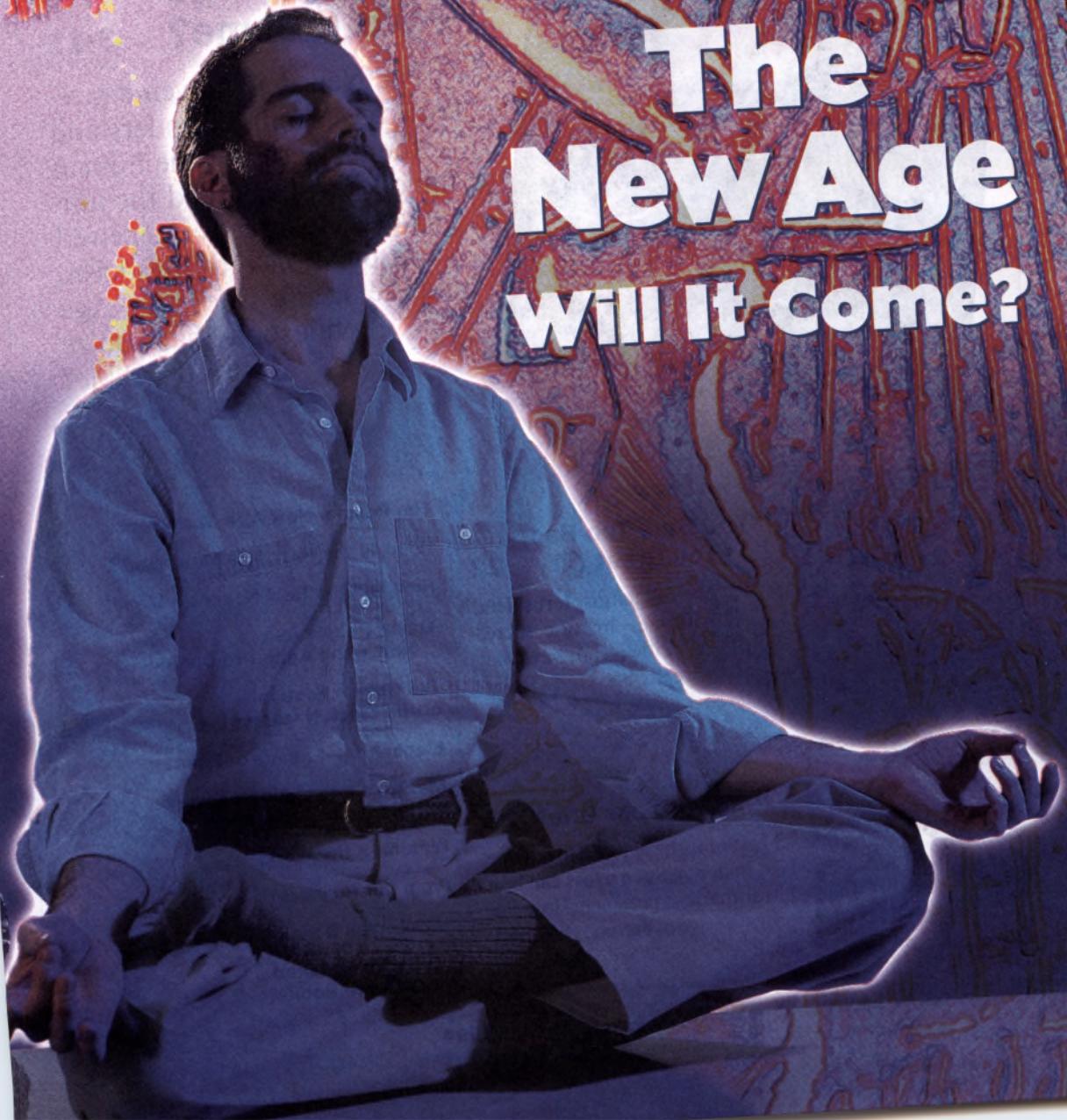


# Awake!

March 8, 1994

## The New Age Will It Come?





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The New Age movement reflects a yearning to understand the mysteries of the human mind, our planet, and the universe. It spreads a renewed fascination with mysticism and the occult. Does New Age philosophy harmonize with the Bible?



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*The Day Before Parting* by Jozef Israels; Gift of Alice N. Lincoln, Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

# The Popular New Age Movement



**W**E LIVE in a crucial age. Traditional values and life-styles are constantly being questioned. The volatile mix of religion and politics propels us from one crisis to another. Science and technology have brought no permanent solutions to mankind's problems. Many are convinced that such a state of affairs cannot be resolved unless a completely new world system is ushered in.

But how will such an era come about? By God's intervention? If so, must we continue to wait? Or can we do something about it ourselves? Can we bring in the desperately needed new age? Millions of people around the world from every walk of life believe that they can play an active role in bringing about a new age of peace and brotherhood. They belong to the revolutionary New Age movement, and they want you to join them!

## A Global Movement

Have you heard about the New Age movement? In many countries the term "New Age" has been loosely applied to some popular forms of literature, music, and art. Why, there are even New Age restaurants! Sports heroes and Hollywood stars promote the movement. Members hold regular conventions and expositions. The term "New Age" has also been widely attached to consumer goods, such as cosmetics, beauty products, vitamins, and health-care items. New Age books are sold by the millions. Some stores have a separate section for them. Many of these books have a strong religious influence on readers.

In his book *The Cosmic Self—A Penetrating Look at Today's New Age Movements*, author Ted Peters refers to the movement as "the equivalent of a religious H-bomb in sustained explosion for nearly three decades now." He adds that "new age prophets are making converts; and their teachings are being adopted . . . by Protestants, Roman Catholics, Jews, atheists, as well as the growing number of Buddhists and Hindus in North America."

*The Times* of London reports that "New Ageism . . . is probably now the fastest growing faith in the West. Soon, it is estimated, 25 per cent of Americans will admit to some degree of New Ageism." The Swiss magazine *Fundamentum* observed that, in the Netherlands, about a hundred theologians were meeting regularly "to discuss how New Age thinking can be introduced into church life and also into the sermon." Another magazine proclaims that "countries around the world have their different approaches to New Age, but the appeal is universal."

Business corporations have spent millions of dollars on New Age consultants and in enrolling their employees in New Age programs. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reports that "New Age thinking has permeated the highest bastions of America's business institutions." The newspaper adds that one survey of 500 companies revealed that more than 50 percent had some involvement with New Age thinking.

But what is the New Age trend, and how did it come about? Will it really bring peace and harmony to the earth? What does it teach, and how does it affect you?

# What Is the New Age Movement?



**I**T IS not an organization, yet hundreds of organizations promote its teachings. It has no central leadership, yet its philosophers and masters probably number in the thousands. It does not have an official book of dogmas and beliefs, yet adherents can nurture their creed in virtually every public library throughout the world. It has no personal god to be worshiped, yet it often promotes the idea of a god that can be found everywhere and anywhere.

What is it? It is the New Age movement: a loose mix of religious, cultural, social, political, and scientific ideologies, combined with fascination for Eastern mysticism, the paranormal, the occult, and even some strains of modern psychology. The mix includes belief in astrology, reincarnation, extraterrestrial life, evolution, and life after death. Environmental and health concerns are also important ingredients.

Anyone can join this movement. There is no initiation rite or baptism. Nor do people have to give up their religious affiliations to

belong to it. On the other hand, many resent being tagged with the "New Age" label simply because they believe in some of the concepts embraced by the New Age movement or enjoy some of the so-called New Age art or music.

Devotees seldom identify themselves as New Agers. Actually, the expression "New Age" is used mostly by the media. These days, New Age books, shops, seminars, and programs often avoid the term. The *Library Journal* explains that "media overexposure in the late 1980s created a backlash about New Age's more fringe elements (UFOs, channeling, crystals, etc.); this is reflected in the fact that major publishing houses . . . and even New Age presses are increasingly discarding the term New Age." Thus, many people may be under the influence of New Age thought without even realizing it.

## What Is New About It?

The New Age movement is considered by many to be a modern phenomenon. According to Professor Carl Raschke of the University of Denver, New Age thinking is essentially "an afterglow of the counterculture of the

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Sixties." Other analysts also point to the 1960's, with the hippies' search for freedom and truth, as the beginning of the New Age movement. Many former hippies, now in their 40's and 50's, are still searching for that elusive truth. But their search is no longer dismissed as the capricious whim of teenagers. Many of them are professionals in reputable fields of knowledge, are politically active, and are now viewed as sensible community members.

During the 1970's and 1980's, they used their intellectual and financial resources to continue their search. The results? Their mixture of beliefs has received wide acceptance and respect. The media rapidly caught on, resulting in widespread awareness of New Age philosophy.

Actually, there is very little that is new about New Age beliefs. For example, its philosophy is based primarily on Eastern mysticism, which is thousands of years old. Consider just a few New Age ideas.

### The New Age Hope

With the year 2000 just around the corner, the notion of a better future, a better millennium, is gaining popularity. A principal belief is that modern society as we know it will be replaced by a Utopian society.\* According to New Age teachers, this will be accom-

\* Utopia: "An ideally perfect place, esp[ecially] in its social, political, and moral aspects."—*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*.

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plished by radically changing conventional thinking through mystical knowledge that has been hidden or ignored until recent years. They say that this new era of harmony will unleash human potential and will usher in universal spiritual peace.

This hope seems to be based primarily on the predictions of astrologers who point to our day as the threshold between the passing age of Pisces and the coming age of Aquarius. Proponents of this theory claim that the zodiacal sign of Pisces has had a negative effect on mankind for almost 2,000 years. They point the finger at Christendom as the principal culprit in the creation of a materialistic and backward society. Christendom is accused of hindering the progress of truth. But today that truth can purportedly be found in the occult and will be made clear during the impending age of Aquarius, the age of spiritual enlightenment, the new age.

