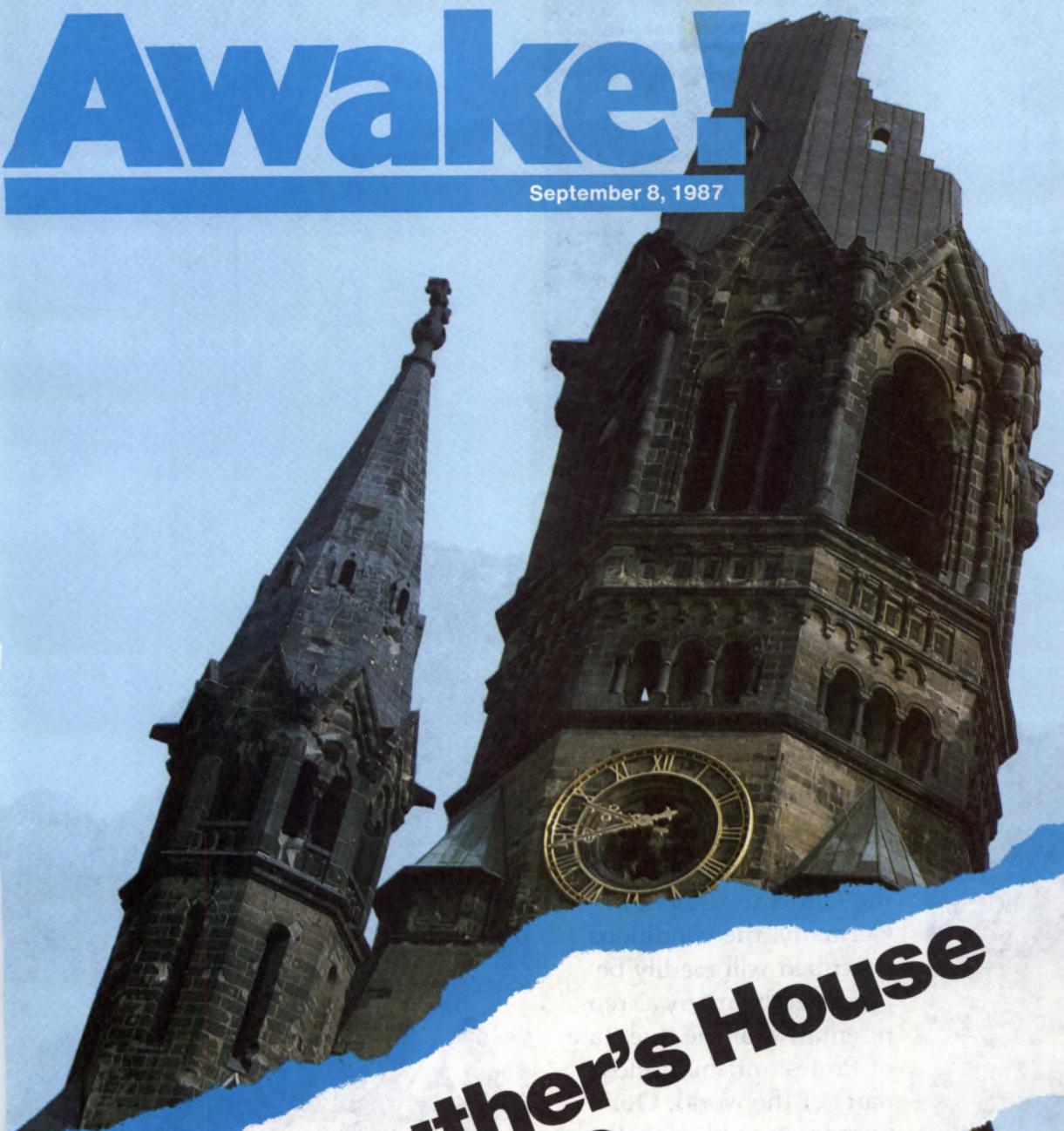
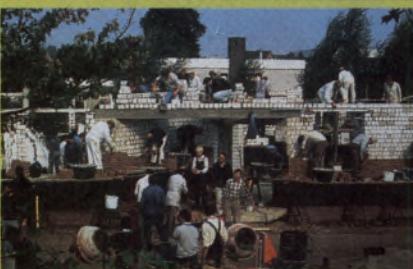


Awake!

September 8, 1987



**Why Is Luther's House
in Shambles?**



Some people, as these pictures indicate, have strong faith, motivating them to regular Christian worship and activity. They work together to build much-needed meeting places quickly. Yet, others admit to living in a spiritual vacuum.

While the following articles deal principally with the Lutheran Church in Germany, the conditions described will readily be identified by many as representative of the true state of Protestantism in most parts of the world. Our purpose in publishing this material is to help people of all religions to analyze their own spirituality in order to achieve a more significant relationship with God.



Are German Lutherans an Endangered Species?



By *Awake!* correspondent in the Federal Republic of Germany

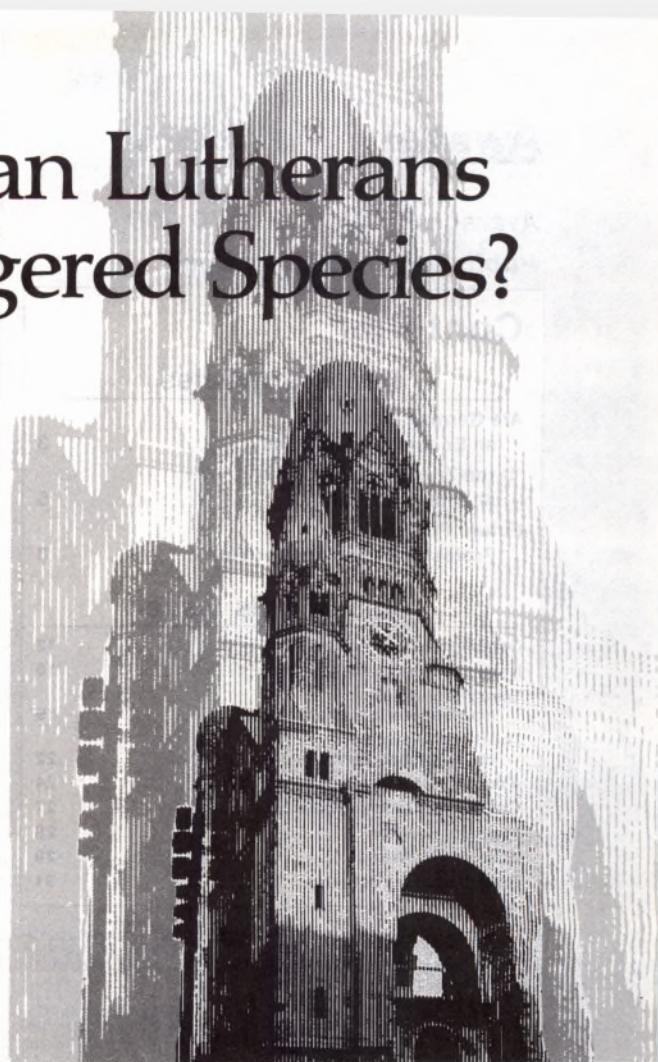
SOME viewers may have been startled to hear the following words on German television: "The Lutheran Church will have no future at all." Even more startling was the fact that they originated near the very region that brought forth Martin Luther, founder of that church and father of the Reformation.*

True, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany has about 25 million members, which is, according to the last official census, some 45 times as many as belong to all the other Protestant groups in Germany combined. Still, the church is in shambles, aptly symbolized on our cover by the bombed-out ruins of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in West Berlin.

In 1961, over 50 percent of all Germans were Lutheran. By 1970, the figure was 49 percent, by 1980, 46 percent. Then things seemed to improve. A German daily newspaper reported at the beginning of 1981: "The Lutheran Church in Germany has recovered from its setbacks of a decade ago. . . . Church membership withdrawals . . . have lost their ominous dimensions."

But membership figures for 1984 showed this optimism to be premature. Estimates now are that the church will lose another 4,500,000 members within ten years. Thus,

* To be exact, Luther was born and spent much of his life in what is now the German Democratic Republic, commonly known as East Germany.



by the year 2030, only a third or less of the population would be Lutheran.

Why Are They Leaving?

On the aforementioned 1986 television program, seven former church members gave their reasons for disgruntlement: church opposition to Sunday sports, its financing of communist guerrilla movements, its stand on governmental defense policies, its dismissal of two homosexual pastors, and its neglect in caring for animals. Another resented the arrangement whereby church taxes are deducted from

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members' earnings. Significantly, only two mentioned God. And yet, is that not what religion is all about?

Although serious, even more disturbing than the drop in numbers, says Johannes Hansen, a leading Lutheran theologian, is "the truly desolate religious state of church members." This accounts for the fact that on a normal Sunday less than 6 percent of them attend church services, in large cities still fewer. Only one in four considers attending church or reading the Bible to be Christian requirements. In fact, about eight out of ten say that to be a good Lutheran a person must simply be baptized and confirmed, live a decent life and be trustworthy. No wonder the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* noted in an editorial: "The danger for the Lutheran Church does not stem from its numbers but comes from its lack of spiritual strength!"

Church members who lack spiritual strength view their church accordingly. They admire its rich history, boast of its beautiful buildings, and take advantage of the social benefits it offers. When it comes to "finding God," however, many prefer to look for him in nature rather than in the church. This led a church leader to ask with sarcasm why they do not just go ahead and have their funeral services conducted by the Department of Forestry instead of by the church.

