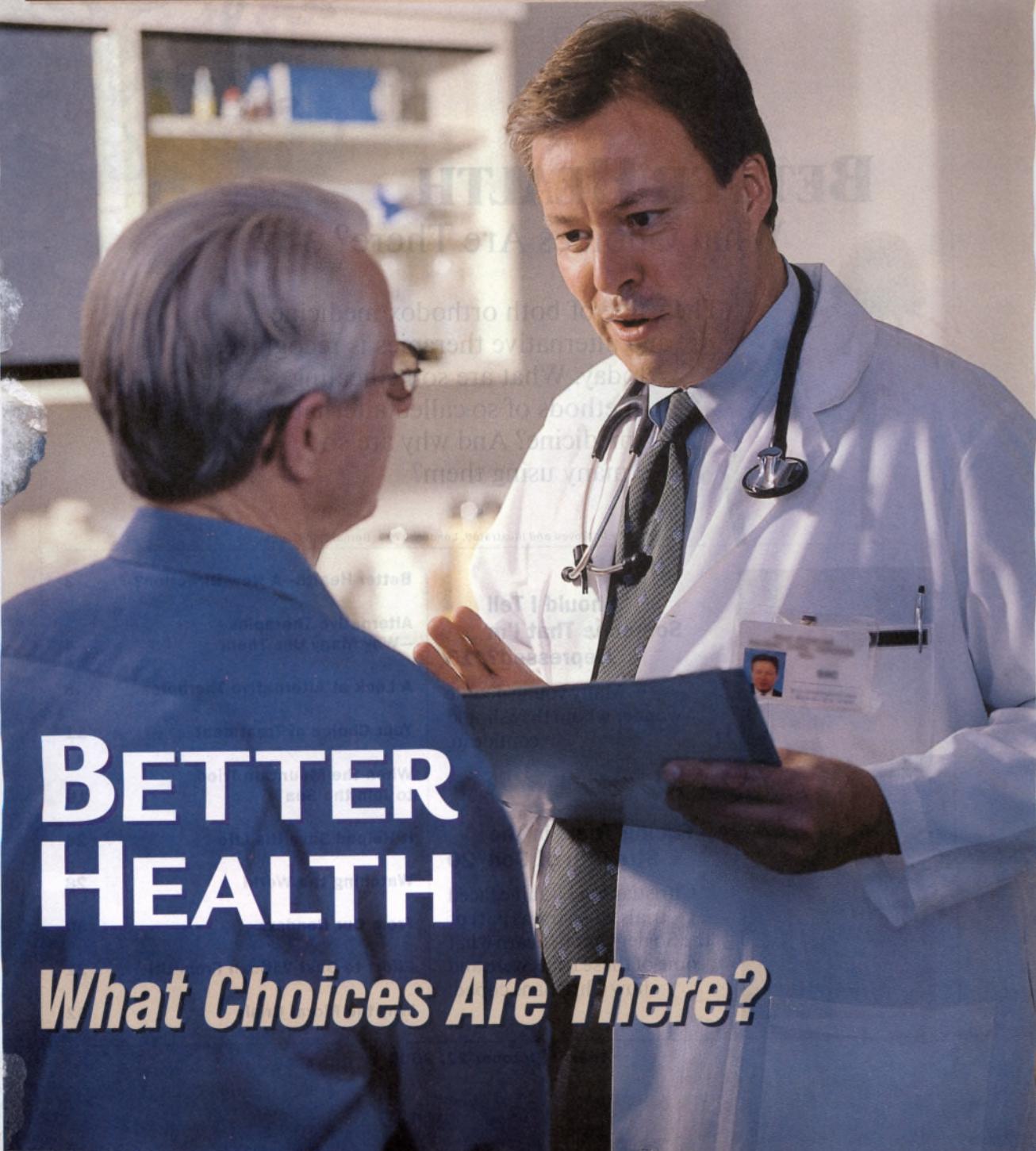


# Awake!

October 22, 2000



**BETTER  
HEALTH**

*What Choices Are There?*

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# BETTER HEALTH

## What Choices Are There? 3-12

The value of both orthodox medicine and alternative therapies is recognized today. What are some healing methods of so-called alternative medicine? And why are so many using them?



*Anatomy Improved and Illustrated*, London, 1723, Bernardino Genga



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Many young people wonder whom they should confide in.



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# Better Health —A New Direction?

**Few subjects matter more to people than health. At times, there seem to be as many opinions as there are health practitioners. Rather than taking sides, Awake! endeavors with this series of articles to report on the increasing use of treatments that are commonly called alternative. We do not endorse any of the health treatments that we will discuss or any others. Many types of treatment are not mentioned—some quite popular, some controversial. Education regarding health issues is, we believe, generally useful; decisions regarding health issues are entirely personal.**

**E**VERYONE wants to be healthy. But good health can be elusive, as can be seen by the numbers of people who have health complaints. It seems to some that more people are sick today than ever before.

In order to combat sickness, many doctors rely heavily on prescribing medicines that are developed and aggressively advertised by pharmaceutical companies. Significantly, the world market for such drugs has skyrocketed in recent decades, from just a few billion dollars a year to hundreds of billions of dollars annually. What has been a consequence?

Medically prescribed drugs have helped many people. Yet, the health of some who take drugs has either remained unchanged or become worse. So, recently some have turned to using other methods of medical treatment.

### **Where Many Are Turning**

In places where modern, conventional medicine has been the standard of care, many are now turning to what have been called alternative, or complementary, therapies. "The Berlin Wall that has long divided alternative therapies from mainstream medicine appears to be crumbling," said *Consumer Reports* of May 2000.

*The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, of November 11, 1998, observed: "Alternative medical therapies, functionally defined as interventions neither taught widely in medical schools nor generally available in US hospitals, have attracted increased national attention from the media, the medical community, governmental agencies, and the public."

Noting recent trends, however, the *Journal of Managed Care Pharmacy* explained in 1997: "In the past, conventional medical practitioners have been skeptical about alternative medical practices, but 27 medical schools in the United States [a more recent report says 75] currently offer elective course work on alternative medicine, including Harvard, Stanford, University of Arizona, and Yale."

*JAMA* noted what many patients are doing in an effort to improve their health. It reported: "In 1990, an estimated 1 (19.9%) in 5 individuals seeing a medical doctor for a principal condition also used an alternative therapy. This percentage increased to nearly 1 (31.8%) in 3 in 1997." The article also observed: "National surveys performed outside the United States suggest that alternative

medicine is popular throughout the industrialized world."

According to *JAMA*, the proportion of the population that used alternative treatments within a recent 12-month period was 15 percent in Canada, 33 percent in Finland, and 49 percent in Australia. "The magnitude of the demand for alternative therapy is noteworthy," *JAMA* acknowledged. This is especially true in view of the fact that alternative therapies are rarely included in insurance benefits. So the *JAMA* article concluded: "Current use is likely to underrepresent utilization patterns if insurance coverage for alternative therapies increases in the future."

The trend toward integrating alternative therapies with conventional ones has long been a general practice in many countries. Dr. Peter Fisher, of the Royal Lon-

don Homeopathic Hospital, noted that the principal forms of complementary medicine have become "virtually conventional in many places. There are no longer two types of medicine, orthodox and complementary," he claimed. "There is only good medicine and bad medicine."

Thus many medical professionals today are recognizing value in both orthodox medicine and alternative therapies. Rather than insisting that a patient accept either one form of medicine or another, they recommend taking advantage of whatever proves to be beneficial to the patient from all the various forms of healing therapy.

What are some healing methods of what is called alternative, or complementary, medicine? When and where did some of these originate? And why are so many using them?

# Alternative Therapies Why Many Use Them

**A**LTERNATIVE, or complementary, medicine covers a broad range of healing techniques and treatments. Many come under the general heading of naturopathy, which is a system of treatment that emphasizes the use of natural agents or physical

means to condition the body and allow it to heal itself. Quite a number of these therapies, commonly used for centuries, have long been abandoned or ignored by modern medicine.

For example, the August 27, 1960, *Journal of the American Medical Association* noted

**Awake!**

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

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that the application of cold for burns was "known to the ancients but seems to have been ignored by physician and layman alike. Although scattered references in the literature are unanimous in praise of this form of treatment, it is not generally used today. Indeed, most physicians say 'it isn't done,' although no one quite knows why."

In recent decades, however, the application of cold water or cold compresses for burns has once again been advocated by conventional medicine. *The Journal of Trauma*, of September 1963, reported: "Interest in the use of cold water in the early treatment of burns has developed since the reports of Ofeigsson and Schulman in 1959 and 1960. We have been treating patients for the past year with this method; our clinical results were encouraging."

The treatment with cold water is relatively safe, and it certainly provides comforting relief. Hydrotherapy, which uses water in various ways to treat ailments, is utilized in alternative medicine, and now various forms of such treatment are also recognized by modern medicine.\*

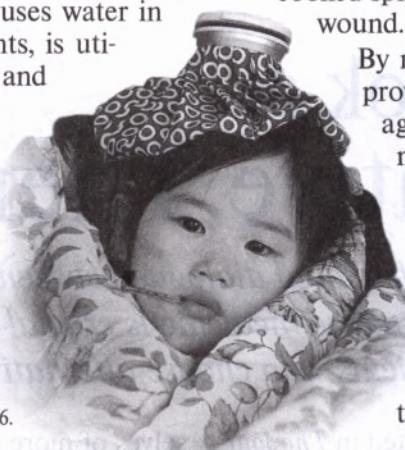
Similarly, alternative therapists often use plants to treat disease. This has been a practice for hundreds—even thousands—of

years in some parts of the earth. In India, for example, the use of herbs has long been a mainstay of medicine. Today, practically everywhere, the healing power of certain plants is recognized by many health professionals.

