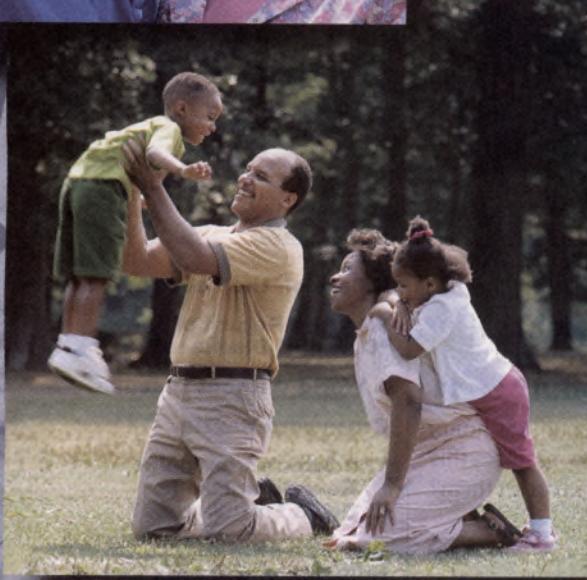


Awake!

December 8, 1993



**A World
Without Disease
Is It Possible?**



A World Without Disease —Is It Possible? **3-10**



For centuries humans have been plagued by disease. Will there ever come a time when all diseases will be conquered?



Are Violent TV Cartoons Harmful? **11**

Children spend countless hours watching TV cartoons. Does this have a bad effect on them?



Who Can Help Me Solve My Problems? **15**

Young people face many difficult problems these days. Where can they get help?

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KILLERS ON THE LOOSE

MARGARET desperately searched for a cure when her son Tito contracted malaria. Three drugs, including highly acclaimed chloroquine, were administered. Nevertheless, Tito died—at a mere nine months of age.

In Kenya, Margaret's home, such tragedy is all too common. "Newsweek" reports: "'Anopheles gambiae,' the queen of malaria-bearing mosquitoes, thrives in this part of the world. Children don't. Five percent of them die of malaria before reaching school age."

In 1991 tuberculosis killed 12 prisoners and a guard in New York State, U.S.A. "We're going to control it in the prisons," says Dr. George DiFerdinando, Jr., "but the real question is how are you going to control it now that it is established in the community?"

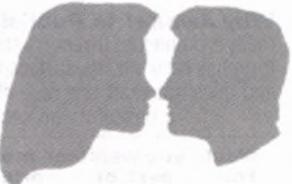


The World Health Organization reports that 1.7 billion—nearly a third of the world's population—carry the tuberculosis bacterium. Each year, eight million of these develop the active disease, and three million die.

In a New York hospital, a baby girl was born 11 weeks premature, but this was only part of her problem. The peeling skin of her hands, the sores on her feet, the enlarged liver and spleen, all gave clear evidence that she had contracted syphilis while in her mother's womb.

"Some babies are so severely damaged by the disease while in their mothers' wombs that they are stillborn," reports "The New York Times." "A few others die soon after birth, some with severe skin lesions that break during the delivery."

Malaria, tuberculosis, and syphilis—all three were thought to be under control and close to eradication a few decades ago. Why are they now making a devastating comeback?



Why the Return of “Curable” Diseases?

A HOME has just been thoroughly cleaned. As the days, weeks, and months pass, however, the dust and dirt gradually reappear. One thorough cleaning, therefore, is not enough. Continual upkeep is essential.

For a time it seemed that modern medicine had thoroughly cleaned out malaria, TB (tuberculosis), and syphilis. But necessary upkeep through research and treatment was too often neglected. Now the “dust and dirt” have reappeared. “Globally, the malaria situation is serious and getting worse,” says Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima of WHO (World Health Organization). “People have to realize that TB is back—and back with a vengeance,” warns tuberculosis specialist Dr. Lee Reichman. And *The New York Times* announced early in this decade: “New cases of syphilis are at the highest level since 1949.”