New Agers are divided on whether this new society will be brought forth by impersonal cosmic forces or by human effort. One theory claims that "a race of mutant New Age Homo sapiens, emerging from genetic seeds planted by enlightened ancients 3,500 years ago, will soon flourish and save the world from greed."—*The Wall Street Journal*, January 11, 1989.

Such a hope for a golden age, Utopia, or new world, however, is not new. The folklore of virtually every major culture includes the hope of a future Utopian society. Sumerian,

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## MacLaine, New Age, and Ramtha

"THE astral dimension was real even though we couldn't see it or measure it in linear terms. There is a greater reality than our 'perceived' conscious reality. That is what has come to be called the new age of thought. A new age of awareness. . . .

"I visited accredited mediums who channeled spirit guides from the astral plane. I developed relationships with those 'entities.' . . . One was more profound than any of the others. His name was . . . Ramtha the Enlightened One. . . . He said he had had one incarnation during the Atlantean time period and had achieved total realization in that lifetime. . . . As I looked into the eyes of Ramtha, I heard myself say, 'Were you my brother in your Atlantean incarnation?'

" . . . Tears spilled from his eyes. 'Yes, my beloved,' he said, 'and you were my brother.'

MacLaine goes on to say: "The point of his spiritual education was to impart the truth that we were God. We were as capable of knowledge as he."—*Dancing in the Light*, by Shirley MacLaine.

Compare Genesis 3:5, where the Serpent (Satan) lyingly said to Eve: "God knows that in the very day of your eating from it your eyes are bound to be opened and you are bound to be like God, knowing good and bad." Those desiring divine approval must avoid any involvement with wicked and deceptive spirit creatures. The Law of Moses stated: "Do not turn yourselves to the spirit mediums, and do not consult professional fore-tellers of events, so as to become unclean by them. I am Jehovah your God."—Leviticus 19:31.

Greek, Roman, and Scandinavian mythologies incorporated this belief. The *Encyclopedia of Religion* notes: "The yearning for a utopia where one is free from want and where peace and prosperity reign supreme has been very much an integral part of Chinese religion since pre-Ch'in times (before 221 BCE)." The most ancient sacred book, the Bible, speaks of a millennium when mankind will be brought to perfection, and war, crime, pain, and death will be eliminated.—Revelation 21:1-4.

### A Religion of Self

In her autobiographical film *Out on a Limb*, famous actress and New Age author Shirley MacLaine stands on a windswept beach with her arms outstretched and exclaims: "I am God! I am God!" Like her, many New Agers promote the search for a higher self and the idea of a god within. They teach that humans need only raise their consciousness to find their divinity.

Once this is accomplished, they claim, the reality of a universal interconnectedness becomes clear—everything is god, and god is everything. This is by no means a new idea. Ancient religions of Mesopotamia and Egypt believed in the deity of animals, water, the wind, and the sky. More recently, Adolf Hitler allegedly encouraged others to embrace the "strong, heroic belief in God in Nature, God in our own people, in our destiny, in our blood."

New Age culture is saturated with literature, seminars, and training programs dealing with self-potential and self-improvement. "Getting in touch with my inner self" is a popular logo. People are encouraged to try anything and everything that can help them unleash their own possibilities. As one writer put it in the magazine *Wilson Quarterly*, the "movement's central teaching is 'that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as it works for you.'"

Margot Adler, a New Age guru, explains that many of the women who join women's New Age movements do it "for reasons that are very personal. . . . They hate their bodies, they hate themselves. They come into these groups which basically say to you, 'You're the Goddess, you're wonderful.'"

New York magazine describes one group's quest for the higher self: "A woman intones, 'We are the teachers of the New Dawn. We are the Ones.' Other participants, wearing horned headdresses, feathered masks, and wispy gowns, dance through the forest, grunting and gesticulating, keening and moaning."

### Sanitized Occultism

Some New Age concepts promote a new, sanitized view of the occult. Satanism is no longer associated with the occult in the minds of many New Agers. A writer in the magazine *Free Inquiry* states: "There are a growing number of practitioners of witchcraft, none of whom have any beliefs that embrace Satanism."

A recent survey in Germany showed that there were 10,000 active witches in that country. Even children are being subtly attracted to the occult. The German book *Der Griff nach unseren Kindern* (The Grasp for Our Children) explains that through "children's drama cassettes, children are getting accustomed to the new image of the witch as a normal woman who uses magic for good purposes." The book adds: "The attention of even small children is thus attracted to a New Age way that can lead them to the supernatural."



**New Age cults**  
experiment with  
astrology, telepathy,  
meditation, and crystals,  
among other things

In her books, Shirley MacLaine promotes the idea that the occult is merely hidden knowledge and that its being hidden does not mean that it is not truth. This philosophy has lured countless people into experimenting with exotic spiritistic practices, such as divination, astrology, telepathy, and communication with the spirits. The latter has been known for thousands of years as spiritistic mediumship. But New Agers call it channeling. Their theory claims that the spirits of the dead select certain individuals to be their channels of communication with mankind.

These supposed human channelers can go into a trance at will and speak or write messages of "enlightenment," purportedly from the dead or from extraterrestrial beings. Spirits of the dead are regarded as master sages awaiting the right time to reincarnate. In the meantime, they are allegedly guiding mankind into a new age.



Many New Agers meet regularly to listen to what these supposed masters have to say through their channelers. And believers have a choice of spirits to consult. Among those supposedly speaking today are the spirits of John Lennon and Elvis Presley, extraterrestrials with names like Attarro and Rakorczy, and a 35,000-year-old warrior from mythical Atlantis named Ramtha.

#### New Age and Health

A growing number of medical practitioners believe that patients should not be treated simply as broken machines and that consideration should be given to the individual's mental and emotional health. This approach is known as holistic or wholistic medicine, from the word "whole," and it is not necessarily connected with the New Age trend. However, many New Agers have eagerly embraced holistic medicine. The book *The Cosmic Self* explains that without necessarily rejecting the medical establishment, New Agers advocate treating the patient as a whole person, "a living organism replete with body, mind, and spirit."

New Agers claim that good health can be found outside the realm of conventional medicine. "The place where most people first encounter New Age concepts is in the world of alternative medicine," says the British newspaper *The Herald*. And the most unusual concepts are explored. For example, Australian veterinary surgeon and author Ian Gawler suggests that cancer may be cured with meditation. Other healing methods popularly labeled with the New Age tag include astrological diagnosis, aura analysis, hypnotherapy,

**New Age healing methods  
include the use of crystals**

psychic surgery, and past-lives therapy. These healing methods are often promoted in specialized magazines dealing with health, natural remedies, vitamins, exercise, and nutrition.

### New Age and Crystals

One popular method of New Age healing involves the use of crystals and gemstones, such as quartz, amethyst, topaz, ruby, opal, and emerald. New Age jeweler Uma Silbey claims: "Throughout history you'll find examples of cultures that believed quartz could magnify psychic energy and healing powers." She adds: "Sumerians, Maya and other civilizations used quartz crystals for curative purposes."

How are the crystals used? Crystal therapists claim that physical and mental ailments can be cured by laying quartz and other gemstones on specific areas of the body. Katrina Raphaell, a New Age crystal guru, explains that crystals "can be placed under the pillow during sleep to inspire lofty and prophetic dreams. They can be used in healing practices to stabilize erratic emotions, soothe troubled minds and help heal body imbalances. They can be held during the labor and birth process for added strength."

### New Age and the Environment

The New Age movement is "clean, it's green, it's the way to be seen," so says *TSBeat*, a British magazine for teenagers. Active participation in the promoting of ecological awareness and environmental protection has contributed to a positive image for the New Age movement, and this environment-friendly message has attracted many to its teachings. However, the New Age concerns for the environment are often expressed as outright worship of nature, with rituals akin to primitive ceremonies dedicated to the earth goddess.

## "Another Drug in a Drug-Ridden Society"?

"THE New Age movement—the latest contribution to our long history of bizarre spiritual fads and panaceas—invites a mixture of ridicule and indignant alarm. Not just the degradation of piety but its blatant commercialization prompts the suspicion of large-scale religious fraud....

"The New Age movement tries to combine meditation, positive thinking, faith healing, . . . mysticism, yoga, water cures, acupuncture, incense, astrology, Jungian psychology, biofeedback, extrasensory perception, spiritualism, . . . the theory of evolution, Reichian sex therapy, ancient mythologies, . . . hypnosis, and any number of other techniques designed to heighten awareness, including elements borrowed from the major religious traditions....

"The New Age replacements for religion soothe the conscience instead of rubbing it the wrong way. Their central teaching is that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as it works for you. 'It's true if you believe it': slogan of the New Age....

"The question is not whether New Age therapies really work but whether religion ought to be reduced to therapy. If it offers nothing more than a spiritual high, religion becomes another drug in a drug-ridden society."—"The New Age Movement: No Effort, No Truth, No Solutions, Notes on Gnosticism—Part V," by Christopher Lasch, Watson Professor of History at the University of Rochester, New York, U.S.A.

Is this modern expression of ancient mysticism the answer to our problems? Will the planet be saved by the wisdom of witches and extraterrestrials? Will a new age of peace and prosperity ever come?

# How Will the Real New Age Come?



**N**EW AGE author Shirley MacLaine expressed a very common sentiment when she wrote: "I found myself thinking a great deal about what was going wrong in the world. You can't avoid it when you actually see the destitution, the starvation, the hatred. I began traveling when I was nineteen, and now, at mid-forty, I could objectively say things had steadily progressed downhill."

Similarly, people everywhere are tired of religious hypocrisy and falsehood. They are frustrated by the negligence and inadequacy of governments. They are alarmed by the perceived casual attitudes and blunders of the medical establishment. And many are victimized by racist or sexist bias and bigotry.