### A Noteworthy Experience

About a hundred years ago, Richard Willstätter, who later became a student of the biochemistry of plants, was influenced by what happened to a close young friend, ten-year-old Sepp Schwab. Sepp had a badly infected leg that a doctor said needed to be amputated to save his life, but Sepp's parents postponed the operation till the next morning. In the meantime, they sought out a shepherd who had a reputation for his use of herbal remedies. The shepherd gathered a combination of plants, cut them into very fine pieces until they were a mass resembling cooked spinach, and applied this to the wound.

By morning the wound had improved, and the operation was again postponed. The treatment was continued, and in time, the wound healed completely. Willstätter went on to study chemistry at Munich University in Germany and later won the Nobel prize for discoveries made in connection with his studies of plant



\* See *Awake!*, June 22, 1988, pages 25-6.

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pigments, particularly chlorophyll. Significantly, some 25 percent of pharmaceutical drugs now used are derived either in part or entirely from chemicals occurring naturally in plants.

### The Need to Exercise Balance

Yet, it should be recognized that when it comes to medical treatment, what works wonders for one person may do little for another. The effectiveness of any kind of therapy depends upon a host of factors, including the type of disease and its severity and the patient's general state of health. Even timing may be a factor.

Alternative methods usually work more slowly than orthodox methods, so a disease that might have been warded off had it been diagnosed and treated earlier may develop to the point where strong drugs—perhaps even surgery—are necessary to save life. It may

therefore be unwise to hold to any one kind of therapy as though it were the only way to handle a health problem.

Alternative medicine differs from conventional therapies in its approach to health. Usually its healing methods deal more with prevention, and they focus on a person's lifestyle and environment and how these factors impact his or her health. In other words, practitioners of alternative therapies generally look at the whole person rather than at just a troubled organ or a disease state.

A strong appeal of alternative medicine no doubt is the perception that its use of natural products and its methods of treatment are gentler and less hazardous than those employed by conventional medicine. Therefore, because of increased interest in identifying safe and effective medical treatments, a few examples of alternative therapies will be presented in the following article.

# A Look at Alternative Therapies

*"Opening a professional dialogue between physicians and practitioners of alternative medicine is crucial to better health care for those patients who choose alternative therapies."*

THAT statement was printed in *The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* in its issue of November 11, 1998. The article stated: "This need [of dialogue] can be expected to grow with use of alternative therapies, particularly as health insurance plans include such therapies in the benefits they offer."

More and more patients are employing alternative therapies while availing them-

selves of more conventional forms of treatment. Yet, some fail to keep their medical doctor informed of what they are doing. Therefore, *Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter* of April 2000 urged: "You should act in your best interest by working with your doctor rather than privately." It added: "Whether he or she approves of your approach, you still stand to gain by sharing the information."



**Black cohosh**

**Certain herbs have been useful in treating health problems**



**Saint-John's-wort**  
© Bill Johnson/Visuals Unlimited

This was said because of possible health risks when certain herbs are combined with conventional therapies. Recognizing that some of their patients are choosing alternative therapies, many health professionals strive not to allow their own opinions about health care to prevent them from working along with alternative therapists for the benefit of the patient.

To give our readers an idea of alternative therapies now used by growing numbers of people in many countries, we are providing a brief description of a few of them. Please note, however, that *Awake!* does not endorse any of these or any other form of medical treatment.

### **Herbal Remedies**

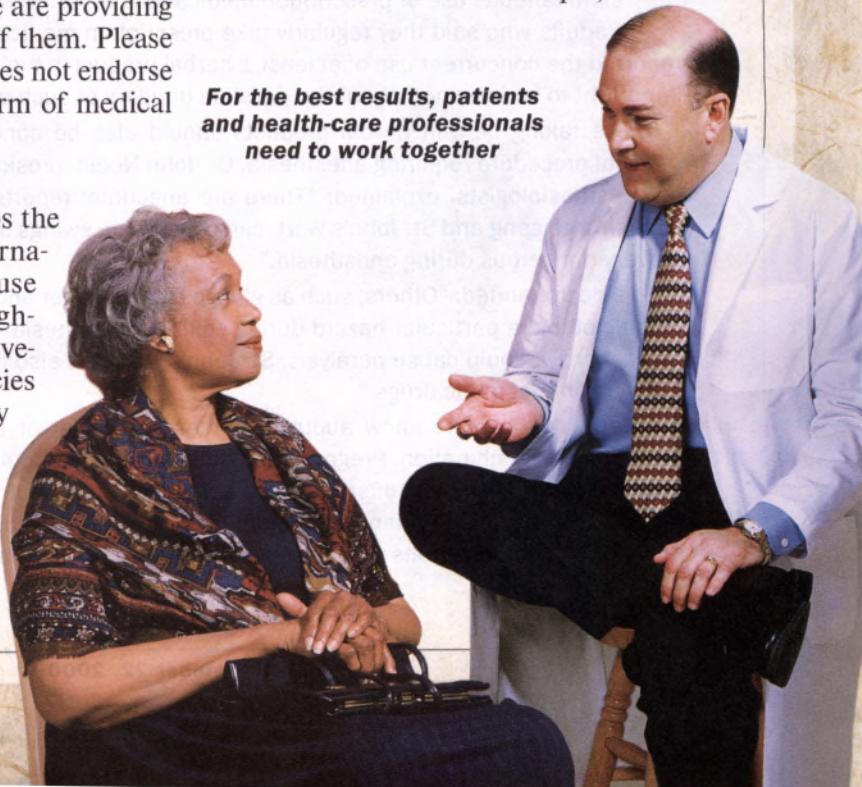
These remedies are perhaps the most common form of alternative medicine. Despite the use of herbs in medicine throughout the centuries, only a relatively small number of plant species have been carefully studied by scientists. An even smaller number of plants and their extracts have been studied so thoroughly that information is available on their safety and efficacy. The ma-

jority of information about herbs is based on experience from their historical use.

In recent years, however, there have been a number of scientific studies that show the usefulness of certain herbs in treating such conditions as mild depression, age-related memory loss, and symptoms of benign prostate enlargement. One herb that has been studied is black cohosh, which is sometimes known as black snakeroot, bugbane, or rattleroot. American Indians boiled the root and used it in connection with menstrual problems and childbirth. According to *Harvard Women's Health Watch* of April 2000, recent studies suggest that a standardized German commercial black cohosh extract may be effective "in relieving menopausal symptoms."

It seems that much of the demand for such natural remedies is based on the perception that they are safer than synthetic drugs. While this may often be true, some herbs are associated with side effects, especially if they are used in combination with other medications. For example,

**For the best results, patients and health-care professionals need to work together**



a popular herb that is promoted as a natural decongestant and weight-loss product can increase blood pressure and heart rate.

There are also herbs that will increase the rate at which a patient bleeds. If these herbs are used in combination with "blood-thinning" medical drugs, serious problems can result. People with chronic illnesses, such as diabetes or high blood pressure, or those taking other medications should be careful about using herbal remedies.—See the accompanying box.

Another concern with herbal remedies is the

lack of consistent quality assurance in their production. In recent years there have been reports of products tainted with heavy metals and other contaminants. Additionally, some herbal products have been found to contain little or none of the ingredients on the label. These examples stress the need to buy herbal products, as well as any other health products, from reputable and reliable sources.

### Dietary Supplements

Dietary supplements, such as vitamins and minerals, have reportedly been helpful in preventing and treating a number of

## Combining Herbs With Medicines

### WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Often the public has been warned against taking certain prescription drugs in combination or taking them with alcoholic beverages. Is there also a danger in taking particular herbs along with prescription medications? How common is this practice?

An article in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* spoke of "the simultaneous use of prescription medications with herbs." It noted: "Among the 44% of adults who said they regularly take prescription medications, nearly 1 (18.4%) in 5 reported the concurrent use of at least 1 herbal product, a high-dose vitamin, or both." It is important to be informed about the possible dangers of such a practice.

Those taking certain herbal products should also be concerned when undergoing a medical procedure requiring anesthesia. Dr. John Neeld, president of the American Society of Anesthesiologists, explained: "There are anecdotal reports that some popular herbs, including ginseng and St. John's wort, can cause wide swings in blood pressure. That could be very dangerous during anesthesia."

This doctor added: "Others, such as ginkgo biloba, ginger and feverfew, can interfere with blood clotting, a particular hazard during epidural anesthesia—if there's bleeding near the spinal cord, it could cause paralysis. St. John's wort can also intensify the effects of some narcotic or anesthetic drugs."

