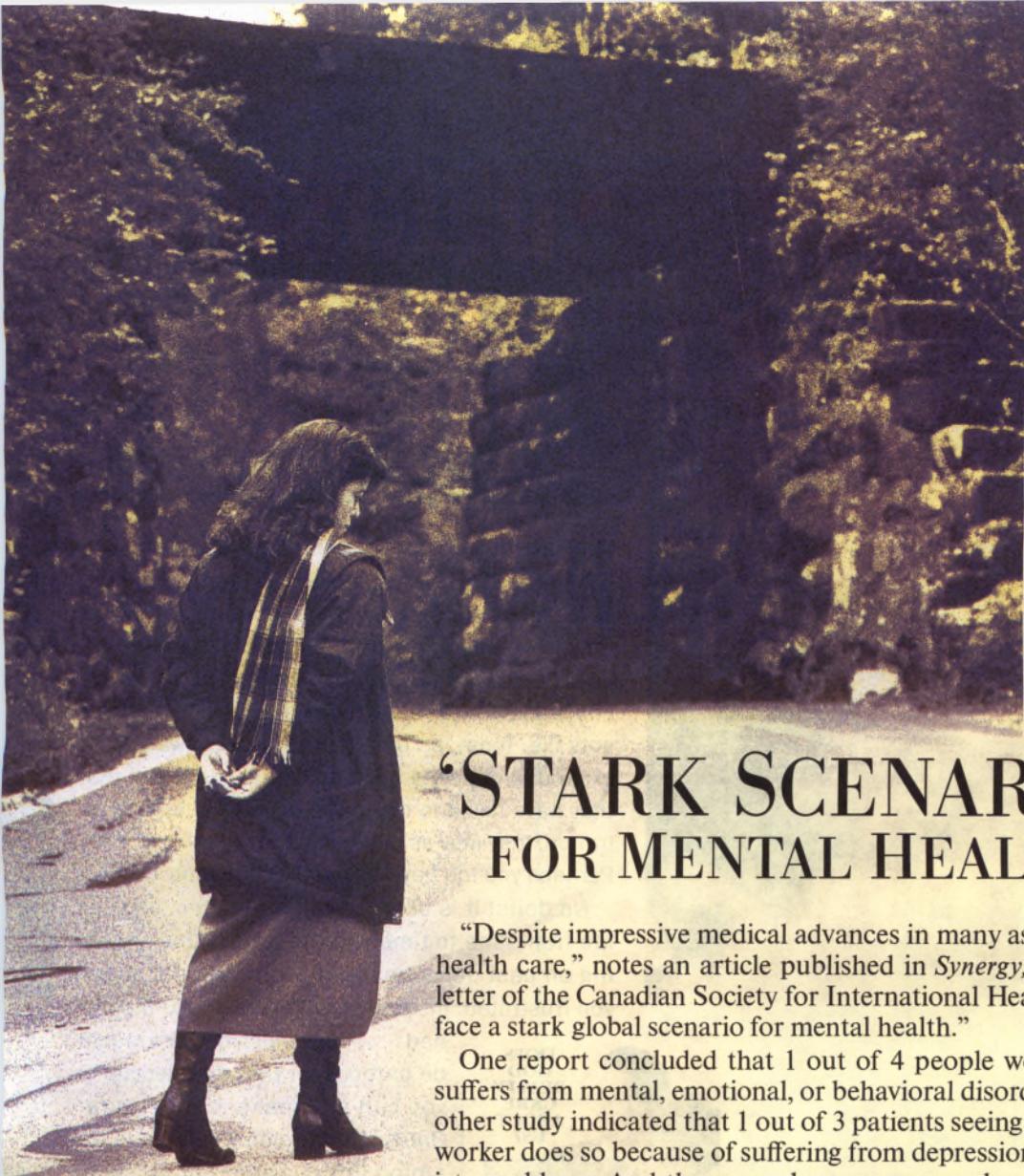
W. B., Germany

Ever since I was small, I have bitten my nails and have thus been ashamed of their uneven shape. As I read the article, my appreciation that nails are a wonderful part of our human bodies was deepened. It encouraged me to work on correcting my habit.