"What seems to be lacking," commented a U.S. magazine several years ago, "is the passion for God and his truth that characterized the original Lutherans." Why do so many Lutherans view their church as nothing more than a convenient framework for infant baptism, adolescent confirmation, and adult marriage ceremony? Why do they seek God in nature and turn back to the church only at life's end for a "decent burial"? Why the lack of spiritual strength?

"If the Trumpet Sounds an Indistinct Call . . ."



"**I**F THE trumpet sounds an indistinct call, who will get ready for battle?" (1 Corinthians 14:8)

Could the indifference shown by German Lutherans—soldiers of the church—be because the church is sounding an indistinct call? Consider the evidence.

An Identity Crisis

Over the past 200 years, claims Lutheran deacon Wolfram Lackner, Protestantism has progressively abandoned its original confessions of faith. So German Protestantism now "finds itself in a critical identity crisis."

This identity crisis became more apparent in the 1930's, as William L. Shirer's book *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* explains: "The Protestants in Germany . . . were a divided faith. . . . With the rise of National Socialism there came further divisions . . . The more fanatical Nazis among them organized in 1932 'The German Christians' Faith Movement' . . . [and] ardently supported the Nazi doctrines of race and the leadership principle . . . Opposed to the 'German Christians' was another minority group which called itself the 'Confessional Church.' . . . In between lay the majority of Protestants, . . . who sat on the fence and eventually, for the most part, landed in the arms of Hitler."

Actually, some of Luther's teachings played right into Hitler's hands. Luther's "two kingdoms" doctrine, arguing that God

rules the world through both secular and church authorities, encourages strict submission to civil officials. Thus, the Lutheran publication *Unsere Kirche* admits that "the greater part of German Protestantism . . . celebrated the end of the Weimar democracy with great enthusiasm and cheered the new dictator." In view of Luther's strong anti-Semitic sentiments, the church did not find it difficult to bar from the ministry persons not of Aryan descent.

But what about the "Confessional Church"? In 1934 it adopted the Barmen Declaration, which expressed opposition to National Socialist ideology. A Berlin exhibition about Protestantism during the Third Reich recently revealed, however, that only a third of the Protestant clergy supported the "Confessional Church." And not even all of that third actively opposed Hitler. The opposition of those who did was apparently misinterpreted by Hitler to mean opposition by the church as a whole. The book *Der deutsche Widerstand 1933-1945* (German Resistance 1933-1945) contends that thus was imputed to the Lutheran Church a position of political opposition that it itself did not choose.

After Hitler's downfall, the church was in shambles. Which of the opposing factions had mirrored its true identity? Why had its trumpet call been so indistinct?

To clear up these questions, 11 leading Protestant clergymen, including Gustav Heinemann, later to become president of the Federal Republic, met in October 1945

to draw up the so-called Stuttgart admission of guilt. Despite their opposition to the Nazi regime, they said: "We accuse ourselves for not having been more courageous in confessing our convictions, more faithful in saying our prayers, more joyful in expressing our faith, and more ardent in showing our love." These clergymen hoped that this declaration would be a distinct trumpet call to action, triggering a fresh start.

A Religious or a Political Trumpet —Which?

Possibly embarrassed that their church did so little in opposing Hitler, many German Lutherans today are quick to attack governmental policies. Lutheran clergy, for example, were among the early organizers of Europe's antinuclear movement. In 1984 a group of North German Lutheran pastors began urging men of draft age to refuse military service. The church condemned this action, however, saying it showed "considerable political intolerance for the feelings of Christians who think otherwise." At its 1986 general synod, the church defended its right to discuss political issues and then did so. It expressed disappointment at the results of the superpower summit in Iceland and debated at length government policy on refugees, unemployment, and nuclear power plants.

Of course, not everyone agrees with this political activism. Luther, were he alive today, would surely condemn it, according to Professor Heiko Oberman, an authority on the Reformation leader. And Rolf Scheffbuch, Lutheran deacon, complains that nowadays the genuineness of Christian faith is too quickly measured by one's attitude toward apartheid or missile deployment.

It is obvious that political differences are dividing the church. It is also obvious that the "longtime love affair" between Church and State is showing "signs of fatigue" and is getting "rusty," as Bishop Hans-Gernot Jung recently expressed it. This explains the reprimanding words uttered by a ranking German politician in 1986: "When dying forests are discussed at greater length than Jesus Christ, the church has lost sight of its real commission."

Protestantism, as its name indicates, arose from a desire to protest against what had gone before. Thus, from its founding, Protestantism has tended to be liberal, receptive to new ideas, open-minded in its approach, willing to adapt to the norms of the moment. Nothing illustrates this better than Protestant theology. With no final authority to rule on doctrine—such as the Vatican in the case of Catholics—every theologian has been permitted to blow his own trumpet of theological interpretation.

Discordant Theological Trumpeters

This has resulted in some very strange sounds. *Time* magazine reported an example in 1979: "Do you have to believe in God to be a Protestant minister? The answer, as in so many cases these days, is yes and no. Germany, in particular, has been a veritable font of Protestant doubt for decades. But last week, deciding it had to draw the line somewhere, West Germany's United Evangelical Lutheran Church . . . unfrocked the Rev. Paul Schulz for heresy.... Since 1971 he has preached that the existence of a personal God is 'a comforting invention of human beings.' . . . Prayer? Mere 'self-reflection.' . . . Jesus? A normal man with good things to say who was later glorified into the Son of God by early Christians." Indicating that "Schulz's notions

are not new, or even rare" was the fact that during the hearings he "played to a sometimes cheering gallery of theology students." And despite its action, "the commission insisted that it still favors 'a wide spectrum' of individual interpretation."

Pointing to this wide spectrum of individual interpretation, a newspaper editorial says that Protestant theology lacks "conceptual clarity and theoretical exactness" and calls it "elementary hodgepodge theology that comes across no less sterile than stale dogmatism." A Swiss Protestant newsletter adds: "The 'either-or' of Christian perception" has been "replaced by a 'this as well as that'." No wonder theologians disagree!*

Is Luther's House Heading for a Fall?

The crisis in the church is in reality a crisis of faith. But can faith be developed in persons nourished on "elementary hodgepodge theology" and guided in a wishy-washy, "this as well as that" direction? Can Protestantism expect to motivate its troops into Christian action with such an indistinct trumpet call?

As far back as 1932, theology teacher Dietrich Bonhoeffer complained: "It [the Lutheran Church] tries to be everywhere

* Karl Barth, one of this century's more prominent Protestant theologians, reportedly described some of fellow theologian Paul Tillich's theories as "abominable." He also violently disagreed with theologian Rudolf Bultmann, who questioned the literalness of some Bible accounts.

Who Sounded a Distinct Trumpet Call for Christian Neutrality?

"We still know very little about the fate of World War II conscientious objectors; until now only the following is known: Among Lutherans, Hermann Stöhr and Martin Gauger uncompromisingly refused military service . . . Seven names of Catholics can be mentioned . . . German Mennonites, traditionally pacifistic, did not choose to 'exercise the principle of nondefense' during the Third Reich, based on a decision made by a meeting of elders and ministers on January 10, 1938. Two Quakers in Germany are known to have refused military service. . . . Seven members of the Seventh-Day Adventists can be named who refused to swear the oath of allegiance . . . and were put to death. Jehovah's Witnesses (Bible Students) mourned the largest number of victims. In 1939 there were about 20,000 persons in the 'Greater German Reich' belonging to this . . . religious organization. It is estimated that in Germany alone some 6,000 to 7,000 of Jehovah's Witnesses refused to do military service during World War II. The Gestapo and the SS therefore gave this group special attention."
—*"Sterben für den Frieden"* (Dying for Peace), by Eberhard Röhm, published in 1985.

and thus ends up being nowhere." Is it too late for the church to find its identity? Most church officials agree that the usual methods of revitalization will not work. Something new and different is needed. But what? Retired Bishop Hans-Otto Wölber says: "The future of the church is not a question of methods, but of contents. . . . It is the message that matters. . . . In other words, we stand and fall with the Bible."

True.

Future Prospects for Protestantism —And for You!



"I HAVE been studying Lutheran theology now for seven semesters and am therefore a prospective minister of the church," began a letter to the editor in a November 1986 German newspaper. It continued: "I would like to call attention to the fact that our training consists basically of tearing the Bible apart —only its covers are left. . . . While the student's faith or its foundation, the Scriptures, is being shattered, most of his lecturers are teaching him the 'new gospel' of socialism, thereby giving the church a totally new substance. God is dead—long live socialism! Jesus has rotted in his grave, we must save ourselves! This is the message that many a minister takes to his pulpit, Sunday after Sunday. We urgently need new facilities to teach us the Bible, but at the moment the church is suppressing them."

With God's Word being treated so shabbily, is there any hope that the church and its parishioners may yet recover from their spiritual disarray? An 18th-century Bible translator correctly observed: "The church's state of health is determined by the way it treats the Scriptures."

Can a New Reformer Help?

"Dietrich Bonhoeffer is honored and quoted nowadays more than any other

theologian of our century," says theology Professor Georg Huntemann. Bonhoeffer, a leading member of the "Confessional Church," was imprisoned by the Nazis in 1943 and executed in 1945 for alleged involvement in an assassination plot against Hitler. Huntemann says Bonhoeffer might just be the new reformer the church needs. Note the following excerpts from some of his sermons. Ask yourself: What would heeding his words mean for the Lutheran Church? for *my* church?