Clearly, it is vital to know about the potential danger of taking particular herbs and medicines in combination. Pregnant and nursing women should especially be aware of the possible harm that their offspring may suffer as a result of the combination of certain herbs and medicines. Patients, therefore, are encouraged to discuss with their health-care provider what medications they take, whether these be alternative or otherwise.





health problems, including anemia and osteoporosis—and even in preventing some birth defects. Government-recommended daily doses of vitamins and minerals are considered to be relatively safe and useful.

On the other hand, megadoses promoted for the treatment of some illnesses may be hazardous to health. They can possibly interfere with the absorption or activity of other nutrients and can also cause serious side effects. This possibility, as well as the lack of substantial evidence supporting the use of megavitamins, should not be ignored.

### **Homeopathy**

Homeopathy was developed in the 1700's as a kinder, gentler type of treatment than those in popular use at the time. Homeopathy is based on the principle that "like cures like" and on the minimum-dose theory. Homeopathic remedies are prepared by repeatedly diluting a healing agent—at times, diluting it so much that not even one molecule of the original material remains.

Nonetheless, when compared with the use of a placebo, homeopathic remedies were found to have some effect in treating such things as asthma, allergies, and childhood diarrhea. Homeopathic products are considered quite safe, since they are so diluted. An article published in the March 4, 1998, issue of *JAMA* observed: "For many patients suffering from chronic problems that lack a specific diagnosis, homeopathy may be an important and useful treatment option. If used within its limits, homeopathy could com-

plement modern medicine as, 'another tool in the bag.'" In potentially life-threatening emergencies, however, it may be wiser to use more conventional medical treatments.

### **Chiropractic**

There are a number of alternative therapies using body manipulation. Chiropractic is among the most commonly used alternative treatments, especially in the United States. It is based on the idea that healing can be promoted when spinal misalignments are corrected. This is why chiropractors specialize in spinal manipulation to adjust the vertebrae of their patients.

Conventional medicine is not always able to provide relief of lower back discomfort. On the other hand, some patients who receive chiropractic treatments report a high degree of satisfaction. Evidence to support the use of chiropractic manipulation for conditions other than pain is scarce.

Significantly, there is a low incidence of side effects with chiropractic manipulation by a skilled practitioner. Yet, at the same time, a person should be aware that neck manipulation is associated with a risk of



serious complications, including stroke and paralysis. To reduce the risk of complications, some experts recommend that a person have a thorough examination to see if a specific manipulation style is safe for him.

### **Massage**

The benefits of massage have long been recognized in almost all cultures. Its use is even reported on in the Bible. (Esther 2:12) "Massage techniques play an important part in traditional Chinese and Indian medical care," observed the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)* of November 6, 1999. "European massage was systematised in the early 19th century by Per Henrik Ling, who developed what is now known as Swedish massage."

Massage is credited with relaxing the muscles, improving circulation of the blood, and removing toxins that have accumulated in the tissues. Doctors now prescribe massage for such ailments as back pain, headaches, and digestive disorders. Most people who receive massage comment on



how good it makes them feel. According to Dr. Sandra McLanahan, "eighty percent of disease is stress-related, and massage reduces stress."

"Most massage techniques have a low risk of adverse effects," reported *BMJ*. "Contraindications to massage are based largely on common sense (for example, avoiding friction on burns or massage in a limb with deep vein thrombosis) . . . There is no evidence that massage in patients with cancer increases metastatic spread."

"As massage becomes more mainstream, consumers are becoming concerned about a massage therapist's credentials, and they should be," noted E. Houston LeBrun, past president of the American Massage Therapy Association. *BMJ* advised that to avoid unprofessional behavior, "patients should ensure that practitioners are registered with an appropriate regulatory body." A report last year noted that therapists were licensed in 28 states in the United States.



### **Acupuncture**

Acupuncture is a healing technique that has become quite popular throughout the world. While the term "acupuncture" covers several different techniques, it most

commonly involves the use of fine needles inserted into specific areas of the body to achieve a therapeutic response. Research over the past several decades suggests that acupuncture may work in some cases by releasing neurochemicals, such as endorphins, which can help relieve pain and inflammation.

Some research suggests that acupuncture may be effective in treating quite a number of ailments and that it is a safe alternative to the use of anesthetics. The World Health Organization recognizes the use of acupuncture in the treatment of 104 conditions. And a committee selected by the U.S. National Institutes of Health cited evidence that acupuncture is an acceptable therapy in the treatment of postoperative pain, muscle pain, menstrual cramps, and nausea and vomiting resulting from chemotherapy or pregnancy.

While serious side effects are rare with acupuncture, individuals may experience a sensation of soreness, numbness, or tingling. Proper sterilization of needles or the use of disposable needles can minimize the risk

of infection. Many acupuncturists lack the medical skills needed to make a proper diagnosis or to recommend other more appropriate therapies. It would be unwise to ignore this lack of diagnostic skills, especially if choosing acupuncture to help relieve the symptoms of chronic conditions.

### The Choices Are Numerous

The foregoing provides only a sampling of the many therapies that are now commonly referred to as alternative in some places. In the future some of these, as well as others not reviewed here, may well be considered conventional, even as they already are in some parts of the world. Others, of course, may fall into disuse or even disrepute.

Unfortunately, pain and sickness are very much a part of the human experience, even as the Bible so accurately states: "We know that all creation keeps on groaning together and being in pain together until now." (Romans 8:22) It is only to be expected that humans would seek relief. But where can we turn? Please consider some observations that may be of help to you in your choice of medical treatment.

# Your Choice of Treatment

**I**N HIS book on alternative medicine, Dr. Isadore Rosenfeld emphasized this point: "*Any health measure or intervention dispensed to a randomly selected group of individuals who are assured that it will 'work' may result in improvement as often as half the time.*"

This is called the placebo effect, which

means that even a sugar pill can be effective if the person believes that it will be. The placebo effect can relieve subjective symptoms, including pain, nausea, fatigue, dizziness, anxiety, and depression. What does this fact reveal?

For one thing, it shows that having confidence in whatever treatment one receives is

in many cases an important factor in getting better. At the same time, it may be the course of wisdom to check to see if a form of treatment is attacking the root of the problem and not just the symptoms. This can be done by measuring the effects of the treatment by objective means, such as laboratory tests and X rays.

Yet, there is more that a person can do when choosing a form of medical treatment.

#### **Important Steps to Take**

It is wise to do research before making a decision. Ask questions. What results can be expected? What are the advantages, the disadvantages, and the expected costs and length of treatment? Talk with people who have received or undergone the treatment being considered. Ask them if it helped. Remember, though, that mere anecdotal evidence can be misleading.

A form of therapy that is not conventional may not be advisable if it causes one to put off treatment that has a record of success, even though the success rate of the conventional therapy is limited. Evidence of the harm that can result appeared in a report in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. The magazine described the progression of cancer in two young patients who refused conventional therapies while using alternative remedies. One of these patients died.

People with chronic or life-threatening illnesses wisely remain alert to the fact that they may be vulnerable targets of charlatans who promote fraudulent therapies. Be wary

of any product that promises to cure a variety of ailments. A recent example involved a new vitamin that was said to have "helped eliminate everything from breathing problems and lack of energy to life-threatening diseases." An analysis of the "vitamin" found it to be nothing more than salt water.

No doubt some forms of alternative therapies can be beneficial in promoting good health. However, be realistic in your expectations. It is wise to concentrate on eating nutritious food, getting enough sleep, exercising sufficiently, and being cautious when choosing medical treatment.

#### **The Quest Realized**

Obviously, no human therapy can put an end to all sickness and eventual death. This is because these have been inherited from our original parent, the first man, Adam. (Job 14:4; Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12) Many medical treatments—of whatever kind—may perhaps prove helpful, yet they are only stopgap measures that may extend life and make it more pleasant for a

limited time. However, there is a sure cure for the problem of poor health, and millions have already discovered it.

That cure has been provided by our Creator, Jehovah God, the Great Physician. By exercising faith in him and taking advantage of the sin-aton ing merit of the ransom sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ, you will be able to enjoy perfect health and everlasting life in a disease-free world! (Matthew 20:28) The Bible promises that in that new world, "no resident will say: 'I am sick.'"—Isaiah 33:24.

## **Millions have found the only sure hope for perfect health**

## YOUNG PEOPLE ASK . . .

"When I feel depressed, at first I prefer not to talk about it because people may think that I am a problem child. But then I realize that I need to talk with someone in order to get some help." —Alejandro, 13 years old.

"When I feel depressed, I don't turn to my friends because I don't think that they can help me. They would only make fun of me." —Arturo, 13 years old.



**A**LMOST everyone gets the blues at times.\* However, because you are young and relatively inexperienced, you can easily feel overwhelmed by life's pressures. Demands from your parents, friends, and teachers; the physical and emotional changes of puberty; or the feeling that you are a failure because of some minor shortcoming—all these things can leave you feeling melancholy and sad.

When that happens, it's good to have someone to confide in. "If I could not speak to someone about my problems, I think I would explode," says 17-year-old Beatriz. Sad to say, though, many youths keep their troubles to themselves—and frequently find themselves slipping deeper and deeper into despair. María de Jesús Mardomingo, a professor at the Medical Faculty of Madrid, observes that young ones who get to the point

of attempting suicide are often intensely lonely. Many young survivors of suicide attempts said that they had not been able to find a single adult with whom they could converse and in whom they could confide.

What about you? Do you have someone to talk to when you feel down? If not, to whom might you turn?

