

Awake!

December 8, 1989



GOOD HEALTH

What Can You
Do About It?



People are very health conscious today, and there is a wide variety of health aids to choose from: exercise, diet, space-age medical procedures. Yet, in spite of huge sums spent on these things, are we healthier now than in the past? What can we do about our health?

Will poor health ever be conquered?

How Healthy Are We?



To nofibro, que es la oxidación de los alfa-
ceto s o átomos de carbono en el suero y otros
grupos dirigidos a nofibro, es decir, que
quieren que sea un producto de la actividad del

A THOUSAND MILLION dollars a day! That is how much people in the United States spend on health care. Inhabitants of the Federal Republic of Germany spend over a fifth of their gross national product, or over 340 thousand million deutsche marks a year, to take care of their health needs. The situation is similar in most other industrialized or developed nations.

There is no doubt that the average citizen in these countries is becoming more health conscious. Books and videos on diets and exercise consistently occupy top spots on best-seller lists. Health foods, vitamins, gym outfits, and exercise gear have become multimillion-dollar businesses. And nowadays the image of a successful person is no longer the cigar-chewing tycoon but the trim, clean-scrubbed, fitness-conscious figure.

With all this attention and interest given to health and fitness, are we really healthier than the people of previous generations? Have the huge sums spent on medical bills and health care resulted in physical well-being for all of us? Really, how healthy are we?

The Picture Today

Contrary to what we might expect, reports from both rich and poor countries around

the world show that people today are far from a picture of health. Speaking about the diverse health conditions worldwide, a report prepared by Worldwatch Institute says: "Though their health care needs differ drastically, the rich and the poor do have one thing in common: both die unnecessarily. The rich die of heart disease and cancer, the poor die of diarrhea, pneumonia, and measles."

In spite of the advances in medical research, heart disease and cancer continue to be the scourge of the affluent countries. In fact, a report in *The New England Journal of Medicine* says: "We see no reason for optimism about overall progress in recent years. There is no reason to think that, on the whole, cancer is becoming any less common." As for the fitness boom, the situation is well-summarized by Dr. Michael McGinnis of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: "The great majority know the importance of fitness. But they have not taken the action themselves. Americans are not as fit as they think they are."

At the other end of the scale, "one-quarter of the world's people lack clean drinking water and sanitary human waste disposal," says the Worldwatch report. "As a result,

diarrheal diseases are endemic throughout the Third World and are the world's major cause of infant mortality." Diarrhea, pneumonia, measles, diphtheria, tuberculosis, and other diseases, take the lives of 15 million children under the age of five each year and stunt the normal development of millions more. Yet, the real irony is that experts feel that much of this is easily preventable.

While children in the developed nations may be spared such tragedies, there are alarming signs that the general health of today's youth is declining rather than improving. For example, *The Guardian* of London, under the headline "Children 'Healthier 35 Years Ago,'" reports that a survey by the Medical Research Council has found "substantial increases in the hospital admission of children up to the age of four, a tripling of instances of asthma, and a six-fold increase in eczema among the new generation." Also found were sharp increases in juvenile diabetes, obesity, stress, and emotional illnesses.

Nationwide studies in the United States have also revealed that the physical condition of schoolchildren today is not what it should be. "It's the best-kept secret in America today—the lack of youth fitness," says George Allen, chairman of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. The latest fig-

ures released by the council show that 40 percent of boys and 70 percent of girls 6 to 17 years of age cannot do more than a single chin-up. Other studies found that teenagers today have high blood pressure, unhealthy levels of blood cholesterol and body fat, not to mention serious emotional problems, as well as drug-and-alcohol-abuse problems.

Looking Ahead

Most of us realize that our condition of health throughout life is determined, to a certain extent, by the condition of health during our childhood. It is, therefore, not surprising that George Allen observed: "What I'm concerned about is that if you don't have the youth learning fitness now, they'll never learn it as adults." The same holds true with the developing nations, except that there many children are not given the opportunity to develop into healthy adults.

Distressing as they are, the problems are not insurmountable. Individually, wherever you may live, there is something you can do about your health and that of your family. Much of it, however, depends upon your view of your health and of yourself. Indeed, the questions might be asked: What is health? What can you do about maintaining good health? These questions will be considered in the following articles.

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What Is Health?



IS A person really in good health just because he does not feel sick? Well, how often have you heard of individuals who seemed perfectly robust but suddenly died of some unexpected cause? Reports show that nearly one fifth of those who die of heart disease each year did not show the slightest indication that something was wrong with them. Clearly, feeling good or fit is no guarantee that one is in good health.

Take, for example, a 22-year-old college basketball player. By all the usual standards, he would be considered a healthy person in his prime. But one night he died—suddenly. Investigations revealed that

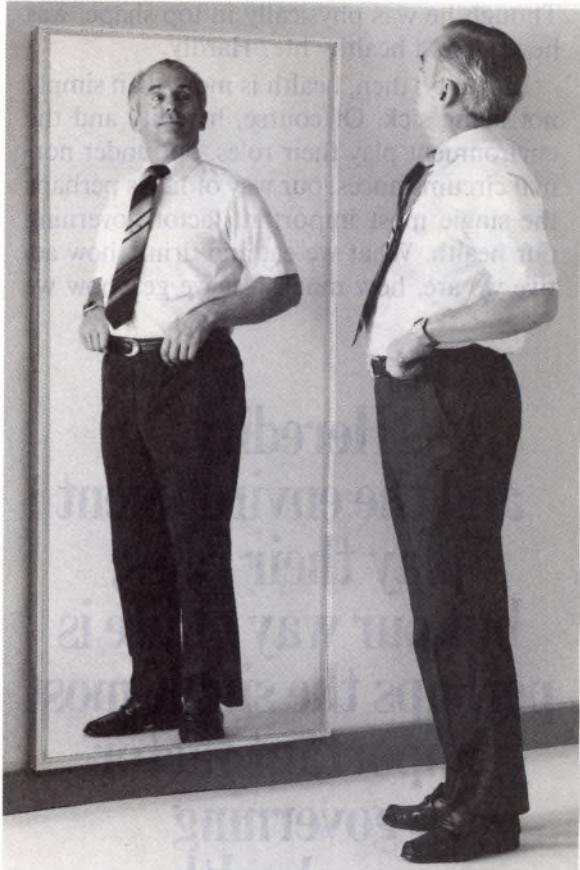
WHY "AWAKE!" IS PUBLISHED

"AWAKE!" is for the enlightenment of the entire family. It shows how to cope with today's problems. It reports the news, tells about people in many lands, examines religion and science. But it does more. It probes beneath the surface and points to the real meaning behind current events, yet it always stays politically neutral and does not exalt one race above another.

Most importantly, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world before the generation that saw the events of 1914 passes away.

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An appearance of good health
may be deceiving

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the cause of death was a drug overdose. Though he was physically in top shape, was he leading a healthy life? Hardly.

In reality, then, health is more than simply not being sick. Of course, heredity and the environment play their roles, but under normal circumstances, our way of life is perhaps the single most important factor governing our health. What we eat and drink, how active we are, how much rest we get, how we

through rigorous exercise routines each day. The result? "There is a considerable body of statistical evidence that lends weight to the view that Japanese workers are the world's healthiest," says the news magazine *Asia-week*. On the other hand, the report points out that in Japan "cancer is the cause of roughly one death in four; heart attack and strokes each one in five, and respiratory illness one in twelve. One male in every 52 kills himself (for women, suicide is one in 70)."

Do these statements seem inconsistent or even contradictory? Not really, when we examine the facts. With 40 percent of all adults puffing away on 300 thousand million cigarettes a year, Japan ranks second worldwide (just after Greece) in cigarette consumption per capita. Furthermore, each year Japanese men drink 8 thousand million bottles of beer and 1.6 thousand million quarts of sake. This is equivalent to taking in nearly half a quart of pure alcohol per man per week. It would really be surprising if such harmful practices did not have a marked effect on the health of the people.

Though it may be argued that the Japanese do have the greatest life expectancy of any people and that their tobacco- and alcohol-consumption rates are lower than some others, such comparisons are ultimately meaningless. The reality is that people are dying prematurely and unnecessarily. They may appear to be healthier than others, but are they really healthy?

Clearly, then, our health reflects the sum total of our life-style and our day-to-day habits. Good health involves a balanced way of life that results in our physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being, enabling us to cope with our environment and derive reasonable joy and satisfaction from our daily activities. What can we do to achieve that?

Heredity and the environment play their roles, but our way of life is perhaps the single most important factor governing our health

react to stress, and a number of other personal habits will either enhance our health or damage it. Thus, to a large extent, our health is what we make of it. The Bible principle, "Whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap," applies just as well to our physical health.—Galatians 6:7.

Health and Life-Style

It is well-known, for instance, that in many large Japanese companies, employees go

Good Health What Can You Do About It?



