

Awake!

December 8, 1994

Material Prosperity The Key to a Happy World?



MATERIAL PROSPERITY The Key to a Happy World? 3-9

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the answer to the
world's problems?
If not, what is?



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The Pursuit of Material Prosperity

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN TAIWAN

MONEY can't buy happiness? Even though most people more or less agree with that statement, many of them are still relentlessly pursuing material riches as a way to a happier life. And why not? After all, it seems that the solution to so many of mankind's problems lies in material success and prosperity.

Just imagine what a different world it would be if every man, woman, and child enjoyed a materially prosperous life! Gone would be the indignities and the sufferings of the millions who live in the world's slums and ghettos. Gone, too, would be the problem of homelessness now plaguing every nation, rich and poor.

And what about good health, so vital to happiness? Though medical science is moving ahead by leaps and bounds, more and more people are finding out that they can ill afford its services. On the other hand, hunger and malnutrition are still the daily experience of millions. If prosperity prevailed worldwide, everyone would have the opportunity to live healthier, and thus happier, lives—would they not?

Even the earth itself would benefit. How? The earth's environment is now being ruined

by deadly pollutants, caused partly by the burning of fossil fuels. Yet, one reason cited for not pursuing the technology needed to utilize cleaner forms of energy is that it is too expensive. The destruction of the rain forests, another serious ecological threat, is also blamed largely on economic factors.

Since material prosperity could seemingly solve so many of our problems and alleviate so much suffering, it is no wonder that people have long associated wealth with happiness. For example, whereas Westerners customarily greet one another with a "Happy New Year!" on New Year's Day, the Chinese, during the lunar New Year, traditionally say "*Kung hsi fa tsai*" to one another, wishing that they will "strike it rich!" Yes, there is no denying that we live in a world in which people give the pursuit of material prosperity a very high, if not the highest, priority. Success or failure is often measured with a material yardstick.

While the acquisition and enjoyment of material things is not necessarily wrong in itself, can it guarantee happiness? How much importance should be attached to it? Is material prosperity really the key to a better world?



Can Material Prosperity Guarantee Happiness?

"OUT of about 50 students in our school, only 1 or 2 wore shoes," recalls 45-year-old Poching, who grew up in southern Taiwan during the 1950's. "We couldn't afford them. However, we never considered ourselves poor. We had all we needed."

That was some 40 years ago. Since then, life has changed dramatically for Poching and the rest of the 20 million inhabitants of that island. As the book *Facts and Figures —The Republic of China on Taiwan* explains, "Taiwan [was] transformed from an agricultural society into a vibrant industrial society." By the late 1970's, Taiwan was regarded as "a stable, prosperous society."

Indeed, evidence of prosperity is seen everywhere in Taiwan. From the ultramodern high-rise office complexes that have

mushroomed up across the island to the highways crowded with expensive imported automobiles, the material prosperity of Taiwan is the envy of other developing nations. The *China Post*, Taiwan's leading English-language newspaper, boasts that today "the people of Taiwan enjoy the highest living standard in Chinese history."

'Multitude of Thorny Problems'

Has all this material prosperity brought the people true happiness and satisfaction? While there is no doubt much that the people of Taiwan are proud of, there is another side to this success story. *China Post* goes on to point out: "With this high degree of affluence have come a multitude of complicated and thorny problems." Taiwan's material prosperity has not come without a price.

Regarding the "complicated and thorny

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problems" that are besetting this once relatively crime-free island, *China Post* observes: "In recent years crime and disorder have increased alarmingly in our affluent society, posing a growing threat to the lives and property of all law-abiding citizens." In an article entitled "Wealth Makes Taiwan a Land of Lust," the *Post* decries the problems of burgeoning "girlie restaurants and bars" and of illegal houses of prostitution operating under the guise of barbershops. Extortion and kidnapping with the intent to collect a ransom have become another problem. One report speaks of the kidnapping of children as

"Taiwan's new boom industry." Many resort to such crimes as a means to pay off gambling debts or other financial losses.

Children are not simply innocent victims of crime. They are increasingly involved in committing crimes. Reports show that in 1989 alone, the number of crimes committed by juveniles jumped 30 percent. Some trace this increase to the breakdown of the family, and statistics seem to support this. For example, from 1977 to 1987, the number of Taiwanese couples who married decreased, but the divorce rate more than doubled. Since Chinese culture traditionally emphasizes the



Material affluence turned small towns into bustling, neon-lit cities

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importance of the family in a stable society, it is no wonder that many are very concerned about the worsening conditions.

Root of the Problem

Various explanations have been offered in an effort to determine the reason for the deterioration of social order in the midst of a prosperous society. Some people, being

**"When one is well fed
and warm, one's thoughts
turn to excesses and
fleshly desires."**

Chinese saying

rather philosophical, say that it is just the price of success. But putting the blame on success or prosperity is like blaming food for gluttony. Not all who eat are gluttons, nor is everyone who is prosperous materialistic or a criminal. No, material prosperity does not in itself cause crime and social disorder.

An editorial in the *China Post* pointed to a major contributing factor. It said: "We have, over the decades, *laid too great an emphasis on material development*. This is responsible for the decline of moral and spiritual values in our society today." (Italics ours.) Yes, over-emphasizing the pursuit of material things leads to a spirit of materialism and greed. It promotes self-centeredness. It is just such a spirit that leads to family breakdown and a proliferation of social ills. What the Bible said 2,000 years ago is still true: "The love of money [not money itself] is a root of all sorts of injurious things."—1 Timothy 6:10.

A Worldwide Problem

In search of peace and quiet—and safety—thousands have emigrated from Taiwan to other countries. But the problems Taiwan is

experiencing are not unique to Taiwan. They are rampant worldwide.

Some years ago a study showed that the wealthiest county in California, U.S.A., had the highest divorce rate in the country. About 90 percent of all real-estate transactions in some areas of the county were the result of broken marriages. Twice as many suicides as the national average were reported. The rate of alcoholism was one of the highest in the country, and there were said to be more psychiatrists and other mental therapists in the county per capita than anywhere else in the United States.

Jesus Christ pointed out a fundamental truth when he said: "Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every utterance coming forth through Jehovah's mouth." (Matthew 4:4) Material possessions, no matter how abundant, cannot satisfy a person's every need, nor can they guarantee happiness. On the contrary, it is often as a Chinese saying puts it: "When one is well fed and warm, one's thoughts turn to excesses and fleshly desires." This is demonstrated by what is taking place in Taiwan and elsewhere—material prosperity alone often turns out to be the prelude to moral and social decay and its attendant problems.

What, then, is needed so that material prosperity can be a part of real and lasting happiness? For an answer, please read the following article.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Can Our Atmosphere Be Saved?

**Caring for Victims of
Rwanda's Tragedy**

The Catholic Church in Africa

HAPPINESS *Guaranteed!*

HAPPY are those conscious of their spiritual need," said Jesus Christ.

(Matthew 5:3) Contrary to conventional wisdom, Jesus pointed to the fulfilling of one's spiritual need rather than the satisfying of material desires as the one essential ingredient for success in the pursuit of happiness. Those words of Jesus, if followed, amount to a guarantee of happiness.

Being conscious of one's spiritual need, however, means more than simply being aware that such exists. More often than not, a need unfulfilled is a source of anxiety and resentment rather than of happiness. The Bible proverb puts it this way: "Expectation postponed is making the heart sick." (Proverbs 13:12) Thus, happiness blossoms as one takes steps to identify and then to satisfy one's spiritual need. How can this be done?

This is where the Bible comes in. Why? Because it alone can provide answers to questions that many have long contemplated without finding satisfying answers. For example, have you ever wondered, "What is the purpose of life? Why is man on the earth? What does the future hold?" Besides providing satisfying answers to these and many other questions, the Bible also supplies guidance for living that has helped millions to cope with the complex problems that confront all of us today and that often impede our search for happiness. "[God's] word is a lamp to my foot, and a light to my roadway," says the psalmist. (Psalm 119:105) Yes, the Bible is a sure guide that can help you succeed in the pursuit of

happiness. Consider these two real-life examples.

From Resentment to Marital Happiness

Marriage can be a source of happiness or of misery. Sadly, for many it is the latter. However, the Bible's counsel, when applied, has helped many to find happiness in a once unhappy marriage.

Yungk'un and Meihsiu had such an experience. "The first seven years of our marriage were not happy ones," confides Yungk'un. "I spent very little time with my wife and two daughters. In fact, I often slept at my place of work." Although having all they needed materially, they were not happy. His wife adds: "Aside from providing for us materially, my husband left all family matters in my care. I really resented it." They even thought of separating.

Yungk'un had other family problems as well. Because of previous family difficulties, he had not spoken to his sister for seven years. This in spite of the fact that they lived less than a hundred yards from each other. Now, however, he enjoys a happy marriage and a fine relationship with his sister. Why the big change?

"My wife and I began studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and attending their weekly Bible meetings," explains Yungk'un. His sister did the same. They began to apply the things they were learning and were amazed at the results. Yungk'un obtained employment that allowed him to care for not



only the material needs of his family but also their spiritual and emotional needs. They now enjoy a happy, united family life.