### Talk to Your Parents

Alejandro, quoted at the outset, describes what he does when he feels depressed: "I go to my mother because ever since I was born, she has been supportive of me, and she gives me confidence. I also turn to my father because he has had experiences similar to mine. If I feel bad and do not tell anyone, then I feel worse." Rodolfo, an 11-year-old, recalls: "Sometimes the teacher would belittle me and scold me, so I felt very sad. I would go to the rest room to cry. Then, later on, I talked

\* If sad feelings persist, it may indicate a serious emotional or physical disorder. Prompt medical attention is recommended. See the article "Winning the Battle Against Depression," in the March 1, 1990, issue of our companion journal, *The Watchtower*.

to my mother, and she helped me solve my problem. If I had not talked with her, I would have felt sadder."

Have you considered having a heart-to-heart talk with *your* parents? Perhaps you feel that they could not possibly understand your problems. But is that really the case? They may not fully understand all the pressures young ones face in today's world; however, isn't it true that they probably know you better than anyone else in the world does? Alejandro says: "Sometimes it is not easy for my parents to sympathize with me and understand just how I feel." Nevertheless, he admits: "I know that I can turn to them." Often youths are surprised to find out just how well their parents *do* understand their

## **"When I speak with my parents, I receive encouragement and practical solutions"**

problems! Because they are older and have more experience, often they can offer helpful advice—this is particularly true if they have experience in applying Bible principles.

"When I speak with my parents, I receive encouragement and practical solutions to my problems," says Beatriz, quoted earlier. With good reason, then, the Bible offers this counsel for youths: "Observe, O my son, the commandment of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother. Listen to your father who caused your birth, and do not despise your mother just because she has grown old."—Proverbs 6:20; 23:22.

Of course, it's hard to confide in your parents if you have a poor relationship with them. According to Dr. Catalina González Forteza, a study conducted among high

school students showed that those who said that they had attempted to take their lives had feelings of low self-esteem and had a poor relationship with their parents. In contrast, youths who avoid such self-destructive thinking are generally "those who enjoy a good relationship with their mother and father."

Therefore, wisely work on cultivating a good relationship with your parents. Get in the habit of conversing with them regularly. Tell them what's going on in your life. Ask them questions. Such lighthearted conversations may make it easier to approach them when you have a serious problem.

### **Talking to a Friend**

But wouldn't it be easier to go to a peer with your problems? Well, it's good to have friends you can trust. Proverbs 18:24 says that "there exists a friend sticking closer than a brother." But while peers can offer you sympathy and support, they may not always offer the best advice. After all, they usually have no more life experience than you do. Remember Rehoboam? He was a king in Bible times. Instead of accepting the counsel of experienced, mature men, he listened to his peers. The outcome? Disaster! Rehoboam lost both the support of most of his nation and God's approval.—1 Kings 12:8-19.

Another problem with confiding in peers might be the matter of confidentiality. Arturo, quoted at the outset, observes: "Most of the boys I know talk to their friends when they feel sad. But later on, their friends reveal everything to others and make fun of them." Thirteen-year-old Gabriela has had a similar experience. She says: "One day I found out that my friend was telling my personal affairs to a friend of hers, so I did not confide in her anymore. Yes, I talk to people of my age, but I try not to tell them things that could affect me adversely if they were to tell them to others." So when you are looking for help, it is



**God-fearing parents, rather than your peers, are usually in the best position to give you advice**

important to find someone who does "not reveal the confidential talk of another." (Proverbs 25:9) Such a person is more likely to be someone who is older than you.

So if for some reason you are unable to find support at home, it's all right to find a friend to confide in, but make sure that he or she has experience in life and a knowledge of Bible principles. In the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, no doubt there are individuals who fit that description. Sixteen-year-old Liliana says: "I have confided in some of my Christian sisters, and this has been quite good. Since they are older than I am, their advice is sound. They have become my friends."

What if your spirituality has also begun to suffer? Perhaps you've been so sad that you've begun to neglect prayer or Bible reading. At James 5:14, 15, the Bible gives this advice: "Is there anyone sick among you? Let him call the older men of the congre-

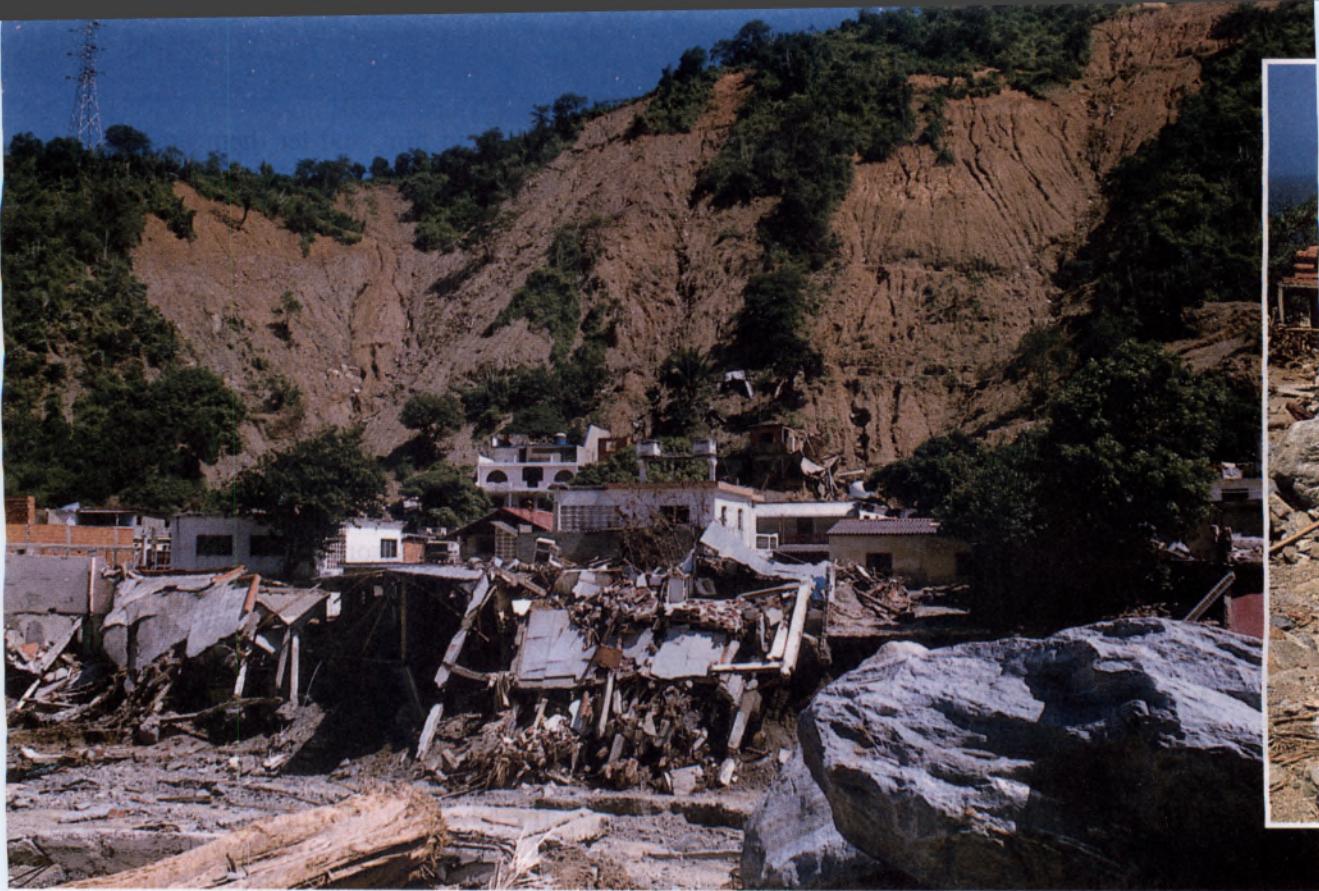
gation to him, and let them pray over him, greasing him with oil in the name of Jehovah. And the prayer of faith will make the indisposed one well, and Jehovah will raise him up." The local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses has older men who have experience in helping people who are discouraged or spiritually ill. Feel free to talk to them. The Bible says that such men can be "like a hiding place from the wind and a place of concealment from the rainstorm." —Isaiah 32:2.

#### **"Let Your Petitions Be Made Known to God"**

The very best source of help, however, is "the God of all comfort." (2 Corinthians 1:3) When you are sad and depressed, follow the advice of Philippians 4:6, 7: "Do not be anxious over anything,

but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus." Jehovah is *always* willing to listen to you. (Psalm 46:1; 77:1) And sometimes prayer is all that you need to ease your mind.

If you feel sad or depressed from time to time, never forget that many other youths have had the same feelings. In time, those feelings will usually go away. But in the meantime, do not suffer alone. Let someone know that you are hurting. Proverbs 12:25 states: "Anxious care in the heart of a man is what will cause it to bow down, but the good word is what makes it rejoice." How do you get that "good word" of encouragement? By telling someone—someone with the experience, knowledge, and godly wisdom to give you the comfort and help that you need.



BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT  
IN VENEZUELA

## WHEN THE MOUNTAIN

**B**ETWEEN Venezuela's capital city, Caracas, and the sea stands a 7,000-foot mountain named El Ávila. On the north side is a narrow, heavily populated strip of coastline. Venezuela's major airport is there, and to get from the airport to Caracas, tourists must travel through a tunnel that is cut right through the mountain.