## A Realistic Solution?

There is no question about it, we desperately need a new world. But are New Age hopes realistic? Or is its portrayal of the future more akin to Hollywood's science-fiction movies? Does it seem prudent to put faith in prophecies based on forgotten traditions, ancient myths, and speculation?

Granted, many of the concepts adopted by the New Age movement may promote mental and physical well-being in a limited way. Good nutrition, exercise, relaxation, and concern for the environment are all sensible aspects of life. Medical practitioners would probably have better success if they gave more attention to the emotional needs of the sick while caring for their physical ailments. But everyone gets sick sooner or later, and even the most healthy

eventually die. We cannot fully enjoy life with the prospect of sickness and death hanging over our heads. Do New Age gurus give a plausible solution to these problems?

More and more people are sad and depressed, and the New Age movement can do very little about it. The *International Herald Tribune* of London noted: "If the 20th century ushered in the Age of Anxiety, its exit is witnessing the dawn of the Age of Melancholy." The paper added that the "first international study of major depression reveals a steady rise in the disorder worldwide."

The New Age movement, with its quasi-religious aura, does not really satisfy the spiritual vacuum in modern society. At its best the perceived spiritual relief it offers is only momentary. Admittedly, conventional religion, especially Christendom, has not relieved the general spiritual starvation. One newspaper openly denounced the "failure of the Church to reach out to those feeling isolated, untouched, unloved." The newspaper described modern religion as bland, "robbing the individual of any sense of a direct encounter with God."

## The Bible—A Book of Answers

Christendom has adulterated and watered down Bible truths. Likewise, many New Age doctrines are also contrary to Bible teachings. Take, for instance, the New Age idea that humans can bring a solution to earth's problems. The Bible clearly states at Jeremiah 10:23: "To earthling man his way does not belong. It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step." Another scripture says: "Salvation belongs to Jehovah."—Psalm 3:8.

The Bible does not teach that humans have an immortal soul that lives as an independent entity, separate from the body. According to the Scriptures, the soul dies, and death marks the end of all thought and activity. (Numbers 23:10; 35:11; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) This clearly rules out the New Age concept of reincarnation.

Furthermore, communication with the dead is impossible. According to the Bible, any alleged communication with the dead is actually communication with demons—spirit enemies of God and humanity. Therefore, God's Law made the practice of spiritism, including every form of divination, astrology, and mediumship, a capital offense.—Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deuteronomy 18:10-12.

The Bible is the source of true spiritual healing. It has a body of teachings that help Christians to get in touch with their inner self and transform their personality. (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Ephesians 4:21-24) It teaches self-discipline, soundness of mind, respect for self and others.

The Bible puts us in touch with the highest power in the universe, our Creator. (Acts 17:24-28) It shows that by exercising faith in the ransom sacrifice of his Son, humankind may attain to everlasting life in a paradise earth. (Romans 6:23) It provides satisfying answers to such questions as: Why has God permitted so much suffering? Who are the powerful entities in the invisible realm? Are they responsible for much of the so-called paranormal phenomena?

For the future, the Bible promises perfect health and everlasting life and a new world of peace and harmony, with a clean environment, right here on earth. (Isaiah 33:24; 2 Peter 3:13) In that new world, humans will undoubtedly increase their knowledge and, under God's direction, unravel many mysteries about the human body, our planet, and the rest of the universe. All of this will be accom-

plished by the power of Jehovah, a God who loves humanity.

### Will You Be There?

However, the Bible also teaches that these blessings are available only to those who live in harmony with God's laws. These laws are not oppressive. But they must be obeyed. (Proverbs 4:18, 19; 1 John 5:3) It is not possible to subscribe to unscriptural New Age thought and at the same time believe in the Bible.—1 Corinthians 3:18-20; 10:18-22; James 4:4.

Therefore, genuine Christians avoid becoming entangled with the unscriptural thinking of the New Age movement. Sound judgment and reasonableness are needed. It should be noted that the "New Age" label has come to be widely used for things that did not originate with the New Age movement and that may not necessarily be unscriptural. This is true especially in the fields of health, nutrition, art, and music. Christians must therefore exercise discernment and intelligent balance while being sure to stay away from anything condemned in the Bible. Appropriately, Proverbs 14:15 wisely counsels: "Anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word, but the shrewd one considers his steps."

Yes, the Bible is the key to true enlightenment. New Agers' general disregard for the Scriptures can only bring more darkness to the world. But the Bible supplies spiritual light and the hope of a new world as promised by God: "Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will 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.' Also, he says: 'Write, because these words are faithful and true.'”—Revelation 21:3-5.

## Young People Ask...



# How Can I Adjust to Our Move?

HAS your family moved recently? Then you probably agree that few experiences in life are as grueling—or as stressful. And after the last box is unpacked and the last piece of furniture moved into place, you may still feel depressed, sad, or anxious. It matters little whether your new home or apartment is superior or disappointingly inferior to your former dwelling. You still miss your old house, your old school, and especially your old friends.

Of course, it's only natural to feel nostalgic about one's old home. But the Bible counsels:

"Do not say: 'Why has it happened that the former days proved to be better than these?' for it is not due to wisdom that you have asked about this." (Ecclesiastes 7:10) Wisdom helps you to view matters realistically. Actually, 'the old days' in your former residence were not really perfect—probably not by a long shot. Far from ruining your life, moving may offer you new opportunities and advantages. Even so, adjusting to a move is anything but easy. What, then, can help you in doing so?

### Make Yourself at Home

There's a lot of truth to the words of an old song that said: "Any old place I can hang my hat is home sweet home to me." Yes, rather than fret over the places you have left behind, why not work at making your new place *home*? *The Teenager's Survival Guide to Moving* suggests: "As soon as you move in, try to make your new room comfortable and familiar." You might, for example, decorate your room with familiar objects and pictures. If you share a room with a sibling, try making it a joint project.

In Bible times a psalmist encouraged God's people to acquaint themselves with their capital city, saying: "March around Zion, you people, and go about it, count its towers. . . . Inspect its dwelling towers." (Psalm 48:12, 13) In a similar way, get to know your neighborhood. Find out where shopping areas, your new school, the local library, and other facilities are located. This will help you to feel more at home.

No doubt you had a set routine, or way of doing things, in your old home. The quicker you get back into that old routine, the sooner you will feel at home. Especially should you "go on walking orderly in [the] same routine" when it comes to spiritual matters like Christian meetings and Bible study.—Philippians 3:16.

## School Days

Adjusting to a new school is a challenge in itself, more so if you have moved in the middle of a school year. In some lands the school curriculum is planned locally, and it may be quite different from the course of study you had in your old school. You may find yourself considerably behind the students in your new school; you may even have to be shifted to a lower grade.

As humiliating as this might seem at the time, don't be discouraged; falling behind academically is a common side effect of moving. Besides, although schools in your area may have a standardized curriculum, the stress of the move and the adjustment to different people, circumstances, and customs, as well as the pressure of trying to remember dozens of new names—all these things can conspire to tire out your powers of concentration. The solution? Try giving yourself extra time for your homework, and give the TV a rest. In time your academic performance will likely improve.



**Take the initiative to make new friends**

## Making New Friends

"Making new friends was really the key [to adjusting]," says a youth named Brian whose family moved to the southern part of the United States. "After I found a couple of friends my age that I had a lot in common with, everything else fell into place. The only thing I still really miss about my old home is playing ice hockey." As one of Jehovah's Witnesses, Brian wisely sought out friends from among the God-fearing youths attending the local Kingdom Hall. If you likewise want friends who have high moral standards and who really care about you as a person, your local Kingdom Hall is the best place to look. —Proverbs 13:20.

Of course, you'll never make friends by moping or isolating yourself. (Compare Proverbs 18:1.) "The way I made new friends," says Anita, "was by doing my part and introducing myself. I've also found that by having a positive attitude—just smiling and looking happy—people will come and meet you." Yes, people will be drawn to you if you offer them something sweet—a friendly smile and a cheerful disposition! And be patient. Friendship takes time to build.

Sometimes you can get a head start on building friendships, though, by visiting your prospective new home before you move. Thirteen-year-old Laura says: "I was really upset when I first learned that we are going to have to move soon. But I've been able to spend time getting to know some of the kids where we are going and that has really helped me feel better about moving."

## Wholesome Versus Unwholesome Friendships

Do you say there is little wholesome association to be found among the young people in your new town? Then "widen out" in your friendships. (2 Corinthians 6:11-13) After all, some of the warmest friendships recorded in

the Bible were between persons with considerable age differences—such as David and Jonathan, and Paul and Timothy. (1 Samuel 18:1; 1 Corinthians 4:17) So why limit your friendships to peers? There are older ones in the Christian congregation whose company you might really enjoy.

Granted, such ones may not be able to keep up with you in a game of soccer. Nor may they be up to hearing your favorite music. Still, they may have much to offer in the way of upbuilding companionship. Since the best way to have a friend is to be one, you might start things off by offering to run an errand for one of these older ones. Or why not simply ask if it would be all right for you to drop by? A satisfying friendship may develop.

