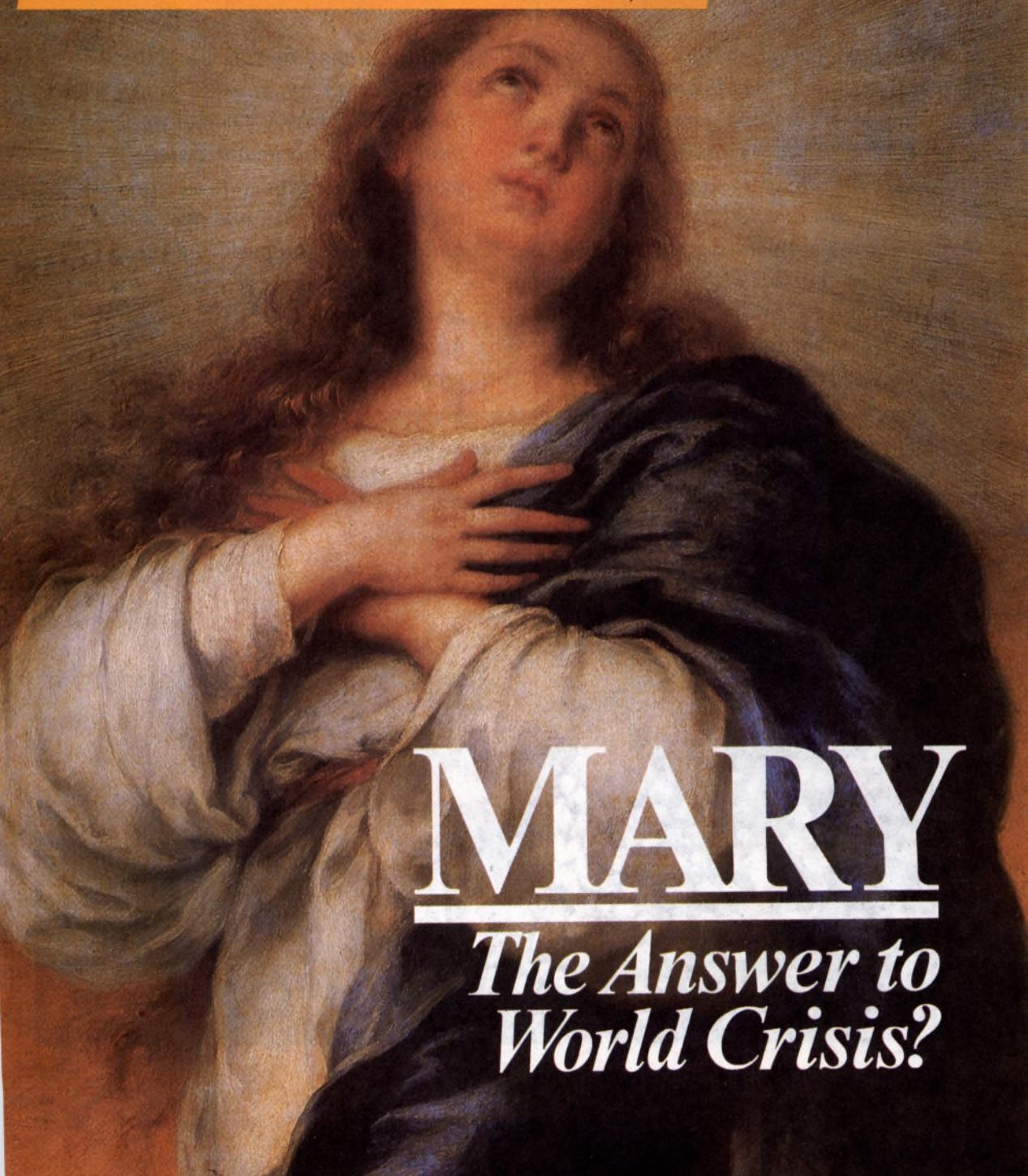


# **Awake!**

November 8, 1988



## **MARY**

*The Answer to  
World Crisis?*

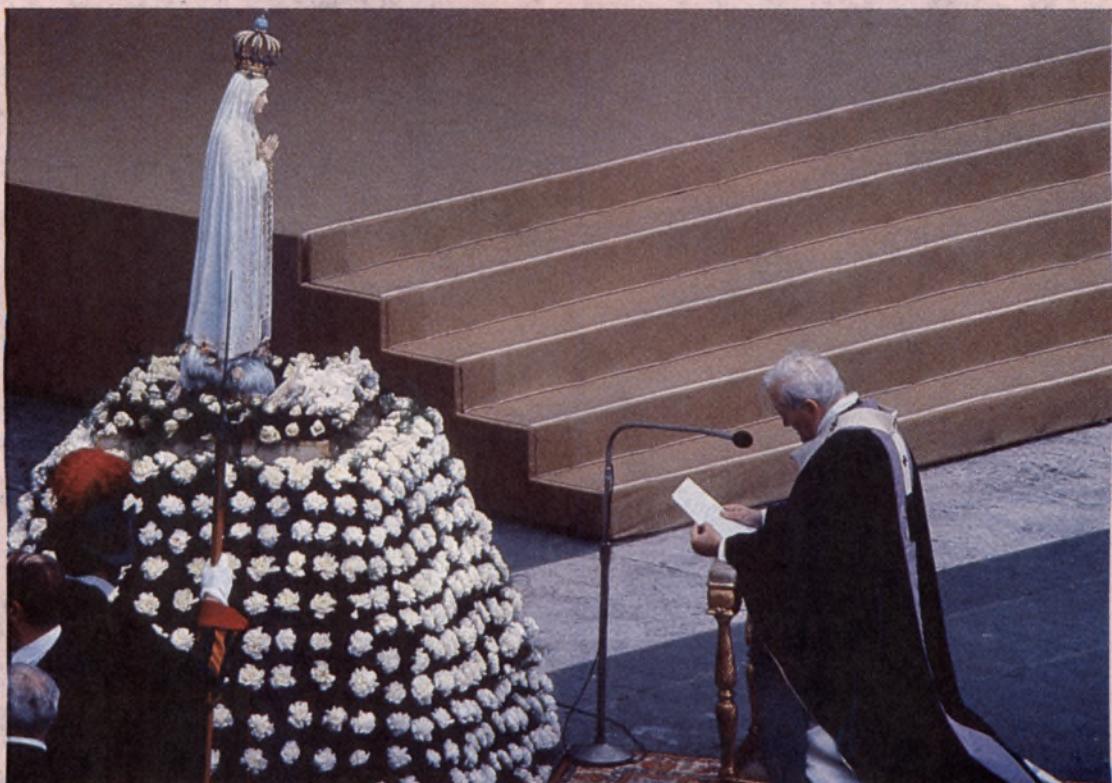
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*Rome, June 6, 1987. In the square in front of the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, the pope opened the "Marian Year" with the recital of the Rosary. There, at one of the most important sanctuaries devoted to Mary, he repeatedly pronounced the words of the Ave Maria (Hail Mary), the prayer that, according to a Catholic daily, is said "perhaps more often than Our Father."*

*The voices of thousands of the*

*faithful, linked by satellite with 16 other Marian sanctuaries, joined with the pope in prayer. Thanks to no fewer than 18 intercontinental satellites, scores of television cameras, and 95 television networks, one and a half billion viewers followed the event.*

*But what does Mary, the mother of Jesus, mean to you? Is a return to Mary the solution to the world's problems?*



# WHY PROCLAIM A “MARIAN YEAR”?

By *Awake!* correspondent in Italy

“THE Planet Rallied Around Mary,” “With Mary Towards the Year 2000,” “The World Prays Live,” ran the newspaper headlines commenting on the transmission in world television of the Rosary,\* one of the more traditional forms of Catholic worship. The voices of thousands of the faithful joined the pope’s voice in prayer. But why did so many people take part in this event? What made this recital of the Rosary so special? Why was ‘the world rallied around Mary’?

With this spectacular ceremony, John Paul II entrusted the whole of humanity to the “Madonna,” invoking her protection. So doing, he opened the Marian Year, a year he has dedicated to Mary.

As was expected, the event raised both agreement and

criticism. Traditionalist Catholics enthusiastically described it as a “sensational example of how modern technology can be used as a precious instrument in the service of an event related to the faith.” For others, both Catholics and non-Catholics, it was a useless waste of money, a “cosmic show” of doubtful taste. Many were disturbed by the fact that a religious event was sponsored by “a team of rampant advertising agencies,” for a total cost of about two million dollars. And Giancarlo Zizola, Vatican observer of *Il Giorno*, deplored the fact that a “multimillion-dollar Barnum-type television spectacle should be staged, reducing the Madonna to a supporting role for disposable razor blades, ballpoint pens, and tights, and for a religious idolatry that knows no limits.”

#### ***John Paul II—The “Madonna’s Pope”***

What moved Catholicism’s chief representative to proclaim a Marian Year? Various reasons, according to Vatican observers.

Some point out John Paul II’s “Marian fervor.” Many Catholics consider him to be the “Madonna’s pope.” He has even included, plainly visible, the letter “M,” the initial of Mary, on his episcopal emblem. As his motto he adopted the words of Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, a 17th-century Catholic mystic, fully consecrating himself to the “Madonna” with the words *Totus tuus* (All yours). He has demonstrated his ardent devotion to Mary while on his travels in Mexico, France, Germany, Poland, Brazil, Portugal, Spain, and other countries, by visiting the most famous sanctuaries dedicated to her.