She Found a Purpose in Life

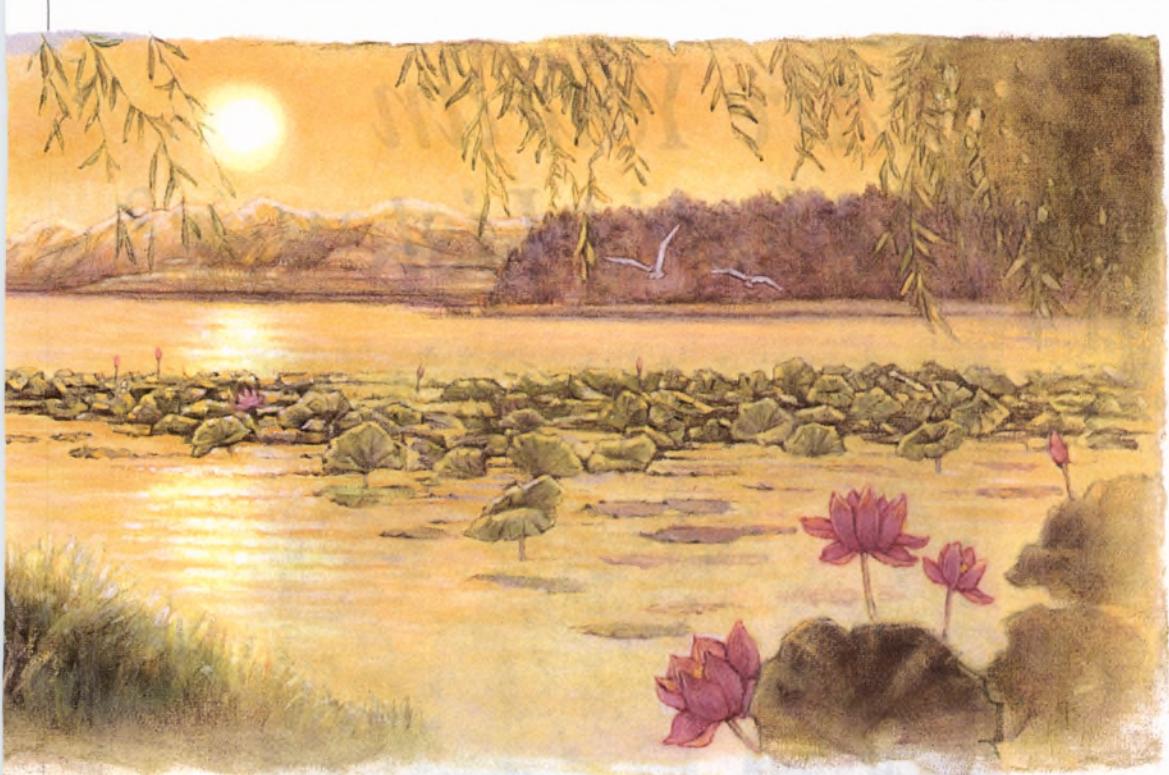
Those who study human nature have said that to be happy we need a reason for living, a purpose in life. A life centered on the selfish pursuit of material things does not satisfy this need. Twenty-six-year-old Lini found this to be true.

"I used to work 12 hours a day, seven days a week," she says. "My goal was to open a large beauty salon." Even though she was close to realizing her dream, she felt something was missing in her life. "I used to wonder about the purpose of life. Was it just to work and make money?"

Then one day someone came into her shop and asked her the very question she had won-

dered about. She was told that the Bible could answer that question. Although she had never read the Bible before, she agreed to set aside one hour each week to examine it.

From her weekly study, Lini learned that the Bible had foretold many of the things she was witnessing every day. She was amazed at how accurately the Bible had described ahead of time the attitudes that existed all around her, foretelling that men would be "lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God." She studied other prophecies that point to the unprecedented suffering



Our Creator purposes to establish an earthly paradise

caused by wars, famines, and natural disasters that are seen around the world.—2 Timothy 3:1-5; Matthew 24:7, 12.

Lini then learned something that made her very happy—these world conditions that often rob people of happiness are an indication that a new era in human history is near. (Matthew 24:3-14) She also read in the Bible that the Creator of mankind purposes to establish a new world here on earth, where material prosperity such as imperfect man has never known will prevail worldwide. (Psalm 72:16; Isaiah 65:17, 18, 21, 22) This future prosperous society will not be marred by the

existence of greed, selfishness, and materialism, with all their evil consequences. (Psalm 37:9-11, 29; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10) She was thrilled when she read these words in the Bible: “There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell.”—2 Peter 3:13.

Happiness Awaits You

Rather than spending all her time in the pursuit of material goals, Lini now spends much of her time telling others about the things she has learned. Would you like to know more about these wonderful promises? Would you like to discover how the Bible can help you to find the happiness that Lini, Yungk'un, Meihsiu, and millions of others have found? Jehovah's Witnesses would be most willing to assist you.

Are You an Empathetic Listener?



IMAGINE that you had the means to give every person in your life an expensive gift. How happy and appreciative they would be! Actually, you *can* give others a special gift, something they really need. It won't cost you a cent. What is it?

Your attention. Most people want attention and respond appreciatively when they receive it. To give quality attention, however, you must be an empathetic listener.

If you are a parent or an employer or serve in any capacity in which people come to you for advice and direction, you need to listen empathetically. If you don't, people will detect your lack of empathy, and your credibility will suffer.

Even if you are not frequently called on for advice, you still need to listen to people empathetically, such as when a friend comes to you for comfort. As a Bible proverb states, failing to listen before speaking can result in humiliation. (Proverbs 18:13) What, then, are some of the ways in which you can show yourself to be an empathetic listener?

Be Absorbed

What is an empathetic listener? *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* defines "empathy": "The capacity for participation in another's feelings or ideas." The same dictionary defines "listen": "To hear with thoughtful attention." So an empathetic listener does more than hear what someone says. He pays attention and shares in that one's thoughts and feelings.

This requires being absorbed in what you are hearing, not allowing your mind to wander. Even thinking of how you will reply detracts from listening. Discipline yourself to stay focused on what the other person is saying.

Look directly at the person speaking to you. If your eyes wander, you will appear uninterested. Observe his gestures and body language. Is he smiling or frowning? Do his eyes reflect humor, sadness, or apprehension? Is what he leaves unsaid significant? Don't worry about your reply; it will come as a by-product of your focused listening.

While listening, you will likely nod your head and use expressions of affirmation, such as 'I see' and 'I understand.' This can show that you are following along. However, don't

think that head nodding and affirmations will make people think that you are listening when you really are not. In fact, continuous rapid nodding of the head can betray impatience. It is as if you are saying, 'Hurry up. Get on with it. Finish.'

In any case, you need not be overly concerned about the mechanics. Just make your listening genuine, and your responses will reflect your sincerity.

Good questions also show that you are absorbed and following along. They show you are interested. Ask for clarification of points that are unsaid or unclear. Ask questions that invite the other person to elaborate and express himself further. Don't worry that you may interrupt occasionally, but don't overdo it. Getting things clear is part of the listening process. If interrupting is not overdone, the other person will appreciate your desire to comprehend fully all that he is saying.

Show Understanding

This can be the hardest part, even if you truly feel for the person talking to you. When someone distressed comes to you, do you jump in with optimistic suggestions and solutions? Do you quickly point out that the situation is not so bad when compared with the suffering of someone else? This might seem helpful, but it can have a negative effect.

There are a number of reasons why you might be inclined to stop listening and start solving. You might think that your enthusiastic suggestions are just what is needed to lift the sufferer's spirits. Or you could feel that it is your duty to "fix" whatever is "wrong" and that if you don't, you are not being helpful or are not "doing your job."

An early barrage of solutions, however, usually sends out discouraging messages, such as, 'I perceive your problem to be much simpler than you claim it is.' Or, 'I

am more interested in my own reputation as a problem-solver than in your well-being.' Or, perhaps, 'I just don't understand—and I don't want to.' Comparing a sufferer's problem with those of others usually communicates, 'You should be ashamed of yourself for feeling troubled when other people are suffering more than you.'

If you unwittingly send out such discouraging messages, your friend will feel that you didn't really hear him, that he isn't getting through. He may even conclude that you think you are superior to him. Next time, he will turn to someone else for comfort.—Philippians 2:3, 4.

What if your friend is troubled unnecessarily? For example, he may feel guilty without valid cause. Should you hurry to tell him that so that he can start feeling good? No, because if you have not listened to him first, your reassurances will be of little comfort. Rather than feel relieved, he will feel that he has still not unburdened himself, that he still carries his guilt. As 19th-century philosopher Henry David Thoreau put it, "it takes two to tell the truth: one to say it and another to hear it."

How appropriate the Bible's direction: "Be swift about hearing, slow about speaking." (James 1:19) And it is also very important to listen with empathy! Participate in the feelings of the one confiding in you. Acknowledge the difficulty of his problem, the depth of his distress. Do not minimize his problem with statements like, 'Oh, you're just having a hard day' or, 'Things aren't really that bad.' Ironically, such minimizing may even intensify his troubled feelings. He will be frustrated because you are not taking his message seriously. So let your responses show that you hear what is said and that you accept that this is how he feels about things for now.

Empathetic listening does not require that you agree with the person confiding in you.