On the other hand, if you simply stay alone in your room and feel sorry for yourself, you could easily become lonely and depressed. This could leave you vulnerable to the overtures of the wrong kind of friends. Teenage gangs, for example, are a serious problem in many areas. They promise lonely youths companionship and a feeling of belonging. But as in Bible times, such young people may also try to get you involved in wrongdoing, saying: "Come on . . . Let's attack some innocent people for the fun of it!" But wise King Solomon warned: "Son, don't go with people like that. Stay away from them. They can't wait to do something bad."—Proverbs 1:10-16, *Today's English Version*.\*

### Focus on Others

One sure way to get your mind off your loneliness is to look for ways to encourage others—especially your own family members. "Moving isn't a piece of cake for parents either," reminds *Current Health* magazine, "and they can use all the support they can get." Mom or dad may both be adjusting to new

\* See the article "Young People Ask . . . Should I Join a Gang?" appearing in the June 8, 1991, issue of *Awake!*

jobs. The new house or apartment may not be as convenient or pleasant as the old one. And if you have brothers and sisters, they are probably having their own bouts of loneliness and discouragement. Why not see what you can do to help out? Ask your parents if there are some extra chores you could do. If your siblings seem lonely, offer to spend some time with them. Remember "love builds up" both its recipients and those showing it.—1 Corinthians 8:1.

In the final analysis, then, whether you like or dislike your new home will depend much upon you. We are reminded of the story of the wise old man who was approached by two car-loads of strangers. "We are thinking of moving here," said the family in the first car. "What are the people like?" The old man countered: "What are the people like where you come from?" The family replied: "We come from a very friendly town. The people are generous and kind and take a real interest in strangers." The old man smiled. "I think you'd like it here," he said. "The people here are just like that."

The old man asked the family in the second car the same question. They replied: "We come from a mean little town. The people there are lazy and nosy and are terrible gossips." The old man frowned. "I don't think you would be happy here," he said. "The people here are just like that."

The point of the story? People are just about the same everywhere. And whether you enjoy or disdain their company depends a lot on your own attitudes, perceptions, and ways of dealing with others. So keep a positive attitude! Make up your mind that you will make the most of your move. No, things may never be the same. But with work and patience, you can make things *better* than before. As long as you are with those who really love you, any place can truly be home.

# The Unique Festival of the Black Nazarene

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

IT'S not often that you see a crowd as big as this. But here in Manila, this spectacle can be seen every January 9. Hundreds of thousands of devout Catholics have crowded Plaza Miranda at Quiapo Church, waiting for the Black Nazarene to make its appearance.

'Black Nazarene?' you ask. Yes, this life-size statue of Jesus Christ bearing a cross is the focal point of a unique procession that according to the book *Filipino Heritage* "is indisputably the most massive, the most spectacular . . . manifestation of popular religion in the Only Christian Nation in Asia," the Philippines.

## The Massive Procession

As the church gates open, the crowd goes wild with cheers amid the sound of firecrackers. Two long ropes are let out into the crowd to pull the carriage on which the Black Nazarene stands. Devotees struggle to get their hands on the ropes. This is a great honor for them. Others lock arms in an attempt to form an opening for the procession to pass through. All the men are barefoot, each one wearing a

T-shirt and having a towel on his head or around his neck.

From a stage set up near the church, an announcer has just explained some rules to the waiting crowd. One thing in particular was made clear: In the main procession, women are not allowed. The reason becomes apparent as the Black Nazarene is slowly pulled out into the plaza; things get pretty rough.

The excited crowd of worshipers reach out, pushing and shoving, even climbing over one another in their all-consuming effort to touch the Black Nazarene. A few men riding on the carriage have to push a number of them down in their attempt to protect the image from the excited crowd.

If too many are allowed to climb up at one time, the platform may topple. In spite of such precautions, the carriage does topple at times, and it takes 30 minutes to an hour to bring it up again because so many people try to touch the image.

Observers line the narrow streets of Quiapo to witness the Black Nazarene as it slowly makes its way through the district. Candles are



held aloft to express devotion to the image. Others bring along smaller images from home. Accompanying the procession are large banners identifying the various groups of Black Nazarene devotees.

Some in the crowd throw towels and handkerchiefs to one of the men riding on the platform with the Black Nazarene. He then rubs them on the image or its cross and throws them back. A thrilled believer then rubs his towel over his face. Following the main procession comes a long line of images, many of them smaller versions of the Black Nazarene. Here it is safe for women to join in.

Meanwhile, inside the church, believers, especially women, petition the Black Nazarene for help in another way. Upon entering the door, they join the long line of others who slowly make their way on their knees down the aisle of the church to the altar.

### What Excites the Crowd So Much?

The Black Nazarene statue is said to be the source of countless miracles. Twelve-year-old Alberto said he went with his grandparents to the festival because the Black Nazarene always gave him whatever he asked for through prayer. Mauricio says he joined the procession hoping for forgiveness of his sins as well as relief from the problems and tensions of everyday life.

The first time Mauricio joined the festival, he was 24 years old. Each year he was able to hold the ropes that pull the image. By his fifth time, he had a strong desire actually to climb onto the carriage. Some of his friends helped him up, where he was able to wipe his towel on the feet of the Black Nazarene; then he dived back into the crowd. This is the ultimate experience, what most can only hope for.

### Origin of the Festival

The Black Nazarene is said to have been originally carved by a Mexican Indian (others claim it is the work of a Filipino or Chinese carver) and brought to Manila by galleon in the 17th century. The artisans made it unique either by carving it out of dark wood or painting the image a dark brown, which matches the complexion of both Mexicans and Filipinos. In the 18th century, the Black Nazarene was enshrined in Quiapo at the request of Basilio Sancho, archbishop of Manila, who gave his blessing to it. Then, in the early part of the 19th century, it received a blessing from Pope Pius VII.

However, it was not until 1923 that it was first taken out to be part of the religious procession that climaxes the Quiapo district fiesta. The processions have continued ever since.

**People flock to have towels and handkerchiefs rubbed on the statue**



### **Can It Be Considered Idolatry?**

Normally, the Black Nazarene can be seen in its place in a window near the entrance to the church. This window is right between two tablets listing the *Sampung Utos*, or Ten Commandments. To some Christians, this may seem ironic, since the second of the Ten Commandments is: "You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven or on earth . . . You shall not bow down to them or serve them." (Exodus 20:4, 5, *The Jerusalem Bible*) Is not the Black Nazarene a carved image that devout Catholics are serving?

Most Catholics would not view it that way. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says: "Since the worship given to an image reaches and terminates in the person represented, the same type of worship due the person can be rendered to the image as representing the person." This is what many Filipino Catholics have said—that they worship, not the image, but Jesus Christ, whom the statue is supposed to represent. Let's examine this reasoning for a moment.

Actually, such relative worship is not unique to Catholics. Pagan religions have reasoned the same way for centuries. For instance, according to Lactantius, a Church Father of the fourth century, such pagans would say: "We do not fear the images themselves, but those beings after whose likeness they were formed, and to whose names they are dedicated."

Does this mean, then, that God's commands regarding the worship of idols did not apply in their case? Can such reasoning truly be sound when it attempts to make God's Word invalid? After all, if the majority of idol worshippers reason this way, then whom were the commands really meant for?

Recall that while God was giving Moses the Ten Commandments, the Israelites had set up

a golden calf and were bowing down to it. The people may not have viewed what they were doing as idolatry at all. In their minds, the calf represented Jehovah. (Exodus 32:4, 5) But was God pleased with what they were doing? We read that Jehovah now said to Moses: "Go, descend, because your people whom you led up out of the land of Egypt have acted ruinously. They have turned aside in a hurry from the way I have commanded them to go. They have made a molten statue of a calf for themselves and keep bowing down to it and sacrificing to it."—Exodus 32:7, 8.

Another question that deserves attention is whether it makes sense to honor an image. The Bible has never minced words on this subject. It says: "Such people are too stupid to know what they are doing. They close their eyes and their minds to the truth. The maker of idols hasn't the wit or the sense to say, ' . . . Here I am bowing down to a block of wood!'"—Isaiah 44:18, 19, *Today's English Version*.

### **Can the Image Help Its Devotees?**

One Catholic priest wrote: "People who put their confidence on the power behind the Black Nazarene of Quiapo have certainly more reason for their trust than those who rely on a horseshoe or rabbit's foot."

The Bible, on the other hand, says of such images: "If anyone prays to it, it cannot answer or save him from disaster." Jehovah God plainly tells us that "they can do you no good."—Isaiah 46:7; Jeremiah 10:5; *TEV*.

There is no doubt that devout Catholics who climb over one another in hopes of touching the Black Nazarene "have a zeal for God," but it is "not according to accurate knowledge." (Romans 10:2) We encourage all such ones to gain accurate knowledge by examining God's Word, the Bible, thus taking up "the form of worship that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and Father."—James 1:27.

# Elephants Friends or Foes?



Animals / Jim Harter / Dover Publications, Inc.

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

ELEPHANTS are prized for different reasons and hated for others. To some they are valuable workers, adept at hauling huge logs and placing them in neat rows. Others value elephants for their tusks, hide, and meat. Still others just see them as a threat to their land and crops.

Many researchers, though, value elephants for their entertaining ways. Cynthia Moss spent 13 years studying elephants in Kenya's Amboseli game park. In her book *Elephant Memories*, she writes: "I have seen the grand old matriarchs leading and defending their families and I have also seen them lose all dignity and run around in play with their tails curled up over their backs and a wild glint in their eyes."

Daphne Sheldrick of Kenya has raised many orphaned elephants and released them back into the wild. In an interview with the magazine *Getaway*, she explained: "All the little elephants that come in have different temperaments, just as human children do.... They're slightly competitive, they get jealous and when you reprimand them they may sulk. ... Some of them will be deliberately mischievous or disobedient. We do have to discipline them, just as you discipline human children."

Besides being entertaining, elephants play a practical role in nature. A moderate number in a confined region increase the richness of plant species. The book *Elephants, Economics and Ivory* lists other valuable functions, such as opening new grasslands, dispersing seeds, and reducing "the incidence of the tsetse fly." "Elephants," conclude the authors, "have an essential ecological role in the African savannas and forests."