"In religion only one thing is of essential importance, that it be true." This agrees with what Jesus said: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."*—John 4:24; see also John 8:32; 14:6; 16:13.

Are you sure that everything your church teaches is really true? Does it teach that man has an immortal soul—one that cannot die—or does it agree with the Bible, which says: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"? (Ezekiel 18:4, 20) Does your church teach you that God is nameless or that he is named Jesus, or does it agree with the Bible, which says: "Thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth"? (Psalm 83:18) Does your church teach you that all good people will be taken to heaven when the

* All quotations are from the *King James Version*.

earth is destroyed by fire, or does it agree with the Bible, which says: "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever"?—Psalm 37:29; see also Psalm 104:5.

"It [the church] must strive for purity of teaching." This agrees with what Jesus said: "Beware of the leaven . . . , the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."—Matthew 16:12; see also 1 Corinthians 5:8.

Does your church welcome "a wide spectrum of individual interpretation," or does it act in harmony with the divine counsel: "Brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them"?—Romans 16:17; see also 2 Timothy 2:16-18; 2 John 9, 10.

"On Judgment Day, God will certainly not

ask us: Have you celebrated impressive Reformation festivals, but rather: Have you listened to my Word and kept it?" This agrees with what Jesus said: "My brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it."—Luke 8:21; see also Matthew 7:21; John 15:14.

Does your church place more emphasis on ritual, ceremonies, and buildings than it does upon gaining accurate knowledge of God's Word? Is occasional holiday attendance at church considered enough, in contrast with the counsel of "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together . . . so much the more, as ye see the day [of judgment] approaching"?—Hebrews 10:25.

Does your church encourage you to read God's Word daily, offering you personal assistance in understanding it and providing motivation to do what it requires?

"Religion is work, perhaps the most difficult

At their conventions—for example, by means of dramas as seen here—Jehovah's Witnesses are offered practical instruction on applying Bible principles in daily life. This distinct trumpet call of truth, undistorted by political wrangling or doctrinal differences, strengthens their hope for the future and motivates to Christian conduct and activity. Attend a convention and see for yourself!





District conventions motivate Jehovah's Witnesses to do the work of preaching God's Kingdom

Lutheran Church must accept blame for at least the 25 million members of that society who are Lutheran. Even as a tree that bears rotten fruit is suspect, so is a church that brings forth pseudo-Christians. Jesus explained: "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."—Matthew 7:16-18.

Make this honest appraisal. What kind of fruit is your church producing? Is it improving

the personalities of its members? Is it promoting peace and unity on the family, community, and global levels? Is it a bulwark against drug abuse, immorality, and crime? Could you, without hesitation, say that the world would be a better place in which to live if everyone belonged to *your* church?

Notice on the opposite page why some Lutherans in Germany, after making such an honest appraisal, turned elsewhere for spiritual guidance.

If Your Church Fails to Act, Will You?

If, after making an honest investigation, you are less than pleased with what you see, do more than just complain. A journalist, while commenting on Karl Barth's statement that a church is its members, logically concluded: "Church members . . . are responsible for what the church says and does." So ask yourself: Am I willing to share responsibility for *everything* my church says and does? Can I really be proud of having all its members as spiritual brothers?

and most certainly the holiest work that a human can do." This agrees with what Jesus said: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."—John 4:34.

Does your church tell you that God's work for Christians today is to preach "this gospel of the kingdom . . . in all the world for a witness unto all nations"? (Matthew 24:14; see also Matthew 28:19.) Does it incite you to share this glorious Kingdom message with "every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you"?—1 Peter 3:15.

At least in the above instances, Bonhoeffer gave his church good advice. "But why do his words, his reformatory admonition to the church, go so completely unheeded?" asks Huntemann. Of even greater significance, however, is the question: Why do the authoritative words of Christ Jesus go unheeded in far greater measure?

Theologian Ulrich Betz says that West German society thinks and acts in a "post-Christian, not to say neopagan" way. The

Former Lutherans Explain Why They Are Now Jehovah's Witnesses

"What first impressed me about Jehovah's Witnesses was the cleanliness and honesty I saw at one of their conventions. I encourage others to attend one to experience for themselves the genuine love among the Witnesses."

—W. R., former sexton.

"I attended church every Sunday. But the sermon, at most 20 minutes long, seldom answered my questions about the purpose of life or about life after death. Jehovah's Witnesses gave me the answers right from the Bible, and I could talk to them on a person-to-person basis. More must be included in divine services than just responding to church bells every Sunday morning, singing songs, and listening to a sermon. No sincere searcher for truth can be satisfied with that! He wants to do something."—E. B., former Sunday-school teacher.

"My activity as church elder never involved Biblical matters, only purely business matters. What helped me most was learning God's name, Jehovah, a name I never heard mentioned at church. I was impressed with the multitude of truths contained in the Bible."
—E. M., former church elder.

While considering these questions, do not overlook the significance of Revelation 18:4, 8. Speaking of the world empire of false religion, displeasing to God, it says: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues . . . [for] her plagues [shall] come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for

"The first time Jehovah's Witnesses spoke to me, the difference [between them and us] was apparent. That they wanted to talk to me about the Bible was totally new and strange. My first question was whether they were being paid for their work. They said no. My second question was whether they had fought during the war. They explained that many Witnesses had been in concentration camps. Finally, I had found persons willing, if necessary, to die for their faith."—H. M., former sexton.

"When I asked my pastor to explain why every pastor had his own interpretation, he said: 'Every pastor has the right to visualize God in the way that will permit Him to be put to the best use in the congregation.' Later I took turns attending two different congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses. What struck me was the complete harmony between them. And the lectures contained such worthwhile material, always supported by Bible texts that you could immediately read from your own Bible! What a contrast to the many sermons I had heard!"
—U. P., former church social worker and parish nurse.

strong is the Lord God who judgeth her."

You may sincerely believe that your church is no part of false religion that God says he will soon destroy. But your life depends upon being 100 percent sure. Are you?

False religion has no future, nor do those who support it. True religion will last forever, along with those who practice it. Make your choice accordingly.

Gambling —Does Anyone Win?

By *Awake!* correspondent in Italy

IN THESE times of serious economic recession, there is an industry untouched by the crisis.' The Italian magazine *Corriere della Sera Illustrato* referred to the gambling industry. Yes, in Italy, as in many other lands, gambling is big business.

"The U.S. is in the midst of an explosion of legalized gambling," says *Fortune* magazine. "Hugely profitable, the lotteries last year [1983] netted . . . almost \$2.1 billion." Gambling also lures great numbers of Canadians. According to the newspaper *La Presse*, families living in Quebec spend more on gambling than on medicine and dental care!

While lotteries, roulette wheels, dice, and card games are used in gambling, the outcome of boxing matches, football games, and horse races are some of the more popular things gamblers bet on. But as *The Complete Illustrated Guide to Gambling* puts it: "Determined gamblers will bet on which of two raindrops will first reach the bottom of a window pane, or on the number of hairs growing on a hirsute mole." Thus, in Italy they bet on presidential elections, whether the government will fall or not, and even the election of the pope! The night before a football match is

likewise a time of frenzy for gamblers, who spend fantastic sums of money on football pools. Newspapers call this 'Saturday night fever.'

Who, though, are the winners in the game of gambling? Does the fact that millions—yes, billions—of dollars are up for grabs indicate that gambling is somehow worth while?

Why They Gamble

Sharon and Steve were happily married. But when Sharon discovered that they were buried in debt, she begged Steve to abandon gambling. Countless promises to stop were broken. Sharon's health collapsed, and she began to have chest pains. That concerned Steve little. His only thought was that if she died, he could use the insurance money to pay off his gambling debts.

This real-life case, related in *Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality*, well illustrates how tenacious a hold gambling can have on people. For some, the lure of gambling is greed, pure and simple. However, the booklet *Compulsive Gambling* says: "People who gamble . . . do so for special satisfactions: relief from tension and stress, the excitement of taking a chance, the thrill of anticipating a winning, a 'glow' or 'high'



similar to that produced by alcohol, and sociability and companionship. When the result is a win, added to the other effects is a feeling of power, even of omnipotence."

Winning early in life, though, often sets a subtle trap. While most people may brush off such a win as "beginner's luck," some foolishly interpret it as an omen of sorts. Said an article in *Psychology Today*: "The cold, hard odds—the fact that 90 percent of those who gamble lose—do not impress them. They feel that they are immune to these odds, that they are, in fact, special." This almost pathological refusal to face facts is one of the first steps toward becoming a compulsive gambler.

The Italian newspaper *Stampa Sera* stated that for such ones, gambling is "a drug a person cannot do without." Or as Giovanni Arpino wrote in *Il Giornale nuovo*: "This vice becomes irremediably embedded in one's flesh." Gambling provides an escape from a way of life that might otherwise be boring.

Even when gambling only for light recreation, the participant can fall prey to pride and egotism, refusing to quit if he loses or continuing to play after he wins—only to lose again.

Beating the Odds

Though the gambler may feel he is 'destined to win,' the fact is that a gambler is almost *certain to be a loser!* The reason? Simple mathematics. Flip a coin ten times, and how often does it come up heads or tails? Intuition

may say it should be five and five. Try it. It rarely comes out that way. You see, the so-called law of averages works only with *large numbers*. In other words, toss a coin an infinite number of times and, yes, it will come out heads and tails equally. But over the *short run*, any combination could appear. Thus, there's really no telling how any specific toss will come out.