Malaria—Threatening Almost Half the World

Now, almost 40 years since it was declared nearly eradicated, malaria poses a serious threat in Afghanistan, Brazil, Cambodia,

China, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, and various parts of Africa. “Two children die of the infection every minute,” reports the French newspaper *Le Figaro*. The yearly death toll is two million—far more than are killed by AIDS.

Close to 270 million persons are infected with the malaria parasite, but 2.2 billion are considered to be at risk. “How is it that malaria, once eliminated or largely controlled for 90 per cent of the world’s population, now threatens more than 40 per cent of us?” asks Phyllida Brown in *New Scientist*. The reasons are many.

Deforestation and colonization. The settlement of mosquito-infested rain-forest areas has stirred an outbreak of malaria in Brazil. “What we had was an invasion of the house of the mosquito,” says immunologist Claudio Ribeiro. Settlers, he says, “had no experience with malaria and no resistance to the disease.”

Immigration. Job-hunting refugees from Myanmar flock to the gem mines of Borai, a small town in Thailand. “Their constant

Awake!

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movement makes malaria control all but impossible," reports *Newsweek*. Some 10,000 cases of malaria are recorded monthly—just among the miners!

Tourism. Many who visit malaria-infested areas return home infected. Thus, in 1991 some 1,000 cases were diagnosed in the United States and 10,000 in Europe. Annually hundreds of tourists and overseas workers return to Canada infected. In a tragic instance, two children developed a fever soon after the family returned from Africa. The doctor did not suspect malaria. "By the time the parents took them to hospital, it was too late," reports the *Toronto Globe and Mail*. "They died within hours of each other."

Drug-resistant strains. WHO reports that drug-resistant strains of malaria have spread to all of tropical Africa. In Southeast Asia, says *Newsweek*, "drug resistance is advancing so rapidly that some strains could soon be untreatable."

Lack of resources. In some places clinics lack the equipment to perform a simple test known as a blood smear. In others a large portion of the health budget is needed for other emergencies, resulting in a shortage of insecticides and medicines. Sometimes it is an issue of profit. "There is no money in tropical diseases," admits *New Scientist*, "because, by and large, those who are affected cannot afford medicines."

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Tuberculosis—An Old Killer With New Tricks

Streptomycin, the drug that promised to bring tuberculosis under control, was introduced in 1947. At the time, it was thought that tuberculosis would be eliminated once and for all. But a rude awakening has come to some lands: TB rates have increased markedly in recent years. "In pockets of poverty in America," reports *The Washington Post*, "TB rates are worse than those of the poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa." In Côte d'Ivoire there is what one journal calls "a brutal reawakening of tuberculosis."

Dr. Michael Iseman laments: "We knew how to cure it. We had it in our hands. But we dropped the ball." What impeded the fight against tuberculosis?

AIDS. Since it leaves a person defenseless against infection, AIDS is considered a major cause of the TB resurgence. "If they don't die of something else first," says Dr. Iseman, "virtually 100 percent of AIDS patients carrying TB bacteria will develop the illness."

Environment. Prisons, nursing homes, shelters for the homeless, hospitals, and other institutions can become breeding grounds for tuberculosis. Dr. Marvin Pomerantz relates that one hospital's use of an aerosolized treatment increased pneumonia patients' coughing and thereby created a virtual TB epidemic among the staff.

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Shelters for the homeless can become breeding grounds for tuberculosis

Lack of resources. As soon as it looked as if tuberculosis was under control, funding dried up, and public attention went elsewhere. "Instead of eliminating TB," says Dr. Lee Reichman, "we eliminated tuberculosis programs." Biochemist Patrick Brennan says: "In the early 1960s I'd worked intensively on TB drug resistance but decided to get out of it because I thought TB was cured." Thus, the return of tuberculosis caught many doctors unawares. "During one week [in the fall of 1989]," said one physician, "I saw four new cases of the illness that my medical school teacher said I'd never see again."