If there are too many elephants, however, they cause damage to vegetation. That is when they become a foe for some people. Because of this, conservationists regularly cull elephants in some confined regions. In other parts of Africa where elephants still have plenty of space, culling has not been resorted to. This has advantages. "In Kenya's Amboseli game park," explains *New Scientist* magazine, "where there has been no culling, elephants walk freely among humans and show no fear of them."

Scientists are working on alternative methods to reduce the elephant birthrate. Meanwhile, as man learns more about elephants, he will no doubt find more reasons to view them as friends.



## How Successful Is It?

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN MEXICO

**W**ORLDWIDE, many nations are struggling with high inflation, devaluation of currency, instability, and public anxiety. With the changes that have been taking place in Russia the last two years, the economic problems in that country seem to be worsening. The United States, although considered the wealthiest nation of the world, is trying to crawl out of a recession. Now Japan's boom has slowed down, and the Japanese are being more careful with their finances. As for Latin America, economic problems are a way of life.

In this context it may be surprising to read some declarations about Mexico's economic recovery. Mexico's president Carlos Salinas de Gortari stated: "We have reduced inflation from almost 200 percent in 1987 to a level that has already reached 10 percent and continues to fall." In his speech to the Foreign Policy Association in New York, he continued: "Since 1989, thirteen million Mexicans have gained access to electric power, eleven million to the drinking water supply, and eight and a half million to the sewage system."

So some questions may arise. What does this recovery involve? Are the Mexican people improving their standard of living?

### The Crisis Years

Before the '70's, Mexico was considered to be economically stable. With its peso having a parity of 12.50 per dollar, the economy was basically steady, and the external debt was more or less controlled. But in the '80's, when it seemed that there should be an economic boom because of more oil being found in Mexico, paradoxically a crisis developed, and in 1987, Mexico reached its highest inflation index.

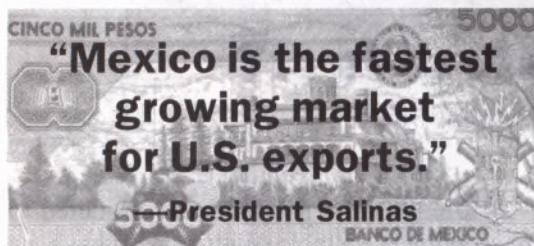
At that time it was very difficult to keep up with the demand for money, and the government continued printing currency that lost value every day. Large sums of money started to flee the country to be kept more secure in banks abroad. The devaluation of the peso was much the same as the rate of inflation. In 1992, when the exchange rate was 3,110 pesos to the dollar, the devaluation had surpassed 24,000 percent since the '70's, when the rate was 12.50 pesos.

In the two six-year periods prior to 1988, most of the action taken by the government to solve the problems mentioned above seemed self-defeating and undermined the Mexican economy. The distrust, both inside the country and in foreign countries, started to spread,

all the more so when in 1982, Mexico advised that it was not able to pay even the interest on its external debt.

### Drastic Changes in the Mexican Economy

Changes have taken place during the presidency of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, who took office December 1, 1988. President Salinas, an economist and graduate of Harvard University, surrounded by a group of financial experts,



faced the task of restructuring the Mexican economy. There were two options to choose from: a mixed economy or a market economy. A mixed economy is one in which the State controls a greater part of the industries and services, while giving opportunity for private enterprise to exist. A market economy is one in which the country is given full freedom, and industry and the private sector are allowed to operate with minimal interference from the State. The Salinas government chose a mixed economy, reversing the process that had been pursued in previous years. The former government had loaded itself with many enterprises and service agencies that, instead of being productive, needed State subsidies in order to survive. Now private companies were given more opportunity, and therefore some State enterprises began to be sold—almost 400 up to now—which created a cash flow and eased the burden on government finances.

With the privatization of enterprises and the concomitant austerity policy in public expenses, it has been possible for Mexico to re-

finance its external debt, which in 1993 amounted to over \$103 billion. In this situation some countries now view Mexico more confidently as a country for possible investment.

### The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

Since 1990 a free trade agreement has been negotiated involving Canada, the United States, and Mexico. During 1993 the debate over final approval of this accord continued, especially in the United States. Ratification had to be completed by the end of 1993 so that the agreement could go into effect on January 1, 1994. While the agreement was negotiated during the administration of former U.S. president George Bush, during the present Clinton presidency there have been many opponents to the pact in the United States and in Canada. Why the controversy?

There are different opinions about the possible effects of NAFTA. The Mexican viewpoint is understandably positive. Jaime José Serra Puche, Secretary of Commerce and Industrial Promotion for Mexico, stated to a group of American businessmen in Detroit: "NAFTA makes a great deal of sense. That is, NAFTA will help us to create more jobs, it will help us become more competitive, and NAFTA will help us improve the environment as well." That last assertion is one that many Americans doubt—they allege that the environment has not been a prime consideration of Mexican businesses on the U.S. border. It is also reported that U.S. unions fear that NAFTA will cause significant job losses for the American work force. The answer of President Salinas is: "Mexico is the fastest growing market for U.S. exports." He said that Mexico is "the third largest buyer of U.S. goods, behind only Canada and Japan." Besides the United States and Canada as trade partners, Mexico is opening its doors to

other countries. Japan has shown interest in investing in Mexico. In fact, one of the enterprises (*Teléfonos de México*) that was privatized was acquired with mostly Japanese capital.

### **The Mexican Nuevo Peso (New Peso)**

One of the government's strategies for better control of finances is the modification of the Mexican currency. With the devaluation of the peso against the U.S. dollar, great sums in pesos were necessary for business transactions. Up to 1992, it took 3,150 pesos to equal one dollar, which meant that a value of 1,000 dollars required 3,150,000 pesos. Can you imagine larger amounts of money, such as one million or 100 million dollars? This would require too many digits to be practical for business transactions. Therefore, in 1993 it was decided to take three zeros off the peso. Now the rate is 3.20 pesos per dollar, and the use of cents has again become possible in the domestic economy.

### **The New Economy —Repercussions in the Country**

For some years now, there has been an agreement in Mexico among employers, industry, and the banking sector to try to control prices. Labor unions have also agreed not to demand increased wages. This has been a way to control inflation. However, how effective has this control been? Some people think that while the increase in wages has been controlled, prices have increased. Even though inflation, according to official figures, was kept under 10 percent in 1993, ordinary people, including housewives, felt that each day they could buy less with the same amount of money. The London *Economist* summed up the situation, saying: "The fiesta has given way to siesta."

This leads to the question: Has the economic improvement fostered real improvement in Mexican society? Unfortunately, poverty con-

tinues its gallop. It is said that the minimum wage for workers, which hardly surpasses 150 dollars a month, makes it impossible for them to avoid poverty in many places. In some Mexican states, the minimum wage is even lower. An average worker or a bricklayer may earn the equivalent of \$200 or \$300 a month, which makes it very difficult for him to support a family. According to a recent study, "of the 91.9 percent of Mexico's population living in poverty, some 30.1 percent are in extreme poverty."—*El Universal*, March 31, 1993.

In this setting, over 380,000 of Jehovah's Witnesses are preaching a positive message to the 85 million Mexicans—that soon poverty and injustice will be done away with worldwide under God's Kingdom rule in the hands of the resurrected Christ Jesus. The Bible promises: "Here I am creating new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart." "They will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. They will not build and someone else have occupancy; they will not plant and someone else do the eating. For like the days of a tree will the days of my people be; and the work of their own hands my chosen ones will use to the full." (Isaiah 65:17, 21-24) At that time poverty will cease, wherever it may have existed.

### **IN OUR NEXT ISSUE**

**The Money Chase  
—Where Will It End?**

**Helping Those With AIDS**

**How Can I Avoid Toying  
With Immorality?**



# "Too Bad, Too Bad, You Great City"

**O**F ALL the cities in the world that claim to be great, it would seem that none would be more entitled to do so than those considered religiously sacred. But the words "too bad, too bad" indicate that the religious city called "great" at Revelation 18:10 obviously lacks divine approval, as we will see later.

## Crossing Over to Immortality?

Sacred Hindu cities in India are called *tīrthas*, meaning "crossings" or "fords." Many, like Banaras (also called Benares, Kasi, or Varanasi), are located on the banks of rivers. But they are understood to be, not literal crossings, but rather spiritual fords that supposedly allow humans to cross life's waters safely to a better life beyond.

An encyclopedia says: "Vārānasi is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world . . . , the first Aryan settlement in the middle Ganges valley." It was a religious center as early as the second millennium B.C.E. Although a Hindu city, it also appears in the annals of Buddhism and Islam. During the sixth century B.C.E., while Banaras was capital of the Kingdom of Kasi, Buddha preached his first sermon nearby. Islam entered the picture in 1194, when Muslims took control of the city.

Located in northern India on the river Ganges, Banaras is one of the country's seven most holy Hindu cities. Within its borders a symbolic place has been assigned each Hindu god and each of the other great *tīrthas*. Thus, *The Encyclopedia of Religion* calls the city "a microcosm of India's sacred geography." It adds: "The intensity of power that comes from the symbolic gathering of gods, *tīrthas*, and sages in this one place has made Banaras India's most widely acclaimed place of pilgrimage."

Hindus consider Banaras a most auspicious place to die. The popular phrase *Kāśyām maranam muktiḥ* means "Death in Kasi is liberation." Tradition says that anyone dying there will be instructed by Siva himself, tantamount to being carried "across the flood of *samsāra* to the 'far shore' of immortality."<sup>\*</sup>

Like rivers everywhere, the Ganges twists its way past prosperous cities, absorbing sewage and chemicals as it goes. Meanwhile, devout Hindus, as dictated by religious tradition, cast an estimated 10,000 dead bodies into the river daily. At the same time, pilgrims, oblivious to the unmistakable danger

\* "Samsara" is understood by Hindus to mean the transmigration of an eternal, imperishable soul.

of disease, descend the steps along the river-banks to engage in religious bathing. Is this really the way to immortality?