The gambler refuses to accept this. If a coin has come out heads eight times in a row, he may believe with almost religious fervor that it just *has* to come out tails on the next toss. And he'll bet away a fortune on that conviction. In reality, the coin has no memory of its past performance. The odds on each toss are *still fifty-fifty!*

How futile it is, then, to attempt to predict with accuracy what will happen in a more complicated game such as blackjack or roulette! The odds against winning consistently are simply astronomical. This is true even in sports such as horse racing or football on which bets are based on the skill of the contestants. "Time and unforeseen occurrence" simply wreaks havoc with predictions. (*Ecclesiastes 9:11*) Nor is it usually possible to beat the odds with a "system." In Italy more than half of those participating in football pools try this by purchasing several coupons at the same time. However, the only sure system in this kind of game would be to send in every possible result for each game. Sure, you'd win. But the amount spent would not be recouped by the amount won.

The only ones who win in gambling are

"The cold, hard odds—the fact that 90 percent of those who gamble lose—do not impress them. They feel that they are immune to these odds, that they are, in fact, special."—*Psychology Today*.

I Was a Gambler

I got hooked on the game of poker at age 12. After I got married, I kept up my habit, beginning my gambling at nine o'clock in the evening, finishing at five or six in the morning. After this, numb with fatigue, I'd try to go to work. Often I did not make it.

Gambling began to ruin my family life and personality. Poker requires a lot of bluffing. But I'd find myself bluffing and lying my way around in real life. Then there was the problem of money. When I won, I had the urge to spend it right away, so it didn't stay

in my pocket for long. Soon my marriage failed.

In 1972, two of Jehovah's Witnesses knocked on my door. As they spoke to me, I thought, 'Nobody does anything for nothing. They have to have some ulterior motive.' (A poker player trains himself to be suspicious of everything!) But as time went on, I realized this was not true. I went to one of their meetings, and though I didn't understand everything, I was impressed by their orderliness, harmony, and kindness.

I began to study the Bible. And gambling? I had to make

a clean break from it. But when the Bible's truth enters your life, you lose the motivation to gamble. So with great effort, I stopped. I was baptized in 1975.

The benefits have been enormous. My health has improved—and so has my personality. My life is no longer dominated by gambling but by spiritual interests. Before, only fellow gamblers held me in esteem. Now I am loved by the congregation where I serve as an elder. I now realize that the gambler is a loser. And the Bible's truths have helped me to see this.—Contributed.

gambling promoters. Casino owners simply adjust the odds in any given game so that the casino almost *always* comes out ahead. In Italian football pools, reportedly a mere 35 percent of the total amount staked is paid out as prize money. The ones running the pools keep the rest.

Therefore, people who say, 'But I'm lucky' or, 'I've been unlucky so far, but I'm sure I'll start winning from now on' are simply fooling themselves. Gambling is an exercise in futility. And while the media give great publicity to the ever so few winners, you rarely hear about the millions of losers.

Gambling and the Bible

"Folly, vice, passion, frenzy, escape from reality, adventure, wild dreams, transgression, and a craving for risk that regenerates as fast as it can be satisfied—gambling

is all of these, together with a hankering after riches, daydreams, and dominating emotions." So said the magazine *La Repubblica*. No wonder governments often make gambling illegal, although perhaps hypocritically condoning the practice in licensed casinos or running lotto and the like themselves!

Regardless of how men view this matter, the Bible indicates that gambling is incompatible with Christianity. Some, for example, may feel that gambling simply fills an economic need. But Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us today our bread for this day." How could a person greedily gamble for money and then pray this? Or how could he follow the exhortation: "Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things [material necessities] will be added to you"? —Matthew 6:11, 33.

The Bible further advises: "Let your manner of life be free of the love of money, while you are content with the present things." (Hebrews 13:5) The gambler often is anything but content. In fact, he is greedy, and the Bible says that greedy persons "will not inherit God's kingdom."—1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.

True, some argue that they gamble not for money but for excitement. The Bible roundly condemns, however, those who sidestep godly principles and become "lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God." (2 Timothy 3:4, 5) Further, Jesus said: "You must love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:39) How can a person love his neighbor while trying to take away his neighbor's money? How can gambling be harmonized with the fundamental principle, "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving"?—Acts 20:35.

Not to be overlooked is the fact that gamblers often invoke "the god of Good Luck," something the Bible clearly condemns.—Isaiah 65:11.

Finally, consider the corrupting influence gambling has on a Christian's "useful habits." (1 Corinthians 15:33) The Christian way of life involves hard work and thrift. (Ephesians 4:28) Jesus himself showed he was not wasteful when, after the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and the fishes, he gave orders that the leftovers were not to be wasted. (John 6:12, 13) But rather than following in Jesus' footsteps, the gambler is more akin to the prodigal son in Je-

sus' parable, who "squandered his property by living a debauched life."—Luke 15:13.

True Christians thus stay away from the snare of gambling in all its forms. It makes no difference to them whether small or large sums are involved. As Jesus said: "The person faithful in what is least is faithful also in much, and the person unrighteous in what is least is unrighteous also in much."—Luke 16:10.

Interestingly, Jehovah's Witnesses have helped many who were caught in the snare of compulsive gambling to break free. (See previous page.) Such ones no longer experience the rush of adrenaline that gambling brings, but now they have a real purpose in life. And rather than engaging in a practice that destroys health and family, they are "rich in fine works." They are "ready to share," rather than ready to scheme how to take away someone else's hard-earned money. They have "a firm hold on the real life," not the fantasy world of gambling.

(1 Timothy 6:18, 19) They have thus become real winners!



Is it consistent for a Christian to gamble and yet pray, "Give us today our bread for this day?"

Namibia

—Vast, Lonely, Inviting

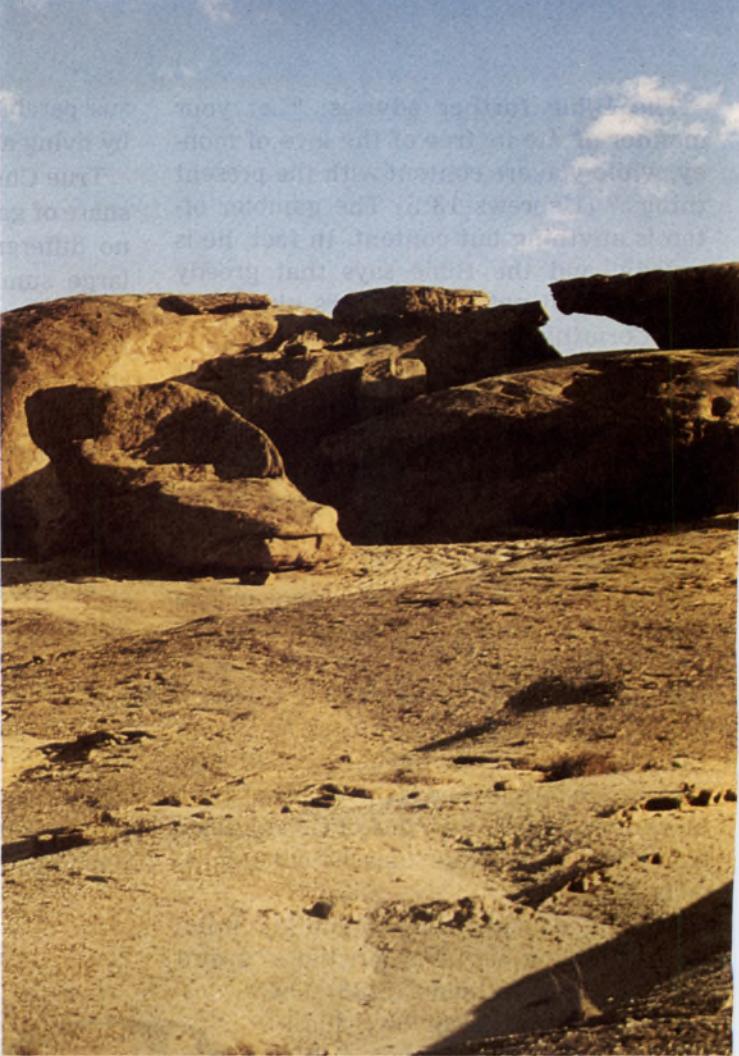
By Awake! correspondent in
South-West Africa

LION! There's a lion in
the camp!"

As the cry rings out, I look through the window of our mobile home and see workers scrambling in all directions. Excitedly, I call my family, and carefully—very carefully—we step outside. Yes, there he is. A large, black-maned lion pads alongside the security fence—but on the wrong side! However, game rangers soon come and corner him in a section where they have cut a hole in the fence. Off he goes, probably as relieved to get away as we are to see him go!

We are in the rest camp at Namutoni in the Etosha National Park, a large game park of Namibia (South-West Africa). But it is not a desire to feast our eyes on nature that has brought us to this at times unsettling place. Really, it is the people that have drawn us here.

Although Namibia is more



than three times the size of the Federal Republic of Germany, it has one of the lowest population densities in the world—less than four persons per square mile. Yet, it is dotted here and there with little islands of habitation. As Jehovah's Witnesses, we had a burning desire to reach these isolated ones with the message of the "good news of the kingdom." (Matthew 24:14) For years my family and I had preached among the Hindu and Muslim people of Natal, South Africa. This was over a thousand miles away, on the other side of the continent. But when our youngest daughter finished high school, we seized the opportunity to serve in a land where there was a need for more Kingdom preachers.