You may believe that a person is unjustified in exclaiming, "I hate my job!" But if you react with disapproval ('You shouldn't feel that way') or denial ('You don't really mean that'), he will conclude that you do not understand. Your comments should reflect your understanding. To the person who hates his job, you might say, 'It must be stressful.' Then ask for clarifying details. Thus you are not necessarily agreeing that he should hate his job but simply acknowledging that this is how he presently feels. You thereby give him the satisfaction of having been heard, of having fully communicated his feelings. Often, sharing the problem may lessen it.

Similarly, the person who says, "My wife is having a checkup today," could mean, "I'm worried." Let your response acknowledge this. It shows that you listened to the meaning behind his words, which is more comforting than if you ignored his meaning, denied it, or tried to adjust him by telling him that he shouldn't worry.—Romans 12:15.

Good Listeners Talk Too!

The Art of Conversation speaks of those who listen but speak very little, "thinking that it gives them an air of dignified reserve." This compels the other person to bear the entire burden of conversation, which is rude. On the other hand, it is also rude, and wearying, if the person you are listening to continues to talk nonstop without allowing you to express yourself. So, while you need to be a good listener, you may also want to let the other person know that you have something helpful to say.

What might you say? Having respectfully listened to your friend's expressions, should you now give advice? If you are qualified to give it, perhaps. If you have a solution to your friend's problem, by all means share it with him. Your words will carry some weight, since you invested time listening first.

If you do not have the necessary credentials to give your friend the kind of direction or help that he needs, try to put him in touch with someone who is in a position to give it.

In some cases, however, advice is neither needed nor requested. So beware of weakening the good effect of your listening by adding a lot of words. Your friend may simply have to endure an uncontrollable situation or take time to work through his negative feelings. He came to you to share his trouble. You listened. You shared his feelings, assured him that you are concerned and that you will keep him in your thoughts and prayers. Let him know that he is free to come to you again and that you will respect the confidential nature of his problems. He may

well need such comfort more than having you try to fix his problem.—Proverbs 10:19; 17:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:14.

Whether listening is accompanied by advice or not, it benefits both parties involved. The one speaking has the satisfaction of being heard and understood. He is comforted in knowing someone cares enough to hear him out. The listener is rewarded too. Others appreciate his concern. If he gives advice, it is all the more credible because he does not speak until he has fully comprehended the situation brought to him. It is true that empathetic listening takes time. But what a worthwhile investment! Indeed, by giving people your thoughtful attention, you give them a special gift.

Megacities Slowly Suffocating

AROUND the world megacities, urban giants, are growing, attracting millions who are in search of work, housing, and the conveniences of city life. But the price is high. Even the act of drawing a breath in these sprawling cities is becoming ever more hazardous to human health.

A recent report from UNEP (United Nations Environment Program) and the World Health Organization shows that air pollution in 20 of the world's biggest cities has been getting drastically worse. "In some cases," says *Our Planet*, a magazine published in Kenya by UNEP, "the air pollution is as bad as the infamous London smogs of 40 years ago." The inhabitants of Mexico City are the hardest hit in this respect, but the tens of millions of people living in such cities as Bangkok, Beijing, Cairo, and São Paulo are not much better off.

How dangerous is the air in such cities? Well, high levels of the major pollutants, such as sulfur dioxide, carbon monox-

ide, and lead, are dangerous in a number of ways. Their effects on the body are wide-ranging: respiratory and cardiovascular problems, neurological damage, and even bone marrow, liver, and kidney trouble.

What is causing the pollution? The largest single cause in these cities, according to *Our Planet*, is the motor vehicle. Since the present number of vehicles in the world—630 million—"is expected to double within the next 20-30 years, mostly in urban areas," the future for city air looks dark indeed. To make matters worse, few preventive measures have been taken, since, as the report notes, in most megacities "there is little awareness of the severity of the problem." Not surprisingly, then, *Our Planet* urges that such cities give high priority to measures aimed at clearing the air. If this is not done, the future is ominous. According to the journal's assessment, "these cities face slow suffocation as their air condition continues to worsen."

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

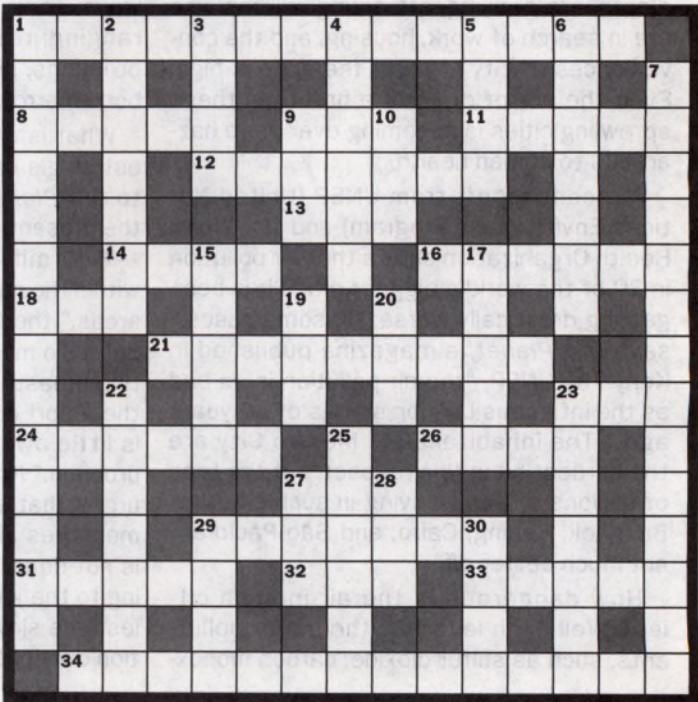
Clues Across

1. Opening words of the Bible [3 words] (Genesis 1:1)
8. Relatively free of liquid (Isaiah 38:21)
9. The temporary repository for the two stone tablets of the Law (Deuteronomy 10:1-5)
11. Pilate wrote one in three languages and placed it upon the torture stake of Jesus (John 19:19, 20)
12. The sixth precious stone in the foundation of the wall of New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:20)
13. Commands and teachings for worship should not originate from this source (Colossians 2:22)
14. To the extent of (Revelation 2:10)
16. An Israelite who assisted Nehemiah with rebuilding Jerusalem's wall (Nehemiah 3:24)
18. What will happen even to "the very name of the wicked ones" (Proverbs 10:7)
21. In using this term, Paul was not speaking derogatorily but simply referring to one who is not a Greek (See Romans 1:14.)
23. To scrape or beat as with a hoof (Malachi 4:2)
24. Statements of fact (See Psalm 119: 151.)
26. Totally destroyed by Alexander, this city was later rebuilt and became a prominent Mediterranean port in the first century (Acts 21:3)
27. Peaceful conditions during the Messiah's reign are represented by amicable relations between this animal and a bear (Isaiah 11:7)
29. In Jesus' illustration this type of man built his house on sand (Matthew 7:26)
31. Jesus ate a meal in the home of a man afflicted in this way and may have cured him (Mark 14:3)
32. The number denoting the fullness of the period of testing that God allows his servants to undergo (Revelation 2:10)
33. The relationship of Uzziel to Moses and Aaron (Leviticus 10:4)
34. Term for some of the unclean animals that Peter saw in vision [2 words] (Acts 10:12)

Clues Down

1. The type of life Jesus is said to have, in reference to his being a priest like Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:16)
2. The ram that Abraham offered in sacrifice in place of his son was found here (Genesis 22:13)
3. Terminates (Job 26:10)
4. King Ahab wanted to turn Naboth's vineyard into one (1 Kings 21:2)
5. One of the gifts brought to Joseph in Egypt by his brothers (Genesis 43:11)
6. The good news must be preached in all of these as a witness (Matthew 24:14)
7. Because of doing this, John was exiled to the penal isle of Patmos [2 words] (Revelation 1:9)
9. Breaking this represents shattering one's might (Psalm 10:15)
10. Relative (See Ruth 3:2.)
15. King Rezin of Syria wrested this city from Judah so that it could be reoccupied by the Edomites (2 Kings 16:6)
17. Paul wrote the book of Hebrews while in this country (Hebrews 13:24)
19. Abbreviation of the name of King Hezekiah's mother (2 Kings 18:2)
20. The last utterance by Jesus before he expired (Mark 15:37)
22. Wood from this tree was used extensively in the construction of Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 3:5)
23. Bird used in the Bible as a symbol of utter desolation (Isaiah 34:11)
25. Describing the observance of established form or ceremony (Joel 1:14)
27. Where Aeneas lay paralyzed for eight years before being healed by Peter (Acts 9:33)
28. To be victorious (Romans 3:4)
29. Without charge (Revelation 22:17)
30. Intended to prevent the spread of certain information (Amos 5:12)

Crossword Solutions Page 27



Young People Ask...



Fads—Should I Jump on the Bandwagon?

THAT'S really cool! 'Now that's hot!' Compliments may fly when your peers see you are following the latest fad. Yes, fads have a way of grabbing attention and evoking strong reactions.

Fads also change like the weather, however, and are notoriously short-lived. According to one marketing survey, a fad first gains a toehold among small groups of daring, unconventional youths. As it begins to spread, manufacturers and advertisers promote it by means of magazine, TV, and radio ads. Mu-

sicians and celebrities are paid to give it respectability and prestige by endorsing it. Youths themselves may promote it with missionary zeal. If it catches on, it can become the rage among "the overwhelming majority of the teen population."