PARTLY as a result of some spectacular successes of modern medicine, an attitude has spread to many parts of the world that health is something the doctors provide for people, instead of something that a community and individuals achieve for themselves." So wrote Dr. Halfdan Mahler in *World Health*, the official journal of the World Health Organization.

Of course, doctors and hospitals do contribute a great deal to our health and well-being. Nonetheless, they play essentially a curative role. We seek their services when something is wrong, but we seldom think about them when we feel well. What, then, can we do to achieve good health for ourselves?

Guidelines for Healthful Living

In general, experts are agreed that good health depends on three major factors: balanced diet, regular exercise, and responsible living. There is certainly no lack of information on these subjects, and much of it is practical and beneficial. Some pertinent and current ideas on how diet and exercise relate to our health are presented in the boxes "Your

Diet and Your Health" and "Exercise, Fitness, and Health."

Although much helpful information is available, the facts show, regrettably, that achieving good health is not very high on most people's list of priorities. Among other things, "everybody knows what is required to lose weight," remarked Dr. Marion Nestle of the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion in Washington, "yet the prevalence of overweight doesn't seem to change much." According to her office, about 1 in 4 people in the United States is more than 20 percent overweight.

Similarly, a study by the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics reveals: "In general, between 1977 and 1983 there appears to have been an increase in unfavorable health practices." What are these "unfavorable health practices"? They are not problems over which the individual has no control, such as malnutrition, epidemics, or pollution. Rather, they are factors that are entirely the responsibility of the individual —practices such as smoking, overeating, overdrinking, and drug abuse.

Clearly, more than medical or scientific information on what to do to achieve good

health is needed. A greater incentive to live up to our individual responsibility is necessary. We must be motivated not only to do those things that will contribute to good health but also to avoid those things that will tear it down. Where can we find such incentive and motivation to help us live healthy lives?

Though most people may not be aware of it, a doctor-author, S. I. McMillen, commented in the preface of his book *None of These Diseases*: "I am confident that the reader will be intrigued to discover that the Bible's directives can save him from certain infectious diseases, from many lethal cancers, and from a

long gauntlet of psychosomatic diseases that are increasing in spite of all efforts of modern medicine. . . . Peace does not come in capsules."

We can see from these comments that although the Bible is not a medical textbook or a health manual, it does provide principles and guidelines that can result in wholesome habits and good health. What are some of these principles?

Emotions and Outlook on Life

For example, "medical science recognizes that emotions such as fear, sorrow, envy, resentment and hatred are responsible for the

Your Diet and Your Health

"If you . . . do not smoke or drink excessively, your choice of diet can influence your long-term health prospects more than any other action you might take."—Dr. C. Everett Koop, former U.S. surgeon general.

In recent years, health experts have spoken out on the harmful effects that certain aspects of the diet of industrialized nations have on people's health. Besides calling attention to such things as tobacco, alcohol, salt, and sugar, special emphasis has been given to the fact that the diet of many people is too high in fat and cholesterol and too low in fiber.

"Of greatest concern," con-

tinues Dr. Koop, "is our excessive intake of dietary fat and its relationship to risk for chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease, some types of cancers, diabetes, high blood pressure, strokes and obesity." Similarly, British surgeon Dr. Denis Burkitt and others have been calling attention to the link between dietary fiber deficiency and coronary heart disease, bowel cancers, gastrointestinal disorders, diabetes, and other diseases.

Not all the details of how our diet affects our health are understood, nor is there total agreement among all health professionals. Yet, there are some medical facts that are well worth our consideration.

Cut Down the Fat

A high level of cholesterol, a fatty alcohol, in the blood is directly related to a high risk of heart disease. Those with heart disease or a family history of it, and those who want to minimize the risk, would do well to keep blood cholesterol at a safe level. What can be done?

The first line of defense usually recommended is to follow a diet low in cholesterol, found in all animal foods, such as meats, eggs, and dairy products, but not in plant foods. Recent studies have found, however, that eating cholesterol-rich foods alone has only a moderate effect on one's blood cholesterol level. But if the diet is also rich in saturated fats (such as animal fats, vegetable shortening, and palm and coconut oils), the rise in blood cholesterol is considerable in most people. Thus,

majority of our sicknesses," said the above-quoted Dr. McMillen. "Estimates vary from 60 per cent to nearly 100 per cent."

What can be done to remedy this? Interestingly, some 3,000 years ago, the Bible pointed out: "A calm heart is the life of the fleshly organism, but jealousy is rottenness to the bones." (Proverbs 14:30) But how does one get "a calm heart"? The Bible's counsel is: "Let all malicious bitterness and anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech be taken away from you along with all badness." (Ephesians 4:31) In other words, to enjoy good physical health, we must learn to control our emotions.

This, of course, is contrary to the advice of some modern psychiatrists and psychologists. They often recommend that we act out our feelings rather than try to control them. Letting off steam and venting one's anger may bring temporary relief to the one who feels hemmed in and disturbed. But what does that do to his relationship with those around him, and what kind of reaction may that trigger on their part? It is not difficult to imagine the tension and frayed nerves, not to mention the possible physical injury, that would result if everyone acted out his feelings rather than tried to control them. It merely creates a vicious circle that never ends.

the emphasis nowadays is 'cut down on fat.' Eat less and leaner meat, cut out the visible fat, remove the skin from poultry, and limit consumption of egg yolks, whole milk, hard cheeses, and processed foods that contain palm or coconut oil.

While saturated fats have the tendency to raise the blood cholesterol level, unsaturated liquid oils (olive, soybean, safflower, corn, and other vegetable oils), fatty fish, and shellfish work just the opposite. Some of these may even help to raise the relative amount of a so-called good cholesterol, the HDL (high-density lipoprotein), in the blood or lower the level of the damaging kind of cholesterol, the LDL (low-density lipoprotein).

Eat More Fiber

Cutting down on fat is only part of the story. Highly refined and processed foods—loaded with white flour, sugar, chemical additives, and so forth—are totally deficient in fiber. The result is the so-called civilized diseases: constipation, hemorrhoids, hernia, diverticulosis, colorectal cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and others. "Men with a low intake of dietary fiber had a three times higher risk of death from all causes than men with a high intake," says a report in *Lancet*.

Dietary fiber plays its role in two ways. It absorbs water as it moves through our digestive system, and it passes through our digestive tract quickly. Health experts feel that it takes with it many of the harmful agents and speeds

up their removal from the body. Some soluble fibers are found to hold down the sugar and LDL cholesterol levels in the blood—a boon for diabetics and heart patients.

How can you benefit from this knowledge about fiber? If possible, increase the proportion of fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain products in your diet. Switch from white to whole-wheat bread and add whole-grain cereal to the breakfast table. Beans are also an excellent source of fiber. And starch—potatoes and rice—may have anticancer properties.

There are, of course, many other aspects of your diet that affect your health. However, cutting fat and increasing the fiber are the two areas in most people's diet needing urgent attention.

Exercise, Fitness, and Health

A 40-year study of some 17,000 men found that those who exercised as little as an hour or two a week (using up about 500 calories) had death rates 15 to 20 percent lower than those who did not exercise. Those who exercised vigorously (burning 2,000 calories a week) had a death rate one third lower. Other studies have reached the same conclusion: Regular exercise reduces the risk of high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, and perhaps even cancer. Regular exercise also helps in the fight against overweight, low self-esteem, stress, anxiety, and depression.

The reason regular exercise seems to do all of this is that it

raises a person's physical capacity and endurance. In other words, regular exercise makes one physically fit. While fitness does not guarantee good health, a physically fit body is less likely to succumb to ailments. It also recovers faster when it does get ill. Physical fitness may contribute to one's mental and emotional well-being as well as slow down the effects of aging.

What and How Much?

The usual questions about exercise are, What kind of exercise, and how much? That really depends on what one wants to accomplish. An Olympic athlete must train long and hard to remain fit. For most

people, the goal may be to lose weight, to get in shape, to enjoy better health, or just to feel well. For them, most health experts agree, 20 to 30 minutes of exercise three times a week is needed to keep fit. But what kind of exercise?

Fitness involves one's physical capacity, age, and endurance, so exercise should aim to elevate one's rate of heartbeat and breathing during the workout. This is what is commonly called aerobic exercise. Running, brisk walking, aerobic dancing, rope skipping, swimming, and cycling are common forms of aerobic exercise, each with its advantages and disadvantages in terms of convenience, cost of facilities and equipment, chance of injury, and so on.

Other forms of exercise strengthen the muscles and

Of course, it is not easy to master these harmful emotions, especially if one is prone to give in to anger and rage. That is why the Bible goes on to say: "Become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, freely forgiving one another." (Ephesians 4:32) In other words, it says that we should replace the harmful negative feelings with positive ones.