\* A Catholic devotion, using rosary beads, “of meditation on usually five sacred mysteries during recitation of five decades of Hail Marys.”—Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary.

According to observers, therefore, the proclamation of a Marian Year is a further demonstration of the pope's fervid "Marian spirituality."

Also, for quite some time, in the more conservative Catholic spheres, there has been concern over the fact that Marian worship seems to have been obscured. In this century, triumphantly described by Pope Pius XII as "the era of Mary," the Catholic clergy have witnessed what they themselves term a "profound Marian crisis." They hope that the Marian Year will help to "rediscover Mary," so reviving her worship.

In the prayer composed for the opening of the Marian Year, John Paul II entrusted "the whole of humanity, with its hopes and fears," to Mary. He had done so on two previous occasions, as had other popes prior to him. Since the more fervid Marianists are convinced that the "present appalling crisis of faith" is also due to the crisis in Marian worship, they claim that if the world returns to Mary, some of mankind's greatest problems will be solved. "Christian living will replace the present materialism, there will be the conversion of the atheistic nations. And humanity will have peace," writes the Catholic periodical *Ecce Mater Tua*.

### **Mary and the Hope of a New World**

Finally, the pope hopes that under the "Madonna's" guidance it will be possible to prepare for the year 2000, the year to which Catholicism's leader attaches great importance. According to the church, preparation for this date is indispensable since, as the Catholic periodical *Verona fedele* states: "At the close of this century, humanity finds itself in its most tragic hour, but also in the most promising hour of its history. We have arrived at a crossroads: on the one hand, the very concrete possibility of self-destruction; on the other, the hope of a new era, of a new world.

. . . If we may use a Biblical term, we would like to say that we are 'in the last times,' that is, the times that conclude a long and painful episode in human history; but also the times that appear to open up another one, more serene and happy." It is therefore to favor a return to God in a moment considered crucial that the pope has entrusted the whole world to Mary.

But what has this period from June 7, 1987, to August 15, 1988, actually meant for Catholics? How was the Marian Year celebrated? What has been the reaction of other religious confessions to the Catholic Church's initiative?

#### **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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Cover: Courtesy of the El Prado Museum, Spain

# THE MARIAN YEAR DIFFERING VIEWPOINTS

*The Bible undeniably depicts Mary as a faithful disciple of Jesus. (Acts 1:14) As we examine the significance of the Marian Year, we certainly have no intention of belittling her reputation or her faithfulness. However, in view of the fact that the year dedicated to her is a religious event of great importance, it is only right for believers to ask themselves: Does God approve of the veneration given to Mary? And is Mary God's answer to the world's crisis?*

THIS Marian Year is the second to be celebrated by the Catholic Church. The first, from 1953 to 1954, was proclaimed by Pope Pius XII to celebrate the centenary of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. This was just a few years after the same pope had enunciated the teaching of the Assumption.\*

What some Catholics remember about the first Marian Year is the large number of new entrants into the priesthood. They evidently hope that this might be repeated, in view of the present vocational crisis. There is, in fact, much concern over the shortage of priests. According to Luigi Accattoli, expert in Vatican affairs for *Il Corriere della Sera*, it is calculated that of the 300,000 Catholic communities in the world, "more

\* According to a Catholic catechism, Mary was "preserved by the grace of God from every stain of sin from her conception onwards" (the dogma of the Immaculate Conception), and at the end of her earthly existence, she was taken up "body and soul" into heaven (the dogma of the Assumption).—*Signore, da chi andremo?—Il catechismo degli adulti* (Lord, to Whom Shall We Go?—Catechism for Adults).

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than half have no resident priest." It is therefore no coincidence that the faithful are exhorted to frequent the Marian sanctuaries, which have been defined as "places for the promotion of vocations." Will a Marian Year be enough to give new life to the dwindling numbers of the Catholic clergy?

### **Mary, Vocations, and Atheism**

Some remember the grandiose manifestations of devotion to the "Virgin" during the first Marian Year. On that occasion, even the armed forces of several nations were mobilized. At Loreto, Italy, home of a celebrated Marian sanctuary, there was an impressive parade of the Italian air force. Five hundred American marines went on a pilgrimage to Lourdes, France. In Ireland "the army units were consecrated to the Madonna, who for the occasion was proclaimed Marshal of the army," says *La Repubblica*.

Pope Pius XII, in giving the announcement of 1953, hoped that the Marian Year would contribute to opposing all those who "exert themselves in eradicating from the souls the faith in Christ" and would counteract their atheistic ideologies. "It is no exaggeration to say that the Marian Year of 1954," *Avvenire* affirms, "obtained authentic miracles of unexpected and longed-for conversions." Similarly, today, in Catholic circles, it is felt that renewed Marian fervor will serve to combat atheistic ideologies and the governments that propagate them.

*The New York Times* points out that John Paul II "has publicly stated his desire to visit the Soviet Union if he could preach freely there." And it is even hoped that 1988, "the year of the celebration of one thousand years of Christianity in Russia, will also be the year in which the Pope will

renew the explicit consecration [of that] Land . . . for its conversion," writes Catholic theologian René Laurentin in *Avvenire*.

### **Special Treatment for Mary**

Various enterprises were planned for the 14 months that ended on August 15, 1988, the last day of the Marian Year, all designed to 'honor the Mother of the Lord' and to revive her veneration after years of decline. The pope issued an encyclical expressly dedicated to Mary, and various conventions were planned in order to examine her importance.

Catholics received precise instructions as to the Marian Year. Among other things, they had to celebrate solemnly all the Marian festivities and make a pilgrimage to the churches dedicated to the "Madonna." They could also benefit from the "plenary indulgence"\*\* by devoutly participating in Marian holidays and liturgical festivities or by piously receiving the papal blessing imparted by the bishop, even by means of a radio or television broadcast. They were counseled that greater value should be attributed to the altar dedicated to Mary in each Catholic church.

### **Protestant Reaction and Catholic Dissent**

This Catholic initiative has been accepted positively by the Orthodox Churches, which also practice the veneration of Mary, but as was to be expected, there have been quite different reactions from Protestant religious groups.

The Catholic hierarchy, well aware of the fact that Mary continues to represent one of the points of disagreement with Protestants, has tried not to sharpen the

\* According to Catholic doctrine, all punishments that should be meted out in purgatory because of venial sins are canceled by means of the plenary indulgence.

contrasts, repeating that the Marian Year "will stimulate ecumenical dialogue." But the same Catholic sources recognize that the Marian Year has caused 'bitter reactions,' "a chorus of invectives," and "a storm of protest" among Protestants. According to the periodical *Vita pastorale*, this is why Catholic ecumenical groups are engaged in "curbing bigoted exuberance, in avoiding sickly sentimentalism, in reshaping the worship of the relics" of the "Madonna." Several Catholic periodicals insistently repeat that the Marian Year celebrants should 'keep in mind the new ecumenical awareness' and put to one side 'devotionalistic and anti-ecumenical aspects.'

For many Protestants, the Marian devotion and practices are idolatrous. Various Italian Protestant groups therefore

proposed the suspension of all ecumenical contacts with Catholics during the Marian Year, and the synod of the Waldenses and the Methodist Church issued a statement that severely criticized the papal initiative, calling it an "obstacle to true ecumenical confrontation."

Furthermore, not all the Catholic clergy are in agreement with the papal initiative. Catholic priest Franco Barbero caused a stir when he publicly declared that he never prayed to Mary. In his "Letter to Mary," Barbero states that she has been crushed "under a mountain of dogmas, relics, devotionalisms, legends, superstitions." The same priest has also stated that even "speaking of a 'year of Mary' could raise legitimate perplexities."

*Com-nuovi tempi*, a periodical published by progressive Catholics, said: "It seemed as though the Catholic Church's ecumenical openings [after the Second Vatican Council] were at least going to help in not repeating the old Marian religious practices that had few roots in common Christian origins. Unfortunately, the celebrations for this 'Marian' year will be against the interests of the revival . . . of an unalienated Christian faith."

Why, then, are church authorities and even the pope himself insisting on placing so much emphasis on the figure of Mary? Why is it that Catholic "people love Mary before loving Jesus," as "Mother" Teresa of Calcutta has said? In other words, why the cult of Mary?

## THE REASON FOR THE CULT

HISTORIANS admit that the early Christians neither worshiped nor venerated Mary or any other creature. Why, then, have so many Catholics become "Madonna

worshipers," as priest Franco Molinari has called them?

There are many reasons. Some of them stem directly from doctrines taught by the Catholic Church. For example, since the church teaches that Jesus is equal to God, this leaves no independent intermediary between man and God. God and Christ, surrounded by an aura of

Trinitarian mystery, are no longer approachable, and for this reason the role of "intermediary" between the Divinity and humankind has been delegated to the "Madonna." In certain Marian movements, mottoes such as "To Jesus through Mary" or "The Virgin, the link between us and Christ," are common. In the opening speech of the Marian Year, John Paul II said that people must "return to God by means of Mary."