Thus, we found ourselves in this vast and lonely land. We soon learned, though, that Namibia has a beauty of its own. Why, here in Etosha, for example, one can see an amazing variety of wildlife: prides of 12 or more lions, flocks of hundreds of thousands of flamingos, herds of 50 to 100 wildebeests (gnu), and innumerable zebras, springbok, and impalas. Why, at one water hole, we see 3 "families" of elephants—mothers and young ones—numbering all together 51!

Look! High above the camel-thorn tree appears the long, graceful neck of a giraffe. Over there a cheetah streaks over the plain, chasing its selected prey. A huge kudu bull with its handsome spiraled horns peers out of a thicket with large, limpid eyes. A gemsbok, or oryx, with its straight, needlelike horns, stands like a heraldic image. Here, too, dwells the magnificent eland, the largest antelope on earth. What a contrast he is to the nearby Damara dik-dik, which stands like a tiny toy just over 12 inches (30 cm) in height! Etosha even hosts the rare but beautiful black-faced impalas.

Natural Treasures

The name Namibia is taken from the Namib Desert, which runs some 800 miles (1,300 km) down the west coast of Africa. Here once-spacious company houses, now sand-filled shells, stand in ghost towns as relics of a short-lived diamond rush. Bleached bones and stranded ships adorn its rugged shores. Sand dunes—the highest in the

world—shift into ever-changing patterns. They are a photographer's dream come true.

Namibia is full of natural treasures. Large quantities of diamonds are still gathered from beneath coastal sands. Inland, on a farm called Hoba, is the largest meteorite known to man, over 60 tons of iron and nickel. Tsumeb houses a mine where over 184 different minerals have been recorded—some of which are found nowhere else on earth!

In the south, a stony plain suddenly drops into the spectacular Fish River Canyon, second in size only to the Grand Canyon (U.S.A.). Huge pink rocks jut out from the canyon walls. These are outcrops of rose quartz, and one entire hilltop is composed of this beautiful crystal. South of the canyon lie other treasures, but the region is unbearably hot and dry. "Bushmen and prospectors," says the *Illustrated Guide to Southern Africa*, "are the only humans who, undaunted even by such hostile conditions, have found their way into this area."

These plants, exclusive to the Namib, can live 2,000 years.



Welwitschia mirabilis

Namibia has treasures of many different kinds, one of which is its "black diamonds," a nickname for Karakul sheep. The Atlantic Ocean also yields many treasures. Silvery pilchards and anchovies are netted and brought into the fishing harbor of Walvis Bay. Crayfish (rock lobster) is processed at Lüderitz, and thousands of pounds are exported annually to all parts of the world. Along the coast are "islands" (wooden platforms) where seabirds roost and valuable guano (manure) is collected for use as fertilizer.

There are many other natural wonders and treasures: towering rock formations and beautiful gemstones, such as amethysts, aquamarines, diamonds, tourmalines, jaspers, and tigereyes. Yes, these and other plentiful minerals, such as uranium and copper, make Namibia a vast storehouse of natural treasures.

Spiritual Treasures

Since serving here in Namibia, my family has neither prospected nor mined for minerals or gemstones. But we have found a

real treasure in the people here. We now live in Tsumeb and form part of a small congregation made up of nine different nationalities of Jehovah's Witnesses. Eight languages are spoken among us. What a joy it is to serve with this group!

Of course, preaching in such a land presents problems. When working from house to house—or hut to hut—we must normally carry Bible literature in a variety of languages: English, Afrikaans, Kwanyama, Nama, Ndonga, German, Herero, Portuguese, and Kwangali. That is no light load, especially when the temperature is about 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38° C.)! And almost inevitably, someone will ask: "Don't you have anything in Chimbundu?"

This is but a minor inconvenience. Namibia is deeply divided politically, and like the rest of the world, its people are concerned about the future. Being able to bring such ones the Bible's message of hope and comfort is deeply satisfying. It has made us feel right at home in this vast, lonely, yet inviting, land.

Seals thrive on the Atlantic coast of Namibia



Young People Ask. . .



How Serious Is Masturbation?

"I'm wondering if masturbation is wrong in the eyes of God. Will it affect my physical and/or mental health in the future and if I ever get married?"—15-year-old Melissa.

THESE questions have plagued many youths. The reason? Masturbation, or deliberate self-stimulation to produce sexual arousal, is widespread. Reportedly, some 97 percent of males and more than 90 percent of females have masturbated by the age of 21. Furthermore, this practice has been blamed for all manner of ills—from warts and red eyelids to epilepsy and mental illness.

No physical illness, however, has been proved by modern medical research to have been caused by masturbation. Add researchers William Masters and Virginia Johnson: "There is no established medical evidence that masturbation, regardless of frequency, leads to mental illness."

Nevertheless, many Christian youths are concerned about the gravity of this habit. "When I gave in to it [masturbation], I'd feel as if I were failing Jehovah God," wrote one youth. "I got seriously depressed sometimes." Another youth asked: "Is masturbation an unforgivable sin?"

What Does the Bible Say?

Though sexual offenses such as premarital sex (fornication), homosexuality, adultery, and bestiality are plainly condemned as gross sins in the Bible, masturbation is

not mentioned. (Genesis 39:7-9; Leviticus 18:20, 22, 23; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10) Masturbation was common in the Greek-speaking world during Bible times, and several Greek words were used to describe the practice. Interestingly, not one of these words is used in the Bible.*

Since masturbation is not directly condemned in the Bible, does this mean it is harmless? *Absolutely not!* Even those not especially concerned with God's viewpoint feel uneasy about the practice. For instance, Dr. Aaron Hass in his survey of the sexual practices of 625 teenagers reported: "The majority of adolescents who masturbated reported feeling guilty, ashamed, dirty, stupid, embarrassed, or abnormal." Surely, masturbation is an unclean habit. But since "uncleanness," according to the Bible, is a term that allows for a wide range of degree of seriousness, masturbation is not to be classed with such serious sins as fornication or other types of gross sexual immorality.—Ephesians 4:19.

However, God realizes that observing the Bible's prohibitions against gross sexual immorality is not easy. He, therefore, gives

* God executed Onan for 'wasting his semen on the earth.' However, interrupted intercourse, not masturbation, was involved. Furthermore, the execution was because Onan selfishly failed to perform brother-in-law marriage in order to continue his deceased brother's family line. (Genesis 38:1-10) The "emission of semen" mentioned at Leviticus 15:16-18 apparently refers, not to masturbation, but to a nocturnal emission as well as to marital sex relations.

advice on how to avoid sexual immorality. He ‘teaches you to benefit yourself.’ (Isaiah 48:17) The principles of his Word indicate that you “benefit yourself” by strongly resisting this unclean habit, primarily because it . . .

Excites “Sexual Appetite”

“Deaden, therefore, your body members,” urges the Bible, “as respects . . . sexual appetite.” (Colossians 3:5) This “sexual appetite” is not the new sexual sensations that most youths feel during puberty, of which there is no need to be ashamed. “Sexual appetite” exists when these feelings are intensified so that one loses control. Such sexual appetite has led to gross sexual immorality, as described by Paul at Romans 1:26, 27.*

But does not masturbation “deaden” these desires? On the contrary, as one youth confessed: “When you masturbate, you dwell mentally on wrong desires, and all that does is increase your appetite for them.” Often an immoral fantasy is used to increase the sexual pleasure. (Matthew 5: 27, 28) Given the right circumstances, you can easily fall into immorality. One youth bemoaned after committing fornication: “At one time, I felt that masturbation could relieve frustration without my getting involved with a female. Yet I developed an overpowering desire to do so.” In fact, a nationwide study revealed that of those adolescents who masturbated, the greater number were also committing fornication.

* The original Greek word for “sexual appetite” (*pa'thos*) was used by the first-century historian Josephus to describe the wife of Potiphar, who, because of an “excess of passion [*pa'thos*],” tried to seduce the youth Joseph; and the man Amnon, who, “burning with desire and goaded by the spur of passion [*pa'thos*], violated [raped] his sister.” The passion both of Potiphar’s wife and of Amnon was out of control. —Genesis 39:7-12; 2 Samuel 13:10-14.

They outnumbered those who were virgins by 50 percent! The practice surely had not diminished their “sexual appetite”!

Even if you feel that you could control yourself in a morally dangerous situation, why take the chance by exciting yourself sexually by masturbating? If the opportunity to commit fornication arose, would you really be able to say no?

Mentally and Emotionally Defiling

Masturbation also instills certain attitudes that are mentally corrupting. (Compare 2 Corinthians 11:3.) This habit teaches one to treat his or her body as merely an object to be used for sexual pleasure. When masturbating, a person is immersed in his or her own bodily sensations—totally self-centered. Sex becomes separated from love and is relegated to a reflex that releases tension. But God intended sexual desires to be satisfied in sexual relations, an expression of love between a man and his wife. —Proverbs 5:15-19.