After torrential rains last December, saturated El Ávila could take no more. Its sides seemed to burst as millions of cubic feet of water cascaded from the mountain. It seemed, as one person put it, as if the mountain were trying to join the sea. Homes—from shacks to villas—were engulfed in an avalanche of wa-

ter, mud, rocks, and trees. Beds, refrigerators, televisions, and even humans were swept along. An elderly man said that he thought it was the end of the world.

In time, the rain stopped, and the floodwaters began to subside. According to one estimate, some 50,000 people may have died, and 400,000 were rendered homeless. For good reasons, this has been termed "the worst natural disaster in Venezuela's history."

### Narrow Escapes

On December 15, Juan Carlos Lorenzo and his father were trapped between two swollen rivers. They abandoned their vehicle and joined 35 people inside a building. Soon, how-



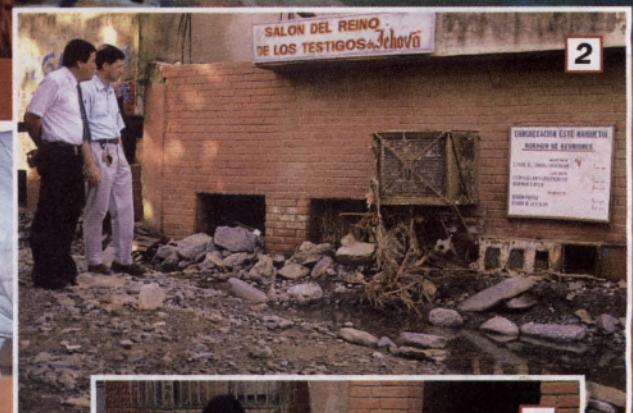
# TRIED TO JOIN THE SEA



ever, the water started pouring in and rose rapidly. All were able to make it to the roof. Meanwhile, boulders and tree trunks pounded the building. Before long, the walls on the first and second floors were demolished, so that only the columns and the roof were left. The flimsy structure shuddered as the battering continued.

A helicopter appeared, but it could not land on the fragile

**Rubén Serrano, with the remains of his house**



**4**

**5**

building. As it turned away, Juan Carlos and his father tearfully said good-bye to each other, convinced that this was the end. Then two helicopters arrived. One by one, all on the roof were lifted to safety as the pilots skillfully hovered above. As soon as the helicopters departed, the building collapsed into the raging waters. They had escaped just in time!

People were evacuated by the thousands—in small airplanes, by road, and by army troopships designed for beach landings. Long lines of people—some carrying children on their shoulders—were guided by ropes through the surf onto boats. While

arrive with help and to take people away from the area."

The Witnesses organized searches to find those needing help. Transportation was arranged to take evacuees to Caracas, where many arrived with nothing. Collection points were set up in the city so that food, clothing, and medicine could be distributed to people in need. But most of them needed more than food and clothing. They desperately needed a place to live. Their Christian brothers gladly took them in.

Even long after the disaster, people had friends and relatives living with them. Joel and Elsa, Witnesses in Puerto Cabello, live in a small apartment. A month after the storm, they still had 16 people living there with them. Many had lost not only their homes but also their jobs. Their places of work simply no longer exist.

Sadly, formerly bustling resort and port towns became virtually unrecognizable. Some vehicles protruded from the mud, while others were plastered against walls, wrapped around posts, or jammed in doors or windows. A layer of hardened mud—up to nine feet deep in some places—caused the level of streets to be so high that as a person walked on them, he was at eye level with an upper floor or even the rooftops of the buildings he passed!

Some in Venezuela commented that the disaster taught them a valuable lesson—not to put their trust in material things. (Luke 12:29-31) A number came to appreciate the counsel of Jesus Christ: "Stop storing up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal. Rather, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

—Matthew 6:19-21.

- 1. Volunteers gathered relief supplies in Caracas**
- 2, 3. The Maiquetía Congregation removed hardened mud that was seven feet deep from their Kingdom Hall**
- 4. These Witnesses lost their homes and then volunteered to build new ones for themselves and others**
- 5. One of the nearly completed homes in San Sebastián de los Reyes**

some were able to salvage a few personal items, many left with just the clothes they were wearing.

### **Relief Efforts**

At the Venezuela branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses, relief efforts began as soon as word of the disaster was received. However, roads were either cluttered with debris or simply washed away. After a few days, one lane of the main highway was opened for emergency use, and Witness vehicles carrying medical supplies and qualified personnel were allowed through. An official later said: "The government is well aware that Jehovah's Witnesses were among the first to

# Facing Trials in the Strength of God

AS TOLD BY STEPAN KOZHEMBA

*One night early in April 1951, trucks loaded with Soviet troops drove into our Ukrainian village of Stenyatyn. Armed soldiers surrounded preselected homes and took away whole families of Jehovah's Witnesses and transported them to Siberia. As an impressionable 12-year-old, I wondered why they were treated in such a way and how they could put up with such suffering.*

I WAS born in the village of Stenyatyn in October 1938. Mother died two weeks after my birth, and Father was killed in 1944 while fighting in the Soviet army against Germany. My father's sisters, Olena and Anna, took me in and raised me.

As a boy, I knew several of Jehovah's Witnesses in our town. They talked to me and to others about the Messianic Kingdom whenever the opportunity arose. In time, I became friends with some of the young Witnesses. When they were taken by Soviet troops and deported to Siberia, I was completely surprised.

But not all Witnesses were exiled. Stepan, a Witness who lived near my home, was allowed to stay, since his family were not Witnesses. He was six years older than I was, and when I left school, I worked with him as a carpenter. He studied the Bible with me, using any copies of *The Watchtower* that were available. Stepan, who now serves the true God, Jehovah, in Estonia, was thrilled when I got baptized in July 1956.



Opposition was part of life for any servant of Jehovah in Ukraine. The authorities conducted house searches to look for Bible literature, so I had a number of hiding places. My aunts Olena and Anna, who were Greek Catholics, did not approve of my contact with the Witnesses. They even tried to influence me to stop associating with them. Similar to the apostle Paul, at times I felt that I was 'under extreme pressure beyond my strength.' But my relationship with Jehovah God strengthened me to endure every trial.—2 Corinthians 1:8; Philippians 4:13.

## My Struggle to Remain Neutral

Service in the Soviet military was compulsory for young men 18 years of age. Because of my knowledge of the Bible, I was determined to remain neutral with respect to the affairs of the world, which meant that I refused to join the Soviet army. (Isaiah 2:4; John 17:14-16) Olena and Anna encouraged me to become a soldier, even though their own brother, my father, had been killed in the war.

After I received draft papers, I went to the military headquarters in our area and explained my position. I was promptly arrested and then kept in custody while charges were prepared against me. The trial was closed to the public; not even my aunts were informed of the date. I gave a thorough witness to the judge, the prosecutor, and the two-man jury. After 20 minutes, it was all over. My sentence—five years' detention plus a further five years during which I would lose some rights as a citizen.

### Serving My Sentence

After the trial I was put in prison in Lviv. For the three months from my arrest until my transfer to a labor camp, I had no Christian fellowship, no Bible, and no Bible literature. I remained spiritually active, however, by witnessing to fellow inmates, who found my refusal to serve in the military difficult to understand. During those months, I relied on the personal study I had done before being put in detention. The experience taught me a valuable lesson: Personal Bible study helps us to build up a spiritual reserve that sustains us when trials arise.—John 14:26.

In April 1958, I was transferred to labor camp 21, near Dnepropetrovsk, over 450 miles from home, to serve the remainder of my sentence. There we got up at 6:00 a.m., and after breakfast we were loaded onto trucks and taken about 30 miles to our workplace outside camp. We worked eight hours on a construction site, and then we were returned to camp for the night.

Our sleeping quarters were barracks that accommodated about a hundred inmates each. Food was poor, and living conditions Spartan; but at least I had the companionship of two fellow Witnesses in my barracks. Each of us made a conscious effort to encourage the other two. This is a further way that Jehovah provides strength to his ser-

vants in distress—through the companionship of fellow believers.—2 Corinthians 7:6.

In all, there were 12 Witnesses in the camp. Some of these had relatives on the outside who smuggled pages of *The Watchtower* to us hidden in food parcels. Most parcels were opened by the guards, who checked the contents before passing them on to us. But to avoid detection, pages of *The Watchtower* were wrapped in plastic and placed in tins of jam, which the guards did not bother to open. Once we received the articles, we copied them by hand and shared them among ourselves.

We also did our best to preach about God's Kingdom, and Jehovah blessed our efforts. For instance, I got to know an inmate named Sergei, who had worked as an accountant at a state-owned enterprise in eastern Ukraine. When fraud was discovered at his place of work, he was held responsible and was sentenced to ten years in detention. Several Witnesses in prison studied with him, using whatever magazines were available. Sergei responded and finally told me: "When I am freed from camp, I want to be baptized as a Witness of Jehovah!" True to his word, Sergei was baptized shortly after his release, and he served Jehovah loyally until his death.