Throughout history, God and Christ have often been represented as pitiless and inflexible judges. So it is not surprising, as theologian René Laurentin acknowledges, that some Catholics "have contrasted the vindictive justice of Christ with the mercy of his Mother: 'Jesus wants to condemn, Mary wants to save.'" "Even if we have committed many sins," writes a bishop, "the heavenly Mother will tenderly forgive us; if we are fearful of God's justice, we will certainly not fear the heart of the Mother." Evidently, "God does not give enough reassurance" for Catholics, concludes the Italian periodical *Panorama*.

Various councils and popes over the centuries have encouraged and continue to encourage the veneration of Mary and her images. Catholic theology uses various terms taken from the Greek in distinguishing the various grades of worship: *latraria* is the worship of God, *dulia* is the veneration of the saints, and *hyperdulia* the "special reverence" reserved for the "Madonna." In

harmony with these definitions, in his recent encyclical letter, John Paul II reaffirms that the "images of the Virgin have a place of honour in churches and houses" because she is worthy of "special reverence."

But is it not true that this "special reverence" has moved some theologians to consider her, as *Panorama* stated, "the fourth person of the Holy Trinity"? Is it not true that it has moved them to declare—as does a Marian catechism—that "her greatness borders on the infinite"?

In effect, therefore, the concept of Mary as a "perfect model of all virtues" serves to satisfy that which *Panorama* calls the "desire for security" of faithful Catholics, above all now in the midst of this generation's present anxieties. Should it surprise us, then, that some of the Catholic clergy have condemned the devotionalistic extremes of the faithful?

### The Madonna is venerated in different forms throughout the Catholic world



### A Guide for the Year 2000?

As has been said, according to the pope's intentions, the revival of the figure of Mary will help to prepare for the year 2000. In the face of the fears and the anxieties caused by the "symptoms of malaise that pervade this generation," the pope has placed his trust in the "Madonna" so that she may intercede with God and solve the world's problems. But does the Bible direct us to Mary for a solution to these "symptoms of malaise"? In whom should we really trust in order to witness the realization of the "hope of a new era, of a new world"?

# WHO REALLY HAS **THE SOLUTION** TO MANKIND'S PROBLEMS?

**M**OTHER of mankind"—this is how John Paul II has defined Mary in his recent encyclical letter, echoing the words of the Second Vatican Council. Many Catholics believe that Mary follows and assists every believer, helping them in every moment of their lives. For this reason, many of them earnestly invoke her protection. They are convinced that on many occasions the "Madonna" has directly intervened to change the course of human affairs.

According to the book *Un anno di grazia con Maria* (A Year of Grace With Mary), prayers are offered to Mary with the words: "Remember, O merciful Virgin Mary, that it has never been said in the world that those seeking your protection, imploring your help, and asking for your patronage, have ever been abandoned by you." It is noteworthy

that at least two of the Marian festivities on the "liturgical calendar"—those of the "Name of Mary" and of "Mary of the Rosary"—commemorate military victories that have been obtained, thanks to Mary's supposed intervention. Are we to assume, then, that Mary is nationalistic?

It is quite normal and understandable to seek the help and protection of someone able to assist us in solving our problems. But is it in harmony with God's will and the Bible to place one's trust in Mary, invoking her aid?

### ***Who Has the Solution?***

The anxieties and the fears of our generation are, as has been said, among the reasons for the pope's proclamation of a Marian Year. The Catholic Church hopes that with people's minds turned toward Mary, peace and harmony will return to mankind and that, a Catholic theologian writes, "in this way the real drama of this world will be solved."

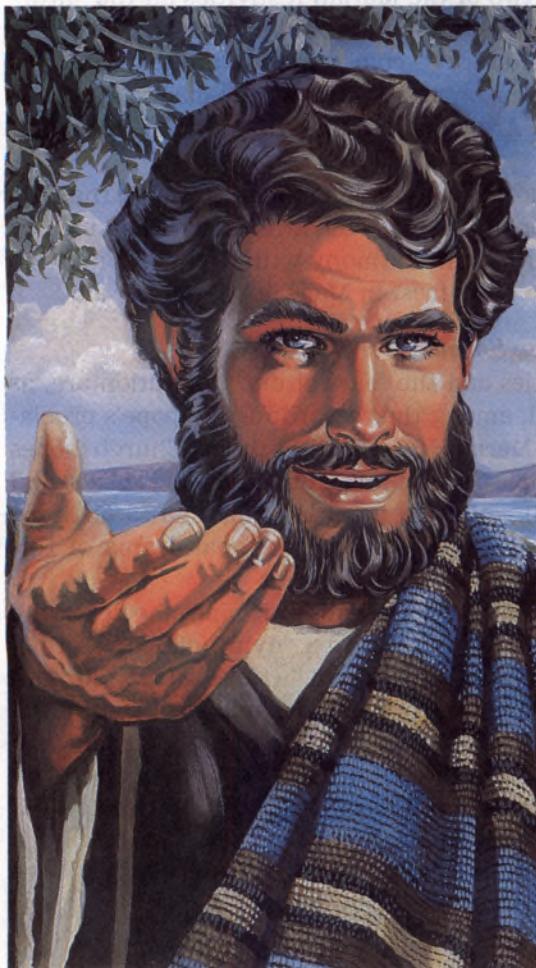
Even Jesus in one of his well-known prophecies spoke of a time when men would be "dying of fear as they await what menaces the world." (Luke 21:25, 26, *The Jerusalem Bible*) Historical proof indicates that Jesus was referring to our times. We are now living in "the last days." (2 Timothy 3:1-5, *JB*; Matthew, chapter 24; Luke, chapter 21) Is there a way out of this critical situation? In whom should we trust so as to find a solution to humanity's distressing problems? Should we place our trust in Mary?

## The True Solution

God has been very clear on the matter. In his Word, the Bible, he says that we should not trust in man or woman. (Psalm 49:6-9; 146:3) His exhortation to suffering ones is: "Trust in Jehovah, you people, for all times, for in Jah Jehovah is the Rock of times indefinite."—Isaiah 26:4.

But how will Jehovah God solve humanity's problems? By means of his government, his Kingdom in the hands of Christ Jesus. This is the Kingdom for which Jesus taught people to pray in the "Our Father"

### The Kingdom of God by Christ Jesus is the solution to mankind's problems



prayer. (Matthew 6:9, 10) Jesus had the Kingdom in mind when, speaking of the terrible conditions in "the last days," he said: "But as these things start to occur, raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because your deliverance is getting near."—Luke 21:28-32.

What will this Kingdom accomplish? Will there be a universal conversion of all peoples, as is hoped by some Catholic movements? No, the Bible is very clear on this point. Jesus indicated that not all will be saved, neither will there be a general conversion of people. He spoke of only one "road leading off into life" and said that "few" would find it.—Matthew 7:13, 14.

God's Kingdom will intervene to radically eliminate mankind's problems, such as wars, food shortages, sickness, crime, misrule, and pollution. (Psalm 46:9; 67:6; Proverbs 2:22; Isaiah 33:24; Daniel 2:44) Under that Kingdom rule, there will be an "abundance of peace." (Psalm 72:7) This is the divine solution for mankind's problems, and as the Bible says: "Blessed is the able-bodied man who puts his trust in Jehovah, and whose confidence Jehovah has become."—Jeremiah 17:7.

Not by placing our trust in a human creature such as Mary, no matter how faithful she might have been, can we hope to see the solution to our world's dramatic problems. It is essential that we place our trust in Jehovah, through Christ Jesus, and accept His way of putting things right. Happiness will only come about through God's Kingdom.

But what exactly is this Kingdom? How does it function? What tangible results has it already produced? You can find out by asking those who have brought you this magazine.

MANY, even in Catholic circles, have criticized the increase in the number of titles being attributed to Mary, and some fear that the present pope, after his recent encyclical letter, will define a new dogma on "Mary, mediatrix of all graces." Many Catholic scholars acknowledge that over the centuries, as the cult of Mary grew, her titles correspondingly increased. (See center column.)

However, in the book *La Vergine Maria* (The Virgin Mary), French theologian René Laurentin, considered to be the foremost expert on Mariology, affirms that during the whole of the second century C.E., Mary is virtually never mentioned and that in the ancient world, before the third century, there is no trace of festivities or prayers in her honor. Further, the various Catholic doctrines concerning her appeared rather late in history and have no Biblical foundation.

#### Examples:

The Church teaches that Mary is the **Theotokos** ("God-bearer," or "Mother of God"), a title given her only after the fourth century. It does not appear in the Bible.

The Church claims she was **always virgin**. While the Bible itself specifically

## Mary in the Church and in the Bible



From Ed Sibbett, Jr.'s *Cathedral Stained Glass Coloring Book*/Dover

### Some of Mary's Titles

*Mother of God  
Queen of Heaven  
Queen of Martyrs  
Queen of the World  
Queen of Mercy  
Queen of Angels  
Queen of Paradise  
Queen of the Universe  
Immaculate Queen  
Immaculate Mary  
Sovereign Princess  
Blessed Virgin  
Our Blessed Lady  
Blessed Virgin Queen*

states that Mary was "a virgin" before giving birth to Jesus, "virginity after childbirth is not indicated in the New Testament," writes Catholic theologian Laurentin. The Bible clearly indicates she had children by Joseph.—Luke 1:27; Matthew 13:53-56, *The Jerusalem Bible*.

As for the dogma of the **Immaculate Conception**, Laurentin points out that in ancient times there were "numerous [Church] Fathers who had no difficulty in finding . . . sins in the Mother of Jesus." During the 17th century, even the Roman Inquisition found this doctrine suspect. "The dogma of the immaculate conception of Mary was proclaimed *without any Biblical proof*," remarks Jesuit John McKenzie.