### How Eternal Is the "Eternal City"?

Another river, possibly once called Albula in reference to the whiteness of its waters, flows through a religious city in Europe, the "Eternal City" of the seven hills. The river, having long lost its whiteness, is now known as the Tiber. And the city has long outgrown its seven hills. Nevertheless, "the heritage of the past that survives in Rome," notes *The New Encyclopædia Britannica*, is "unsurpassed in any city of the West."

Dozens of monuments and historical buildings testify to this heritage. That they have survived at all is amazing, considering the many times the city has been conquered and plundered—at the beginning of the fourth century B.C.E. by the Gauls and in the Common Era, by the Visigoths in 410, the Vandals in 455, the Normans in 1084, imperial mercenary troops in 1527, Napoleon's army in 1798, and the Germans and the Allies during World War II.

Although the original walled city of Rome makes up only 4 percent of the total area of the modern city, it is the Rome that millions of tourists flock to see, for it is where most of the monuments are located. Another tourist attraction, at least in early 1993, was the exhibition "Sixtus V and Rome." As pope from 1585 to 1590, Sixtus left such a lasting imprint on the face of Rome that he has been called "the father of modern town planning." Explaining why he remodeled Rome, *The European* wrote: "First, to provide a solid architectural base for the affirmation of Vatican power against the Protestant threat. . . . Second, to make the city of Rome, in many ways still a provincial market town, the worthy seat of the New Jerusalem."

Vatican City, a tiny enclave of Rome, claims to be this "seat of the New Jerusalem." In 1929 the Fascist Italian government signed the Lateran Treaty, thereby recognizing the sovereignty of Vatican City. Since then the pope has ruled that city with absolute executive, legislative, and judicial authority. The Vatican has its own postal and telephone system and its own army, including the uniformed Swiss Guards, responsible for protecting the pope. But what tourists chiefly want to see is St. Peter's Basilica, for centuries the largest church in Christendom. This distinction was lost in 1989 with the completion of the basilica in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire.

*The New Encyclopædia Britannica* says that "for 1,000 years, to be a citizen of Rome was to hold the keys to the world, to live in safety, pride, and relative comfort." But no longer! Political corruption in Rome and religious stagnation in Vatican City prove the so-called glories of yesterday to be less than eternal.

### Islam's Holiest Place

About a billion Muslims throughout the world view the city of Mecca as "the site of divine, angelic, prophetic, and auspicious human activity since the primordial moment of creation."<sup>\*</sup> According to Islam it is where creation began, where Abraham built the first house of worship, and where he took his concubine Hagar and their son, Ishmael.

More recently, probably about 570 C.E., Mecca, Saudi Arabia, was where the prophet Muhammad was born. At first his teachings met with little response. Mecca was an oasis on the caravan trade route between India and Europe, and its powerful merchants feared that his religious reforms might lead to an

\* *Islam: Beliefs and Teachings*, published by The Muslim Educational Trust, claims that "the latest population of Muslims all over the world might nearly be 1,100 million."

economic slowdown. Failing to get a foothold there, the prophet turned to Yathrib, which became known as Al-Madīnah (Medina), a city over 200 miles to the northeast. But in 630 C.E., he returned to Mecca, captured it, and made it the spiritual center of Islam.

Today Mecca is a wealthy and cosmopolitan city, even though only Muslims may reside there. During Dhū'l-Hijja, the holy month of pilgraming, millions visit to fulfill their religious duty of hajj. While in Mecca pilgrims visit the Sacred Mosque, where they walk seven times around a small shrine located near the center of the mosque's roofless courtyard.

This shrine is the Kaaba, a cube-shaped structure normally covered by a large curtain of black brocade and containing the sacred Black Stone. This stone, which Muslims be-

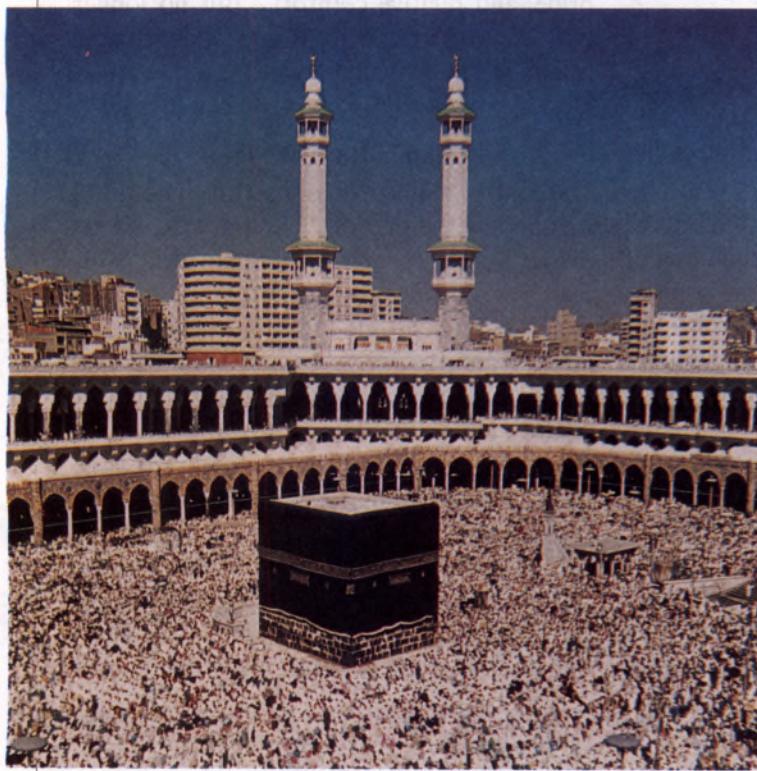
lieve was given to Adam for the forgiveness of sins upon his expulsion from Eden, was then supposedly white. In Muslim tradition the original Kaaba perished in Noah's Flood, but the Black Stone was preserved and later given to Abraham by the angel Gabriel, after which Abraham rebuilt the Kaaba and restored the Black Stone to its proper place. It is in the direction of the Kaaba—according to Islam the holiest place on earth—that Muslims orient themselves in prayer five times a day.

Twenty-four gates lead into the courtyard of the Sacred Mosque, but the traditional entrance for pilgrims is the Gate of Peace, located at the northern corner. Still, things are not always peaceful during the hajj. In 1987, Islamic dissidents attempted to take control of the mosque. Order was soon restored but not before over 400 Muslims were killed and some 650 injured. Such an obvious lack of peace at the most holy of all Islamic shrines is regrettable, but Muslims gain comfort from Islamic teaching, according to which anyone who dies while on the hajj gains immediate entry to heaven.

#### **Possession of Twofold Peace?**

Jerusalem, viewed by Jews and professed Christians as the Holy City and by Muslims as the third most holy place on earth (behind Mecca and Medina), means "Possession of Two-fold Peace." From 1070 B.C.E.,

**The sacred mosque of  
Mecca and the Kaaba**



Camerapix



**The Jewish Wailing Wall of Jerusalem and the Muslim Dome of the Rock (left)**

it was the capital city of ancient Israel, although it existed almost 900 years earlier under the name Salem. (Genesis 14:18) As the administrative center of the nation, it was strategically located, nestled among hills at an altitude of about 2,500 feet above sea level, making it at that time one of the highest capitals in the world.

In the fourth century B.C.E., Jerusalem came under Greek control. By the second century B.C.E., it was increasingly influenced by an expanding Roman power. During the rule of Herod the Great, Jerusalem prospered. Part of the courtyard wall of the temple that he built apparently still stands, now known as the Western (Wailing) Wall. Because the Jews tried to throw off the Roman yoke, Roman armies attacked Jerusalem in April 70 C.E. Less than five months later, the city and its temple lay in ruins.

According to one reckoning, Jerusalem has been conquered 37 times. In many cases this resulted in either its partial or its total destruction. But a new Jerusalem has always arisen on top of the old. So in about 130 C.E., Emperor Hadrian ordered a new city built, one named Aelia Capitolina. No Jew was allowed to enter it for nearly two centuries. Then, in the first half of the seventh century C.E., the Muslims captured the city and

later built the Dome of the Rock on or near the former temple site.

The modern State of Israel was founded in 1948, and in 1949, Jerusalem was divided between Israel and Jordan. But in 1967, during the Six-Day War, the Israelis captured its eastern half. Since then they have modernized the city, while trying to retain its historical integrity. By 1993 its population was over half a million.

With three major world religions all viewing Jerusalem as sacred, religious tensions sometimes run high. "Of all the conflicts between Jews and Arabs, that over Jerusalem is the most complex and intractable," notes *Time*. For the present there is little evidence of the twofold peace that Jerusalem's name promises.

#### **"Your Cities Will Become a Desolate Ruin"**

The city mentioned at Revelation 18:10 symbolizes all religions displeasing to God. "Too bad, too bad, you great city, Babylon you strong city, because in one hour your judgment has arrived!" Plainly, this means that religion in opposition to Jehovah God is doomed. Despite their temples, ceremonies, and religious paraphernalia, today's "great" cities of religion will offer no lasting protection on God's day of judgment.

# Help for Your Grief

"SORROW MAKES US ALL CHILDREN AGAIN—DESTROYS ALL DIFFERENCES OF INTELLECT. THE WISEST KNOW NOTHING."

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON, 19TH-CENTURY AMERICAN POET AND ESSAYIST.

THE sting of death not only pains but numbs most survivors—husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter, or friend. The wise may ask questions but hear no comforting answers, and the strong may weep under the weight of grief but get no solace. Bible readers may be reminded of the outcry of David at the execution of treacherous Absalom: "My son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! O that I might have died, I myself, instead of you, Absalom my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33) This was not the cry of a king concerning a traitor; it was the cry of a father for his dead son. It may be that you too have had a similar feeling when bereaved.