Losing this viewpoint can lead to problems in adjusting to a right relationship with those of the opposite sex. Such ones could be viewed as sex objects rather than as sensitive human beings. One may tend to

In Our Next Issue

● **Africa’s Vanishing Wildlife
—Will It Survive?**

● **I Gained My Freedom—In Prison!**

● **How Can I Get Along With My
Brother and Sister?**

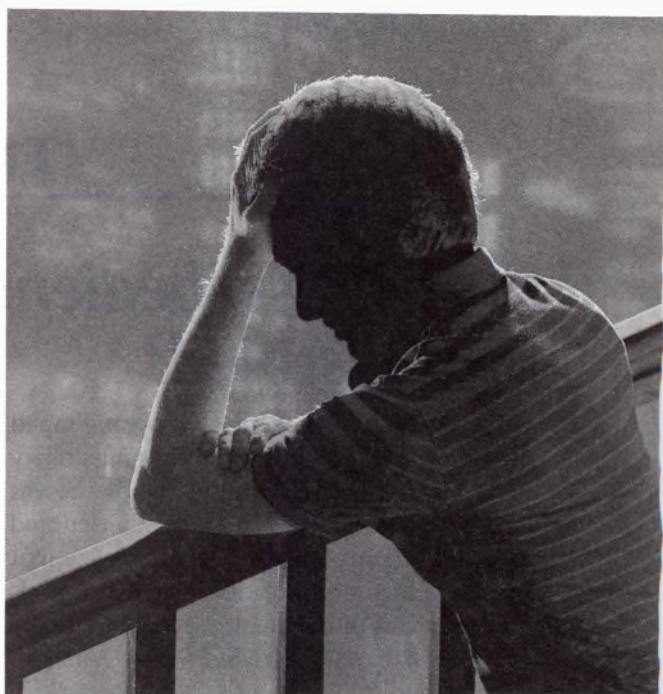
Though masturbation may cause strong guilt feelings, sincere prayer for God's forgiveness and hard work to resist the practice can give one a good conscience

exploit another as a mere tool for sexual satisfaction. Such wrong attitudes taught by masturbation can defile one's "spirit," or dominant mental inclination. For good reason, God's Word urges: "Beloved ones, let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit." (2 Corinthians 7:1) True, after marriage most couples are able to work out the problems caused by masturbation. Yet, many examples document how difficult and persistent some of these problems can be, often affecting compatibility of a married couple.

But what if a person is striving to overcome this bad habit and, while generally successful, still has problems with it?

A Balanced View of Guilt

Though sin is sin, the Bible does show that God views our wrongdoing as having varying degrees of gravity, and he is very merciful. "For you, O Jehovah, are good and ready to forgive; and the loving-kindness to all those calling upon you is abundant." (Psalm 86:5) When a Christian succumbs to masturbation, his heart is often self-condemning. Yet, the Bible states that "God is greater than our hearts and knows all things." (1 John 3:20) God sees more than our sins. The greatness of his knowledge enables him to hear with sympathy our earnest pleas for forgiveness. As one young woman wrote: "I have felt guilty to an extent, but knowing what a loving God Jehovah is and that he can read my heart and know all my efforts and intentions keeps me from feeling too depressed



when I fail on occasion." By fighting masturbation, it is not likely that you will commit the serious sin of fornication.

The February 15, 1954, issue of our companion magazine, *The Watchtower*, stated: "We [may] find ourselves stumbling and falling many times over some bad habit that has bitten more deeply into our former pattern of life than we had realized. Then we are inclined to feel very discouraged and quite unworthy . . . Do not despair. Do not conclude you have committed the unforgivable sin. That is just how Satan would like you to reason. The fact that you feel grieved and vexed with yourself is proof in itself that you have not gone too far. Never weary of turning humbly and earnestly to God, seeking his forgiveness and cleansing and help. Go to him as a child goes to his father when in trouble, no matter how often on the same weakness, and Jehovah will graciously give you the help because of his undeserved kindness and, if you are sincere, he will give you the realization of a cleansed conscience."

Is Civil Disobedience Ever Justified?

"WHEN you see your own people raped and killed," said a Catholic missionary of 30 years, "when you see whole towns uprooted by soldiers, and kids conscripted out of their homes, and when you realize that 2 percent of the population already controls three-quarters of the wealth, you cannot bury your head in a Bible and ignore these realities." —Italics ours.

If you were in this missionary's shoes, what would you do? Join in a peaceful demonstration or in a strike? What if these do not bring the needed change? Would violence then be justified? A revolution or a coup? What do the "spiritual leaders" of today recommend? Note these reports:

- A clergyman in Nicaragua said that he serves God by serving the people and the revolution.
- In the Philippines a minister was expelled from the country for fomenting political unrest and portraying Jesus as a rebel.
- Priests and nuns have sided with guerrillas in an effort to bring down a government in Central America.

Their actions trumpet a loud and clear message: Civil disobedience is justified or even deemed a Christian duty. But is this true, even when the motives and goals are sincere and humanitarian? What is the Bible's viewpoint?

'A Stand Against God'?

God has a clearly defined policy with regard to human governments or authorities. The Bible states: "There is no authority except by God; the existing authorities stand placed in their relative positions by God." Yes, Jehovah God has the necessary power either to interfere with or to terminate any existing authority at any given time. If they function, it is because he allows it.—Romans 13:1.

After establishing this fact, the scripture adds: "Therefore he who opposes the authority has taken a stand against the arrangement of God; those who have taken a stand against it will receive judgment to themselves." (Romans 13:2) In view of these words, can a Christian conscientiously say that he 'serves God by serving a revolution'? Is one taking 'a stand against God' by participating in, or even advocating, activities that directly challenge the existing governmental authority?

Let us look to Bible history for an answer. By the end of the seventh century B.C.E., Jehovah had allowed the Babylonian Empire to dominate Israel, making Zedekiah of Jerusalem a vassal king. After eight years of submission, however, Zedekiah felt compelled to resist such an arrangement. He called on Egypt for help. No longer was he going to allow a foreign power—pagan at that—to dominate God's people. His motives seemed pure. Yet, how did God view it? Was Zedekiah to become a divinely approved

"freedom fighter"? No! For in rebelling against Babylon, he was also rebelling against God. On account of this revolt, Jehovah decreed that Zedekiah would die as a captive in Babylon.—2 Kings 24:17-20; Ezekiel 17:15, 16.

Zedekiah's case is not an isolated one. History has shown over and over that civil disobedience, even when well intentioned, cannot bring lasting solutions to man's problems. The fact is that uprisings and revolutions often tend to worsen the situation. In many cases, after the apparent success of a revolution, the "liberators" themselves eventually become guilty of tyranny and oppression. In time, a new generation of oppressed people seek to revolt. Such a vicious cycle has been experienced in many countries. For example, one country in South America recently experienced its 189th coup in 154 years!

Man's Failure—Why?

Why is it that sincere men cannot free mankind from exploitation and oppression? Simply because they lack two things—the wisdom and the power. No wonder the Bible warns us: "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs."—Psalm 146:3.

To illustrate, picture yourself in a hospital awaiting surgery. You cry out in pain and discomfort. Suddenly, a janitor passing by

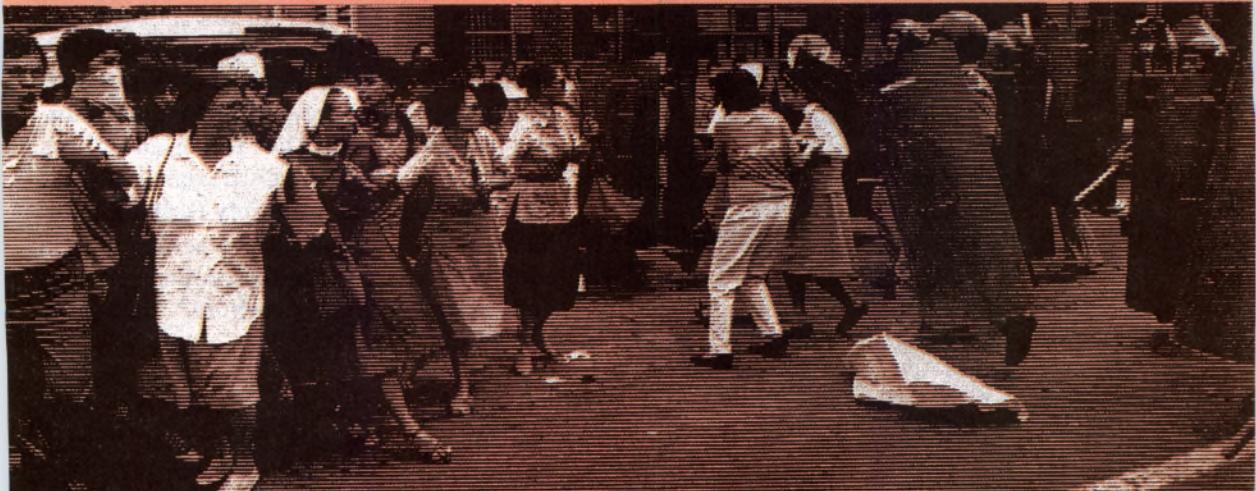
hears you, grabs a scalpel, and offers his help to bring needed relief. Would you allow him to operate? Of course not! Why? Because his love and compassion alone simply do not qualify him for such a difficult job. His actions will only worsen your suffering, even placing you in mortal danger. Such behavior would be presumptuous and highly irresponsible and ignores the fact that a time has been set aside for a qualified surgeon to operate. It would, by far, be much better for him simply to reassure you that help is on the way.