What do such positive feelings toward others do to us? "Caring is biological," writes Dr. James Lynch in his book *The Broken Heart*. "The mandate to 'love your neighbor as you love yourself' is not just a moral man-

date—it's a physiological one." Regarding the benefits that such positive relationships bring, Robert Taylor, a psychiatrist, adds: "Knowing you have people you can turn to in times of need can provide some very important feelings of security, optimism and hope—all of which can be great antidotes to stress." Thus, while modern medicine may try to come up with cures for some of what are called psychosomatic illnesses, the simple directives of the Bible can help to prevent them from occurring in the first place. Anyone who is willing to apply the Bible's guidelines will benefit emotionally and physically.

shape the body. These include workouts with exercise machines and weights. Such exercises increase one's physical strength and endurance and can improve one's posture and appearance as well—all pluses in the pursuit of a fit body.

What about the calisthenic exercises that most of us remember only too well from our school days? They did us a lot of good, whether we appreciated them at the time or not. Stretching, turning, and twisting limber up the body. Jumping and kicking speed up the heart rate. Sit-ups, push-ups, and chin-ups strengthen the muscles. A great advantage of such stretching exercises as one ages is that one may remain limber and able to continue active longer.

Finally, there are the recreational sports—tennis, rac-

quetball, softball, skating, and many other activities. The advantage of such activities is that they are more fun than monotonous forms of exercise and therefore may be the element needed to make a person exercise regularly. Depending on how skillfully and how vigorously one pursues them, such activities may or may not provide the sustained level of exertion as do other forms of exercise. Nonetheless, they help condition the body, improve coordination, and enhance flexibility and agility.

With so many forms of exercise to choose from, the secret of success lies in picking one, or a combination of them, that you would enjoy. This will help you to stick to your intentions, since studies show that from 60 to 70 percent of adults

who start to exercise quit within a month or so. Remember, it is the regularity, not just the amount, of exercise that matters. By engaging in different kinds of exercise at different times, you will also give your body well-rounded development, becoming fit in a balanced way.

Your choice of activity should also be governed by your age and your general condition of health at the outset. Of course, those with health problems should consult with their doctor before embarking on an exercise program. In any case, start out slowly, and increase as you make progress. Learn about the forms of exercise you choose—there is no shortage of books and instructions on the subject—and you will both enjoy and benefit from your efforts.

Habits and Addictions

Something else that affects our emotional and physical well-being is the way we treat our body. With reasonable effort on our part—eating properly, getting the needed exercise and rest, keeping clean, and so on—our body will care for itself. However, if we habitually abuse it, sooner or later it will break down, and we will suffer the consequences.

The Bible's advice is: "Let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit." (2 Corinthians 7:1) How can we apply such advice, and what are the benefits? Consider

the following report by the Washington-based Worldwatch Institute: "Smoking is an epidemic growing at 2.1 percent per year, faster than world population. . . . Growth in tobacco use slowed briefly in the early eighties, primarily for economic reasons, but is resuming its rapid increase. Over a billion people now smoke, consuming almost 5 trillion cigarettes per year, an average of more than half a pack a day."

What has been the effect of this 'growing epidemic'? The accompanying box gives some sobering food for thought. The list is by no means exhaustive, but the message is clear:

The Cost of Smoking

- *Tobacco causes more suffering and death among adults than any other toxic material in the environment.*
- *The worldwide cost in lives now approaches 2.5 million per year, almost 5 percent of all deaths.*
- *Health expenditures plus economic losses in [the United States] range from \$38 thousand million to \$95 thousand million, or from \$1.25 to \$3.15 per pack. These totals do not include the cost of tobacco itself—about \$30 thousand million per year.*
- *Passive smokers are perhaps three times as likely to die of lung cancer as they would be if they were not exposed to smoke.*
- *Smoking by mothers diminishes the physical and mental capabilities of their children, and in many countries more than one fifth of the children are exposed to smoke in this way.*

Addiction to tobacco is both powerful and costly. It is a defiling habit that damages the health of both the addicted and those around them.

What about efforts to stop the habit? In spite of all the antismoking campaigns, success has been minimal on a worldwide scale. This is because overcoming the tobacco habit is a strenuous uphill battle. Research shows that only 1 in 4 who smoke ever succeed in breaking the habit. Apparently all the warnings that smoking is a health hazard are not incentive enough.

However, the Bible counsel quoted above,

along with its injunction for Christians to love their neighbors as themselves, has moved thousands who are now Jehovah's Witnesses to stop smoking. Whether at their Kingdom Halls, where they meet for several hours each week, or at their conventions, where thousands of them meet for days, you will not see any of them with a cigarette. Their willingness to accept and apply the Bible's directives has given them the needed determination to accomplish what others fail to achieve.

Other harmful practices include overindulgence in alcohol, drug abuse, promiscuous sex with possible deadly diseases resulting from it, and a host of other troubling health and social problems. Although health authorities are hard-pressed to deal with these problems, you will find that the Bible provides advice that is both reasonable and practical.* —Proverbs 20:1; Acts 15:20, 29; 1 Corinthians 6:13, 18.

When All Sickness Will End

However much we may try to maintain good health, the hard fact remains that, at present, we get ill and die. Yet, the Creator of man, Jehovah God, not only tells us why man gets sick and dies but also tells us about the time that is soon coming when all sickness and even death itself will be overcome.—Romans 5:12.

A Bible prophecy at Isaiah 33:24 promises: "No resident will say: 'I am sick.'" Revelation 21:4 also promises: "And [God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore." Yes, the Creator's promise is a new world right here on earth, where mankind will be raised to human perfection, with vibrant health and everlasting life being the lot of the human family!—Isaiah 65:17-25.

* For additional information, please see chapter 10 of the book *Happiness—How to Find It*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

Christmas Traditions

What Are Their Origins?

IN BOTH the Northern Hemisphere and the Southern Hemisphere, Christmas celebrations rank among the most popular, among believers and nonbelievers alike. In Japan, with its non-Christian Shinto majority, Christmas takes its place alongside other celebrations and has become a time of uninhibited revelry and commercialism. But have Christmas festivities always been so secular? How did this seasonal festival begin?

A look at how Christmas was celebrated in the first millennium of the Common Era helps trace its origin back to pre-Christian sources. Writing in the magazine *History Today*, Alexander Murray of Oxford University contends that medieval man "fused existing elements of pagan mid-winter rites with the developing theology of Christmas." How and why was this done?

Pre-Christian Origins

Peoples of ancient European civilizations observed how the sun appeared to stand still in mid-winter near the southern horizon before slowly regaining height in the sky. This winter solstice (a word derived from Latin words for "sun" and "stand still") was, according to the Julian calendar, originally dated December 25. These same people found it easy to draw an analogy between the sun and God as the Source and Sustainer of life. In 274 C.E., the Roman emperor declared *Sol invictus* (unconquered sun) the principal patron

of the empire, and this on December 25, thus honoring Mithras, god of light.

About the emergence of Christendom as a new imperial religion, Murray writes: "After much uncertainty, victory would go to [Mithraism's] main rival, Christianity. But around the year 300 this rival still had to be diplomatic. It was then that the church decided to create a feast for Christ's birth (Latin: *nativitas*). (No such feast is included in lists of feasts from the third century, and the new feast is first recorded in a document of 336.)" What date was chosen for this celebration? December 25, the result of "a shrewd and practical decision on the part of the early church fathers," according to the book *Discovering Christmas Customs and Folklore*. Why so?

Mid-winter was already well-established as a season of merrymaking with the seven-day Roman agricultural festival of fire and light, Saturnalia. Then there was Calends, a three-day feast to celebrate the appointment of Roman administrative officials who served for one year from the first, or calends, of January. Thus, with Saturnalia, Calends, and the Mithraic birthday of the unconquered sun falling within so short a period each year, December 25 became the chosen date for the celebration of "Christ's Mass" in an appeal to pagan peoples to convert to the Roman Empire's new state religion.

As time went by, the heathen Germanic mid-winter feast, Yule, reinforced the customs of banqueting and merrymaking, as well as the giving of gifts. Tapers (or, candles), logs, evergreen decorations, and trees became prominent in Christmas celebrations. But, some may reason, the celebration of Christ's birth must surely have figured prominently among Christians before any subsequent link with pagan traditions. Is this so?

Not Celebrated by Early Christians

The Bible does not reveal the exact date of Jesus' birth. More than that, "the early Christians did not celebrate His birth," comments *The World Book Encyclopedia*. And why not? "Because they considered the celebration of anyone's birth to be a pagan custom." Augus-

tus Neander, in *The History of the Christian Religion and Church, During the Three First Centuries*, agrees: "The notion of a *birthday festival* was far from the ideas of the Christians of this period in general."