During the time of deep grief, troublesome questions may come to mind. 'Why did it have to happen? Did God know this would happen? If he did know, why didn't he prevent it?' Even though a person may be well versed in the Bible and know that the dead will be resurrected, troublesome questions may require deep meditation for consolation and comfort.

Wrong answers do not

bring true satisfaction, only false comfort. To be told that 'God needed your loved one' very often causes a turning away from God in a spirit of bitterness. The truth, as contained in the Bible, answers questions about grief and draws one closer to Jehovah God, rather than pushing one away from him. We are assured at 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4 that he is the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort.

**God's Knowledge and Power Are Balanced**  
Jehovah, the Almighty, knows all that happens in his vast creation. Psalm 11:4 assures us: "Jehovah—in the heavens is his throne. His own eyes behold, his own beaming eyes examine the sons of men." At Hebrews 4:13 the apostle Paul wrote: "There is not a creation that is not manifest to his sight." God not only knows but he cares! Said Jesus: "Do not two sparrows sell for a coin of small value? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's knowledge. . . . You are worth more than many sparrows."—Matthew 10:29, 31.



*The Day Before Parting* by Jozef Israels:  
Gift of Alice N. Lincoln, Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Could God have prevented the untimely death of a loved one and the grief that followed? Yes, he could. "All things are possible with God," stated Jesus. (Mark 10:27) Long ago, Jehovah hearkened to dying Hezekiah's prayer and healed him and added years to his life. (Isaiah 38:2-5) There is no question about Jehovah's ability to do all that he wills, but we must understand more about his will. We have all read accounts of people who were seriously injured or ill, and yet they lived. Did Jehovah intervene in their behalf?

Some people have extraordinary powers of recovery and a strong will to live. This may explain their seemingly miraculous recovery. Or some new treatment may have proved successful. Thus, we must not automatically conclude that Jehovah intervened.—Philippians 4:13.

#### **God's Word Explains Why People Die**

At Romans 5:12, the apostle Paul explains very simply that our forefather Adam rebelled against his Creator and was justly sentenced to death. Since we are his descendants, we are sinners and subject to death at any time. We have no guarantee of continuing life. Wise King Solomon of old makes it clear that time and unforeseen occurrence can befall anyone at any time, be it a fatal accident or a sudden terminal illness. Or one can be born with a congenital defect that shortens his life. Solomon also explains that with God there is a time and a season for everything. God has set a time to heal, not just one or a few, but all believing mankind during the reign of Christ Jesus.—Ecclesiastes 3:1; 9:11; 1 Corinthians 15:25, 26.

Keep in mind this sobering thought: Christians are not exempt from the calamities afflicting the human race and are thus subject to experiences that are common to mankind. "The trials that you have had to bear are no

more than people normally have."—1 Corinthians 10:13, *The Jerusalem Bible*.

#### **The Way to Recovery**

Death is a time for tears mingled with the greatest sincerity in beseeching Jehovah, the Hearer of prayer. Now as never before, draw close to God. Now as never before, pour out your heart in supplication for insight, for strength to readjust. The Bible encourages us to do just that. Peter says: "Throw all your anxiety upon him, because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7) How comforting are the words of God at Isaiah 57:15: "This is what the High and Lofty One, who is residing forever and whose name is holy, has said: 'In the height and in the holy place is where I reside, also with the one crushed and lowly in spirit.'" The crushed one clings to the Father; there is a greater intimacy than ever before. "The nearer you go to God, the nearer he will come to you," writes James. (James 4:8, *JB*) James assures us that God is willing to give us the necessary wisdom and strength for recovery.

In addition, you will find you will become a more compassionate person regarding the trials and adversities of others, more sympathetic. You will know more about how other people feel and how to offer words of comfort and hope. You may be able to aid a grieving one through his sorrow. Yes, you will have greater empathy for others in their distress.—Philippians 2:1.

The loss of a loved one can be grievous and painful for a time, perhaps for a long time. Yet, in the end, it may yield a clearer view of the hope ahead, the hope of serving God free of painful experiences. We can even become stronger in our Christian personality.—1 Peter 1:6, 7.

So despite the pain of grief, never give up! Let it be your resolve to continue serving God faithfully and loyally, to his glory and honor and to your everlasting salvation.

## WATCHING THE WORLD

### Beggars in Sheep's Clothing

In China, begging is becoming the road to wealth for some unscrupulous scam artists, reports *Worker's Daily*. If child beggars see someone they think looks sympathetic, they "start weeping and say 'uncle, auntie—I'm very hungry.' The potential donor cannot do anything but give," says the Chinese newspaper. Mothers pinch their children to make them cry and then claim that "the children are sick and have no money to see doctors." The elderly, it says, kneel down, "kowtow, and force a donation." The questioning of 25,000 beggars over a period of three years revealed that only 8.5 percent of them had no one to rely on and only 18.5 percent of those who appeared to be disabled actually were, said a Chinese official.

### More Victims Sue Church

Victims of sexual abuse in Australian religious institutions run by Catholic "brothers" are banding together to take what *The Canberra Times* describes as one of the biggest class actions in Australian legal history. An application to allow more than 250 writs to be lodged for compensation was filed recently by an organization representing former child victims. The abuse is alleged to have occurred from the 1940's right up until the 1980's, and the main defendants cited in the writs include several Catholic archdioceses. One Marist brother has already been convicted of sexual assault. The lawyer representing the victim in this case said: "We're facing the

tip of the iceberg. There's a deluge of actions likely to occur in the next few years. All religious institutions would need to be concerned."

### Who Has the Most Children?

Which nation has the highest fertility rate in the world? According to the United Nations, in first place is Rwanda, where women of childbearing age give birth, on the average, to 8.5 children each. Next come Malawi with 7.6 children, Côte d'Ivoire with 7.4, and Uganda with 7.3. The world average is 3.3 children, while for developed countries it is 1.9. Surprisingly, the



nation with the lowest fertility rate in the world, with only 1.3 children per woman of childbearing age, is once prolific Italy. Gone are the days when it was common for an Italian family to have three, four, or more children. Evidently, the times have also passed in which Italians followed the instructions of the Catholic Church with regard to birth control and contraception.

### Parental Contact Before Birth

Why speak to a baby that is still in its mother's womb? In the Brazilian magazine *Veja*, Swiss child psychiatrist Bertrand Cra-

mer says: "This kind of conversation allows the parents, especially the mother, a first contact with the child before birth." Although it is not fully known how the baby interprets such talk, "the only certainty is that the memory already works, which is extraordinary," according to Cramer. Moreover, after birth, since the baby observes intently the parents' facial expressions, Dr. Cramer says that "all small events in life have enormous importance already in the first days." However, he cautions: "Rather than worrying about perfect children, parents should avoid a poor relationship with the children, which may result in future schizophrenic, depressive adults. It is enough to dream of normal children—and not potential Nobel prize winners."

### AIDS in Côte d'Ivoire

Of the nearly 13 million inhabitants of Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa, at least 1 in 10 adults is infected with the AIDS virus, making it one of the worst affected regions in the world. Doctors say that AIDS is already the number one cause of death among young adults in Abidjan, the nation's capital, and that the epidemic has reached almost every section of the country. The French government has said that it will be committing greater financial support to combat the AIDS epidemic in Côte d'Ivoire. French doctors and government ministers, however, say that the international pharmaceutical industry has done very little to

help developing countries in their fight against AIDS. The French newspaper *Le Monde* notes that the pricing policies of drug manufacturers have put the antiviral drugs needed to treat AIDS victims virtually beyond reach in Africa.

#### **Churches in Hungary Share Blame**

About half a million Jews are said to have been murdered in Hungary during World War II. How did Christendom's churches there react during this horrific period? A report prepared by theologians of the Lutheran, Baptist, and Roman Catholic faiths reveals that these churches "regret not having acted more vigorously to protect Jewish fellow-citizens in their country." Why were the churches so reluctant to oppose the persecution? The hesitant stance was said to be "the result of the anti-Judaistic tradition of the churches, as well as the traditionally close connection with the authorities," says *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

#### **Deaths During Pregnancy**

"Child-bearing is one of the leading causes of death among women of reproductive age in developing countries," states the 1992 Report issued by the United Nations Population Fund. Each day during 1992, an average of 1,359 women in the developing world died as a result of complications related to pregnancy or childbirth. In contrast, says the report, during that same year, pregnancy-related deaths in the developed countries took 11 victims per day. Although a woman's risk of dying during pregnancy in some developed countries

varies from 1 in 6,000 to 1 in 9,000, the risk in the least developed countries is 1 in 20. These figures, notes UNFPA, reveal "a staggering disparity between the developing and the developed worlds."

#### **Decibel Damage**

One in 4 of the youths in France who regularly listen to music on personal stereo headphones may now suffer from hearing damage, reports the Paris magazine *Le Point*. High-decibel music is the culprit. Over two-thirds of the youths in France own personal stereos. Many of these stereos deliver from 100 to 110 decibels of high-energy sound directly into the



ear canal. To avoid permanent hearing damage, doctors say that at the 100-decibel level, listening should continue for no more than 40 minutes and just five minutes at the 110-decibel level! Yet, many youths admit that their headphone listening time often exceeds five hours a day. Considering the number of youths suffering from increasing premature hearing loss, the World Health Organization has recommended that a maximum output limit of 90 decibels be set for personal stereos.