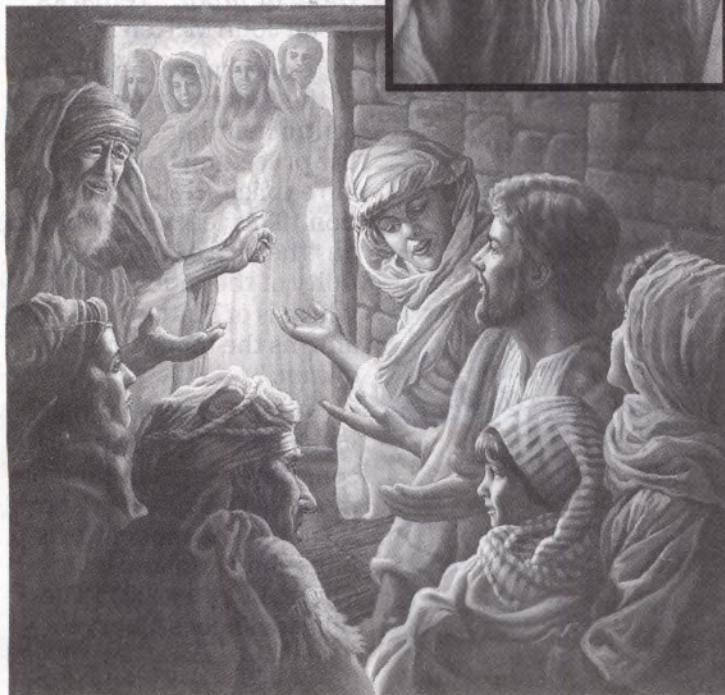
Concerning the dogma of the **Assumption**, Laurentin maintains that, like the preceding one, it has 'no explicit Biblical foundation.' This teaching is based on "the idea of the immortality of the rational soul, which is of Platonic origin," affirms the magazine *Concilium*.

But what is the Bible's viewpoint? Should Mary be considered an 'unattainable model'? The apostle Peter says that the model Christians should follow is Christ. (1 Peter 2:21) The Bible describes Mary as a

faithful woman, ready to listen to God, to put spiritual interests first. She appreciated moral cleanliness and was most scrupulous in teaching the Word of God to her children.—Luke 1: 26-38; 2:41, 42, 46-49; Acts 1:14.

However, she cannot be described as the “Mother of God” for the simple reason that Jesus was not “God the Son,” but “the Son of God.” The Trinity doctrine was no part of ancient Hebrew belief and is not taught in the Bible.—1 John 4:15; Luke 1:35; John 14:28; 1 Corinthians 11:3; 15: 27, 28.

**Jesus' mother and brothers came looking for him**



Is it correct to speak of Mary's perpetual virginity? The Bible makes mention of Jesus' “brothers” and “sisters.” (Matthew 13: 53-56) The Catholic Church claims they were his cousins. But Catholic writer Jean Gilles points out that the Christian Greek Scriptures use the same terms in referring to the brothers and sisters of other Bible



characters, such as Peter and Andrew, as well as Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, and that “they were real brothers and sisters. The Church has never presented them differently.” Why, then, should they be called Jesus’ cousins when the Scriptures speak of “brothers” and “sisters”?

Was Mary immaculate, or without sin, at the time of her conception? Theologians explain that this was possible because of her “advanced redemption.” In other words, the benefits of Christ’s ransom were applied to her in advance, even before Jesus was conceived and sacrificed. But this conflicts with the Bible teaching that “unless blood is poured out no forgiveness takes place.” (Hebrews 9:22) It is therefore incorrect to speak of an “advanced redemption.” (Romans 5:12; compare Luke 2:22-24 with Leviticus 12:1-8.) This dogma, concludes Laurentin, “is not Biblical.”

Was Mary taken up bodily into heaven? ‘The Scripture does not affirm the Assumption of Mary,’ says the *Nuovo dizionario di teologia*, and neither could it do so since it categorically states that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” —1 Corinthians 15:50, JB.

**I**T IS not easy to be handicapped and happy. Most persons burdened by physical impediments get depressed, at least from time to time. On such occasions they often ask themselves: "Why me?"

I was no exception. I was born with a severe physical impediment that prevents me from walking, standing up, or even using my hands. This circumstance understandably has had a marked effect on my personality. I still remember the jealousy and frustration I felt as a child when I watched other children running and jumping.

Sometimes I visited a nearby church to beg God's help. I would earnestly repeat 20 or 30 times

the prayer "Padre Nuestro" ("Our Father") and a similar number of "Ave Marias" ("Hail Marys"), interspersing among these entreaties the heartfelt plea, "Please Lord, cure me!" I promised God so much if only he would heal me.

### **The Seeds of Pride**

I was born in Granada, a beautiful city in southern Spain at the foot of the towering Sierra Nevada Mountains. As a young child, having a disability motivated me to develop other skills, and by the time I was seven, I was more advanced scholastically than others of my age. At that time I mixed quite normally with other children, playing with them and somehow moving around dexterously while seated on my

small chair. I even learned to draw and write left-footed by gripping a pencil between my toes.

On one occasion the local newspaper published an article about me, together with photographs showing me writing with my foot. This publicity resulted in my receiving numerous awards and trips, plus the admiration of others. All of this served to foster in me a vain and conceited spirit. Pride was taking over.

### **Effects of Enforced Isolation**

Before long I had to stop attending school. I was growing, and it became impossible for my mother to take me back and forth from our second-floor apartment. Thus, from the age of 13, I continued my education by means of a correspondence course. I found it easy to study and progressed well, but the enforced isolation affected me. Although perhaps outwardly I appeared cheerful and outgoing, I started meditating about my physical condition and its implications for the future.

In 1971, I won a scholarship to study for one year in a rehabilitation center run by Catholic nuns in Madrid. It was there that I learned to typewrite using a pen in my mouth, which has proved very useful. Of course, religion was an obligatory part of our weekly schedule. Every Sunday at 7:00 a.m. we assembled to attend Mass. Although the ritual seemed unnecessary to me, I attended faithfully, for I wanted to please the nuns who looked after me so well.

After a year in Madrid, I returned to Granada. Progressively I became more introverted, imprisoned as I was within the four walls of my home. For the most part, I spent my time reading novels and other books that I could get hold of. I also followed the trend of the time: I grew a beard

and let my hair grow long. But it was not a happy period of my life.

### **Asking for a Sign**

Often I was morose because of loneliness and a feeling of helplessness. I prayed to God, asking him for some sign that would demonstrate his existence and his concern for me.

Sure enough, God did provide a sign—but not the way I expected. It was toward the end of 1973. One of Jehovah's Witnesses called at our door, and as my mother was out shopping, I opened the door and listened to what he had to say. At the end of the conversation, he offered me the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*. I readily accepted it, for at that time I was willing to read anything. I read the entire publication that same afternoon. Its contents really surprised me, especially in regard to two Scriptural prohibitions: the use of images in worship and the misuse of blood.—Exodus 20:4, 5; Acts 15:28, 29.

The Witness returned a week later, and while he showed me what the Bible taught, I showed him how I could light a cigarette using only my feet! He offered me a free study of the Bible for six months. I immediately accepted without realizing that this was really the sign that I had been asking for.

I quickly assimilated a knowledge of the Bible. However, it was quite another thing to make the necessary changes in my life in order to be a real disciple of Christ. My biggest problem was my personality.

### **"Knowledge Puffs Up"**

A brief experience will illustrate my mentality. After I had studied the Bible for six months, a traveling minister of Jehovah's Witnesses visited me and asked me how I was progressing. "I'm doing great.

"I've already memorized 500 Bible texts," I replied with a smug smile of satisfaction. "Really, 500 Bible texts?" he repeated somewhat incredulously. "Yes, 500! Look, I have them all written down here in this notebook," I boasted.

Intrigued, he tried me out with Proverbs 18:1. Immediately I repeated the text word for word: "One isolating himself will seek his own selfish longing; against all practical wisdom he will break forth." He then asked me: "Are you applying this text? Do you meet regularly with your Christian brothers and sisters?" "Well, yes, I do," I said, for brothers in the congregation had kindly made practical arrangements so that I could attend the meetings.

After another couple of questions my visitor realized that I really had memorized all those texts. At the same time, he discerned that I was paying more attention to the acquisition of Bible knowledge than to the application of such knowledge in my life. He reminded me of the text at 1 Corinthians 8:1, "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." He helped me to see the need to change my personality.

In time I stopped smoking, improved my appearance, and eliminated reading material that was not upbuilding. Eighteen months after first being witnessed to, I got baptized in June 1975.

### **Overcoming My Pride**

Nevertheless, I still had not conquered my pride. My circumstances permitted me to study three or four hours every day, and I soon accumulated a vast store of Scriptural knowledge, which I was eager to demonstrate. Witnesses in the congregation to which I belong started to come to me with their Bible questions and even personal problems. I was only too happy to use my

ability to help others, but at times this too caused my vanity to be flattered.

In time my conceit became less evident. Every time I realized that I was displaying a proud spirit, I would pray to Jehovah, asking him to help me. I would especially ask for help in having the right motive: that of helping others with my knowledge rather than glorifying myself.