Eventually, though, a fad loses steam and passes into oblivion. (*American Demographics*) But while a new style, dance, or gadget is the rage, you may feel under intense pressure to conform. Many feel like 15-year-old Kim: "You are made to feel like an outcast when you are different."

Jumping on the bandwagon can be a costly enterprise. Take, for example, the pin fad that broke out among French youths a few years ago. According to a 1991 article in *The New York Times*, "it is de rigueur [a must] to have your baseball cap or jacket lapels loaded with colorful, domino-dot-size enamel tack pins." The fad seemed harmless enough—but you had to be able to pay a whopping \$12 for each designer pin.

A youth may also find that being "cool" means more than simply laying out cash. In some quarters where it is fashionable to wear a baseball cap, you have to pick a cap with the right color, representing the right team, and part of the fad is the way you wear the cap.

To many youths this is serious business. They see following certain fads as the key to gaining prestige or acceptance. Even so, we will see that jumping on the bandwagon is not always the smart thing to do.

Considering Your Steps

The Bible does not categorically condemn fads per se. Some popular activities may be appropriate despite their faddish nature. Jogging, for example, was considered a fad by some when it became popular a few years ago. But who can deny the benefits of

wholesome, moderate exercise?—Compare 1 Timothy 4:8.

Nevertheless, some fads range from silly to downright dangerous. The warning of an ancient proverb is thus appropriate: "Anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word, but the shrewd one considers his steps." (Proverbs 14:15) A shrewd person is wise, discerning. He doesn't blindly follow some new trend simply because it is popular. Wisely, he weighs the consequences of his actions.

Cost may be one factor to consider. A Canadian magazine tells of a teenage girl who works in a fast-food restaurant. More than half of her hard-earned cash goes to keeping up with the latest clothing fads. "Money is for a protection," says the Bible, that is, it's a needed, useful tool. (Ecclesiastes 7:12) Can you afford to squander it on items that are, as one writer puts it, "designed to become obsolete within a season or two"?

Physical danger may be another factor to ponder. Break dancing was popular not too long ago. But it produced a crop of back injuries. What about today? An article in *Rolling Stone* magazine talks about the wild antics at dance clubs and rock concerts, such as "stage-diving" (leaping from the stage into the arms of cheering fans), "slamming," and "moshing"—"dance" activities that are little more than violence set to the beat of music. "This thing has gotten way out of hand. I mean, *really*," complains one youth. She describes how frenzied "moshers" will "commandeer the dance floor and let it rip, undulating in an ever-widening whirlpool, mindlessly bashing into anyone who has the misfortune of standing in the vicinity." Such behavior may impress some of your peers. But will being

in such places or doing such things gain the favor of God, who commands Christians to "repudiate ungodliness and worldly desires and to live with soundness of mind"?—Titus 2:12.

What about the health dangers of body piercing and tattooing—also gaining in popularity among youths? Doctors say that tattooing can pose medical risks, such as hepatitis and perhaps AIDS, if sanitary measures are not taken. Then there is the prospect of being permanently decorated long after the fad has passed out of style. True, some tattoos can be zapped away by a laser. But laser treatment involves several painful sessions, costing hundreds of dollars each.



How will your parents react if you adopt a certain fad?

Most deadly of all is the spiritual damage that can result from following certain fads. Many of them center on celebrities—actors, athletes, musicians, and the like. It becomes “cool” to dress and act like whoever is currently in the limelight. But how does Jehovah God view such hero worship? As a form of idolatry. The Bible thus warns: “Flee from idolatry.” (1 Corinthians 10:14) Many celebrities have no regard whatsoever for the Bible’s moral standards. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) Such being the case, could God possibly be pleased if you act or dress in ways that, in effect, pay homage to such ones?

The Impression You Give Others

The Bible also commands youths to honor their parents. (Ephesians 6:2) Would it not dishonor them if you came home festooned with body jewelry or covered with tattoos? And what about others, such as your classmates? If you are a Christian, would they find it hard to take you seriously if you later tried to share your faith with them?—Compare 2 Corinthians 6:3.

The same might be said about wearing some of the styles made popular by rap artists. Granted, in many localities a baseball cap is just a head covering. But in some urban neighborhoods, “politics now play a key role in the popularity of certain hats.” (*Entertainment Weekly*) Could wearing certain caps, jackets, sneakers, or other hip-hop paraphernalia give the impression that you adhere to the rap life-style? Remember, Christian love “does not behave indecently” or in a shocking manner.—1 Corinthians 13:5.

Consider what happened to one group of teenage girls in a conservative town who, according to *People* magazine, flouted local sensitivities by going to school clad in “hip-hop style wardrobes.” Explained one girl: “We see these clothes on MTV [a cable TV sta-

tion featuring music videos]. I thought they looked good.” However, the trendy garb ignited controversy—and racial violence.

As Christians we therefore want to ‘adorn ourselves with modesty and soundness of mind.’ (1 Timothy 2:9) This involves considering the feelings and attitudes of others and not insisting on one’s personal preference. It also means avoiding styles of dress and behavior that others may view as extreme.

The Need for Caution

Of course, each fad must be weighed on its own merits. Remember, though, that Satan the Devil is the ruler of this world and his goal is to “devour someone.” (1 Peter 5:8; John 12:31; 1 John 5:19) No doubt some popular fads have been used by Satan to distract and lead youths away from God. Caution is thus in order.

It usually isn’t wise to be among the first to follow any new trend or fad; it’s a lot safer to lean toward being conservative. On the other hand, the Bible also cautions against being “righteous overmuch.” (Ecclesiastes 7:16) Surely you do not have to resist changes of style to the point of looking hopelessly out-of-date, weird, or eccentric.

When a fad clearly violates Bible principles or good sense, then the smart thing to do is to steer clear of it. Granted, it is not easy to be different from your peers. But in her book *How to Say No and Keep Your Friends*, writer Sharon Scott asks: “Do you have any friends so brilliant and who know you so well that *they* should be making your decisions for you? Probably not!” Would it not be better to be guided by your parents’ wishes and by your Bible-trained conscience? Doing so may not bring you the approval of all your peers, but it will bring Jehovah’s approval, which, unlike some fleeting fad, can be everlasting! —Psalm 41:12; Proverbs 12:2.

Does God Give Rewards?

YES, he does. Is it selfish, therefore, to serve God with a reward in view? No, for he himself sets rewards before his faithful servants. In fact, as a God of justice and love, Jehovah obligates himself to reward those who serve him. His Word, at Hebrews 11:6, says in part: "The man who approaches God must have faith in two things, first that God exists and secondly that God rewards those who search for him."—Phillips.

Demonstrating genuine faith in God gains his friendship, and this friendship leads to a reward. God blesses those who earnestly seek his favor.

Rewards Are Acts of Love

Jehovah wants us to know that he is the kind of God who rewards those who love him. For example, considerate parents look for ways to reward their child who willingly does chores around the house out of love for the parents. The parents may provide more than just the necessities of life, rewarding the child with a special gift. At times the gift may even be money to put in the bank to provide future security for the child. Thus, God is not like people who have no appreciation or consideration for those who do things out of love or loyalty. Jehovah is warmheart-

ed and draws close to his friends. If you hold fast to faith in him, he "will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you."

—Hebrews 13:5.

God appreciates and favors all of those who do even the slightest service to him, giving them further opportunities to know him. Jesus' words at Matthew 10:40-42 illustrate the point: "He that receives you receives me also, and he that receives me receives him also that sent me forth. He that receives a prophet because he is a prophet will get a prophet's reward, and he that receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will get a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water to drink because he is a disciple, I tell you truly, he will by no means lose his reward."

Jesus was sent by his Father, Jehovah. Hence, a person who favorably receives Christ's disciples—whether they be prophets, righteous men, or little ones—is receiving Christ as well as God, who sent Christ. Surely that person will be blessed; he will not go unrewarded. His treasure chest of spiritual possessions will become fuller. Why? Because Jehovah remembers even



the smallest act of service rendered in support of his Kingdom, and that act will not go unrewarded.—Hebrews 6:10.

Interestingly, Peter, a disciple of Jesus, asked Jesus straight out if there would be a reward for him and for his fellow apostles: “Look! We have left all things and followed you; what actually will there be for us?” (Matthew 19:27) Jesus did not consider the question inappropriate but gave a positive answer, saying: “Everyone that has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive many times more and will inherit everlasting life.”—Matthew 19:29.

Rewards Present and Future

The reply Jesus gave shows that his followers are rewarded both now and in the future. One present reward is their becoming part of an expanding international family of spiritual brothers and sisters. While the churches of Christendom are groaning about shrinking membership and lack of support, the meeting halls of Jehovah’s Witnesses are figuratively bulging. Hundreds of thousands of new Witnesses are baptized each year.

Still another reward is peace of mind with the contentment and happiness that friendship with God and knowledge of him bring. Yes, “godly devotion along with self-sufficiency” is great gain. (1 Timothy 6:6) It reflects a happy state of mind indeed when one is able to say, as did the apostle Paul: “I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be self-sufficient,” that is, content.—Philippians 4:11.

Shortly before his death, Paul wrote of a future reward for the “little flock” of Jesus’ anointed followers—the reward of a resurrection to heavenly life: “From this time on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous

judge, will give me as a reward in that day, yet not only to me, but also to all those who have loved his manifestation.”—Luke 12:32; 2 Timothy 4:7, 8.