#### **Suicide Prevention**

A new center for the prevention of suicides and attempted

suicides has been set up at Karolinska Hospital in Stockholm, Sweden. The head of the center, Assistant Professor Danuta Wasserman, says in the Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter* that one of many factors in suicides and attempted suicides is the lack of confidence that suicidal individuals have in themselves and in others. She therefore suggests that closer contact with others and greater fellow feeling will minimize suicides. "In Sweden there is a developing tendency to close the door on others and live just for oneself," she says. She proposes that if thoughts of suicide persist, one should "avoid self-denial and isolation" and "speak to somebody." Long-term studies following up those who have attempted suicide show that 90 percent of them eventually have a normal life after the crisis is over.

#### **Biblical City Uncovered**

*Le Figaro*, a French newspaper, reports that a team of Japanese archaeologists has uncovered the ruins of one of the five ancient Biblical cities named Aphek. For years scholars have unsuccessfully tried to connect the location of this ancient city with the modern village of Afriq, or Fiq, three miles east of the Sea of Galilee. However, archaeologist Hiroshi Kanaseki believes that the discovery of part of an ancient wall at 'En Gev, located on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, proves that the site is indeed where this particular Biblical city of Aphek once stood. It is mentioned in the Bible at 1 Kings 20:26 as the location where Syrian King Ben-hadad II was defeated by the Israelite forces under King Ahab.

## FROM OUR READERS

**Loneliness** Thank you for the series "Loneliness—What You Can Do About It." (September 22, 1993) I cried from the first to the last page. It made me look closely at the feelings I've been having lately. I now realize that I'm not the only person who feels lonely. I just hope that I can take your advice and apply it in my life.

S. G., United States

I was deeply moved by those articles. I have been treated for major depression and find loneliness to be my biggest enemy. A depressed person struggles day after day to fight this silent killer. Articles like these are like a light in the tunnel ahead.

G. P., United States

I am 21 years old and serve as a ministerial servant in a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. I have also served as a pioneer (full-time evangelizer). But I've often battled with loneliness. Your articles were an answer to my prayers. My congregation elders have been very loving and helpful, but now I see how I can better myself. I have made many changes in attitude and actions.

R. P., United States

Recently I have been plagued by loneliness. I can't tell you how desperate I have felt. But can you imagine my surprise on receiving the September 22, 1993, *Awake!*? I was speechless! I thanked Jehovah and read it as soon as I could. Thank you for that well-written series with its sensible advice.

C. F., England

**Twisted Love Stories** I was taken aback when I saw the "Watching the World" item "Love Story Twist." (October 22, 1993) Before I began studying the Bible, I used to write these twisted stories about homosexual love. When I read the article, it struck home with me that I was still thinking about those

stories, sometimes developing new ones in my imagination. Because you dealt with this subject, I have finally been able to stop this train of thought.

S. S., Japan

**Religious Persecution** No other life story has touched me more than the one entitled "Oh, Jehovah, Keep My Young Girl Faithful!" (September 22, 1993) It reinforced in my mind and heart that no matter what I may have to go through in order to keep my integrity to Jehovah, he will always sustain me.

C. D., United States

It was impossible not to be moved by this life story. Our daughter Esther thought the article was marvelous! May Jehovah help our children to be just as strong in faith!

A. C., France

Thank you for the article "Victorious in the Face of Death." (May 8, 1993) We enjoy religious freedom here. But I pray I can follow the example of these brothers and keep my integrity when it comes to other kinds of hardships.

S. M., Brazil

**Appreciates Artwork** When I saw the picture of God's new world on the cover of the October 22, 1993, *Awake!*, I was overjoyed. I kept staring at the picture, praying that I will be able to live there. I looked at it again a couple of days later, and it had the same effect. Thank you for such wonderful encouragement.

S. H., United States

I don't know who your artists are, but their work is *really impressive!* Some of the most beautiful art I've ever seen is in your books and publications. I'm an artist myself, and I can appreciate truly excellent art.

D. W., United States

# "A Job Well Done!"

SO READ a headline in the *St. Helena News*. Jehovah's Witnesses had done it again. They had constructed a second Kingdom Hall on the little island of St. Helena, over a thousand miles west of Africa. The building is situated at an elevated site in an area called Half Tree Hollow, with a magnificent view of the Atlantic Ocean.

The building inspector and the fire chief paid some compliments to the Witnesses. "You have worked wonders," said a retired governor. "This is a showpiece!" the electrical inspector added.

Dedication day was set for Saturday, January 9, 1993. By announcements over the radio, the whole island of some 6,000 people was invited to attend. But would the small group of local Witnesses, some 150 strong, be able to complete the project in time? Sarel Hart, a traveling overseer from South Africa, explains: "Concern filled our hearts when on the afternoon of the eighth, the driveway still

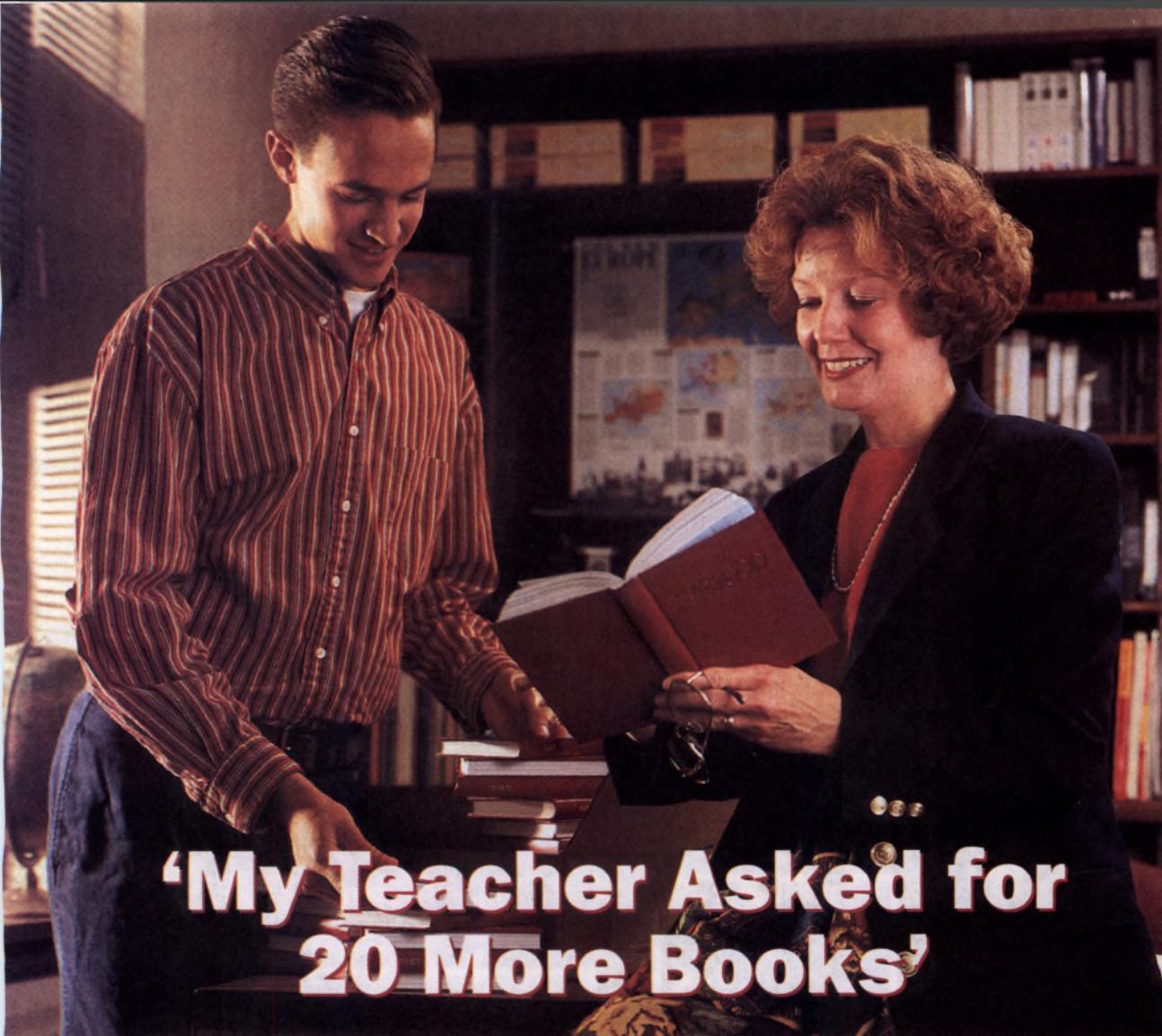
required many loads of fill to level it." How could they get trucks, equipment, and sufficient fill material to level the ground at that late hour? Hart continues: "Silent prayers were heard by Jehovah. The contractor who supplied the fill material said to the brothers: 'You asked for five loads. I know you need more. I have stopped counting—just let the trucks load until you have enough.' It was 4:00 p.m. when an operator on a front-end loader passed by on his way home. One of the Witnesses stopped him and explained our predicament. 'Just pay my overtime,' he said, and he pulled his machine into the driveway and leveled off the soil as fast as the trucks dumped it. Within three hours the rough approach to the Kingdom Hall was transformed into a smoothly graded driveway."

The next day a total of 328—more than 5 percent of the island's inhabitants—attended the dedication talk. Included in the audience were the government secretary and one of the counselors, and the Anglican bishop also sent a message wishing them well.



New Kingdom Hall





## 'My Teacher Asked for 20 More Books'

**S**EVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD Daniel was given an assignment at his high school in Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A., to prepare information on an Asian religion. He says: "The teacher encouraged us to go to the library for research. I knew that the book *Mankind's Search for God*, published by the Watch Tower Society, would be a tremendous help. I took it to school and showed it to the teacher. She was so impressed by its objectivity, accuracy, and question-and-answer format that she ordered 20 copies for the whole class. They are now school property and are

used for each succeeding class. A \$50 donation was given to help our worldwide educational work."

*Mankind's Search for God* is a 384-page book that traces mankind's search for God through the major religions of the world. It has been translated into 34 languages, and over 15 million copies have been distributed.