### **A Source of Real Happiness**

Witnessing to everyone with whom I came in contact became a source of real happiness. Sharing with others what I had learned not only produced an inner satisfaction but forced me out of the shell into which I had retreated and enabled me to mix with others and to be of help to some of them. I was especially delighted to help an elderly man who had problems similar to mine.

### **Preaching on the street with the help of another Witness**



I first met him when I was witnessing to a couple of men on the street. During our conversation I couldn't help but notice a man, walking with the aid of crutches, who passed from time to time. He stopped for a few moments each time he passed, as if he wanted to listen to what we were saying. Finally, he stopped in front of me and asked: "Is it true, all this about a global Flood?" I replied in the affirmative and went on to explain its meaning for us today. In time I was able to study the Bible with him.

Despite his age and his physical problems, he made progress and applied the Bible in his life. He was baptized at the age of 80. His wife, who at first ridiculed him, was baptized at the age of 85.

Being able to aid those who have impediments or who need help in other ways makes it easier for me to forget about my difficulties. In all, I have been able to help ten different people to get to know the truth of God's Word. This has been a real source of encouragement to me.

### **My Pride Has Taken a Fall**

Most important, I have discovered that a physical disability does not preclude the finding of happiness in life. Getting to know the Creator has helped me to be realistic and face up to my impediments, including my pride. I try to live a normal life as far as possible. I can now provide for myself economically, which gives me great satisfaction. I enjoy serving as an elder in the local congregation, and I try to have an active share in preaching the good news of the Kingdom. (Mark 13:10) Without a doubt, being able to help others is what furnishes me my greatest happiness. At the same time, I have learned to seek Jehovah's glory, not my own.—Luke 17:10.—*As told by José Martín Pérez.*

# Portugal

## 26 Years Later



View of the Watch Tower Society's branch office and factory in Alcabideche, Portugal

**Y**OU have 30 days to leave the country." With that ultimatum, in 1962 my wife and I were forced to leave Portugal, our missionary assignment.

Along with four other missionaries, we were being expelled for being Jehovah's Witnesses and for being neutral on issues of war and politics. My 19-year-old Bible student, João Gonçalves Mateus, was the first Portuguese Witness to take a firm stand on neutrality. The chief of the secret police quoted João's name to me and told me that such conscientious objection was a luxury that Portugal would not tolerate. I lost track of João when we left Portugal.

Back then, Portugal was a Catholic-Fascist dictatorship, struggling with rebellion in its African colonies. The spirit of the people was oppressed and stifled. Distrust reigned everywhere because of the paid-informer system, whereby you could be denounced to the infamous secret police—a *PIDE* (*Polícia Interna*)

not able to be held responsible for children  
because all of us are born  
innocent and should therefore not be held  
responsible now. This has been the view of

*cional e Defesa do Estado*), as they were called in Portuguese.

So we were expelled, and Jehovah's Witnesses became a banned religion until 1974 when an army-sponsored revolution overthrew the Fascist regime, and democracy and religious freedom were introduced. In December of that year, the Witnesses were legalized, and soon they had organized a branch office in Estoril, a few miles along the coast from Lisbon. But with the fast expansion of the work, it became too small. In 1983 land was bought for a new Watch Tower branch, or "Bethel" ("House of God," in Hebrew) complex. A beautiful new building was constructed by the Witnesses in the little town of Alcabideche.

Situated on a hill, Bethel commands a view all the way down to Lisbon and the famous suspension bridge over the Tagus River, which leads to the imposing *Cristo Rei* (Christ King) statue. In another direction the view takes in Estoril and the coastline.

We, along with many other former mission-



Secret Bible meeting in woods near Lisbon in 1961

Forty-five thousand attended a special program at the Restelo soccer stadium, Lisbon



aries, were invited to attend the dedication program in April 1988. When my wife and I arrived at the police control at Lisbon airport, I could not help but wonder if we would be challenged. Would they check the old blacklist that prevented us from reentering 26 years ago? No problem at all. The PIDE had disappeared, and we discovered a new Portugal—the people were more open, smiling, and communicative. And instead of the 1,000 Witnesses that we left in 1962, there are now more than 33,000, a ratio of 1 Witness for every 297 people, one of the best in Europe!

We went to the Restelo (Belem) soccer stadium for the afternoon lecture given by a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, Milton Henschel, through the Portuguese translator Mario Pinto Oliveira. What a satisfaction for my wife—she had been Mario's English teacher over 26 years ago. As we climbed the hill to the stadium there was an amazing sight—more than 45,000 Portuguese Witnesses and their friends flocking to hear the program.

As the program ended, I saw a well-built Portuguese Witness in his 40's who obviously wanted to speak to me. "Irmão Erico (Brother Eric), do you not know me?" he asked. I con-

fessed I did not recognize him. Then with a closer look, I took off a few kilos of his weight and 26 years of life—it was Jôao Gonçalves Mateus! What a joyful reunion after so many years! He presented us to his wife and three daughters, a lovely family and all Jehovah's Witnesses.

We spent four happy days in Portugal, renewing old acquaintances and friendships. How encouraging to see faithful men and women who had endured over the years in spite of persecution. One was José Lança, a journalist in the days of our persecution, now a traveling overseer who visits the congregations. Another was António Cordeiro, the first pioneer minister in Portugal. Their joyful faces reflected Portugal's new spiritual prosperity, the result of decades of preaching faithfully the good news of God's Kingdom.

We visited the street where our secret Kingdom Hall apartment used to be, on the second floor of number 66, Calçada de Arroios. It was once again an apartment. But now there are over 440 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses meeting in legal Kingdom Halls all over the country. After 26 years' absence, we found that Portugal is certainly different—and far better for Jehovah's Witnesses.—Contributed.

## Is Knowledge of God for the Elite Few?

A JULY evening in 1987 saw a strange event at the Palais des Congrès in Paris, France. Inside the auditorium, laser lights swept the walls as deep, solemn electronic sounds, interspersed with a gong and peals from bells, filled the huge room. On stage two men attired in black masks gently rocked a hanging burner shaped like a boat, while colored smoke belched forth from the wings of the stage. At the same time, dozens of white-clad men and women appeared before the audience of 4,000.

The event? A rock concert? No, an initiation ceremony of the Rosicrucians, a movement devoted to esoteric or secret wisdom. However, for the novices of this world fraternal order, this ceremony was just the first step in a series of degrees of initiation.

In some ways the secret society of the Rosicrucians is similar to the Gnostic sects that flourished during the second century C.E. and were a rival of Christianity. The Gnostics believed that salvation comes through mystical knowledge and that such secret wisdom is bestowed upon only the select few. But is knowledge of God for the elite few? Is it restricted to a small group of initiated ones?

### Is Christianity a Secret Fraternity?

Some authors consider that to a certain extent Christianity is esoteric, or reserved for

the few. In his book *L'ésotérisme*, Luc Benoist, honorary curator of the Museum of France, wrote: "Other signs of a reserved teaching are found in Saint Paul's epistles: 'I gave you milk and not solid food. . . . Whoever lives on milk alone understands nothing of the discourses of Wisdom.' [Paraphrased from 1 Corinthians 3:2 and Hebrews 5:13] The texts of the early [Church] Fathers refer to 'a truth that no novice may contemplate.'"

**On stage two men attired in black masks gently rocked a hanging burner shaped like a boat**

Was the apostle Paul, though, writing about esoteric knowledge? No, the context of Paul's words shows that he was, in fact, upbraiding his Christian companions who were not new converts. Paul was writing to Christians who had not progressed spiritually and who "ought to be teachers" of other people "in view of the time" that they had been in the faith. —Hebrews 5:12.

Thus, Paul was not referring to truths he wished to keep secret but to explanations he wished to share with them, yet that were beyond their spiritual comprehension because they had not advanced in Scriptural knowl-

edge as they should have done. We could compare Paul's situation among those certain Christians to a mathematics teacher who expects her students to progress. If the students failed to do their homework properly and therefore did not fully grasp simple addition and multiplication principles, the teacher would be hard-pressed to help them fathom algebraic equations.

### **Knowledge Open to All**

Admittedly, Bible knowledge is not static. With time and effort it is possible to obtain a better grasp of the truth and a deeper understanding of spiritual things. Moreover, the Bible shows that Jehovah has progressively revealed his purposes to his servants, but it never mentions any "hidden truths" that would be accessible to some and hidden from other sincere seekers of truth living in the same period. (Psalm 147:19, 20; Proverbs 2:1-11; 4:18; Isaiah 45:19) This was true not only when God was dealing with the nation of Israel but also when his Son, Jesus Christ, was laying the foundation for Christianity.

During his three-and-a-half-year ministry, Jesus covered a large part of the territory of Israel. Did he do this in a clandestine way or visit solely a closed group of the initiated? No. He preached his message publicly, often before crowds. Shortly before his death, when interrogated by the Jewish religious authorities about his manner of teaching, he explained: "I have spoken to the world publicly. I always taught in a synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret."—John 18:20.

Did you note that Jesus' message is addressed to a vastly greater audience than just Palestine? It is directed to the whole *world!* Jesus did not say: 'I have spoken the word to all people,' that is, to all Jews. Instead, being prophetic, he selected the specific word for

"world."<sup>\*</sup> Thus, Jesus preached no esoteric doctrine; it was for everyone, everywhere.