The millions of Jesus’ followers who are his “other sheep” look to the future reward of everlasting life on an earth transformed into a paradise. (John 10:16) And Jesus assured that his followers who die will “be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous ones.”—Luke 14:14.

Visualize the Reward

It is appropriate to try to visualize such blessings, although nobody knows exactly what they will be like. Are you not able to feel the happiness described at Isaiah 25:8: “He will actually swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will certainly wipe the tears from all faces”? Try to envision the words of Isaiah 32:17: “The work of the true righteousness must become peace; and the service of the true righteousness, quietness and security to time indefinite.” Yes, all humans will be working together in true friendship. (Isaiah 65:21-25) Even today, diligent work results in fine homes and products of excellent quality. Then, in God’s new world, healthy people under perfect conditions will be able to produce whatever is needed to make life enjoyable.—Psalm 37:4.

The rewards God gives are not due to any meritorious service on our part but spring from his love as a gift despite our inherited sinful state. (Romans 5:8-10) Nevertheless, there is a connection between the anticipated reward and our conduct. We must earnestly seek Jehovah with bold faith and endurance. (Hebrews 10:35-39) In other words, “whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah, and not to men, for you know that it is from Jehovah you will receive the due reward of the inheritance.” Yes, he does give rewards.—Colossians 3:23, 24.

A New Message for a New World

THE Western Hemisphere was first called the New World about the beginning of the 16th century. When Columbus "discovered" it in 1492, he also discovered that people were already living there and had been for hundreds of years. But then for the first time, Native Americans got a taste of nominal Christianity. What would this mean for the New World?

For centuries the Catholic Church had exercised almost complete control over the lives of Europeans. It set standards and dictated rules in nearly every field of human endeavor, including government. Such collaboration of Church and State, the alliance that had spawned the Crusades, also came to dominate the New World.

Sidney H. Rooy of the Educación Teológica in Buenos Aires writes that by the end of the 15th century, Spanish kings were convinced that "the Spanish crown was the divinely chosen instrument for the salvation of the New World." The papacy drew an imaginary north-south line in the Atlantic dividing the rights of discovery between Spain and Portugal. In 1494 the two governments signed a treaty moving the line farther west. Thus, while Spain proceeded to settle most parts of Central and South America, Portugal moved into Bra-

zil, whose east coast now lay east of the demarcation line. According to Rooy, both countries interpreted the papal decree to mean that "the right to the lands was coupled with the duty to evangelize the native peoples."

Conquest of the New World

Columbus was accompanied on his second voyage in 1493 by a group of friars especially chosen to convert the natives. From then on, European conquistadores and missionary priests worked side by side in the conquest of the New World.

In 1519, Hernán Cortés reached what is now known as Mexico accompanied by a chaplain and other priests. Within 50 years, the number of missionaries had grown to 800. Another 350 were in Peru, which Francisco Pizarro had reached in 1531.

Papal bulls issued in 1493 gave secular authorities the moral justification they wanted for their campaign of conquest. They thought that they could count on God's support because they felt that colonialism was his will. Church officials, eager to please, moved in to confer legitimacy on the colonial system. In fact, a Jesuit of the 17th century named António Vieira, born in Portugal but reared in Brazil, praised colonization,

saying that without it evangelization would have been impossible.

The missionaries saw nothing amiss in using colonialism as an instrument for spreading their religion. However, this made them an integral part of the world of which Jesus said his followers should be no part.—John 17:16.

Making Converts

Christendom's missionaries began at first, according to Rooy, "to uproot old rites and most external manifestations of Indian religion." He added: "Although force was still used when necessary, many Indians were converted by peaceful means through the direct approach of the priests."

Of course, some missionaries believed force was never really justified. For example, a Spanish Dominican missionary and priest named Bartolomé de Las Casas came to disapprove of the cruel methods used. He repeatedly pleaded in Spain in behalf of the Indians, for which reason the government gave him the title "Defender of the Indians." His efforts met with mixed reactions, however. Some have called him a crusader, a prophet, a servant of God, and a visionary; others have called him a traitor, a paranoiac, an anarchist, and a pre-Marxist.

The goal of uprooting old rites was later discontinued. Once the natives had been pressured into accepting the name Christian, they were permitted to retain their heathen beliefs and practices. Thus, "many Christian festivals among the Sierra Indians of Peru," says *Man, Myth & Magic*, "contain practices which are relics of forgotten Inca beliefs." *The Cambridge History of Latin America* explains that Mexican Indians took from

Christianity "those elements which suited their own spiritual and ritualistic needs and blended them with elements of their ancestral faith."

True, hundreds of thousands of Native Americans were baptized. But the "Christianity" imposed upon them was superficial at best. Little time was spent teaching them the foundations of Christianity upon which to build a strong faith. *The Cambridge History of Latin America* notes: "There were alarming indications that Indians who had adopted the new faith with apparent enthusiasm still venerated their old idols in secret." In fact, some Indians reportedly placed pagan idols behind "Christian" altars in case the "Christian God" failed to respond. They were also slow in giving up long-established patterns of behavior such as polygamy.

The members of Roman Catholic orders did not always act the way one would have expected "Christian" missionaries to act. Quarrels between the orders were frequent. The Jesuits in particular were often criticized for their policies and actions. In fact, in 1759 they were expelled from Brazil.

The arrival of Protestant missionaries did not change things significantly. As the



From the book *Die Helden der christlichen Kirche*

Missionaries came to the Americas with European conquistadores

missionary ranks grew, so did the disunity typical of nominal Christianity. Catholics accused the Protestants of fostering imperialism; Protestants accused the Catholics of spreading pagan beliefs and of being responsible for keeping the people in poverty. All these claims contained more than just a grain of truth. Christendom's missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, failed to follow the example of Jesus.

Throughout the New World, according to *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, "conversion went forward as an arm of the colonial ventures of the Spanish, French, and English governments." Whereas Spain and Portugal concentrated on Latin America, France and Britain were more involved in what later became the United States and Canada.*

Like those missionaries in Latin America, the French and British missionaries set wrong priorities and became entangled in political matters. Thus, notes *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, "by the close of the French era in Canada, the missionaries had been more successful in making the Indians loyal to France than in converting them."

For God or for Gold?

Some may claim that "the extension of the kingdom of God was the goal" pursued by the early conquistadores. But more realistically, *The Cambridge History of Latin America* says: "Above all, they wanted gold." It was thought that once converted, the Indians "would meekly deposit large quantities of gold."

Some of Christendom's missionaries thus let themselves become willing instruments of those who had base motives. One of the first Europeans to recognize this was Barto-

lomé de Las Casas, mentioned earlier. *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* quotes him as writing in 1542: "The reason why the Christians have killed and destroyed such an infinite number of souls is that they have been moved by their wish for gold and their desire to enrich themselves in a very short time."

European conquerors brought little in the way of spiritual enlightenment. In his book *Mexico*, James A. Michener says that Christian apologists claim that when Cortés invaded Mexico, "he found it occupied by barbarians to whom he brought both civilization and Christianity." However, Michener says the Mexican Indians, even in 900 C.E., "were not barbarians, but they became so lax in guarding their marvellous civilization that they allowed real barbarians to overrun them." These "real barbarians" were some of the so-called Christians.

A Work of Preparation

Christendom's missionaries did not obey Jesus' instructions to "make disciples . . . , teaching them to observe all the things" he had commanded. (Matthew 28:19, 20) New converts were not taught to manifest the fruitage of God's spirit. They were not united in the one faith.

Even those of Christendom's missionaries who were sincere could do no better than spread an apostatized form of Christianity. The "light" shed upon the New World was dim indeed. However, by introducing the Bible to some extent, Christendom's missionaries performed a preparatory work for the vital missionary campaign that Jesus prophesied would take place in the time of the end. (Matthew 24:14) It would be a unique campaign, the most successful ever conducted in Christian history, benefiting people of all nations. Read about it in the next issue in the article "Making True Disciples Today."

* Spanish influence was, of course, felt in Florida and the southwestern and far western part of what is now the United States, especially California.

THE RH FACTOR AND YOU

THE proud father looks down happily at his newborn baby sleeping quietly in its mother's arms. It was a long night in the delivery room, but now all of that is in the past. In comes the doctor to check on his patients and to congratulate all. "There's just one thing, routine really," he says.

The mother's blood is Rh-negative, and a check showed that the baby's is Rh-positive, so the mother will need to be given an immunizing shot. "It's just a small injection made up of human antibodies but quite important," the doctor assures them, "for preventing complications with future pregnancies."

Though the doctor may consider the shot routine, the mention of it and possible "complications" brings up a set of questions in the minds of the concerned parents. What does this shot actually do? How necessary is it? What would happen if the parents did not want it? For the Christian another question emerges. Since the Bible says, 'Keep abstaining from blood,' can the Christian accept the shot in good conscience if it contains human antibodies from someone else's blood?—Acts 15:20, 29.

History of the Rh Problem

Decades ago scientists discovered that human blood contains many factors, or antigens, that make each person's blood unique.



In time they learned that two antigen systems in the red blood cells caused most of the medical problems if one person's blood was put in contact with another person's. One of these antigens is termed "ABO"; the other is termed "Rh." A brief review of the Rh system will help us answer the important questions these concerned parents have and that you too may have wondered about.