From this examination, you can see that Christmas celebrations find their roots in pagan customs. As *The Economist* explains, it was only later that religious "publicists appropriated 'this festival of light [the birthday of the unconquered sun], for Christ is the world's light,' and pretended (with a lack of evidence that would not be approved by Truth in Advertising campaigners) that baby Jesus was born in December. That is why Presbyterian Scotland long disdained Christmas, as did lingeringly puritan America until commercial interests recreated it."

FATHER CHRISTMAS, ALIAS SANTA CLAUS

Father Christmas has been described as "the most successful promotion story since Jesus Christ." But who was he? According to *The Customs and Ceremonies of Britain*, he has been "known as a vague personification of the [Christmas] season since at least the 15th century . . . and appears in approximately his modern garb in a woodcut of 1653: but 'Santa's' Christmas Eve visits, his habit of descending chimneys to fill stockings (or, more ambitiously, pillow cases) and his reindeer-drawn sleigh all derive from that melting pot of traditions, the USA. His character

there was blended from European legends about the 4th-century St Nicholas of Myra (who saved three maidens from prostitution by a surreptitious midnight gift of dowry money, and who as *Sinte Klaas* filled the shoes of Dutch-American children on 6 December, his feast day); the German-American *Krisskringle* (who rewarded good and punished bad children); and Scandinavian or Russian tales about North-Pole-dwelling wizards. . . . This composite American Santa quietly recrossed the Atlantic during the 1870s: since when, his reputation apparently undamaged by numerous commercial impersonators, he has increasingly provided a purely secular focus for 'the children's Christmas'."



CHRISTMAS EVERGREENS

Prominent among Christmas decorations are holly, ivy, and mistletoe, described as "magical plants bearing fruit in a dead season." But why these particular evergreens? Although some believe that red holly berries represent Christ's blood and its prickly leaves symbolize the "crown out of thorns" that Pontius Pilate's soldiers placed mockingly on Jesus' head, pagans viewed the holly's shining leaves and berries as a masculine symbol of eternal life. (Matthew 27:29) They looked on ivy as a feminine life-symbol of immortality. Holly and ivy together became their fertility symbol. Mistletoe's pagan associations are still so strong that the book *The Customs and Ceremonies of Britain* states: "No church decorator will tolerate it—except at York Minster." Most well-known of all evergreens is the Christmas tree, long featured in German traditions and popularized in Britain by Queen Victoria's consort, Prince Albert, and which became the focus of Christmas family celebrations. Since 1947, Norway's capital, Oslo, has sent a gift Christmas tree for display in London's Trafalgar Square.



Christmas Traditions Revived

At the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign (1837-1901), according to Gavin Weightman and Steve Humphries, authors of *Christmas Past*, "no British children hung their stockings by a fireplace on Christmas Eve; nobody had heard of Santa Claus; Christmas crackers did not exist; very few people ate turkey on Christmas Day; it was not common to give presents; and the decorated and lighted Christmas tree was hardly known outside the royal court. In fact, Christmas Day was not a very important date in the calendar for any kind of social ritual." What happened, then, to revive the popularity of Christmas festivities?

"This transformation of old feasts into one short, respectable family event began around the 1830s . . . and was more or less complete

by the 1870s, which was when the figure of Santa Claus first appeared in Britain," states *Christmas Past*. At the same time, the publication of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, a story of miserly Scrooge's conversion to the spirit of Christmas, sparked a mood of benevolence toward the poor. The squalid conditions and economic hardships of living in towns spawned by the Industrial Revolution prompted the Victorians to take up a kind of moral crusade that, in the later Edwardian period, was modified to bring charity only to the "respectable" poor.

A writer in Britain's *Catholic Herald* observes: "Gradually, with increasing general affluence, many of the unfortunate aspects of the middle-class Christmas ritual have become widespread. Simplicity and generosity

have been overtaken by competitiveness and oneupmanship. The homely feasting which was once a genuine treat has been replaced by orgies of over abundant heavy food. Families are forced by this new tradition to spend days together whether they like it or not, playing games which some of them despise, watching television some of them hate, cutting out contact with neighbours and outsiders at the one time when goodwill and general friendliness are supposed to reign.

"And if one says this, if one ventures to criticise either the commercialism or the mere social conventions of it all, one is labelled a Scrooge. To my mind Christmas has gone horribly wrong in recent years."

Whether you agree with this assessment or not, what can happen in your neighborhood at Christmastime?

Christmas—A Hazardous Time

Do you find that some people use this occasion to overindulge in eating and drinking?

Norway's annual Christmas tree gift to Britain



Does drunken, rowdy behavior disturb the peace of your community? Although many sincere people demonstrate outstanding kindness and consideration at Christmas, their efforts do not prevent the damaging of family relationships so common at this season.

You may well ask then, 'Why does Christmas produce such excesses of bad conduct?' Basically, because it is unchristian, pagan. Can you imagine Christ being pleased with that? Hardly. Indeed, in frank terms, the Bible reasons: "What fellowship do righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what sharing does light have with darkness? Further, what harmony is there between Christ and Belial [Satan]?"—2 Corinthians 6:14, 15.

A Different View

During this Christmas season, you may well receive a visit from one of Jehovah's Witnesses. You will observe that they do not join in Christmas celebrations. Perhaps you are concerned about their children, believing that they, most of all, miss out on the festivities. But in an interview in the Southampton (England) *Southern Evening Echo*, a Witness father of two offered this reassurance: "They honestly don't feel they are missing out, I promise you," says John. 'Jehovah's Witnesses are very earnest in promoting happy family life. So as well as giving many presents to our children throughout the year, we give them something much more valuable [, namely,] our time and love.'

Certainly, such genuine love and interest contribute much to happy family life. So instead of following Christmas traditions of pagan origin, would it not be better if everyone honored Jesus by displaying a true Christlike spirit to relatives, friends, and acquaintances, yes, and to strangers too, the whole year around?

YOUNG PEOPLE ASK...



What Should I Do if My Parents Fight?

WHEN the two people you love more than anyone else in the world are “biting and devouring one another” with hurtful words, life can be a daily nightmare. (Galatians 5:15) True, even the best of marriages will suffer some “tribulation.” (1 Corinthians 7:28) But when parental bickering is unrelenting, vicious, or even violent, something is seriously wrong.

Little wonder, then, that some youths desperately try to patch up their parents’ marriage. “I’ve gotten right in the middle of a fight and tried to take my father out of the room so they’d stop fighting,” said one teenage boy. Others withdraw in frustrated silence. “I try to stay away from them when they have these fights, so I won’t be depressed about it,” said one young girl. “But then I feel guilty for not trying to help.”

So just what should you do when a family feud erupts?

What Not to Do

Don’t Treat Them Disrespectfully: It is easy to become fed up with bickering parents. After all, they’re supposed to set the example for you—not vice versa. Treating a parent contemptuously, though, will likely only add to family tensions. More important, Jehovah God commands youths to respect and obey

their parents, even when they make it hard to do so.—Exodus 20:12; compare Proverbs 30:17.

Don’t Take Sides: “Sometimes when my parents are arguing,” said one teenage girl, “one of them will ask me what I think. It really makes me nervous.” Of course, when an issue directly involves you, a mild, respectful answer may be appropriate.—Proverbs 15:1.

Or it may be that one of your parents is a Christian and the other is an unbeliever. Religious difficulties may arise in which you may find it necessary to take a stand for righteousness along with the God-fearing parent. (Matthew 10:34-37) Even so, it should be done “with a mild temper and deep respect” so that the unbelieving parent may one day be won over.—1 Peter 3:15.

But when a squabble is clearly *their* dispute, it is usually wise to remain neutral.* Proverbs 26:17 warns: “As one grabbing hold of the ears of a dog is anyone passing by that is becoming furious at the quarrel that is not his.” If you take sides, you risk arousing the resentment of—and perhaps alienating—one of your parents.

A youth who takes sides in a parental

* We are not referring to situations where an abusive father threatens family members with violence. In such cases, family members may be forced to obtain outside help in order to protect themselves from physical harm.

dispute is also trying to "get a handle on a situation that's really too complicated to understand." So said family counselor Mitchell Rosen in *'Teen* magazine. Marital disputes, he said, "involve a great number of factors, and it's not just a matter of she's right, he's wrong." Often, at the core of a dispute are grievances and resentments that have built up over a period of years. So when Dad or Mom complains because supper is a few minutes late or because the bathroom sink was left dirty, there may be much more involved than meets the eye.

The Bible exhorts: "If possible, as far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men." (Romans 12:18) So try to stay neutral. What, though, if your parents pressure you to take sides? "Anyone holding back his sayings," says the Bible, "is possessed of knowledge." (Proverbs 17:27) Yes, refrain from voicing—or worse yet, screaming—your opinion. Perhaps you can excuse yourself graciously by saying something like, 'Mom and Dad, I love you both. But please don't ask me to take sides. This is something you have to work out between yourselves.'