True, Jesus used figurative language, especially when teaching by parables, or illustrations. But this method merely enabled him to make a selection among his hearers. Those who were not truly interested in Jesus' teaching just listened to his parables and went off without looking deeper into the matter. Those thirsting for knowledge stayed on for further explanation. Thus, knowledge was within reach of all sincerely seeking it.—Matthew 13:13, 34-36.

The fact that Christianity is open to all is evident from the tone sounded in the rest of the Scriptures too. For example, one of the last verses of the Bible contains God's invitation to 'come and take life's water free.' And it states specifically: "And let anyone thirsting come; let anyone that wishes take life's water free." So, again, Bible knowledge was to be made available to all.—Revelation 22:17; compare Isaiah 55:1.

Although knowledge of God is open to all, effort is nevertheless required to obtain it. The Bible encourages us to "keep seeking for it as for silver, and as for hid treasures . . . keep searching for it." (Proverbs 2:4) Consequently, knowledge must be acquired from God's Word, the Bible, and then wisdom will become evident when its principles and commandments are put into practice.

Is the effort worth while? Yes, for such wisdom brings "goodwill from Jehovah" and can lead to everlasting life. What a treasure! Have you personally begun searching for this all-important knowledge?—Proverbs 8:34-36; Psalm 119:105.

\* Jesus did not use the phrase (*pant-i' toi la-o'i*) "to all the people," that is, all who assembled or all of the same race; but (*toi ko'smoi*) "to the world," that is, the human race, mankind. Interestingly, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* states about John 18:20: "It is noteworthy that the strongest repudiation in the Gospels of cryptic or esoteric teaching in the words of Jesus is found in Jn [John]."

# Young People Ask...



## How Can I Overcome Feelings of Racial Prejudice?

**R**esearchers in Sydney, Australia, submitted questionnaires to a multiracial group of children, 9-13 years old, allowing them to express their feelings toward people of other races. Though some white Australian children expressed prejudice toward minorities, "children from all ethnic groups revealed themselves as prejudiced towards other ethnic groups as Australian children were, and often more so." —"The Journal of Psychology."

**Y**OUNG people are not immune to racial prejudice. "In my school," says 17-year-old Lucy, "most of the white children eat in one lunchroom and all of the blacks in another."

Just what are *your* feelings toward people of other races? While you may know at heart that prejudice is foolish, unfair, and obsolete, you may still have somewhat mixed feelings. As researchers Jane Norman and Myron W. Harris, Ph.D., observed: "The vast majority of... white and nonwhite teenagers agree that they do not want to be prejudiced. But they are wary and often distrustful of each other. They are also aware that friends and parents

may be hostile if they develop close contacts across racial lines." Similar racial tensions exist in many lands.

Feelings of unease around members of other races can also afflict Christian youths who have been taught that prejudice is wrong. They may live in areas where exposure to other races is limited or where racial tensions run high. Where, though, do feelings of racial bias originate?

### ***The Workings of Racial Prejudice***

To be prejudiced means to prejudge. One who is racially prejudiced thus judges others without a trial. He concludes that any member of a certain race automatically has certain undesirable habits, traits, or attitudes. He nurtures this bias even in the face of facts that clearly contradict his notions. He may, for example, believe that all members of a certain group are 'lazy' or 'unintelligent.' When confronted with someone of that group who is industrious—or even brilliant—he concludes that such a person must be an "exception." Sadly, he is blind to individual qualities.

Prejudice, though, is not inborn. *The Encyclopedia of Human Behavior* says: "Observations made the world over have shown that children play indiscriminately

with members of other ethnic groups, and are either unaware of obvious physical differences or accept them as a matter of course." Continues the encyclopedia: "Prejudices are . . . wholly due to *learning*, and are acquired primarily through interaction with other people." Parents, teachers, and peers appear to be instrumental in passing on racial bias. At times, unpleasant encounters with members of another race work to reinforce this prejudice.

Many of us, therefore, have unwittingly picked up attitudes and views that are prejudicial. And it often takes some real soul-searching for one honestly to face his feelings in this regard. For example, you may have friends of other races. But do you make disparaging, racially oriented remarks behind their backs? When conversing with these friends, do you keep the issue of race to the fore, perhaps by always harping on racial differences or by making tasteless, belittling jokes? Observes the book *The Nature of Prejudice*: "Even when jokes seem friendly they can sometimes mask genuine hostility." Furthermore, do you feel awkward and uncomfortable being seen in public with friends of another race? Do you automatically assume that members of another race possess certain talents—or flaws?

"I get so angry with myself for having such feelings," lamented one youth who honestly faced his prejudices, "but somehow I do not seem to be able to quench them."

#### **God's View of Race**

Acknowledging the problem, though, is a big step toward tackling it. It also helps to understand how God views the different races. Consider, for example, a situation that developed back in the first century.

Lingering racial tension between Jews and Gentiles afflicted the Christian congregation. On one occasion the apostle Peter yielded to peer pressure and "went withdrawing and separating himself" from Gentile Christians, refusing even to eat with them! When the apostle Paul learned of this, he did not sympathize with Peter. Rather, he "resisted him face to face, because he stood condemned." Racial prejudice was not to be tolerated among Christians! In the words of Paul, "God does not go by a man's outward appearance."—Galatians 2:6, 11-14.

Acts 10:34, 35 adds that "God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." True, a certain race may have different skin color, facial features, or hair texture from your own. But since God "made out of one man every nation of men," the amazing variety among the races is the work of God! (Acts 17:26) Furthermore, God does not condemn all the

#### ***Is the Black Race Cursed?***

*Some have attempted to justify their prejudice by claiming that God cursed the black race. However, no such curse is recorded in the Bible. True, Genesis 9:25 says: "Cursed be Canaan. Let him become the lowest slave to his brothers." However, that oft-cited verse says nothing whatsoever about skin color. Besides, the black race evidently descended from a brother of Canaan named Cush. (Genesis 10:6, 7; see the footnote in the "New World Translation Reference Bible" for Isaiah 43:3, where the name Cush is used to refer to the African country of Ethiopia.) Canaan's descendants were evidently light-skinned—not black.*

foods, music, styles of dress, speech, and decorum that vary from race to race. Thus, when the apostle Paul worked among non-Jews, he did not look with contempt upon their habits, though many were no doubt contrary to his Jewish upbringing. Says Paul: "To those without law [non-Jews] I became as without law [showing respect for their customs]."—1 Corinthians 9:21.

A person who harbors hatred or scorn for people of different races, therefore, simply could not be pleasing to God!

### ***Overcoming the Feelings***

Still, purging oneself of long-held feelings is not easy. Talking matters over with a close friend or parent may help. It may also help to follow the Bible's counsel to "widen out" in your dealings with others. (2 Corinthians 6:12, 13) If possible, do not limit your association to individuals of your own race, culture, and social standing. Says *The Encyclopedia of Human Behavior*: "Association and communication enable individuals to know and appreciate each other, and frequently change their attitudes toward one another."

A young man named Chris, who lived in a predominantly white town, found this to

be true. "I wasn't raised to be prejudiced," says Chris. "But when I got into secondary school, I used to get picked on by black kids all the time. I developed the feeling that they were all troublemakers. I grew to fear them. And since the part of town they lived in was quite run-down, I concluded that blacks must all be lazy."

Chris, though, began studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Learning God's view of the matter, his own view toward blacks began to soften. Later Chris began serving at the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York, and was assigned to a racially mixed congregation. "I was face-to-face with the problem now. But I began visiting their homes and eating with them." The effect of this exposure was healthy. "I came to realize that they're just the same as everybody else."

Yes, within the Christian congregation are individuals "of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." (Revelation 7:9) Get to know some of them. Observe how, in spite of their differing backgrounds, they manage to work unitedly in a way that pleases God. Stop viewing people as members of groups; come to know them as *individuals*, 'letting each one prove what his own work is.' (Galatians 6:4) Be yourself and apply the golden rule: "Always treat others as you would like them to treat you." (Matthew 7:12, *The Jerusalem Bible*) If feelings of superiority well up within you, prayerfully try to apply the Bible's counsel to 'consider that the others are superior to you.'—Philippians 2:3.

Of course, your negative views did not develop overnight, and they will likely not disappear overnight. But with time and diligent effort, along with perseverance, feelings of prejudice can be overcome.

## ***In Our Next Issue***

- Battered Wives—A Look Behind Closed Doors
- Greek Church Blocks Free Assembly!
- The Socinians—Why Did They Reject the Trinity?



Patio de los Leones, the Alhambra palace, Granada

# Moorish Spain A Remarkable Legacy

By Awake! correspondent in Spain

**S**PAIN—land of flamenco, Moorish castles, and proud caballeros—is host to a yearly influx of more than 40 million tourists. From all parts of Europe and beyond they come, not only to enjoy the peninsula's innumerable sun-drenched beaches but also to soak up Spanish culture.

When listening to the haunting music of flamenco, admiring the Andalusian stallions in local fiestas, or surveying the views from a Moorish embattlement, discerning visitors perceive something different in Spanish culture. Their senses have not deceived them. They have been captivated by the sights and sounds of *Moorish Spain*.

Expelled from Spain some 500 years ago, the Moors left behind a lasting heritage still observed in the buildings, the music, and even the animals of Spain. But who exactly were the Moors? How did they come to influence Spain to such a large extent? What happened to them?