Syphilis—A Deadly Comeback

Despite the effectiveness of penicillin, syphilis is still widespread in Africa. In the United States, it is making its strongest comeback in 40 years. According to *The New York Times*, syphilis is now "fooling a generation of doctors who have rarely, if ever, seen a case." Why the resurgence?

Crack. Crack addiction has propelled what one doctor calls "marathon binges of cocaine use and sex." While men often steal to support their addiction, women are more likely to trade sex for drugs. "In crack houses," says Dr. Willard Cates, Jr., of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, "there is sex and multiple partners. Whatever infection happens to be



prevalent in those environments is going to be the one that gets transmitted."

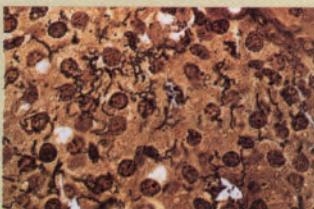
Lack of protection. "Despite the 'safe sex' campaign," reports *Discover*, "teenagers are still lackadaisical about using condoms to protect themselves from disease." A study in the United States revealed that only 12.6 percent of those with risky sexual partners used condoms consistently.

Limited resources. States *The New York Times*: "Budget cuts have strapped the public clinics where most syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases are diagnosed." Furthermore, testing methods are not always accurate. In one hospital a number of mothers gave birth to infected babies, yet the mothers' previous blood tests gave no evidence of syphilis.

An End in Sight?

Man's battle against disease has been a long and frustrating one. All too often success in fighting some ailments is offset by failure in fighting others. Is man doomed to a perpetual war that he can never win? Will there ever be a world without disease?

The Ravages of Syphilis



Biophoto Associates/Science Source/Photo Researchers

SYPHILIS is caused by *Treponema pallidum*, a corkscrew-shaped spirochete, and is usually contracted through the sex organs. The spirochete then

enters the bloodstream and spreads throughout the body.

Several weeks after infection, a sore called a chancre appears. It usually forms on the sex organs but may instead appear on the lips, tonsils, or fingers. The chancre eventually heals without leaving a scar. But the germs continue spreading through the body until secondary symptoms appear: skin rash, sore throat, aching joints, hair loss, lesions, and inflammation of the eyes.

If untreated, syphilis settles into a dormant phase that may last for a lifetime. If a woman becomes pregnant during this stage, her child may be born blind, deformed, or dead.

Decades later, some will move on to the later stage of syphilis, in which the spirochete may settle in the heart, brain, spinal cord, or other parts of the body. If the spirochete lodges in the brain, convulsions, general paralysis, and even insanity may result. Eventually, the disease may prove fatal.

"A Great Mimic"



SPL/Photo Researchers

THAT is what Dr. Lee Reichman calls tuberculosis. "It can look like a cold, bronchitis, flu," he says. "So unless a doctor is thinking about TB, he or she may miss the diagnosis." A chest X ray is needed to confirm the infection.

Tuberculosis is passed from person to person through the air. A cough can create particles that are tiny enough to enter the lungs. However, the body's defenses are normally strong enough to contain the infection. Dr. Reichman explains: "It is only [those] who have enough of the bacillus in their chest cavities—100 million organisms as opposed to less than 10,000 for inactive carriers—[who can] spread the disease."



Dr. Tony Brain/SPL/Photo Researchers

Global Warming and Malaria

MALARIA could not begin without the infecting *Anopheles gambiae* mosquito. "Change the vector [insect] population and you change the incidence of the disease," observes *The Economist*.

Laboratory experiments have shown that small increases in temperature can greatly affect the insect population. Thus, some experts conclude that global warming may have a grave impact on the incidence of malaria. "If the overall temperature of the Earth increases even one or two degrees Celsius [two to four degrees Fahrenheit]," says Dr. Wallace Peters, "it could increase the breeding areas of mosquitoes so that malaria could become more widely distributed than it now is."