K. Y., Japan

Role Model When I read the piece in the May 22, 1998, *Awake!* entitled "Young People Ask . . . Who Should Be My Role Model?," I reflected on the way that articles such as this one have enriched my life. After my family disintegrated, I was naturally drawn first to friends who were my own age. But then I started to think seriously about people who had the most positive impact on my life—the older Christian sisters. Now I search out relationships like those of Paul and Timothy or Ruth and Naomi. My best friend is a sister about 50 years old who has taught me about joy, love, compassion, kindness, and generosity. We are joining forces—we have become roommates and are well on our way to entering the full-time ministry. Thank you for your sound guidance and direction.

C. F., United States



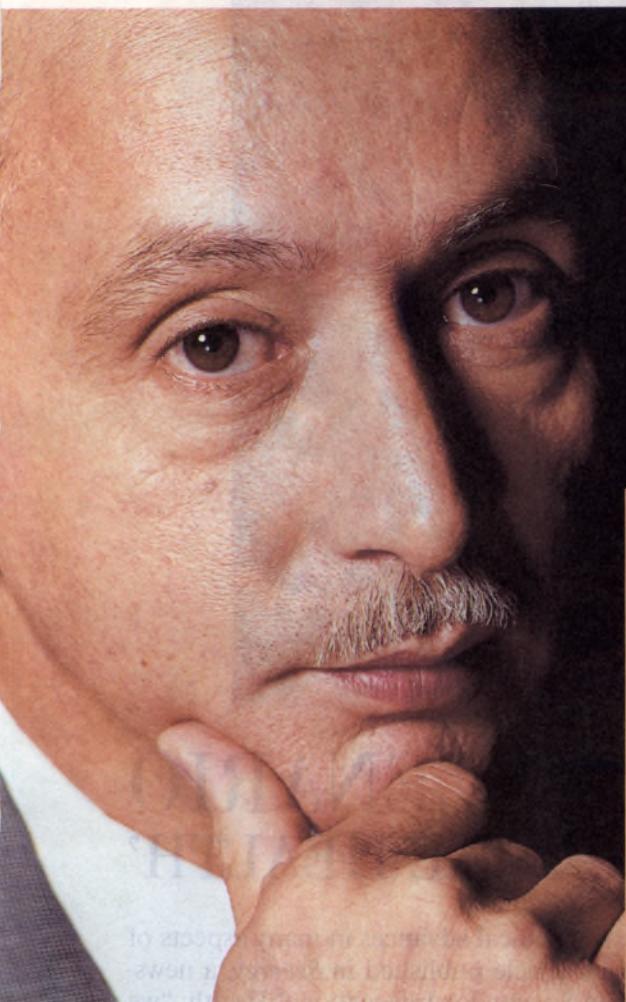
'STARK SCENARIO FOR MENTAL HEALTH'

"Despite impressive medical advances in many aspects of health care," notes an article published in *Synergy*, a newsletter of the Canadian Society for International Health, "we face a stark global scenario for mental health."

One report concluded that 1 out of 4 people worldwide suffers from mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders. Another study indicated that 1 out of 3 patients seeing a health worker does so because of suffering from depression or anxiety problems. And those numbers, say researchers, are increasing.

Why? A study conducted by Harvard University's Department of Social Medicine notes that such illnesses as clinical depression, schizophrenia, and dementia are multiplying because "more people live to the age of risk." However, living longer is not the only reason. Economic problems are also to blame, as is the increased stress of modern living.

How can this gloomy picture be changed? Amid the many aspects of health care, say experts, mental health should be given priority because it "represents one of the last frontiers in the improvement of the human condition."



A DECISION YOU WILL NOT REGRET

HUNDREDS of millions of men and women born after World War II have now reached middle age. Although many feel content with what they have accomplished, some feel disappointed. They have married, worked, borne children, and raised families, and some have seen their parents die. Today, as their hair turns gray, waistlines expand, and knees begin to creak, some feel that they have failed to reach their goals in life. In frustration, they may ask, 'What is the meaning of life?' Perhaps you too have asked that question.

No doubt it is of great value to reflect on your life from time to time. On the other hand, dwelling on past decisions that you regret can leave you frustrated. Instead of telling yourself, 'If only I

had . . .,' how much better it would be to focus on the wise decisions you can still make in the future. One such decision would be to examine information that answers questions about life's meaning.