## **The Moors—Where Did They Come From?**

The seventh and eighth centuries were a time of enormous political and religious upheavals in the Middle East and in the Mediterranean region. During the hundred years that followed the death of the



**Intricate Moorish  
ornamentation in the  
Alhambra  
palace, Granada**

### **The Golden Age of Córdoba**

Known in Arabic as *al-Andalus*, which is the origin of "Andalusia," Spain was ruled at first from Damascus, but in the tenth century it became independent when the emir of Córdoba pronounced himself caliph, or head of state. It was at this time that the Moorish caliphate reached its zenith and Córdoba, in

southern Spain, became a thriving metropolis, rivaling Damascus as a center of Islamic culture.

With the possible exception of Constantinople, tenth-century Córdoba, with some 500,000 inhabitants, was the most populous city of Europe. As the capital of Islamic Spain, it enjoyed enormous revenues, largely derived from agriculture, trade, and industry, all of which flourished under the Umayyad ruling dynasty.

The university was a celebrated center of learning, and the city boasted a public library containing 400,000 volumes. Twenty-seven free schools were provided to teach poor children, and there was a high standard of literacy among both girls and boys. Young noblemen from Christendom's feudal kingdoms to the north received their education at the Moorish courts, and wealthy women from France sent to Córdoba for their most elegant attire.

prophet Muhammad in 632 C.E., his ardent followers created an Islamic empire that stretched from the Indus River in the East to the Pyrenees in the west. Spain itself was invaded in 711 C.E. and was gradually conquered by Muslim armies composed of Berbers, or North African tribesmen, and Arabs who later formed the ruling class. The invaders are generally called "Moors," irrespective of their country of origin.\*

This vast Muslim empire, equaling its Roman counterpart in extent, was religious as well as political. Although the Islamic conquerors usually did not propagate their religion by force, the new faith gradually won over not only the pagans but most of those claiming to be Christian in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as many in Spain.

\* The term "Moor" comes from the Latin word *Maurus*, which referred to the people who inhabited northwestern Africa.

An ornamented dome ceiling in the Mosque (*Mezquita*) of Córdoba

The huge influx of wealth was also reflected in the general appearance of the city, described by a contemporary German nun as "the world's ornament." The streets were paved and lighted. Gardens, waterfalls, and ornamental lakes adorned the city, while an aqueduct brought fresh water in abundance to supply the fountains and public baths, which numbered as many as 700 according to one Muslim chronicler. Scattered throughout the city stood sumptuous palaces, one of which, Al-Zahra, on the outskirts of Córdoba, took 25 years and the toil of 10,000 workers to complete. Its ruins still testify to its grandeur.

Also during the tenth century, the Great Mosque of Córdoba was finally completed. Professing to preserve the arm of Muhammad, it became an important center for



Muslim pilgrims. One source says: "It was second in holiness only to Mecca and . . . a visit to it absolved the faithful from the obligation to make the Arabian pilgrimage." Visitors today still marvel at its magnificent forest of marble columns (there are about 850) and ornate arches. It has been described as the "most beautiful Moslem temple in the world."

However, the golden age of Córdoba was to be short-lived. Early in the eleventh century, the Umayyad dynasty came to an end, and there began a series of assassinations, uprisings, and feuds. Soon Moorish Spain disintegrated into 23 city-states or *taifas*, which over the following centuries were gradually absorbed by the feudal kingdoms of Spanish Christendom from the north.



Some of the more than 800 marble columns in the Mosque of Córdoba

Granada, the last Moorish kingdom, was conquered in 1492, and the Moors were expelled from the peninsula.

But the impact of Moorish culture was to remain. Even the language of Spain still reflects a marked Moorish influence; scholars calculate that 8 percent of modern Spanish words are derived from Arabic. Visitors can hear Spaniards unwittingly invoke Allah, using the common idiomatic expression, "ojalá," which originally was *wa-sa Alláh*, or "would to Allah."

### ***Islam—'Transmission Belt for Technology'***

The Moorish occupation of Spain was to have enduring consequences for the rest of Europe as well. Especially during the period when Christendom's kingdoms in northern Spain were gradually incorporating the Muslim states to the south, Moorish Spain served as an intermediary between East and West, facilitating the diffusion of Oriental culture, science, and technology throughout Europe and beyond. (See box, page 27.)

Explaining this process, the *Encyclopædia Britannica* states: "The importance of Islám lay in the Arab assimilation of the scientific and technological achievements of Hellenic civilization, to which it made significant additions, and the whole became available to the West through the Moors in Spain.

"Islám also provided a transmission belt for some of the technology of the ancient civilizations of East and South Asia, especially those of India and China."

The considerable impact of Moorish culture on Western Europe can readily be seen by the many words from diverse fields in English (and other European languages) that are derived from Arabic: algebra, zero,

alcohol, alkali, lemon, orange, sugar, adobe, alcove, tariff, magazine, jar, mattress, sofa.

Islamic scholars literally heeded the admonition of their prophet, "Look for wisdom, albeit found in China." Some of the new technology did indeed come from China.

### ***Toledo's School of Translators***

At first all this knowledge circulated in Arabic, a language unknown to most European scholars. But this linguistic barrier was soon overcome. The recovery of Toledo from the Moors by Catholic King Alfonso VI of León in 1085 was crucial in this respect.

By the following century a school of translators had been established in Toledo, and gradually the vast majority of Islamic works were translated into Latin and later into other European languages. Because of the labors of these translators, Arabic works such as Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine* became standard textbooks, sometimes for centuries, in many European universities.

### ***The Moorish Legacy Remains***

The Moorish legacy can still be seen in modern Spain. Passed on to each succeeding generation, Moorish architecture, science, and technology influenced Spanish builders, farmers, and scientists alike. Moorish music was later incorporated in flamenco, and Moorish craftsmanship also survived and can be readily discerned in many a souvenir that entices the modern-day tourist. Meanwhile, many of its imposing castles still stand vigil as mute witnesses of a grandeur that is no more.

So it is that, wherever the tourist may wander, the sights and sounds of modern Spain may well be the echoes of this by-gone civilization whose glory has passed but whose legacy to Spain and, indeed, to the world is remarkable.

## The Arabs—A Bridge Between East and West

**Silk and Paper.** When the Arabs conquered a large part of Asia Minor, they found that the silk-making process had already been developed there on a limited scale because of previous contact with China. It subsequently spread throughout the Islamic world, by the ninth century probably reaching Spain, which became the first European country to make silk.

Even more important was the discovery of how to produce paper. Reportedly, a Chinese prisoner captured by the Arabs taught them the art of making paper from rags. Manufactured in Damascus by the end of the eighth century, it swiftly replaced papyrus throughout the Islamic empire. Before long, it was being produced in Spain, and thanks to this new process, there was a great increase in book production in Córdoba and other Spanish cities.

The technology spread from Spain to other parts of Europe, and indeed the use of paper facilitated the development of the printing press in the 15th century.

Other Oriental innovations such as the windmill and the use of gunpowder also found their way into Europe, apparently by means of this Islamic "transmission belt."

**Agriculture.** The efficient Moorish system of irrigation canals is still in use in many parts of Spain, watering orange and lemon groves first planted by Arab horticulturists. Under the direction of the Moors, rice, sugarcane, pomegranates, cotton, bananas, oranges, lemons, dates, and figs were cultivated. Many of these crops would later be taken to the Americas by Spanish and Portuguese settlers.

The leisurely ox was replaced by the mule, the ass, and the horse. North African horses were crossed with the Iberian steeds to produce what has been called the oldest recorded breed in the world, the magnificent Andalusian.

**Medicine.** The hospital of Córdoba was a renowned medical school, the first of its kind in Europe, and its surgeons enjoyed international repute. Surgical instruments were surprisingly similar to ones in use today. Wine, hashish, and other drugs were reportedly used as anesthetics.

Much emphasis was given to curative medicine and the use of herbal remedies. In Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine*, a medical encyclopedia of the 11th century, we find the following sound advice: "Experience shows that nursing at the mother's breast is an important protective factor against diseases."

**Astronomy, Geography, and Mathematics.** A notable geographical and astronomical work, written by al-Idrisi who studied in Córdoba, appeared in the 12th century. Entitled "Roger's Book," it divided the known world into climatic zones and included some 70 detailed maps that have been termed "the crowning achievement of medieval cartography." Like most Islamic scholars, al-Idrisi took for granted that the earth was spherical.

Another Moor, a citizen of Toledo, published astronomical tables and invented what is known as the universal astrolabe (a device for determining latitude), the forerunner of the sextant. These advances, together with the adoption of the triangular sail used for generations by Arab dhows, were to be important contributions to the great voyages of discovery in the 15th century.

Our numerical system also owes much to Islamic mathematicians who, by the eighth century, were employing what are today known as Arabic numerals, together with the zero and the decimal point, all of which were a considerable improvement on the former Roman system of numerals by letters ( $I=1$ ,  $V=5$ ,  $X=10$ ,  $L=50$ ,  $C=100$ ,  $M=1,000$ ). As an example, compare MCMLXXXVIII with the Arabic-based system—1988!

# From Our Readers

## Apartheid

If your organisation loves people so much, why do you not condemn apartheid for what it is? (June 22, 1988) Cruel! It is up to every Christian who openly says they have God in their heart to condemn apartheid. I suggest that your organisation openly and publicly condemns apartheid and all other oppression in the world!