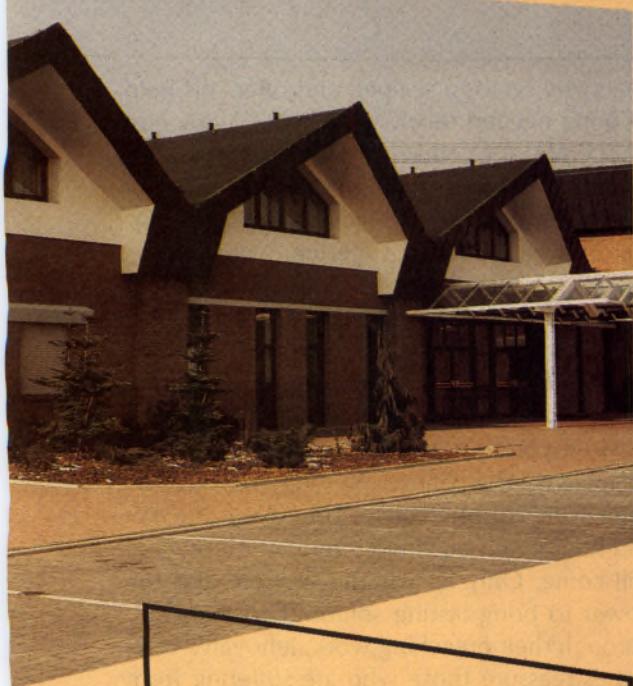
Similarly, true Christians today do not engage in civil disobedience. They await the day and hour when qualified intervention by God will come. Only he has the wisdom and the power to bring lasting solutions to mankind. Through their preaching work, Jehovah's Witnesses reassure those who are suffering from injustices that such relief is soon to come.

—Isaiah 9:6, 7; 11:3-5.

In the meantime, we can pursue any legal and peaceful means available to establish and defend our rights and seek relief from oppression. Should these fail, however, it would be wrong to resort to civil disobedience. Accordingly, the apostle Paul advises: "As far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men. Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but yield place to the wrath; for it is written: 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay,' says Jehovah.'" Genuine and obedient Christians take this wise admonition to heart.—Romans 12:18, 19.

Reuters/Bettmann Newsphotos





Meckenheim, Germany



Assembly Halls —A Sign of What?

HAVE you seen one in your area? Or heard about it through your local news media? 'Heard about what?' you may ask. About the local Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses. The fact is that these Assembly Halls are making an appearance all around the world. At present, worldwide there are 126 enclosed Assembly Halls plus another 96 open assembly facilities. Another 36 halls plus 59 open facilities are under construction. They are a sign that Jehovah's Witnesses are on the increase.

Recently, a large octagonally shaped hall was inaugurated in the north of England at Hellaby, near Maltby, South Yorkshire. Its unusual design merited an article in the *Journal of the Institution of Structural Engineers*. The writer was also impressed by the volunteer labor program used to complete the construction. The article stated: "Once the [steel] frame was completed the International Bible Students' Association's [Jehovah's Witnesses] ability to mobilise large numbers of voluntary workers meant that the building was completed rapidly and enthusiastically.... The East Pennine Assembly Hall is a notable example of what can be achieved by a combination of skilled professionals and dedicated voluntary workers." In fact, a

total of 11,000 volunteers worked at this site.

At Haysbridge in Surrey, south of London, a 50-year-old school complex was bought and converted into an Assembly Hall. It is nestled in 28 acres (11 ha) of beautiful English countryside, making an ideal setting for Bible conferences and education.

France now has its first two Assembly Halls, one located some 30 miles (50 km) north of Paris, at the city of Creil. It has seating for 1,870 people. The other is in the south of France at Marignane, a few miles northwest of Marseilles. These, too, were built by volunteer labor. In fact, the one near Marseilles took 350,000 volunteer man-hours to complete.

In the neighboring Federal Republic of Germany, they already have nine Assembly Halls across the country. A recent addition is located at Meckenheim on the edge of the Rhine River valley. It has seating for 1,700 persons.

But if the Witnesses have their local Kingdom Halls, why do they need these large auditoriums?

What Is the Motive?

Jehovah's Witnesses recognize that they live in a world that is corrupt in the extreme, hostile to the values taught in the Bible. Hatred and distrust displace love and unity. Permissiveness and promiscuity have replaced integrity and chastity. And with such changes has come an increase in sexually transmitted diseases and the AIDS plague. There is all the more reason, then, for the Witnesses to fortify their convictions and faith by gathering together in meetings on a larger scale in



Marignane, France





Haysbridge, England

Creil, France



order to share Bible education and the promise of a new system.—Hebrews 10: 23-25; 2 Peter 3:13.

In former years, the Witnesses used to rent theaters and auditoriums for these larger gatherings, called circuit assemblies. (A circuit is composed of some 20 congregations.) Now such facilities are no longer available in many areas. Therefore, a movement got under way in the United States some 20 years ago to acquire properties that could be converted into Assembly Halls. The fact that more and more are being inaugurated all over the world is a sign of the increase that Jehovah's Witnesses are experiencing.

How Is It Done?

There are not many wealthy people in the ranks of Jehovah's Witnesses, so how are they able to construct or remodel these large buildings? Each project is based on voluntary and anonymous contributions from the Witnesses themselves. Likewise, the major part of the labor is voluntary. This results in significant cost savings. As *The Structural Engineer* stated regarding the project in Yorkshire, England: "The cost savings were also impressive: under competitive tender the centre would have cost £2.5M[illion] in total, but the actual cost will be no more than half that figure."

Spain now has three Assembly Halls—one in Madrid and two in Barcelona (one in the city, the other a few miles outside the city). Two were formerly movie theaters, and the third was an unused factory building. Volunteer labor and voluntary contributions have turned them into Bible education centers for thousands of Witnesses from nearby congregations. In every nation a willing spirit motivates all—from adults to children—to participate in these Assembly Hall projects.

Computing Fraud and Sabotage

HOW could crooks crack a bank's computer code and so easily siphon off over \$600,000 of its reserve funds? Britain's Fraud Squad at Scotland Yard is having a hard time finding out. "There is no evidence of staff involvement," says the bank's head office. Who, then, are the culprits? Thieves who illegally programmed the bank's computer system. "The extraction had been cleverly disguised," reports London's *Daily Mail* of August 22, 1986. There was a real panic at the bank.

Computer fraud is not new to Britain. Every year, tens of millions of pounds are stolen this way. Nor is it just a national problem. One investigation concerns some \$20 million that disappeared in a transaction from a New York bank. In fact, computer crime may well be the world's biggest growth industry.

As serious as such illegal computer manipulation is, it obviously took a more sinister turn in the summer of 1986—that of sabotage. *The Times* of London, August 7, 1986, reported that disgruntled employees program illicit commands that "are triggered [to function] at a particular time or when a set of circumstances occur." The effects can be devastating, with losses that are incalculable. Of the 15 big sabotage

incidents examined in Britain last year, one third put companies out of business. These crimes now have their own name—"logic time bombs." By means of them, valuable lists of clients, sales invoicing, and other fundamental information essential in running a modern business, are irretrievably lost.

Even more alarming is the so-called computer virus, reported to be active in the United States. Here the computer is programmed with illicit instructions that are also self-generating. As each set of directions is acted upon, further damage is perpetrated. Imagine the consequences of all this self-destructive action.

What, then, can a company do to prevent this fraud and sabotage? The answer lies initially in contracting with reliable and trustworthy firms in installing a computing system and then employing an honest, reliable staff to operate it. But this is not always easy. And who is to say that an employee may not later become disgruntled?

Yet another problem outlined by *The Times* of London relates to "cynical self-employed maintenance programmers and analysts, who ensure a computer system hiccups frequently and generates work for them in the process." Fraud, sabotage, and deceit—it seems as if companies seeking to keep up with modern technology cannot win. Laments the *Daily Mail*: "Computers, hailed as the miracle force of the twentieth century have as much potential for harm as good." Or is man's dishonesty really to blame?

From Our Readers

Phobias

I want to thank you for the article "Phobias—Those Mysterious Fears." (February 8, 1987) I was always ashamed to talk of this to others, but when I was a child, I had no fear of the dark until I heard a radio program on the supernatural. After that, I dreaded the dark so much that I would not go from one room to another if I had to pass a room where the lights were not on. Your article cleared up the matter for me, showing that my feeling is not necessarily cowardice.

H. M., Brazil

A Birth or an Abortion?

Your extensive coverage of abortion missed one point: the effect of pregnancy on the health and life of the mother. (April 8, 1987) A deliberately induced abortion simply to prevent the birth of an unwanted child is a willful taking of human life. But how do you view a deliberately induced abortion to prevent the death or ill health of the mother?

A. A., Nigeria

It cannot be right to take the life of an unborn child merely because allowing the pregnancy to go full term may possibly, or even probably, endanger the health of the mother. A potential danger is no justification for such drastic action. In many cases, doctors have warned a mother that to complete her pregnancy would endanger her health, but the outcome was a healthy baby and no lasting harm to the mother. Besides, what about the potential physical and emotional

damage that may accrue to the mother because of an induced abortion? There might be a situation in which, at the time of childbirth, a choice has to be made between the life of the mother and that of the child. It would be up to the individuals concerned to make that choice. In many lands, however, advances in medical procedures have made this situation very rare.—ED.

Religion in Politics

I am writing because of your issue on "Religion in Politics—Is This God's Will?" (April 22, 1987) I personally do not mind your attacks on nationalism, but being of German background, I object to your constant use of Germany and the Third Reich as the essence of evil. You assert that it is wrong to mix politics and religion. But what are you doing? You do not try to create love as Christians should; you renew hate.