Don't Join in the Bickering: Two loud voices are bad enough. Why add a third voice to the chorus? Proverbs 15:18 says: "An enraged man stirs up contention, but one that is slow to anger quiets down quarreling." Simply refuse to jump into the

fray. And if you sense that a fight is about to erupt, recall the words of Proverbs 17:14: "The beginning of contention is as one letting out waters; so before the quarrel has burst forth, take your leave."

Perhaps you can simply excuse yourself and go to your room and read, study, or play music. Or it may be a good time to visit a friend. Finding something productive to do removes you from the scene of contention and helps you get your mind off matters.

Don't Try to Be a Marriage Counselor: As a proverb puts it: "There are contentions that



Can young people effectively mediate parental disputes?

are like the bar of a dwelling tower." (Proverbs 18:19) Quarreling parents have often built up a barrier of resentment that is as formidable as "the bar of a dwelling tower." Do you have either the knowledge or the experience in life to help them tear that barrier down? Not likely.

Presuming to involve yourself in your parents' marital troubles may make them worse. Says Proverbs 13:10: "By presumptuousness one only causes a struggle, but with those consulting together there is wisdom." Yes, likely your parents can better work out their difficulties by consulting together privately. —Compare Proverbs 25:9.

Besides, the role of family mediator may be a more demanding job than you realize. In her book *Teen Troubles*, Carolyn McClenahan Wesson tells of a young girl named Cora who tried her hand at playing marriage counselor. The result? Her parents' marriage improved, but Cora developed stomach problems. Concludes Carolyn Wesson: "Let your parents handle their problems. You have enough to deal with just being an adolescent."

Don't Play the Parents Against Each Other: Some youths scheme to turn domestic friction to their advantage. When Mom says, "No!" they play on Dad's emotions and squeeze a "Yes" out of him. Clever parental manipulation may gain one some freedom, but in the long run it only prolongs family strife. A youth who truly honors his parents will not resort to such power play.

Don't Aggravate the Situation: Lazy or surly behavior, acting up in school, letting your grades slip—these simply compound your problems. Take responsibility for your actions, and do not let your parents' distraction be an excuse for unruly conduct. Go out of your way to be helpful and cooperative.

Surviving Family Crisis

Clearly, you cannot change your parents. You can, however, try to influence them for good. Try to be as optimistic and cheerful as you can. Remember, love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (1 Corinthians 13:7) Never stop praying for things to improve. (Philippians 4:6, 7) Family counselor Clayton Barbeau further recommends: "Let [your parents] know independently that you love each of them." That alone may ease family tensions.

You can also try urging your parents to get help. This should not be done in the heat of an argument. Proverbs 25:11 speaks of the 'right word at the right time.' That would likely be when things have settled down and your parents are in a more receptive mood. (If one parent is particularly touchy, try approaching the one who seems more inclined to discuss matters reasonably.)

Begin by assuring them of your love. Then calmly explain to them how their squabbling affects you. This will not be easy. In her book *Trouble at Home*, Sara Gilbert admits that such attempts may be met with, "It's none of your business—stay out of it!" She advises, however, that "you need to make it clear that it *is* your business." Tell them how their fighting frightens, upsets, or angers you. Although you do not want to interfere with their lives, their fighting is very much disrupting your life! Suggest that your parents seek help—perhaps by approaching a trusted Christian elder.*

Being brought face-to-face with the effects of their marital strife, your parents may be moved to give serious attention to working out their problems—and maybe even stop fighting.

* If your parents prove to be unreasonable or unwilling to listen, it may be wise to confide in a mature Christian. He or she will not be able to interfere in your parents' marriage but can offer welcome emotional support and good advice.

"The Land Divided,

The Panama Canal Story

By "Awake!" correspondent in Panama

THREE years ago, the slogan "THE Land Divided, the World United." For many decades, this slogan appeared on a seal of the Panama Canal. Bridging two mighty oceans, the canal has united the world in a certain way. And it has had a greater impact on your life than you may realize. Perhaps your car, household appliances, or even the food on your table traveled that route!

August 15, 1989, marked the 75th anniversary of the first transit of this vital waterway. However, the dreams, plans, and labor that made this 50-mile water journey possible go centuries into the past.

After Columbus discovered the so-called New World, an era of exploration by the Spanish conquistadores began. Thus, Vasco Núñez de Balboa traversed the narrow Isthmus of Panama in the year 1513. Spurred on by stories told by local inhabitants of a "narrow place" leading to another sea, Balboa searched until he encountered the great western ocean.

A few years later, Ferdinand Magellan sailed around the

southern tip of South America, through the treacherous strait that now bears his name, and entered that same great ocean. Magellan called it *el pacifico*, the peaceful one, in contrast with the turbulent Atlantic. The long, hazardous journey triggered a search for a more efficient route to the Pacific.

In 1534 King Charles I of Spain backed a remarkable proposition: a canal to connect these two great oceans! Though he ordered surveys to be made, the project was far beyond the technological capabilities of his age. More than three centuries would pass before the dream would be realized.

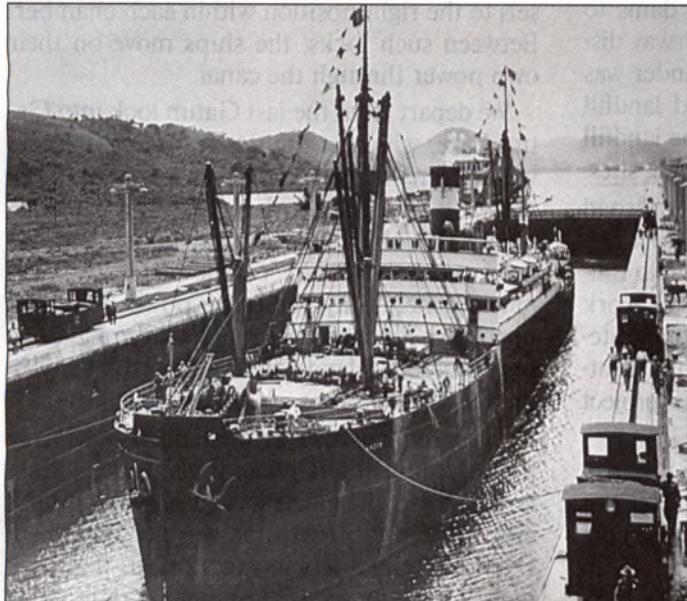
In the 1800's the new technologies of steam power and railroads began to raise exciting new possibilities. Then came the California gold rush. Prospectors discovered a shortcut to California: sailing from the U.S. east coast to Panama, crossing the isthmus on foot or mule, and then sailing on to San Francisco! A railroad across the Isthmus of Panama became operational in 1855. Still, the idea of a canal lingered.

The Daring French Canal Project

Following his success in the construction of the Suez Canal, Count Ferdinand de Lesseps took steps to make the Panama Canal a reality. He headed a committee that directed the initial survey and obtained a 99-year concession from Colombia, of which the Isthmus of Panama was then a part. Work began on the canal in 1881. Expectations were high, since the canal would be only half as long as the Suez, and there was no water shortage or relentless desert sand to contend with.

But new enemies—the tropical jungle, huge hills of rock, unstable soil, and, worst of all, yellow fever and malaria—proved to be too much for the workers. The resulting labor problems, slow progress due to inadequate equipment, and mismanagement of funds forced the French to abandon their project after 20 years of work, an expenditure of 260 million dollars, and the loss of many lives.

"the World United"



Panama Canal Commission, Office of Public Affairs

On August 15, 1914, the ship *Ancon* made the first passage through the canal

Taking On the Challenge

Near the turn of the century, the United States was beginning to flex its muscles as a world power and soon focused its attention on Panama. During the Spanish-American War, it had taken the battleship *Oregon* 68 days to sail from California to Florida via the Strait of Magellan! This dramatized the need of a better East-West route. Realizing the practicality of a Panama canal, the United States purchased the rights to build it.

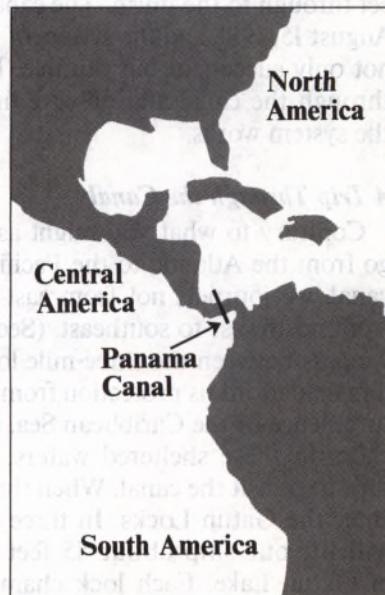
U.S. negotiations with Colombia, however, soon broke down. Panama then declared its independence from Colombia in 1903 and quickly granted the United States the rights to construct the canal and to have jurisdiction over the ten-mile-wide strip that would follow its course.