In 1939, doctors published the puzzling case of a 25-year-old woman whose second baby died during pregnancy. Following the delivery of the dead baby, the woman was given blood transfusions and developed severe reactions even though the blood was from her husband and apparently compatible with her own as respects ABO antigens. Doctors later surmised that some unknown factor from the blood of her first baby had mixed with her blood and had "sensitized" her blood, leading both to her reaction to her husband's blood and to the loss of her second baby.

This unknown factor was later identified through experiments involving rhesus monkeys, so it was termed "Rh factor." This blood factor was the subject of intense medical interest through the 1960's because it was discovered to be the cause of a somewhat common and often tragic illness of babies called erythroblastosis fetalis. As doctors

studied the Rh factor and the disease, a fascinating medical story unfolded.

Rh, Genetics, and Sick Babies

Most people are touched when a newborn baby is seriously ill or dies. Merely seeing an infant sick or in distress is hard on many, and doctors are no different. Two other reasons made this baby-killing Rh factor of especial concern to physicians.

The first was that doctors began to see a pattern with the disease and to understand how the Rh factor was involved in sickness and death. Rh factor is present in the red blood cells of about 85 to 95 percent of people, both men and women. They are termed "Rh-positive." The 5 to 15 percent without it are labeled "Rh-negative." If an Rh-negative person is exposed to the blood of an Rh-positive person, he or she may form molecules called antibodies that destroy Rh-positive blood.

This is really a common, normal response of the body's immune system as it fights off foreign invaders. The problem is, an Rh-negative mother may have a baby who inherits Rh-positive blood from its father. This presents no problem when the placenta works perfectly and the baby's blood is kept separate from the mother's. (Compare Psalm 139:13.) But because our bodies are imperfect, a small amount of the baby's blood may sometimes leak through and come into contact with the mother's. Occasionally, this happens because of some medical procedure, such as an amniocentesis (drawing a sample of the fluid in the birth sac surrounding the developing baby). Or some of the baby's blood may intermingle with the mother's during delivery. Whatever the cause, the mother may become sensitized and make antibodies against the Rh-positive blood.

Picture the problem: Once the mother develops such antibodies, all succeeding babies

are at risk if they should inherit Rh-positive blood from the father. This is because the mother now has antibodies to Rh-positive blood.

You see, certain antibodies pass the placenta normally. This is a good thing, causing all babies to be born with a degree of temporary natural immunity by way of their mothers. With Rh disease, however, the sensitized mother's Rh antibodies pass the placenta and attack the Rh-positive baby's blood. This rarely affects the first baby, being more common with any succeeding babies. It causes sickness, called Rh hemolytic disease of the newborn (erythroblastosis fetalis if the damage is severe).

There are many ways to manage this disease, though often with limited success, as we will see. Let us now focus on one medical aspect of the problem—a possible means of prevention.

A Breakthrough in Prevention

You may recall that there were two reasons this disease became so exciting to doctors. The first was that the mechanism of illness became known and understandable. What was the second reason?

It showed up in 1968. After years of research and frustrating attempts by doctors to treat these very sick babies, which met with limited success, an immunization was developed that was effective in preventing the problem of "Rh babies." This was good news. But how did it work?

Recall that the Rh problem (for the second and succeeding Rh-positive babies) developed when blood from the first Rh-positive baby "leaked" into the Rh-negative mother's bloodstream and caused her to produce antibodies. Could there be a way to snatch up the baby's red blood cells in the mother's system before they had a chance to sensitize her?

The method devised was an immunizing shot for the mother called Rh immune globulin, or RhIG, known in some countries by brand names, such as RhoGAM and Rhesonativ. It is composed of antibodies against the Rh-positive antigen. Exactly how it works is complex, and even unclear, but it basically seems to work the following way.

When an Rh-negative mother is suspected of having been exposed to Rh-positive blood, such as after the delivery of an Rh-positive baby, the mother is given an RhIG shot. These antibodies quickly attack any leaked Rh-positive red blood cells from the baby and destroy them before they sensitize the mother. This effectively eliminates the danger to the next baby, since no antibodies against Rh-positive blood are produced by the mother. The real advantage that doctors see in this is that it serves to *prevent* disease rather than *treat* it after it develops.

This sounds good in theory, yet has it worked? Apparently, yes. In one country, the United States, the incidence of Rh hemolytic disease dropped 65 percent during the 1970's. Though many things could have contributed to this, 60 to 70 percent of this drop was attributable to the use of RhIG. In one Canadian province, the number of babies dying from Rh hemolytic disease decreased from 29 in 1964 to 1 between 1974 and 1975. The medical community saw this as verification of the principle that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." With this basic background, we can consider some specific questions that often arise concerning Rh disease.

What are the risks of having a problem with Rh disease during my pregnancy?

A simple blood test can determine the Rh blood types of mother and father; roughly 1 in 7 marriages is of an Rh-negative woman to an Rh-positive man. Aspects of the father's

genetic makeup bring the overall risk down to about 10 percent.*

Those are overall population statistics, however. If you are an Rh-negative woman married to an Rh-positive man, your chances are either 50 percent or 100 percent of having an Rh-positive baby, depending on the genetic makeup of your husband.[#] (There is no sure way to determine the genetics of the husband, just as there is yet no simple way to determine whether a baby in the womb is Rh-positive.)

For the Rh-negative mother carrying an Rh-positive baby, there is a 16-percent chance with each pregnancy that she will be sensitized, thus putting future pregnancies at risk. Of course, that is merely an average. Barring prior blood transfusion or other exposure of the mother to blood, the first baby of a marriage is usually free from the risk of Rh disease. After that first baby, the risk is actually somewhat difficult to predict in any given case. One woman may be sensitized with her very first Rh-positive baby. Another may have five or more Rh-positive babies and never be sensitized. If a mother becomes sensitized, the risk of death to each succeeding Rh-positive fetus is 30 percent, and this is not altered by the interval between pregnancies. So this is not to be taken lightly.

Can laboratory testing tell me if my developing baby is at risk?

Yes, to an extent. Antibody levels in the mother's blood can be measured during pregnancy to tell if she is producing antibodies against the baby's blood. Also, amniocentesis

* These statistics vary with different races. In most whites the incidence of Rh-negativity is 15 percent; American blacks, 7 to 8 percent; Indo-Eurasians, about 2 percent; Asiatic Chinese and Japanese, almost zero.—*Transfusion Medicine Reviews*, September 1988, page 130.

[#] Some women in this situation have had a number of babies, and all turned out to be Rh-negative, so the mother did not become sensitized. But in other cases, the very first child was Rh-positive, and the mother became sensitized.

can help tell if the baby's blood is being destroyed and the baby is in danger. Yet, amniocentesis sometimes presents its own complications, and so there ought to be caution about undergoing it.

Does the RhIG shot have side effects?

There is still some controversy about its use during pregnancy because of possible immunologic damage to the developing embryo. Yet, most experts conclude that the immunization is relatively safe both for the mother and for the developing baby inside her.

According to doctors, how often should I take the shot?

Authorities say that the shot should be given soon after any event that may have caused Rh-positive blood to enter the bloodstream of an Rh-negative woman. Thus, current recommendations are that the shot be given within 72 hours of delivery of the baby if the baby's blood is found to be Rh-positive. The same recommendation holds for an amniocentesis or a miscarriage.

Furthermore, since studies have shown that a small amount of the baby's blood may enter the mother's bloodstream during normal pregnancy, some doctors recommend that the shot be given at 28 weeks into the pregnancy to prevent sensitization. In that case the shot would still be recommended again after the baby is born.

Is there any treatment for a baby once it gets Rh disease?

Yes. Though hemolytic disease of the newborn is a serious illness, there is good evidence supporting treatments that do not involve exchange blood transfusions for the baby. The most feared complication of this disease involves the buildup of a chemical called bilirubin, which results from the breakdown of red blood cells. This produces jaundice and can in some instances cause

Elevated Bilirubin —Reason for Transfusion?

Doctors have long been fearful of the consequences of elevated bilirubin in babies, so much so that when the bilirubin begins to rise—especially toward the number 20 mg/100 ml—doctors often insist on exchange transfusion "to prevent brain damage" (kernicterus). Is their fear, and the value of blood transfusion, justified?

Notes Dr. Anthony Dixon: "Several studies of such infants have been unable to detect any consequences, whether short or longterm, of bilirubin levels between 18 mg-51 mg per 100 ml." Dr. Dixon goes on to discuss "vintiphobia: the fear of 20." Though no advantage has been proved from treating these elevated bilirubin levels, Dr. Dixon concludes: "The dilemma is clear. Aggressive treatment of elevated serum bilirubin levels is now standard practice. Standard practice should not be challenged until it has been proved to be wrong, yet any attempt to demonstrate that it is wrong is unethical!"—*Canadian Family Physician*, October 1984, page 1981.

On the other hand, an Italian authority, Dr. Ersilia Garbagnati, has written about a protective role of bilirubin and the "potential unexpected dangers from inappropriately low serum bilirubin levels." (Italics ours.) (*Pediatrics*, March 1990, page 380) Going a step further, Dr. Joan Hodgman writes in *Western Journal of Medicine*: "Exchange transfusion will not prevent bilirubin staining of the brain at low levels of bilirubin and, in view of the experimental work quoted above, may actually be harmful."—June 1984, page 933.

damage to the baby's organs. (Incidentally, a mild jaundice may be caused when there is an ABO incompatibility between the mother's blood and the baby's blood, but this is usually not as serious.)