A World Without Disease

"Malaria is smarter than anyone ever imagined," says immunologist Dr. Dan Gordon. "We're still trying to find an answer to it."

WE STILL don't know enough about the metabolism of the [tuberculosis bacterium]," says Barry Bloom of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. "We don't fully know how any drug works. We just don't really know."

"Knowledge doesn't necessarily translate into behavior change," laments a spokesman for the Centers for Disease Control, observing the failure of "safe sex" campaigns to curtail syphilis. As the above statements indicate, the battles against malaria, tuberculosis, and syphilis have been frustrating ones. Will the future bring improved remedies for these diseases?

Perhaps. But while man may conquer some ailments and make others easier to live with, there is a fundamental reason why he cannot entirely win the war against disease.

The Root of Disease

The battle against disease is much more than just a fight against parasites and germs. The Bible explains that disease is a consequence of sin inherited from our first hu-

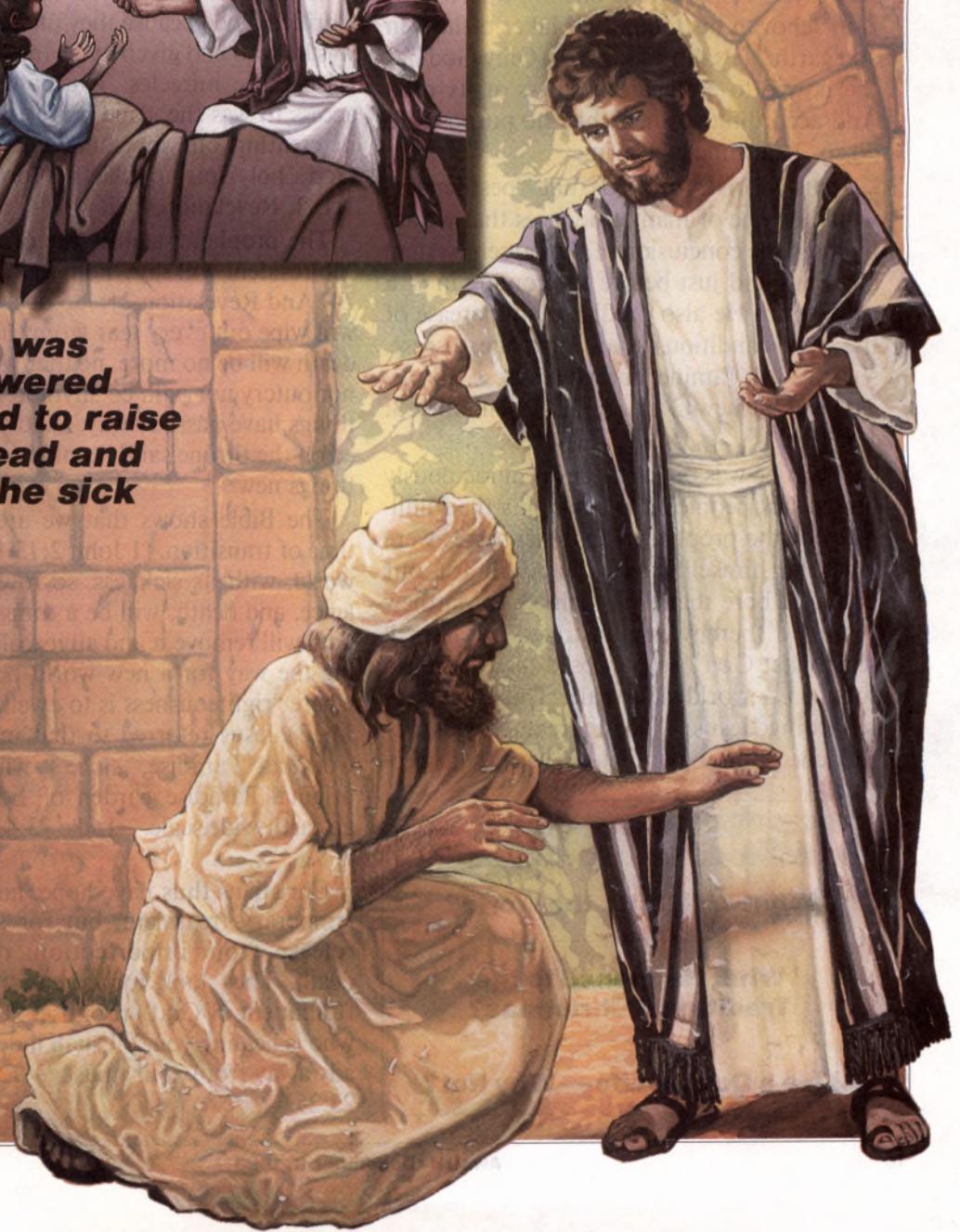
man father. (Romans 5:12) Sin not only damaged man's relationship with his Creator but also led to his deteriorating mentally, emotionally, and physically. Thus, instead of continuing in perfection on a paradise earth, humans became imperfect and deteriorated until death overtook them.—Genesis 3:17-19.