Still, there were the old problems that had plagued the French—and some unforeseen new ones—to challenge

builders as the work began anew. Each one was overcome in due time:

Disease: Yellow fever and malaria were rampant in that tropical land. Colonel William Crawford Gorgas, however, enforced strong sanitation measures. Coupling that with an all-out war against the disease-bearing mosquito, those sicknesses were virtually eliminated!

Labor: Panama was unable to provide the huge labor force needed for this project. The solution? Thousands of workers were recruited from the West Indies.



Excavation and Disposal Problems: The stubborn rock and unstable soil continued to be a problem. However, the decision to construct a lock-type canal rather than a sea-level canal greatly reduced the amount of earth that had to be moved. Where, though, was the excavated earth to be put? The building of dams to create lakes as part of the inland waterway disposed of much of the soil. The remainder was used for breakwaters, causeways, and landfill to eliminate swamps and marshes. The landfill provided areas for industrial and housing sites.

John F. Stevens, an experienced railroad man, was at the helm in those early days. Devices for transporting earth and movable railroad sections that could be shifted as work progressed proved very practical. Though Stevens later resigned, the methods he inaugurated continued to be utilized until the project was completed.

Lieutenant Colonel George Washington Goethals, a U.S. Army engineer, then was put in command, appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt. Goethals' background as an engineer proved invaluable in seeing the project through to the finish. The canal opened on August 15, 1914, and the system of locks proved not only successful but durable. Let us travel through the canal and observe firsthand how the system works.

A Trip Through the Canal

Contrary to what you might assume, as we go from the Atlantic to the Pacific end of the canal, we journey, not from east to west, but from northwest to southeast. (See map.) First we pass between the three-mile-long breakwaters that afford us protection from the seasonal turbulence of the Caribbean Sea. Our ship anchors in these sheltered waters, awaiting its turn to transit the canal. When that arrives, we enter the Gatun Locks. In three stages, these will lift our ship about 85 feet to the level of Gatun Lake. Each lock chamber is huge:

110 feet wide and 1,000 feet long, sufficient to accommodate almost all commercial and military vessels.

Here's how the locks work: Water enters the chambers by gravity, lifting the ship. Electric-powered locomotives, or "mules," tow the vessels to the right position within each chamber. Between such locks, the ships move on their own power through the canal.

We depart from the last Gatun lock into Gatun Lake, which at the time of its completion was the largest man-made body of water in the world. It is a masterpiece of water management. The abundant tropical rains were utilized not only to provide the waterway itself but to generate hydroelectric power for canal operation. Navigating through Gatun Lake, we see numerous islands. Before this tropical jungle was flooded, these were the tops of hills!

The canal narrows as the land rises sharply to the Continental Divide. It was here at Gaillard Cut that the greatest earth-moving project ever made up to that time was accomplished. Over 200 million cubic yards of dirt and rock had to be removed. Constant landslides frustrated progress, often burying railroad tracks and equipment. Today, men and equipment are regularly called into service to maintain the 500-foot-wide waterway.

We pass through two more lock systems—called Pedro Miguel and Miraflores—until we have finally descended to sea level at the Pacific terminal of the canal. Our journey has ended. But for a number of ships waiting to transit the canal in the opposite direction, the journey is yet to begin.

Though modern methods of transportation have advanced rapidly in recent years, the Panama Canal still serves as a vital link in world commerce. Over 12 thousand vessels pass through it yearly, carrying some 145 million tons of cargo. No doubt for years to come, the canal will continue to be a place where one can find "the land divided—the world united."

RELIGION'S FUTURE IN VIEW OF ITS PAST

Part 23: 1945 onward

The Time for Settling Accounts Is Near

**"The first requisite for the happiness of the people
is the abolition of religion."**

Karl Marx, 19th-century German sociologist and economist

DESPITE having numerous Jewish rabbinical ancestors on both sides of the family, Karl Marx was baptized a Protestant at the age of six. But at an early age, he became disenchanted with religion and politics. He argued that if humankind was ever to achieve happiness, both would have to be changed drastically.

With this the Bible agrees. But whereas the drastic changes proposed by Marx have brought no real improvement, those foretold by the Bible to take place in our generation will be crowned with lasting success. About this there can be no doubt.

Particularly since 1914, the bloodguilt of false religion has reached climactic levels. Since then false religion has also been plagued by growing indifference and lagging popular support. (See the preceding two articles in this series.) In sharp contrast, true religion has flourished more remarkably from year to year.

But what is yet to come? Now as never before, it is appropriate to ask, What is religion's future in view of its past?

What Does the Bible Say?

Events of the first century of our Common Era shed light on the matter. Because of having adopted false religion, Israel was faced with a future foretold to climax in the execution of God's judgment against that nation. But provision was made for those practicing true religion to escape destruction with the Jewish system. Jesus told his disciples: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by encamped armies, then know that the desolation of her has drawn near. Then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains, and let those in the midst of her withdraw."—Luke 21:20, 21.

In 66 C.E., Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem. The city appeared doomed. But suddenly the armies withdrew, giving Christians an opportunity to flee to safety. Any idea that apostate Israel had escaped punishment, however, was put to rest four years later when the Romans returned, once again laid siege to the city, and finally took it at a frightful loss of life to those inside. Masada, the last Jewish

stronghold, fell three years later. True religion, however, as practiced by faithful Christians, survived.

Now, in our generation, the entire world empire of false religion stands face-to-face with disaster. Once again "encamped armies" are preparing to execute divine judgment. Like the Roman armies of the first century that were designed to maintain the *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace), the encamped armies of today are also a peace-keeping instrument. Bible prophecy indicates that militarized forces among UN member nations will be Jehovah's instrument in finally settling accounts with modern-day Jerusalem, Christendom, as well as with the rest of Babylon the Great.—Revelation 17:7, 16.

When will this occur? First Thessalonians 5:3 answers: "Whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security' then sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them just as the pang of distress upon a pregnant woman; and they will by no means escape."

"The Peace Epidemic"

During 1988 former U.S. secretary of state George Schultz said that "peace is breaking out all over." A foreign policy expert spoke of a "peace epidemic." The prestigious German weekly *Die Zeit* asked: "Could it be, in a century so well endowed with catastrophes, that its final decade might mark an end to destruction and the beginning of an era of peaceful construction?" And *Time* magazine said: "Peace is threatening in Iran-Iraq, Kampuchea, Afghanistan, southern Africa and even Central America."

The year 1989, now drawing to a close, has also been full of peace talk. In February the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* editorialized: "Since about 1985 we have been living in a phase in which the superpowers have done more than just pull in their claws.

. . . Today there is scarcely a place on earth where the two superpowers are not converging. . . . At any rate, never before have prospects been so favorable, both sides been so serious, and so many steps been taken at the same time in the right direction."

As recently as six years ago, things did not look so bright. Journalist Roy Larson observed that "throughout 1983 religious leaders around the world cried 'peace, peace,' but there was no peace." Are the surprising world events since then a fulfillment of 1 Thessalonians 5:3? We cannot say. Nevertheless, it is obvious that today, in December 1989, "peace and security" is closer to realization than before.

Religious Leaders Working Hard —For What?

As Larson shows, religious leaders have not been inactive in pursuing peace. Continuing his appraisal of 1983, he mentions the "pilgrimage for peace" to Central America and the Caribbean that John Paul II made. Also during the year, the U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted a pastoral letter entitled "The Challenge of Peace." Shortly thereafter, representatives of more than 300 churches from 100 countries met at the sixth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches and approved a similar resolution. Many Protestant evangelicals were also involved in what Larson called "the global preoccupation with peace."

At its founding in 1948 and at its 1966 conference, the World Council of Churches spoke out strongly against the use of modern weapons of annihilation. Accordingly, dozens of clergymen and theologians have taken up arms for peace, men like German Protestant theologian Helmut Gollwitzer. Earlier this year, on the occasion of his 80th birthday, he was praised by a Swiss Protes-

tant weekly as a "politically engaged theologian, always striving for peace," who "by means of his teaching and political commitment has strongly influenced many theologians and also the peace movement within the church."

Thus, it comes as no surprise that Babylon the Great actively supported the 1986 International Year of Peace, designated as such by the United Nations organization, the charter of which calls on it "to maintain international peace and security." During that year, the Catholic pope, the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, and 700 other religious leaders, including professed Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, African animists, native Americans (Indians), Jews, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Shintoists, and Jains, met together at Assisi, near Rome, to pray in behalf of peace.

More recently, in January 1989, the Sydney, Australia, *Sunday Telegraph* wrote that members of "the Buddhist faith, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Unitarian, Baha'i, Confucian, Jain, Shinto, Tao, Raja Yoga and



UN headquarters in New York and a world peace statue—man beating sword into plowshare

The Quest for Peace and Security

Most individuals have a natural desire for peace and tranquillity, but that desire has been frustrated throughout much of human history. Recent years, however, have seen some remarkable gains in man's quest for peace, as the following list shows.