### Confusion Over Romans Chapter 13

I was released from detention in January 1963 and returned to my home village,

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

**Nurses—What Would  
We Do Without Them?**

**Should the Zodiac  
Influence Your Life?**

**A Visit to a Chinese Pharmacy**



**With fellow Witnesses  
in labor camp 21**

Stenyatyn. Almost immediately I sensed that something was wrong in the local congregation in Sokal. The atmosphere among the brothers was tense. What was the problem? What had led to this situation of uncertainty?

For years the Soviet authorities had been trying to sow disunity among Jehovah's people by picking up brothers for questioning and suggesting to them that the Witnesses were being used to further the interests of the United States of America. The officials recommended that Witnesses within the Soviet Union form their own separate organization, adding that they could then enjoy peaceful relations with the State and be left to practice their religion without persecution. The officials made all of this sound appealing.

Then in *The Watchtower* of November 15, 1962, which appeared later in the Ukrainian edition of July 1, 1964, a new understanding of Romans chapter 13 was presented. Until that time, we had understood "the superior authorities" mentioned in verse 1 to be Jehovah God and Jesus Christ, but *The Watchtower* noted that

**Microfilm of a Ukrainian  
"Watchtower" (actual size)**



"the superior authorities" actually represent the earthly governments and that these are "placed in their relative positions by God."—Romans 13:1.

Some of the Witnesses found it hard to believe this adjusted view, since the heads of the earthly government in the Soviet Union had been so cruel in their attempts to wipe out the true worship of God. These Witnesses, therefore, thought that *The Watchtower* containing the new understanding had not originated with the official organization of Jehovah's Witnesses. Instead, they thought that the information had been fabricated by those compromising with the authorities in order to make the Witnesses more obedient to the Soviet State.

So each servant of Jehovah in Ukraine was faced with the question, Which group is right, and which is wrong? I observed the Witnesses supporting each side of the argument and asked myself, 'What motives do they have?' Soon I was able to identify a clear difference between the two sides.

The majority of Jehovah's Witnesses, some of whom may not have fully understood the new explanation of Romans chapter 13, wanted to stick loyally to Jehovah and his organization. Others, however, had begun to doubt that recent publications of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society still came from the official organization of Jehovah's Witnesses. Such ones were also inclined to have extreme views on a number of matters. For instance,

they felt that it was wrong for a bride to wear a white dress at her wedding and for marriage partners to wear a wedding ring. A number of individuals left the organization. In time, however, quite a few of them recognized their error and returned to serving Jehovah.

### **Underground Activity**

Even though our Christian activities were banned, whenever possible we held our weekly meetings in groups of between 10 and 15. From the meetings we derived spiritual strength, from both our Bible study and our association after the study. We would compare our experiences, and this helped us to realize that each of us had the same struggle. We took to heart what the apostle Peter wrote: "The same things in the way of sufferings are being accomplished in the entire association of your brothers in the world." —1 Peter 5:9.

Articles in *The Watchtower* formed the basis for our discussions. How did the magazines reach us? Witnesses acting as couriers brought microfilm copies across the frontier into Ukraine. These films were passed along a prearranged route from one Witness to the next. Then each one produced enough copies for his congregation. Sometimes I got involved in making such copies. I worked all day and kept busy in Jehovah's service at night, producing magazines and doing other things. It was a challenge to keep up with the schedule, but those of us who carried responsibility in the organization learned that Jehovah "is giving to the tired one power."—Isaiah 40:29.

We created opportunities to talk about the Bible with people we met. Many of us did this while riding on public transportation. One common method of starting a conversation was simply to read the daily newspaper and then casually mention the lat-

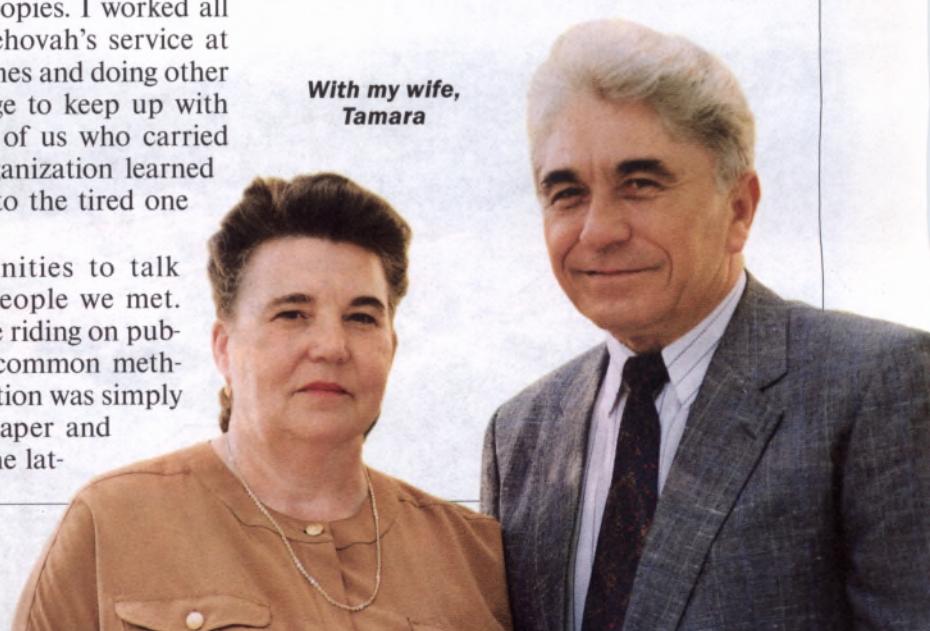
est news to a fellow passenger. Once a conversation was started, we then steered it toward a Bible subject. In this way we spread the good news in our area.

### **A Capable Wife**

In 1965, I married Tamara, who had been brought up as a servant of the true God and knew what it meant to stand up for her faith under trial. Her brother Sergei had been arrested and tried for his activities as a Witness three times. On the last occasion, copies of *The Watchtower* were found in his possession and he was sentenced to ten years in detention. Tamara herself was taken by the authorities to their headquarters for questioning and threatened with imprisonment.

Finding a place to live after our marriage was difficult, but a family living in Sokal who were friendly toward the Witnesses offered us a small room in their home at a low cost. This family assured us that Tamara could continue to live in the room should I be arrested and put into prison again. My wife and I were grateful to Jehovah for his blessing and to the family for their kindness. Later, when the family suffered a bereavement, Tamara took the opportunity to explain the resurrection hope to the daughter, Galina. The seeds of Bible truth bore fruit, and

**With my wife,  
Tamara**



Galina grew to love our Creator. She was baptized and now serves Jehovah along with her husband.

Most weekends in the 1970's, I traveled to various parts of Ukraine as well as to Moldavia (Moldova) and the Carpathian Mountains, meeting with and encouraging those who were taking the lead in Jehovah's organization. Normally I left Friday evening and returned home late on Sunday. Tamara rarely knew where I was going and was sometimes not even sure whether I would return. This situation lasted for years. I can only confirm what the Bible says about a capable wife: "Her value is far more than that of corals."—Proverbs 31:10.

In those days any activity as one of Jehovah's Witnesses involved some risk. We were able to carry on only with the strength that Jehovah supplies. Countless times I faced difficult situations and did not know what to do. So I would say a silent prayer and rely on Jehovah for strength. To do that became our way of life.—Acts 4:29.

**An artist's rendering of the new branch complex under construction in Lviv**



## **More Recent Times**

With the passing of time, life became easier for servants of Jehovah in Ukraine. Persecution eased, and prison sentences were replaced by fines. In the 1980's, the authorities came to appreciate that Jehovah's Witnesses really are an international organization. Thus, by imprisoning the Witnesses in Ukraine and elsewhere in the Soviet Union, the State was damaging its reputation abroad. I recall being questioned by one official who told me: "We now realize that religion does not have to be bad. Our chief concern is that a religious group should not harm the State."

In Eastern Europe the Iron Curtain began to open at the end of the 1980's, and since then we have enjoyed increased freedom in Ukraine. In 1991 our preaching work was legalized. Then, in September 1998, the Watch Tower Society established a branch office in Lviv. Early in 1999 construction began on a new branch facility that will accommodate over 170 workers. Now in Ukraine we have over 112,000 sharing in the preaching work, and more than 250,000 attended the Memorial in 2000. What is most striking is the number of young people in our ranks. At

**Why do so many young people  
in Ukraine serve Jehovah?**

a convention in Kiev in 1991, a newspaper reporter asked me:

"Where did all these people come from? I thought that there were no Witnesses in the Soviet Union, and suddenly there are thousands!"

"We did not appear all of a sudden, overnight," I told her. "We have been serving Jehovah here for many years."

"How do you attract so many young people to your religion?" she wanted to know.

"The best thing is for you to ask the young ones themselves. Let them tell you why they want to serve Jehovah."

"I already did," the reporter said. "They told me that they enjoy it."

"Then that is the reason," I added. "If that is what our young people say, then that is the explanation."

Young people are not the only ones who enjoy serving Jehovah. Tamara and I have been serving him for a combined total of over 80 years and would not wish to change our faith for anything. Though we are Jehovah's Witnesses, we still have problems. We realize that as long as this old system lasts, everyone will continue to face difficulties. But we are better equipped to face trials than any other group of people on earth. We remain determined to face these trials as we have in the past, in the strength of our almighty God, Jehovah. We feel the same as Moses did when he sang the victory song: "My strength and my might is Jah, since he serves for my salvation."