For some years doctors thought that a specific level of jaundice was indication for exchange blood transfusion in these babies, but further research has revealed various alternative treatments. Early delivery or cesarean section, phototherapy (blue light), and medications such as phenobarbital, activated charcoal, and other treatments have proved helpful and have dramatically decreased the push to resort to transfusion. In fact, some recent reports have highlighted the futility and even the danger of exchange transfusions in babies with Rh disease.—See box, page 26.

Nevertheless, there are extreme cases when doctors still insist that exchange transfusion is the only acceptable treatment. Therefore, some parents feel that it is better to avoid the whole problem with a shot that will prevent the disease and thus the jaundice.

Is the RhIG shot made from blood?

Yes. The antibodies that make up the shot are harvested from the blood of individuals who have become immunized or sensitized to the Rh factor. Genetically-engineered RhIG not derived from blood may become available in the future.

Can the Christian conscientiously take RhIG?

The issue involved is the possible misuse of blood. The Scriptures quite emphatically prohibit the eating or other misuse of blood. (Leviticus 17:11, 12; Acts 15:28, 29) Since RhIG is produced from blood, would it be in violation of the Bible command to abstain from blood if a Christian woman were to accept the shot?

This journal and its companion, *The Watchtower*, have commented consistently on the

matter.* We have noted that in all pregnancies antibodies freely pass the placenta between mother and baby. Hence some Christians have concluded that to them it does not seem a violation of Bible law to take a shot consisting of antibodies, like RhIG, since the process is essentially like what happens naturally.

The decision whether to take RhIG remains finally, though, a matter for each Christian couple to decide conscientiously. However, if a husband and wife facing the Rh issue decide not to take the RhIG when medically indicated, they need to be willing to accept the risk of having a future child seriously affected by an illness that could possibly have been prevented. In this situation they might even decide that the course of wisdom is to take extra precautions so they do not have more children and expose themselves to the possibility of such a tragedy. Concerned Christian parents should prayerfully consider all aspects before making such weighty decisions.

* See *The Watchtower* of June 1, 1990, pages 30, 31; June 15, 1978, pages 30, 31; and *How Can Blood Save Your Life?*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

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WATCHING THE WORLD

The Garbage Boom

Soldiers patrolling the Polish border are on the lookout for a new type of invasion these days—foreign garbage. According to *The Washington Post*, in 1992, Polish authorities stopped some 1,332 unwanted shipments of waste from coming into the country from Western Europe alone. In the first half of 1993, the number of such shipments soared by 35 percent. In many Western lands, hazardous garbage has become so expensive to dispose of that shipping the waste to less developed lands where environmental laws may be more difficult to enforce has become a lucrative option. For example, two U.S. metals companies were convicted of mixing 1,000 tons of toxic dust from a smelter into a shipment of fertilizer sent to Bangladesh. Some of the garbage is even disguised as charitable donations. Customs officials in Poland report that they commonly receive shipments that purport to be medical charity from Australia, Europe, and the United States that turn out instead to consist of such waste as syringes, underwear, and toilet articles—all of it used and contaminated.

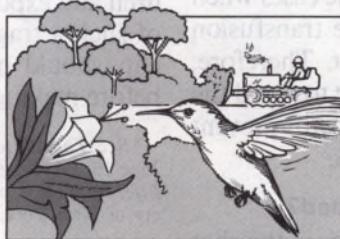
Divorce Magazine

Seeing a commercial opportunity in a staggering divorce rate, a magazine publisher in France has launched a periodical called *Divorce*. A columnist for the *Bulletin of Sydney*, Australia, comments that the magazine features "advice columns from lawyers and psychologists, hints for women trying to find their first job after marriage, and—for the brave—how to get back into the dating game." One subject the magazine evidently does not deal with, though, is

marital reconciliation. The columnist remarks: "Anyone seeking advice on how to patch up a rocky relationship should look elsewhere." Yes, seek advice from God's infallible Word, the Bible.

Venezuelan Hummingbird in Peril

Twenty-eight different species of hummingbirds are in danger of extinction in Venezuela. Some of these are found nowhere else in the world. The hummingbird is native to the Americas, ranging from Alaska to Argentina and Chile. It weighs between 1/14 and 1/3 ounce, the tiniest being the bee hummingbird, measuring about



2 inches, and the largest being the giant hummingbird, which measures 8 1/4 inches. What is wiping out the hummingbird in Venezuela? A disease or a predator? No. *Carta Ecológica*, a newsletter published by the oil company Lagoón, reveals the culprit to be deforestation—the systematic destruction of the bird's habitat. This small, fascinating, iridescent creature is just one of the many victims of man's ruthless destruction of the rain forest.

Damaging Habit Outlawed

The government of Pakistan has ruled that packets of betel nut must carry health warnings similar to those on cigarette packs, reports *Asiaweek* magazine. The

magazine notes that millions of people in southern Asia are addicted to *pan masala*, a mixture of betel nut and various oils and other ingredients wrapped in a betel leaf. This is meant to be chewed. India had already placed warnings on packets of betel nut because of a reported link with cancer of the mouth. And children have been known to choke to death on betel nut. Pakistan's new laws will forbid the selling of betel nut to children under five years of age.

Grandparents' Role Increases

Studies in the United States indicate that grandparents, particularly grandmothers, are taking on an increasing role in the lives of their grandchildren. An ongoing study by the National Institute on Aging has found that 69 percent of those born between 1931 and 1941 are grandparents; some 44 percent of them spend more than 100 hours a year caring for one or more of their grandchildren. On average, these grandparents spent 659 hours with the children, the equivalent of 82 eight-hour days, notes *The Wall Street Journal*. Women, the study found, spent an average of 15 to 20 hours a week caring for grandchildren and were 2.5 times likelier to be such caregivers than were men.

Fathers Out Of Touch

As in the rest of the world, family ties in Japan are not quite what they once were. *The Daily Yomiuri* reported recently that some 481,000 Japanese men were forced by job transfers to live apart from their families. That figure was 15-percent higher than five years previously and was expected to rise still further as problems in finding housing and schooling

continue to worsen. On the same issue, the paper reported a survey of primary and middle school students in which 43 percent of the youths said that they did not talk to their fathers at all. A sizable number, 18.4 percent, said that they did not have conversations with their mothers.

Family Changes in Argentina

Recent studies revealed significant changes in the structure and behavioral patterns of Argentine family life, according to the Buenos Aires newspaper *Clarín*. Commenting on the model family—one that is large, is united, and on days off or at night eats together—the paper noted: "Many today would say that such model families are merely an old photo, a past utopia reflected in images." A statistic from the book *La familia en la Argentina* (The Family in Argentina), by Susana Torrado, showed that in the past decade, single-parent families, now numbering some 1,200,000, have increased in Argentina by some 60 to 80 percent. Children born out of wedlock now account for over 36 percent of all births—an increase of almost 30 percent since 1960. Furthermore, interviews have shown that a third of those between the ages of 20 and 34 do not believe that the marriage bond is lifelong.

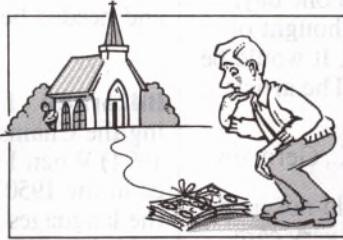
Children's Vocabulary

Children may know far more about the unpleasant realities of the modern world than adults generally give them credit for, a study in Italy revealed. A team from Italy's National Research Center examined more than 5,000 essays written by schoolchildren aged six to ten. According to the newspaper *La Repubblica*, a comparison of their 6,000-word vocabulary with children's reading material written by adults revealed that the "almost unreal, tranquil world

without problems" presented to children "does not fool them." The paper adds: "They know exactly what 'drugs,' 'AIDS' and 'rape' mean." The researchers say that "the world of children's writings seems to be more advanced and more in step with the times than their reading material" written by adults, observes *Corriere della Sera*.

Baiting the Hook

An evangelical church in Maryland, U.S.A., found a new way to lure people inside. On a recent Sunday, the first 125 people to arrive at the church were each given \$10. They only had to sit through the 75-minute service, which featured a skit and singing backed by



a "light-rock" band. According to the Associated Press, the church's assistant director of ministries said: "Many people complain they don't go to church because churches always want money. We thought, 'Why not be bold and give them money?'" Most people, the report said, accepted the money, although many claimed they gave it back later. Thirty-two kept the money.

Useful Old Containers

Instead of throwing large shipping containers away as so much scrap metal, a shipping company in South Africa has found some ingenious uses for them when they are too worn to transport heavy goods anymore. Two of these large metal structures, when

joined together, make a fair-sized school classroom. Of course, one side of each container must be removed, and windows and doors must be added to the remaining sides. Old containers may also serve as homes, shops, clinics, and libraries. In one case, according to the magazine *African Panorama*, "16 converted containers provide 8 roomy classrooms for over 1,000 pupils." Thus far, over 1,000 containers have been made available for needy South African communities. But the company involved is running out of old containers and is calling for the assistance of other international shipping companies with old containers to spare.