E. M., Canada

We did not criticize the German people, nor did our article stir up old hatreds. However, Nazism perpetrated some of the most heinous crimes recorded in human history. That historic fact should not be ignored or forgotten by the present generation. And it is an outstanding example of how wrong it is for the churches to get involved in politics. Nazism could not have attained power without the support, open or tacit, of the Lutheran and Catholic churches. This was only one of several examples of the bad that results when churches mix in politics, as discussed in our article mentioned above.—ED.

Watching the World



Lonely Hearts

Finding a bride in Japan is becoming more difficult. The reason? Young men outnumber young women. Additionally, Japan's "liberated" young women are in no haste to get married, nor are they anxious to fit into traditional molds when they do get married. Country boys are hardest hit. Unable to find Japanese girls willing to work alongside them, sons of farmers have recently discovered that girls from other Asian countries make delightful partners. City boys, however, are trying a different approach to win girls' hearts. According to *Asahi Evening News*, Tokyo's fashionable young men are spending an average of a hundred dollars (14,-200 yen) a month on personal cosmetics to impress their girlfriends. Such efforts, however, may not always meet with success. A 22-year-old university student in Tokyo complained of the irritation she and her friends feel when they "have to wait . . . for the men, as they apply such things as facial scrubs, milky lotions and hair mousses."

Record Suicides

Twice as many people die each year in Finland by suicide as by traffic accidents. According to the latest available statistics, 1984 proved to be a record year for suicides, with a total of 1,231 per-

sons taking their life. Of that number, some 80 percent were men. What is even more serious is the increase in the number of youngsters committing suicide. About 45 percent of all deaths of those between the ages of 20 and 24 are found to be suicides. A ten-year-old was reported as Finland's youngest suicide victim during 1984.

Fortune-Tellers Debunked

Astrologers who claim they can analyze a person's character and



predict that person's life course just by reading the stars are fooling the public and themselves, says Shawn Carlson, a researcher at University of California's Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory. In a carefully controlled study, designed specifically to test what astrologers say they can do, the scientist found that astrologers had no special ability to interpret personality purely from astrological readings. "It is more likely that when sitting face-to-face with a client, astrologers read clients' needs, hopes and doubts from

their body language," said Carlson.

High-Tech Cheating

Cheating on examinations is nothing new, but high-tech cheating is now possible because of a new wristwatch capable of storing in its memory up to 500 words. According to the newspaper *The Australian*, one teacher said: "The watch could be very worrying. If teachers were not aware of its existence or if invigilators [examination supervisors] were lax it would definitely compromise an exam." The Japanese-made watches sell for \$230 (Australian) and were designed to help busy people remember important engagements, and so forth. How do students feel about them? Said one 16-year-old: "It would be great if teachers didn't know about it."

Grim Statistics

Some 350,000 Americans will die this year because of cigarette smoking, says the American Lung Association—exceeding the combined death tolls from traffic accidents, suicide, homicide, alcohol, and illegal drugs. According to a writeup in the *New York Post*, cigarettes cause 17.2 percent of the deaths in the United States each year, "more than the combined American battle deaths in World

War II and Vietnam." The costs are also high: \$23.3 billion a year for medical treatment and about \$30.4 billion a year in lost work and productivity. The report shows 31 percent of the adult population to be cigarette smokers.

Magnet Stitching

Soviet surgeons have performed over a hundred operations using magnets instead of stitches, reports *Sputnik* magazine. Intestines have been joined by use of "two thin magnetic rings with a diameter matching that of the intestinal tube." One is inserted into each of the separated ends. "The magnets safely 'glue' the intestines together, forming an hermetic seal which heals much faster than a stitched one," says *Sputnik*. The new method was devised to reduce postsurgical complications caused by stitching that does not seal well and the additional tissue injuries inflicted by the needle. The magnetic rings are left in and are said to cause no obstruction or damage.

(Information from *Sputnik* magazine, August 1987)

Cancer's Common Thread

After reviewing the findings presented in last year's 14th International Cancer Congress in Budapest, Hungary, *Voice* magazine's science writer Laszlo Dosa notes: "The single common thread in the global cancer picture is the undeniable fact that tobacco is the largest preventable cause of cancer everywhere." According to the World Health Organization, smoking causes 90 percent of all lung cancers. In addition, about half of all kidney-cancer sufferers are longtime heavy smokers. Some countries have already taken steps to control smoking. The Egyptian government, notes *Voice*, now

urges religious leaders, doctors, teachers, and armed forces personnel to quit smoking and thus "set an example for the rest of the population." Similar efforts to control smoking are under way in other Middle Eastern countries. Are people responding? Reports indicate that cigarette consumption has increased!

Homeless Everywhere

Every fourth person in the world either is homeless or lives under "wretched and unhealthy conditions." An investigation by the United Nations revealed that at least 100 million people have to



sleep in the streets, under bridges, in gateways, or on deserted property. Twenty percent of such persons are adolescents in Latin America. In African cities, up to 80 percent of all citizens live in slums. The United States has 2.5 million homeless people, and in Great Britain the number is about 250,000.

Computer Vandals

"A new breed of vandals, working within a vast network of computer 'bulletin boards,' are devising sophisticated software programs that erase and scramble the computer files of unsuspecting users," says *The New York Times*. "I guess the people who devise these things take pleasure in destroying other people's work," says computer consultant Ross M. Green-

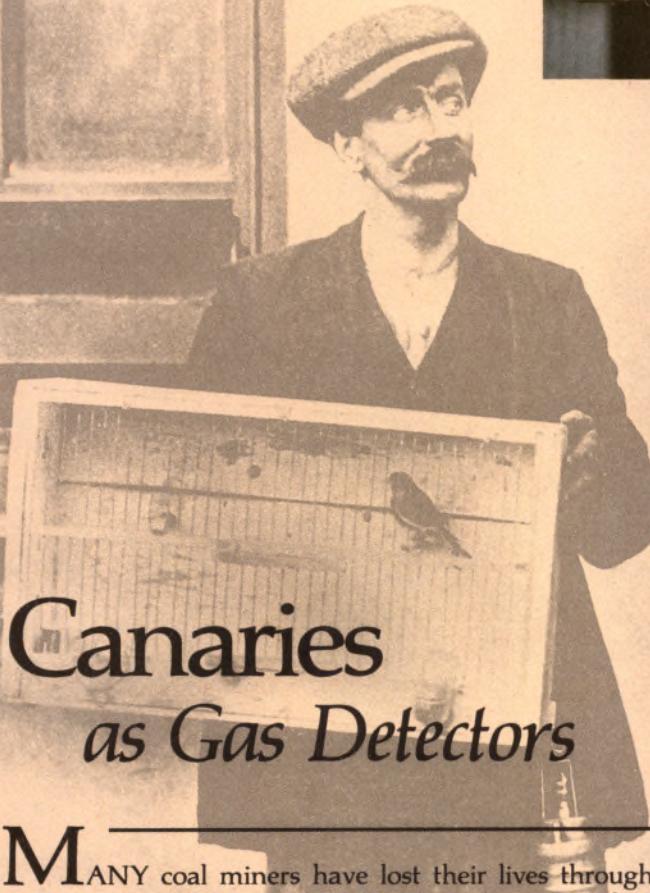
berg. Some of the programs are so sophisticated that they can operate as legitimate programs for months, then suddenly do their destructive work.

Too Descriptive

Brandon Brooks, a TV anchorman, allowed police to use his home so viewers could see anti-burglary devices that could foil thieves. The following week, while he was anchoring his nighttime newscast, burglars entered his home and made off with a number of things, including furniture, TV, and video tape recorder. The investigators believe that the thieves used the telecast to map out his home and bypass the devices.

Not Gourmet

Is that gourmet Colombian coffee for which you paid about \$10 a pound measuring up to your taste expectations? If not, you may be the victim of price gouging. In a Canadian survey, 85 gourmet coffee samples were randomly tested for quality in seven different cities. Many of the samples tested were selling at premium prices even though they were found to contain exclusively inferior-quality beans or were mixed with them. Some distributors have been quick to take advantage of the fact that the average customer is not able to distinguish between low-grade and truly gourmet coffees. Experts claim that "gourmet coffee should be uniform in size, shape, and color," notes *The Globe and Mail*, and "every bean should look the same." Retailers claim that last year's drought in Brazil is one reason for the dumping of substandard coffee in bins marked "Gourmet."



Canaries as Gas Detectors

MANY coal miners have lost their lives through carbon monoxide poisoning during underground fires after explosions. A reliable detector for this lethal gas was needed. Small creatures such as birds and mice are more sensitive to carbon monoxide poisoning than are humans. If the atmosphere became contaminated by carbon monoxide, they collapsed more quickly than humans, thus giving ample warning of the danger.

In 1911 a law was passed in Britain obliging each coal mine to have two finches or mice that could be taken underground by rescuers if a fire occurred. But mice sometimes fell asleep on the floor of their cage, and the miner was unable to tell whether the animal was merely sleeping or had succumbed to the deadly gas. Finches, on the other hand, remained on their perches even when asleep. But when overcome by poisonous gas, they fell from their perch, giving the necessary warning



to the miner. A small bottle of oxygen might be kept on hand to resuscitate the affected bird.

The accompanying background photo shows the birds used at Sengheydd, Wales, about 1913, after an explosion and fire had killed 440 men.

In many mines today, though, finches and canaries are being replaced by chemical and electronic devices, and some miners are permitted to provide new homes for the unemployed birds. Pairs of canaries or finches are still kept in some British mines for use as gas detectors.