—Exodus 15:2.



# It Helped Save His Life

The December 22, 1999, issue of "Awake!" featured the cover subject "Kidnapping—Why a Global Threat." William Louis Terrell said that this issue of "Awake!" helped save his life.

**S**HORTLY after ten o'clock on the morning of Friday, March 10, 2000, Terrell was kidnapped at gunpoint from his home by Joseph C. Palczynski, Jr. The *Awake!* articles, which Terrell said that he kept recalling during his ordeal, contained the following advice from experts about what to do if kidnapped:

"Be cooperative; avoid obstinate behavior. Antagonistic hostages are more often subjected to harsh treatment, and they run a greater risk of being killed or singled out for punishment.

"Do not panic. Keep in mind that most victims survive the kidnapping."

"Engage in small talk if possible and try to establish contact. If the kidnappers see you as an individual, they will be less likely to harm or kill you.

"Make them [the kidnappers] aware of your needs in a polite manner."

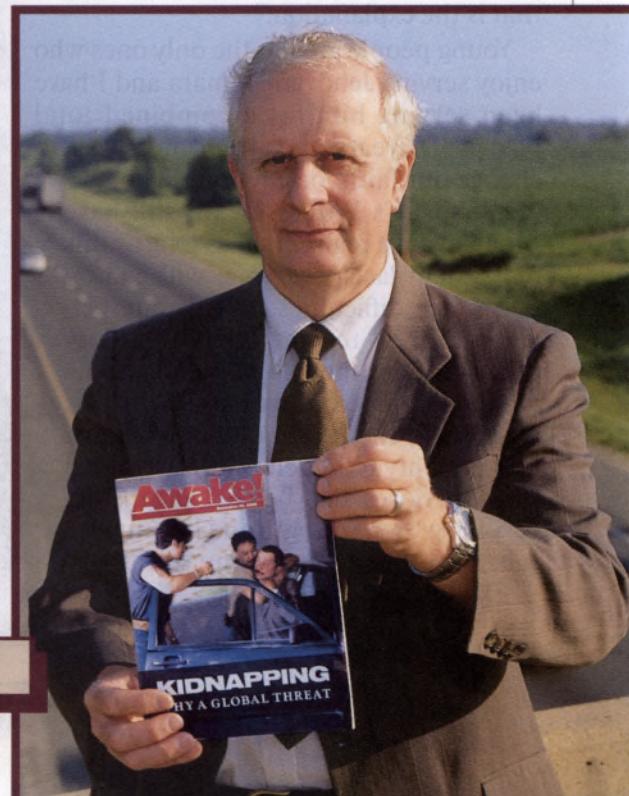
"Interaction has served as a protection to the kidnapped, as the book *Criminal Behavior* explains: 'The more the victim and the captor get to know one another, the more they tend to like one another. This phenomenon indicates that after a period of time the offender is less likely to harm the hostage.'"

William Terrell, who is 53 years old and one of Jehovah's

Witnesses, did his best to follow such advice during the nearly 14 hours he was held hostage, much of the time at gunpoint. The ordeal began shortly after Palczynski knocked on Terrell's door in a rural area near Interstate Highway 95, where the vehicle Palczynski had stolen ran out of gas.

After hearing the stranger's plight, Terrell expressed a desire to help him. Palczynski asked for a glass of water and for a ride to

William Terrell



Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A. Terrell said he would arrange for someone to drive him to the city of Fredericksburg, Virginia, where he could catch a bus the rest of the way. When Terrell turned with a glass of water for the stranger, a gun was pointed at him. Palczynski ordered Terrell to drive him to his destination.

### **Following the Advice**

During the drive along I-95, Terrell followed Palczynski's directions to maintain the speed limit and not to drive in any way that would draw attention to them. Remaining calm, Terrell engaged 31-year-old Palczynski in conversation, expressing genuine interest in him as a person and in the circumstances that led to their meeting. Palczynski related that three days earlier he had gone to see his girlfriend Tracy, who had broken up with him. There he shot and killed two of her friends and a neighbor who attempted to interfere with his taking Tracy with him. Later Tracy escaped.

The following evening, during Palczynski's efforts to hijack a vehicle, a two-year-old child was struck by one of his bullets, shattering the child's jaw. A car driven by Jennifer Lyn McDonel was also hit. Sadly, a bullet killed her, and another struck their one-year-old child's empty car seat. Jennifer and her husband, Thomas, were on their way to the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, where both of them were to present assigned parts at the meeting that evening. Sarah Francis, Jennifer's mother, explained: "That's the only night they did not take that baby to the Kingdom Hall. [Otherwise] we would have two of them to mourn."

As Terrell continued gently to engage his abductor in conversation, Palczynski said that he had never intended to hurt anyone and that he really loved Tracy and wanted to be with her. Terrell explained: "I told him that he couldn't change the past but that he could change the future, and I encouraged

him to turn himself in. I told him I would come to visit him in prison and study the Bible with him." Later it was reported that since finishing high school in 1987, Palczynski had spent all but ten months of his life in prison or mental-health institutions or on probation.

Using his experience as a long-time Christian elder, Terrell continued to appeal to the disturbed young man by using true-life examples from the Bible. For instance, he told the experience of a good man, Israel's King David, who became obsessed with the wife of Uriah, one of the soldiers in David's army. When the woman became pregnant by David, he saw to it that Uriah died in battle. When David's sins were tactfully presented to him, he sincerely repented and regained God's favor.—2 Samuel 11:2-12:14.

Terrell established a rapport with the fugitive, calling him by his nickname Joby. When they stopped at a store and Terrell was sent to purchase food and a portable television, Palczynski said he would kill more people if he tried to warn anyone. Realizing the fugitive's unstable condition, Terrell complied. Eventually, after watching a broadcast about Palczynski's crimes on the 11 o'clock news, Palczynski hugged Terrell and slipped out into a Baltimore suburb.

About a week later, Palczynski was cornered in a house where he was holding hostages. Terrell, whom the fugitive had spoken about, was called in to help with negotiations. Unfortunately, these were unsuccessful, and on March 22, Palczynski was shot to death by police who stormed the residence. No one else was hurt.

Afterward Terrell obtained about 600 copies of the issue of *Awake!* that he credits with helping to save his life. He has shared hundreds of these with others. Terrell is grateful that he has made it a habit to read the valuable information in *Awake!*, and we feel that you will be too.

### Is a Second Opinion Important?

"When it comes to second opinions in medicine, too many of us are simply too polite. But such a lack of assertiveness could cost patients their lives," states *The News of Mexico City*. Patients are often afraid that their doctor will feel insulted if they want to get a second opinion. But "most doctors don't mind patients asking," says the paper. "If yours does, it could indicate trouble ahead." Today, second opinions are viewed, both by doctors and by insurance companies, as a good way to ensure the best treatment for patients. Dr. Michael Andrews, president of the Georgia Society of Clinical Oncology, says that he encourages his patients to get a second opinion because they often come back feeling more confident about his recommendations. The director of a public-health group said: "Patients need to remember they're the ones whose bodies are on the line."

### Dangerous Friends

Teenage drivers are far more likely to have a fatal accident if there are passengers in the car, according to a study reported in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*. Researchers at Johns Hopkins University, Maryland, U.S.A., found that the risk that a 16-year-old driver has of being killed increased by 39 percent with one passenger, 86 percent with two passengers, and 282 percent with three or more passengers. The main reasons cited in the study are "dangerous driving behaviors . . . , strong-

ly associated with the presence of peers." Such risky behaviors include speeding, tailgating, running a red light, driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and being distracted by passengers who engage in horseplay.

### "Older and Wiser"



Researchers have discovered that parts of the brain are able to grow new cells as people age, reports *The Times* of London. Previously it was believed that brain cells did not reproduce during adulthood. "The key to encouraging the growth is keeping the mind active," says *The Times*. A recent study of people over the age of 65 found that learning and interaction with other people appear to encourage new growth in brain cells and their connections. The researchers found that mixing with other people improved "health, longevity and quality of life." Neuroscientist Susan Greenfield comments: "The richer your experience, the more connections you have. So people do get older and wiser."

### Northern Sea Route

Sixteenth-century spice merchant Robert Thorne once

dreamed of finding a sea route from Europe to the Far East via the Arctic. Today, Thorne's dream has become a reality, thanks to global warming, reports *The Times* of London. The waters along the Russian and the Eastern Siberian coasts are now almost totally ice free throughout the summer months, enabling cargo ships to sail from the North Sea, around the Arctic Circle, and into the Pacific through the Bering Strait. When the route is frozen over, ships from Europe have to use the Suez Canal, go around the southern tip of Africa, or journey through the Panama Canal to reach the Far East. The economic advantages of using the northern sea route are significant. It virtually halves the distance between Hamburg, Germany, and Yokohama, Japan—to just under 7,000 nautical miles.