1985: (October) United Nations celebrates 40th birthday and proclaims 1986 as the International Year of Peace.

(November) First superpower summit in six years as Gorbachev and Reagan meet; Reagan speaks of a "fresh start."

1986: (January) Gorbachev calls for banning all nuclear weapons by the year 2000.

(September) Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe (35 nations, including the United States, Canada, the Soviet Union, and all of Europe except Albania) signs treaty to reduce risk of accidental war.

(October) Reagan and Gorbachev summit in Iceland fails, although Gorbachev says they were on the verge of "major, history-making decisions."

1987: (January) Policy of *glasnost* (openness) appears to be pointing to new era in the Soviet Union.

(March) First visit of a British prime minister to Moscow in 12 years.

(December) Gorbachev and Reagan sign INF (Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces) treaty to eliminate intermediate-range nuclear missiles.

1988: (March) Nicaragua and anti-Communist contras sign cease-fire, beginning negotiations to reach a permanent settlement.

(April) Soviet Union announces withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan by February 1989; Ethiopia and Somalia agree to end conflict.

(May) Vietnam announces withdrawal of 50,000 troops from Kampuchea before end of year, the rest by 1990.

(June) Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke says of Gorbachev-Reagan summit in Moscow: "For the first time in the whole postwar period, there are real signs of emergence of a world that can live constructively in peace."

(July) Iran announces acceptance of UN resolution calling for cease-fire in eight-year-old Iran-Iraq war.

(August) The United States agrees to pay withheld dues to UN, a course already taken by the Soviets, thus helping end UN financial siege and giving it renewed stature.

(September) Morocco and Polisario guerrilla forces accept UN plan to end 13 years of war in Western Sahara.

(October) The UN peacekeeping forces are awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace; Libya and Chad formally end long-lived state of war.

(December) At UN, Gorbachev announces large unilateral reduction of Soviet forces within two years and a pullback of troops and tanks from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and the German Democratic Republic; South Africa, Namibia, and Cuba agree to implement UN resolution on April 1, 1989, granting Namibian independence and ending 22 years of war; half of the 50,000 Cuban troops in Angola to be withdrawn by November 1, the rest by July 1, 1991; the United States agrees to talk with Palestine Liberation Organization after Yasser Arafat guarantees the right of Israel "to exist in peace and security."

1989: (January) 149 nations attending Paris Conference on Chemical Weapons call for rapid action to ban development, production, storage, and deployment of chemical weapons.

(February) Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala sign agreement on securing peace in Central America; Colombia's largest rebel group, FARC (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces), announces cease-fire, raising hopes that 35 years of guerrilla warfare may be coming to an end.

(March) Foreign ministers from 35 nations begin talks in Vienna on CFE (Negotiations on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe), designed to reduce military forces in Europe.

(April) Vietnam announces total troop withdrawal from Kampuchea by September 30.

(May) Hungary begins scrapping its 40-year-old barbed-wire barrier on Austrian border; at first meeting of Soviet and Chinese leaders in over 30 years, Soviets announce reductions in Asian armies; Soviets start unilateral troop and armor pullback from Eastern Europe.

(June) Bush's call for deep cuts in troops, tanks, artillery, and aircraft in Europe by 1992 leads newsmagazine to say: "It may really open the door to the most significant arms reductions since the end of World War II."

(August) Five Central American nations agree on a plan to bring an end to the hostilities in Nicaragua.

In spite of these impressive gains, however, many lands are still far from enjoying peace. People are still dying in Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and the Philippines—to name just a few—because of military action. Hence, while many feel more optimistic than before about the prospects for peace, we should not forget that the second horseman of Apocalypse, the "fiery-colored horse" of war, is still galloping through the earth.—Revelation 6:3, 4.

Zoroastrian" had met in Melbourne for the fifth assembly of the World Conference on Religion and Peace. Significantly, the "more than 600 delegates from some 85 countries . . . acknowledged that tensions caused by religious differences were long misused as one of the major causes of war."

Religious involvement in the search for peace confirms what Dag Hammarskjöld, former secretary-general of the United Nations, once said: "The [UN] Organization and the churches stand side by side as participants in the efforts of all men of good will, irrespective of their creed or form of worship, to establish peace on earth."

Notwithstanding, Babylon the Great's protest marches, her public demonstrations, and her other more subtle forms of religious meddling in political affairs will lead to her undoing.* Already it has caused considerable friction, as Albert Nolan, a Dominican friar from South Africa, recently admitted, saying: "The only effective way to achieve peace in accordance with God's will is to get into the fight. . . . To achieve armament reduction, conflicts with the government are almost unavoidable."

Let Babylon the Great continue to cry for peace. Let the pope continue to offer his traditional *Urbi et orbi* (to the city [Rome] and the world) blessing at Christmas and Easter. Let him continue to suppose—as he did last May—that the present easing of political tensions is God's answer to "Christian" prayers. Mouthing words of peace and arrogating to herself God's blessing cannot absolve Babylon the Great from her bloody past. It brands her as being the greatest hindrance to peace between humans, as well as between humans and God, that has ever existed. Di-

* The book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!* published in 1988 by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., explains how this will take place.

rectly or indirectly, mankind's every problem can be traced to her door!

How ironic it is that false religion continues to strive, in conjunction with the UN, to bring about the very "peace and security" that will precipitate her destruction! False religion's end will vindicate the God of true religion, who says: "Do not be misled: God is not one to be mocked. For whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap."—Galatians 6:7.

Waste No Time—Flee for Your Life!

The time for false religion to be called to account is near! The only way to avoid suffering loss of life is to desert her without delay. (Revelation 18:4) The final countdown to destruction has already begun.

After God's beautiful earth has been cleansed of counterfeit religion and pseudo-religious nationalism, only true religion under divine government will remain. How exciting the outlook for individuals who survive these drastic changes! Will you be among them? Would you like to rejoice forever in "The Eternal Beauties of True Religion"? If so, learn how by reading the final article in this series in the December 22, 1989, *Awake!*

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Funeral for a Former God

*Mom and Dad Are Illiterate
—How Can I Respect Them?*

*The French Revolution—A
Foregleam of Things to Come*

WATCHING THE WORLD

QUALIFIED CLERGY SHORTAGE

"Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish leaders alike are haunted by the challenge of maintaining the number and quality of their clergies," reports *The New York Times*. "Complicating the situation is the possible divergence that many religious leaders see between the needs of the church and the background and goals of many of those aspiring to the clergy." Seminarians today are said to be "distinctly different" from those of just 25 years ago. In Protestant seminaries, a much larger percentage of those now seeking ordination are women. And since there are fewer applicants, the seminaries have been under pressure to lower intellectual standards and admit more marginal students. Catholic officials have been concerned about the seminarians' sexual attitudes and about the priesthood's "attracting an unusually high number of gay candidates." The report adds: "One difference between today's seminarians and their predecessors appears to be true regardless of faith or denomination, gender or age: They are less thoroughly grounded in their own religious tradition."

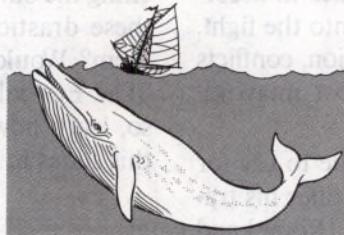
WITNESSES' GROWTH WORRIES ITALY'S CATHOLICS

"Warnings about Jehovah's Witnesses have become a frequent pulpit topic in some Rome parishes," says *The Catholic Standard and Times*. "What concerns the Church is the Witnesses' rate of growth and their energetic and apparently successful methods of recruiting new adherents." Earlier in the year, seminary professor Monsignor Lorenzo Minuti told

Pope John Paul II "that the Jehovah's Witnesses are 'moles' undermining the Church and compared them to an 'epidemic.'" He called on the church to take preventive measures, as if stopping a plague. According to Minuti, the number of Kingdom Halls in Rome increased from 10 in 1982 to 66 in 1989, whereas there are only 44 temples and churches for all other non-Catholics in the city. "The secret to the Witnesses' success in the land of popes and churches is their evangelical zeal," the paper said, calling for "a new Catholic evangelization of Italy."

THE VANISHING GIANT

The blue whale is not out of trouble yet. There are far fewer of them left than scientists had hoped. All hunting of the blue



whale was banned back in 1966, but it is not rebounding from the brink of extinction. Before the days of commercial whaling, there were as many as 225,000 of them. Scientists were hoping that there were from 11,000 to 14,000 left. But preliminary results from direct counting suggest that there may be fewer than 1,200 or 1,500. The giant whales, which grow up to 100 feet long and weigh up to 150 tons—about as much as a herd of 30 elephants—may well be the largest creatures ever to inhabit

the earth. They nurse their young for a year, take six years to mature, and give birth only once in two years. Thus, they recover slowly from depletion. But illegal poaching may also be a factor in their small numbers.