Brain Atrophy

Consuming too much alcohol and fat over the years not only increases flabbiness but also shrinks the brain, according to a study by a research group of Akita University Medical College in Japan. Over the past seven years, the group conducted a survey of 960 people, using MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging), and found that 58 percent of those who are dependent on alcohol had developed atrophy of the brain. Among those with hyperlipidemia, a high level of fatty compounds in the blood, 41 percent of those in their 40's and 50's and 55 percent of those over 60 showed such atrophy. In stark contrast, only 4 percent of those with neither alcohol dependence nor hyperlipidemia showed signs of atrophy. Symptoms of dementia were observed among 80 percent of those with atrophy, reports the newspaper *Yomiuri Shimbun*. Assistant Professor Ikuro Naemura of the research group advises: "Atrophy of the brain develops slowly but surely. It is important to avoid overdrinking alcohol and overeating fatty food."

FROM OUR READERS

Faithful Youths I was touched by the series "Youths Who Put God First." (May 22, 1994) When I was a teenager, I had a brain tumor. As one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I told the doctors: "I don't want to take a blood transfusion." Although a court order was obtained to force blood on me, the surgery went well without it. As I read about these faithful young servants of God, I had tears in my eyes. They had been through the same experience as I! Their stories have touched my heart and strengthened my love for God.

M. P., United States

I am 17 years old and have been afraid of finding myself in such a situation one day. Dying doesn't scare me, but the thought of disregarding Jehovah's laws does. It would be awful to give in under pressure. The article gave me much strength.

C. K., Germany

When I read the articles, I could not hold back the tears. Afterward, I read very carefully the booklet *How Can Blood Save Your Life?* (published by the Watchtower Society). I now know how to behave should I ever be in a similar situation.

Y. G., Germany

Since I suffer from an incurable form of leukemia, the experiences of young ones who have proved their devotion to Jehovah were quite encouraging to me as an adult. Many thanks.

H. K., Austria

I am 18 years old. I was thrilled and shaken when I read the articles yesterday. I could not stop crying when I came to see that these faithful children died. Their faith has made me ask myself whether I could, under such conditions, keep my integrity.

E. A. O., Nigeria

I was really struck by the indomitable firmness of all the youths mentioned. After reading the articles, I cried a lot and thanked Jehovah that he gave them the strength to face such difficulties down to their death. I can sincerely say that my teenage problems are really nothing in comparison.

R. C., Italy

There is no question that these deeply moving articles will encourage all young people who read them. These young ones were all firm in their refusal of blood; at the same time, they could think for themselves and explain themselves clearly. I was encouraged to learn that whatever pressures and tests there are, Jehovah will not fail to give us strength and needed help.

R. T., Japan

Illiteracy I appreciated the series "Breaking the Chains of Illiteracy." (February 22, 1994) When I fled from China to South Africa in the 1950's, I was unable to speak any of the languages spoken here. However, Jehovah's Witnesses patiently helped me to understand the Bible in English. I also attended their meetings, including the Theocratic Ministry School. My English gradually improved, and now I am confident in the door-to-door ministry.

W. W., South Africa

Reincarnation Although I am Muslim, I am a regular reader of *Awake!* I wish to express my sincere thanks for your recent series "Have You Lived Before? Will You Live Again?" (June 8, 1994) I found it very informative. I have for a long time been searching for information that could be used to correct some of my friends who insist upon the existence of reincarnation. With the information given, I believe they will surely agree that since there is a resurrection, there cannot be reincarnation.

K. S., Nigeria

"Why I Don't Celebrate Christmas"

SOME say that children of Jehovah's Witnesses are deprived because they don't celebrate Christmas. But consider the essay "Why I Don't Celebrate Christmas" that an 11-year-old Witness in California, U.S.A., wrote as a class assignment:

"To many people, Christmas means a lot of things—presents, family, presents, food, presents, sharing, presents, love, presents, Santa Claus, presents, etc. Yet people nowadays rarely ever think about what Christmas means or why they celebrate it. If they do, they usually think of Christmas as Jesus Christ's birthday, a time for family and, of course, lots of presents. Most people pity Jehovah's Witnesses because they think their children are deprived. But are we *really* missing out on something? Let's consider why Jehovah's Witnesses don't celebrate this holiday.

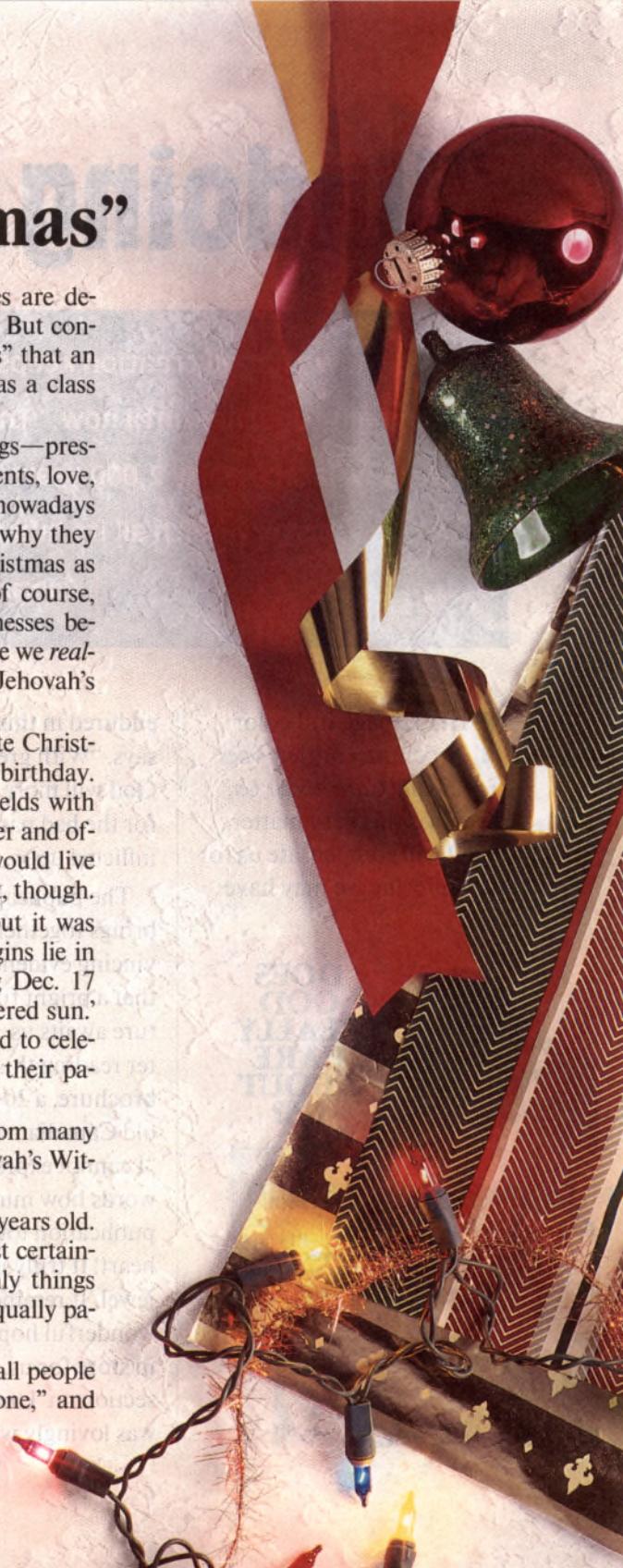
"As one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I don't celebrate Christmas for many reasons. For one thing, it isn't Jesus' birthday. The Bible says there were shepherds out in the fields with their sheep. In Jerusalem it is very cold in the winter and often snows. It is very unlikely that the shepherds would live outside during these months. . . . There is more to it, though.

"Not only was Christmas not Jesus' birthday but it was never observed by first century Christians. Its origins lie in the ancient Roman festival Saturnalia, beginning Dec. 17 and ending Dec. 25, the 'birthday of the unconquered sun.' In the fourth century, some Roman official decided to celebrate Jesus' birthday Dec. 25, perhaps to sanctify their pagan holiday.

"It is no wonder that Christmas was banned from many different countries. Today some people (like Jehovah's Witnesses) have followed their example. . . .

"I used to celebrate Christmas—until I was four years old. . . . As to being deprived, Jehovah's Witnesses most certainly are *not*. We get presents all year long. The only things we're missing are these pagan holidays and their equally pagan celebrations."

Although the teacher noted on the paper, "Not all people wish for presents," she also wrote, "Very well done," and gave the student an "A."



"Undoing the Past"

"We know that all creation keeps on groaning together and being in pain together until now." That was true when these words were written nearly 2,000 years ago, and it is true today. But can history, with all its human suffering, be undone?

Romans 8:22.

THE 32-page full-color brochure entitled *Does God Really Care About Us?* discusses this very matter. "God will compensate us for the suffering we may have

endured in this world," it says. "With great compassion God will more than make up for the bad past that was inflicted upon us."

The publication brings together convincing evidence that a bright future awaits us. After reading this brochure, a 20-year-old Canadian wrote: "I cannot express in words how much this publication touched my heart! It truly is a precious jewel. It reminds us of the wonderful hope that God has in store for us. I feel that the section on 'Undoing the Past' was lovingly written. Thank

you for reminding us of how much Jehovah loves us."