### Blood Testing Problems

"More than half of the world's countries fail to perform full tests on donated blood, increasing the risk of spreading AIDS and other diseases," says an Associated Press report. This report, based on information from the World Health Organization, also claims that "5 to 10 percent of people with the AIDS virus are estimated to be infected via blood transfusions." However, AIDS is just one of the diseases that is transmitted in this manner. Each year, 8 to 16 million hepatitis B infections and 2 to 4 million hepatitis C infections are spread through transfusions and un-

safe injection practices. One reason given for inadequate testing of blood is that it is expensive. It costs between \$40 and \$50 per unit to check for these contaminants. Even so, such tests are "not always reliable, particularly if carried out by inadequately trained staff or with inadequate equipment," notes the report.

#### **Child Abuse in India**

A child is inducted into prostitution every ten minutes in India, reports *The New Indian Express*. This means that about 50,000 Indian children are forced into the sex trade every year. In the state of Kerala, a seminar on child sex abuse reported another startling finding. Doctors there are "reluctant to examine cases of rape as they do not have the expertise for it, nor do they want to be involved," says the newspaper. In some cases, even parents contribute to the problem. Says Central Vigilance Superintendent Sreelekha: "Parents were reluctant to file [rape] cases because of the possible social stigma and ostracism."

#### **Eating Together as a Family Is Healthiest**

One of the best ways for parents to ensure good health for their children is to eat dinner with them, says the *Globe and Mail* newspaper. According to Dr. Matthew Gillman of the Harvard Medical School, "family dinners contain foods that are more healthful than children and adolescents would otherwise eat." Children who eat family meals are more likely to eat the recommended servings of

fruits and vegetables, to take in the vitamins and minerals that they need, and to consume less sugar and fat. The researchers also found that eating dinner as a family engenders conversations about healthy eating and instills better dietary habits in children—habits that they will carry with them when they eat away from home. The new study, taken from a continuing research project using a sample of about 16,000 children between 9 and 14 years of age, found that "only two in five school-age children actually eat supper with their parents most days, and one in five never do," says the *Globe*.

#### **Master Weavers**



"Spider silk is one of the strongest materials on Earth," says *New Scientist* magazine. Each fiber can stretch from two to four times its length before breaking and is so strong that it has been said that a strand of silk the thickness of a pencil could stop a jumbo jet in flight. Researchers have been trying to unlock the spider's weaving secrets for use in a variety of industries. For example, the present fabric of choice for bulletproof vests is Kevlar, an artificial fabric made using "concentrated sulphuric acid heated to near boiling point," says the magazine. But while

the by-products of manufacturing Kevlar are toxic and difficult to dispose of, spiders spin silk from "protein and plain old water, at pH levels and temperatures similar to those found in the human mouth." Moreover, this mixture of water and protein is spun into a fiber that isn't washed away by rain. Thus, *New Scientist* says: "Despite years of study, spider silk is still an enigma."

#### **Pollution in the Home**

"The inside of your house is ten times more likely to be polluted than your front garden," says *The Times* of London. A study of 174 British homes conducted by the Building Research Establishment showed that levels of formaldehyde vapor, released from furniture containing chipboard and other synthetic substances, were ten times higher indoors than outdoors. Twelve of the homes inspected did not meet World Health Organization air quality levels. Synthetic furnishings, vinyl flooring, building and decorating materials, chemical cleaners, or heating and cooking appliances can generate carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, benzene vapor, or volatile organic compounds. Benzene vapor, a known carcinogen, is a component of spray cleaners and also of tobacco smoke, another major indoor pollutant. Charlotte Gann, editor of *Health Which?* magazine, says that many people spend 80 to 90 percent of their time indoors. She advises "cutting back on a few chemical products, opening a few windows and checking gas appliances" to improve indoor air quality.

## FROM OUR READERS

**Fatherless Families** Thanks for the series "Fatherless Families—Breaking the Cycle"! (February 8, 2000) I had been bitter about my divorce to the point where I wanted to fight for full custody of my daughter. But these articles made me realize that my daughter needs to maintain as good a relationship as possible with her father. Fighting over custody is not the answer.

L. D., Guam

As a single mother, I have always worked hard to bring my boy up according to Bible principles. My ex-husband is one of those whom you describe as "coldly indifferent"; he shows no interest in his son. Even so, I have taught my son to love and respect his father, just as your article suggested. It was very encouraging to know that I am on the right track.

R. S., Brazil

My parents were divorced when I was five years old. My father never showed any interest in his children. Sometimes I feel that it would have been better never to have known him at all than to have experienced his indifference. Thanks to Jehovah, I started studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses at an early age. Learning the Bible's truths has helped me to face these feelings of abandonment and resentment.

C. B., Puerto Rico

For nearly seven years now, I have been raising three boys on my own, and at times it is very tough. For example, there are times when the boys are very hard to handle. Yet, I love them with all my heart, and I thank Jehovah that I have them. The oldest one recently got baptized, so it is worth all the effort. Articles such as these encourage me to continue. I will read them often.

N. B., Canada

My father left when I was six years old. Now I'm 21 and just now realizing the effect that it had on me. I've been so afraid of marriage because I thought that a man would probably end up leaving me. I have also felt that I had nothing to offer a man, since I didn't know how a functional family works. However, this article comforted me greatly. It let me know that I can become a balanced, faithful, loving wife someday.

E.V.W., United States

**Friendship Problems** I have often wanted to write you, but I never have. I have just finished reading the article "Young People Ask . . . Why Did My Friend Hurt Me?" (February 22, 2000) I had a serious problem with a close friend, and I found myself nurturing anger toward him. This article arrived at the right time.

C. V., Italy

I was hurt by one of my friends. The article helped me to see that since we are imperfect, we rub one another the wrong way at times. I did what the article said and resolved matters with her.

N. T., Trinidad

I am 18 and have two close friends. One is much older than I am, and the other is two years younger. Well, the younger one and I have been having some problems lately. This article came right on time. Colossians 3:13 reminded us that Jehovah freely forgives us many, many times and that we in turn should forgive each other. The last paragraph drove the point home. So each of us wants to be a friend like the one described at Proverbs 18:24—"sticking closer than a brother" or sister!

W.C., United States

# Effort to Oust Vatican From UN



UN/DPI Photo by Sophie Paris

Vatican official  
addresses the UN

UN photo 143-936/J. Isaac

**T**HE Rome-based news agency Inter Press Service (IPS) reported that "an international coalition of more than 70 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has launched a global campaign to oust the Vatican from the United Nations." Presently, the Vatican is a permanent observer, or nonmember state, in the UN organization. The Vatican has had that status since 1964.

Why does this group of NGOs, which by the end of April last year had increased to 100 organizations worldwide, object to the Vatican's position in the UN? Because the Vatican, the NGOs argue, is a religious authority and not a political state. Frances Kissling, president of Catholics for a Free Choice, told IPS that the coalition does not oppose the Vatican's right to express its view, but "what is in question is the right of this non-state to occupy a position with governments."

Anika Rahman, director of International Programmes at the Centre for Reproductive Law and Policy, agrees. IPS quoted her as saying that "if the UN treats the Holy See as a state with permanent observer privileges because of its religious authority, the world body is creating a precedent for similar claims by other religions." She added: "To ensure that the United Nations does not promote any particular religion, religious entities such as the Roman Catholic Church should not be permitted to participate in this forum as a non-member state."

But what about the argument that the Vatican is a state and is therefore entitled to its present status? "That is semantic double-talk," responded Ms. Kissling in an interview. "We say that this is in essence a 15th-century definition of statehood and that the Holy See is, in effect, the governing structure of the religion." She added that the terms "Vatican" and "the Holy See" are both "synonyms for the Roman Catholic Church."

Much of the resentment of the NGOs against the Vatican's current position in the UN is caused by the Vatican's view on population issues. For instance, the Vatican has used UN conferences such as the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, in Cairo, and the 1995 Women's Conference, in Beijing, to express its strong views against family planning. "Since the UN takes most of its decisions by consensus," notes IPS, "dissenting voices such as those of the Vatican have derailed negotiations on issues relating to population, contraception, women's rights and reproductive health care."

According to Ms. Kissling, "the appropriate role for the Vatican is that of a NGO—the same as all the other NGOs representing Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Bahais and other religious organisations." The coalition wants UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and ultimately the UN General Assembly to conduct an official review of the place the Vatican occupies within the world's largest political body.

# WHY THE MORAL CRISIS

LAST October a writer in Loja, Ecuador, expressed appreciation for the ministry of Jehovah's Witnesses. Among other things, he observed:

"One of the worst scourges afflicting mankind is the moral crisis . . . It seems that people have forgotten to fulfill the Ten Commandments and have ignored their conscience, all of which precludes understanding among men. Everywhere and everyday, we hear about hate, violence, crime, drug trafficking, terrorism, and lack of respect for human dignity. . . .

"Jehovah's Witnesses, with little fuss, perform their duty in a peaceful and calm way, visiting their neighbors from door to door, offering their two beautiful magazines, *The Watchtower* and *Awake!*, in which most interesting articles are published. The *Awake!* in particular covers a variety of interesting matters of undeniable scientific and cultural content. All of this is written with admirable clarity and accuracy."

Today's moral crisis is obvious, but as stated on page 4 of this magazine in the section "Why *Awake!* Is Published," *Awake!* "probes beneath the surface and points to the real meaning behind current events." The brochure *Does God Really Care About Us?* acknowledges the suffering humans have endured, but it does more. It shows why the moral crisis with its terrible consequences exists. More important, it reveals how relief will soon be realized.