DEMAND FOR BIBLES

The demand for Bibles in the Soviet Union has been increasing, and despite shipments of two million copies during an 18-month span, the demand continues unabated. As reported in the *Church Times* of London, "more bibles were imported into the Soviet Union during 1988 than in the whole period since the 1917 Revolution." In contrast with earlier years, entry permits have already been approved for additional shipments from the United Bible Societies.

EASIER CHILDBIRTH

Women will have easier deliveries in childbirth if they assume a squatting position, obstetricians in England say. A study of some 400 deliveries has shown that most women giving birth function better in an upright position than in an inclined position. The study found that a supported squatting position allows for stronger and more effective pushing, thus significantly reducing the length of the second stage of delivery and the need for use of forceps. Two supports are now in use, birth chairs and birth cushions. Dr. Jason Gardosi of the Milton Keynes General Hospital in Buckinghamshire, England, who headed the study, recommends the use of the cushion, as it can be placed directly on the bed and makes for an

easier delivery by allowing a wider opening of the pelvic bones. Of the women using the device, 95 percent said they would use the squatting position again for their next birth. Interestingly, this is the position referred to in the Bible at Exodus 1:16.

NEW PHONE SERVICES

Phones with memory, automatic dialing, hands-free operation, and digital display, among other things, have become commonplace. But they still ring only when a call comes through. That is now changing. As phone companies in the United States install new signaling equipment, they are offering a host of new services that a phone will perform if you just press a couple of buttons. Included are: call trace—this logs the caller's number with the phone company even if the call was very short and the caller has hung up; call block—numbers programmed into the phone hear a message that you are not taking calls right now; repeat call—tries a busy number for up to 30 minutes while still allowing you to make or receive other calls; return call—if the phone stops ringing just as you get to it, this function calls the num-

ber of the last person who was trying to reach you; priority call—gives a distinctive ring when a call is received from certain numbers; caller ID—shows on a screen-equipped device the number of the person calling.

REBEL HAIR

New York and Los Angeles have spawned yet another fad in hair styles: close-cropped haircuts with various patterns shaved in. Designs have included the New York City skyline, the Golden Gate



Bridge, and prestigious-looking company logos. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, a movie helped popularize the style because a leading character had a pattern of thunderbolts cut in his hair. As to why the hairstyle was chosen, the *Journal* quotes the movie's director as saying: "We were trying to find

something to show a rebellious spirit."

PHOTOGRAPHIC FEAT

When the spacecraft *Voyager 2* sent back clear and detailed pictures of Neptune, currently the planet farthest from the sun, its creators were ecstatic. In its 12-year, 4.4-thousand-million-mile voyage, the small one-ton spacecraft took advantage of a planetary alignment that occurs just once every 176 years. It first visited, in succession, Jupiter, Saturn, and Uranus, sending back information from its 11 scientific instruments, including two television cameras. At nearly 2.8 thousand million miles from earth, sending high quality pictures of Neptune and its moons was not an easy feat. Sunlight there is a bare one-thousandth of the brightness that falls on earth, necessitating long time-exposures and panning of the cameras to prevent blurring. By the time the signal from *Voyager*'s 20-watt transmitter reached the tracking stations on earth, it had diminished to a fraction of a thousand-millionth of a watt and was mixed with the electromagnetic noise of space.

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FROM OUR READERS

Death for Sale Thank you for this series of informative articles. (July 8, 1989) I appreciated the way they gave you the facts on the damage smoking does to the body and also the information regarding its side effects. I believe that all smokers who would like to stop the bad habit should obtain a copy of this magazine.

C. T. M., United States

Wall Street Thank you so much for the honest and insightful articles on Wall Street and the stock market crash. (August 8, 1989) The financial world is now waging an all-out campaign to assure the general public that the crash was a 'non-event,' and that it is safe to jump in the water again. The intelligent person who has his feet on the ground knows that the world is in deep financial trouble. I urge readers to steer clear of the stock market, pay off debt, and save money instead of spending it.

B. W., United States

In view of the world's shaky economy, it certainly makes sense to be prudent financially, and the risks involved in making stock market investments cannot be ignored. However, all investments—including bank deposits—can be said to involve some element of risk. Individuals must therefore make a personal decision as to how much risk they are willing to take. The articles in question were not intended to serve as an investment guide or particularly to discourage stock market investments. They served to highlight that greed is at the root of many of the world's financial woes and that government by God is the only solution.—ED.

School Bullies As a single parent with a teenage son to take care of, I find much guidance, and answers to the many questions and problems I face, in the "Young People Ask . . ." articles. The recent one on bullies (Au-

gust 8, 1989) was just what my son needed. He read it three times the day he received it.

V. B., United States

Homosexuality "The Bible's Viewpoint" article about homosexuality (July 8, 1989) gave me second thoughts about being a homosexual. You see, I have been having sex with men since I was 12 years old. Now I'm 47. I have also appeared in many pornographic movies. But I think it is about time I lived a normal life, and I have started studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Thank you very much for the wonderful article.

T. M., United States

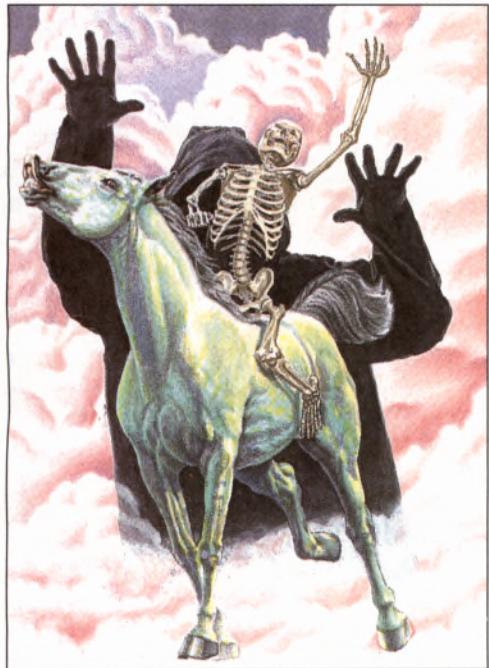
Making Conversation The article "How Can I Improve at Making Conversation?" (May 22, 1989) caught my attention. I have had difficulty sharing in conversations and was very much like some of the youths mentioned in the article. With the help of Jehovah God and of the good suggestions you gave, I now note much improvement in this regard. I believe that thousands of youths feel grateful for the provision of the "Young People Ask . . ." articles.

M. C. M., Brazil

Depression Thank you for the article on depression in your October 22, 1987, issue. I've read it so many times I almost know it by heart. You packed so much information into 15 pages! Even the pictures were encouraging. Sometimes I just think of the cover photo of that woman looking sad and then smiling, and I feel so much better. Depression is agony. But reading about all those others who have experienced it helps. You seem to have so much insight into how a depressed one feels. It is as if the article was talking just to me.

J. A., United States

The Pale Horse Rides On



THE prophet John was inspired by God to foretell a time when disease epidemics would run rampant throughout the earth like a charging pale horse ridden by death. (Revelation 6:8) The appalling spread of AIDS is more grim proof that we are living at that time. In fact, New York City health officials describe the burgeoning growth of AIDS as "the epidemic to come."

In Thailand, 70 of the 73 provinces now harbor the AIDS virus. In 1987 only 1 percent of Bangkok's drug users had AIDS; by mid-1989 more than 40 percent had it. Brazil expects 75,000 diagnosed cases of AIDS in three years, with 1.5 million others infected. Of Brazil's 1,200 blood banks, only 20 percent had screened their blood supply in 1988, and 14 percent of AIDS sufferers got the disease from tainted blood. In Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, about 75 percent of hemophiliacs are infected. In Côte d'Ivoire, up to 10 percent of pregnant women and 10 percent of blood donors have AIDS.

An American medical official at an 87-nation meeting on AIDS said: "The epidemic of HIV [the AIDS virus] infection is out of control in the United States and in the world." The U.S. Centers for Disease Control estimates that by 1998 one million Americans will have the full-blown disease, with many more having the virus. Estimates on the number who already have the virus were recently revised upward drastically. In New York City, AIDS is now the third leading cause of death, surpassed only by heart disease and cancer.

Blood banks have been sued for supplying AIDS-tainted blood for transfusions. Several have been ordered to pay damages. They may yet face many more lawsuits. Lamented the chief counsel for the American Association of Blood Banks: "What does the future hold? I don't know. The worst-case scenario is blood centers going out of existence."

Soon, there will indeed be an end to all blood banks because we are nearing the time that will see a world without AIDS, a world without hospitals, sickness, or death. John, who described the ride of the pale horse, also recorded God's promise of "a new earth," a human society freed of the scourge of disease. (Revelation 21:1-4) It is urgent to evaluate that promise now, for in the meantime the pale horse rides on.