S. C., England

*Most of our readers perceived, correctly, that we abhor racial oppression, but we expressed it with the dignity that is in keeping with the standards of "Awake!"—ED.*

I find no fault with [the article on apartheid], but I feel that you infer that the Jehovah's Witnesses Church is the only one to encourage this mixing of the races. One photo is captioned "The racial harmony among Jehovah's Witnesses in South Africa attracts many to the Kingdom message." I do not argue with this statement, only pointing out that so does the harmony among the Methodist Churches that try to meet the Black and make him welcome.

D. H. K., England

*Certainly we agree that there are some individual local churches that may have improved race relations, but apparently that is not typical of the overall situation, as admitted by the Methodist and Congregationalist clergymen quoted on page 6 of the article. Over the years Jehovah's Witnesses throughout South Africa and worldwide have consistently and quietly established an unequaled record on race relations without rancorous political debate or illegal confrontations with government.—ED.*

## Time

As a business executive, I have long been interested in time management. Your article "Time—Are You Its Master or Its Slave?" (December 8, 1987) succeeded in presenting within the space of four pages better, more practical, and easily understood advice than I have ever received at seminars or from textbooks.

W. K., Federal Republic of Germany

That article fit like a glove on my needs. When I saw the picture on page 26, I identified perfectly with the image of a disorganized person trying to do several jobs at once. I read the article several times, marking the main points that applied to me. I put the suggestions into practice and was happy to see that at the end of Monday, I had handled six of the ten jobs I had listed. What I liked was the open manner of handling the subject—no fixed rules but just suggestions full of empathy, such as: 'Be flexible, try them, adapt them, see which ones work for you.'

D. C., Brazil

## Twins

Your article on twins (April 22, 1988) really helped me to understand the differences between my daughters. They are delightful little girls of such total unalikeness it was staggering (one fair-skinned and blue-eyed, one dark-skinned and brown-eyed). They are being raised as separate persons, yet they have a bond that is unbelievable. One would cry for a bottle and refuse it, yet quit her "ba-ba" as soon as her twin received a bottle. I've heard of these things with identical twins but never with fraternal. Thank you.

R. L. R., United States

# Watching the World

## Trillion-Dollar Military

Despite promising smiles and handshakes for global disarmament by the superpowers this year, military spending worldwide is approaching the one-trillion-dollar mark. "Between 1960 and 1980, world expenditures for military purposes almost doubled in real terms—today estimated at in excess of \$900 billion a year," states the *UN Chronicle*. The report predicts that if present trends in the arms race continue, the trillion-dollar figure will soon be reached. The arms merchants must continue to rejoice.

## Crack Use and AIDS

"Health experts are becoming increasingly concerned that crack use in poor neighborhoods may be accelerating the spread of AIDS among heterosexuals," reports *The New York Times*. How so? "Both male and female users of crack often experience extremely exaggerated sexual desires and diminished inhibitions during crack binges," leading to sex with strangers, previously avoided sexual practices, and exchanging sex for drugs. The result has been a sharp rise in syphilis cases, and those "infected with syphilis are more likely to spread or contract AIDS." Many of the men who frequent the crack houses (similar to the old-time opium dens) have

used drugs intravenously and are infected with the AIDS-causing HIV virus. "The logical chain goes crack, syphilis, HIV," says New York City Health Commissioner Dr. Stephen C. Joseph. "There are now some very strong indications that crack and other forms of cocaine are a driving issue in HIV transmission."

## Youths and Credit Cards

Credit cards have become the latest teenage fad and are now



"the youth status symbol," reports *The Sun-Herald* newspaper of Australia. A January study showed that 50 percent of Year 10 students in one school and as many as 80 percent in another school had a credit card. A few had auxiliary cards to their parents' credit cards, with limits as high as A\$10,000! At the same time, consumer debt exceeded A\$23.4 billion—the equivalent of \$1,500 for every man, woman, and child—mostly from unpaid credit-card bills. Unable to handle the financial difficulties re-

sulting from overspending, increasing numbers of Australian youths are filing for bankruptcy. In 1987 young people between 18 and 25 made up 16.8 percent of voluntary bankruptcies, and the figure is expected to be much higher this year. Said one official: "The problem is on the same level as alcohol, road deaths and tobacco abuse among youngsters."

## Babies Born Drunk

In Ireland pediatricians and nurses are seeing numbers of babies born "blind drunk." The Addiction Research Foundation newspaper, *The Journal*, reports that "the drunken babies must spend the first few days of their lives in intensive care units suffering from the effects of overindulgence." Excessive alcohol in the baby's system is due, in part, to the traditional practice by overdue mothers of indulging in large doses of alcohol as a means of inducing labor. These newborns suffer from hangovers, and some nurses say they "actually smell drink" on a few of the babies. But, as one doctor said, the nutritious diet of most Irish mothers does afford the babies some protection.

## World's Oldest Population

According to a computer projection, Japan may have the world's oldest population by the

year 2020. Japan's 1985 census showed that the number of Japanese 65 years old or older was around 12.5 million, accounting for about one in ten of the population. The average life span in that year was 74.9 years for men, 80.6 years for women. However, the computer projection, conducted by the Population Research Institute of Tokyo's Nihon University, estimates that by the year 2020, 31.5 million Japanese will be senior citizens, or about one in four of the population. It has also been calculated that the average age would increase to 78 years for men and 83.6 years for women by the year 2025.

### Deadly Sexual Addiction

Sexual addiction is a "chronic illness" that is often misdiagnosed in the treatment of drug-dependent patients, reports the Addiction Research Foundation newspaper, *The Journal*. One doctor, who is also a founder of a cocaine hot line in the United States, claims that "up to 15% of his cocaine-addicted patients are also sexual addicts." Sexual addiction includes compulsive behavior at various levels, from compulsive masturbation to sexual fetishes, to sadomasochistic practices, and to compulsive heterosexual and homosexual encounters. *The Journal* continues: "It is the compulsive behavior that is a major factor in the spread of AIDS"—the disease of almost certain death.

### Pope Bemoans Lack of Faith

On his recent visit to Austria, Pope John Paul II gave "a more critical analysis of faith in Austria" in his discourse to the bishops than in his sermons to the public. According to the Austrian newspaper

*Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, the pope stated that "it is a result of affluence and religious indifference that secularization has advanced to such a degree in the life of the individual, within the family and, most of all, in public life." Austria needs a "new evangelizing campaign," said the pope.

### "Sick-Building Syndrome"

"Office work . . . has never been regarded as particularly hazardous . . . but it may not be particularly healthy either," says *Time* magazine. "Despite bright, well-scrubbed appearances, many of today's workplaces are awash with noxious pollutants." The problem is indoor air pollution, or "sick-building syndrome," affecting "an



estimated one-fifth to one-third of U.S. buildings." It can cause such symptoms as watery eyes, stuffy heads, headaches, nosebleeds, workers' falling asleep, and "that just-plain-lousy feeling." Poor ventilation in buildings where most or all of the air is recirculated or where design flaws have placed air-intake ducts over polluted areas is usually the cause. Additionally, there are the chemical irritants that come from cleaning solvents, carbonless paper, copier-machine liquids, and even from paints, draperies, rugs, and wall paneling. "Pollutants in the indoor environment can cause a serious health risk," says Eileen Claussen of the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

"The air in some office buildings is 100 times as polluted as the air outside."

### Fighting Back

In the city of León, Mexico, scorpions are stinging more than 100,000 persons annually, reports *The Mexico City News*—the highest rate in the world. About 60 billion pesos are spent each year to care for the victims of scorpion stings. Within the last five years, nine deaths have been attributed to the scorpion's sting among victims who failed to use antiscorpion-sting serum. According to Manuel Dahesa Damiela of the University of Guanajuato, León is known as the "scorpion capital of the world." A scorpion's sting injects deadly toxins into humans. Why the rise in scorpion attacks? The accelerated growth in León's population is thought to be the reason for the increase.

### Illegitimacy in Vogue?

"So many children are now born out of wedlock in Europe," observes Britain's *Economist*, "that in some countries babies born to married couples may soon be in the minority." The reason? "A change in the moral climate is a big part of the explanation," says the magazine. Since premarital sex has become more acceptable in today's society, illegitimate children have also. Unwed mothers no longer carry a social stigma as in past generations. Thus, in Sweden, Denmark, and Iceland, almost half the babies are born out of wedlock. In Norway, Austria, France, and Britain, it is one in four or five. And even in the deeply religious country of Ireland, more than one baby out of ten is illegitimate.

# Can You Cry Out Joyfully?

Can you see the generosity and thoughtfulness of a loving Creator in our natural environment? Though clouds, trees, rivers, and mountains are here for reasons other than just their pleasing beauty, is it not noteworthy that they were, nevertheless, made so satisfactorily attractive to the eye? And who does not enjoy the peaceful, relaxing—yet invigorating—effect of a stroll in such surroundings? When you add to that the blessings of fresh air to breathe, the fragrance of flowers, and the songs of birds, it is not hard to agree with the declaration: “Because of the works of your hands I cry out joyfully. How great your works are, O Jehovah!”—Psalm 92:4, 5.

True, because of mankind’s selfishness and imperfection, many today are unable to enjoy all these blessings. But the time is near when God’s Kingdom government will satisfy the needs of every living creature.—Psalm 104; Luke 21:7-36.