Even with the best of medicine, man cannot reverse his sinful condition or its consequences. This dilemma leaves the human race "subjected to futility [so limited," Phillips]. (Romans 8:20) And this is true with regard to conquering disease. Lifesaving progress in the field of medicine is often neutralized by life-threatening breakdown of society.

"We find ourselves in a bind," writes Jerold M. Lowenstein in *Discover* magazine. "The more success we have at fighting disease and extending human life, the greater looms the possibility of hastening our own extinction" because of overpopulation and the degradation of the environment.



**Jesus was
empowered
by God to raise
the dead and
heal the sick**



The Real Cure

The real cure for disease rests not with man but with the Creator. That is why the psalmist declared: "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs." The Bible further says: "Happy is the one . . . whose hope is in Jehovah his God, the Maker of heaven and earth." (Psalm 146:3, 5, 6) Only God has the power to eradicate sickness at its root. And according to the Bible, he purposed to do so. That time is nearing.

Jesus Christ foretold that "pestilences" would be one of many evidences that we are living in the conclusion of the present system of things and just before the coming in of a new world. He also predicted an increase of the very conditions that aggravate disease, such as war, famine, and lawlessness.—Luke 21:11; Matthew 24:3, 7, 12; 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13.

When he was on earth, Jesus miraculously healed sick people, thus beginning the fulfillment of the prophecy: "Our sicknesses were what he himself carried; and as for our pains, he bore them." (Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 8:17) He thereby demonstrated on a small scale what God has purposed to accomplish soon on a worldwide scale. The Bible says regarding Jesus: "Then great crowds approached him, having along with them peo-

ple that were lame, maimed, blind, dumb, and many otherwise, and they fairly threw them at his feet, and he cured them; so that the crowd felt amazement as they saw the dumb speaking and the lame walking and the blind seeing."—Matthew 15:30, 31.

The people who observed those miracles glorified God because they understood that it was he who had given Jesus the power to perform those miracles. The power Jesus had access to was the same power that was used in creating our awesome universe. It was God's holy spirit, his active force.—Genesis 1:1, 2; Revelation 4:11.

The prophet Isaiah wrote of a time when "no resident will say: 'I am sick.'" (Isaiah 33:24) And Revelation 21:4, 5 declares: "[God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.' And the One seated on the throne said: 'Look! I am making all things new.'"

The Bible shows that we are living in a time of transition. (1 John 2:15-17) Soon this world, with its sickness, sorrow, crime, violence, and death, will be a thing of the past. God will remove it and all its calamities, paving the way for a new world here on earth, where "righteousness is to dwell." (2 Peter 3:11-13) Jesus referred to that incoming new world as "Paradise," since it will be like the original Paradise garden of Eden, only on an earth-wide scale.—Luke 23:43; Genesis 2:7, 8.

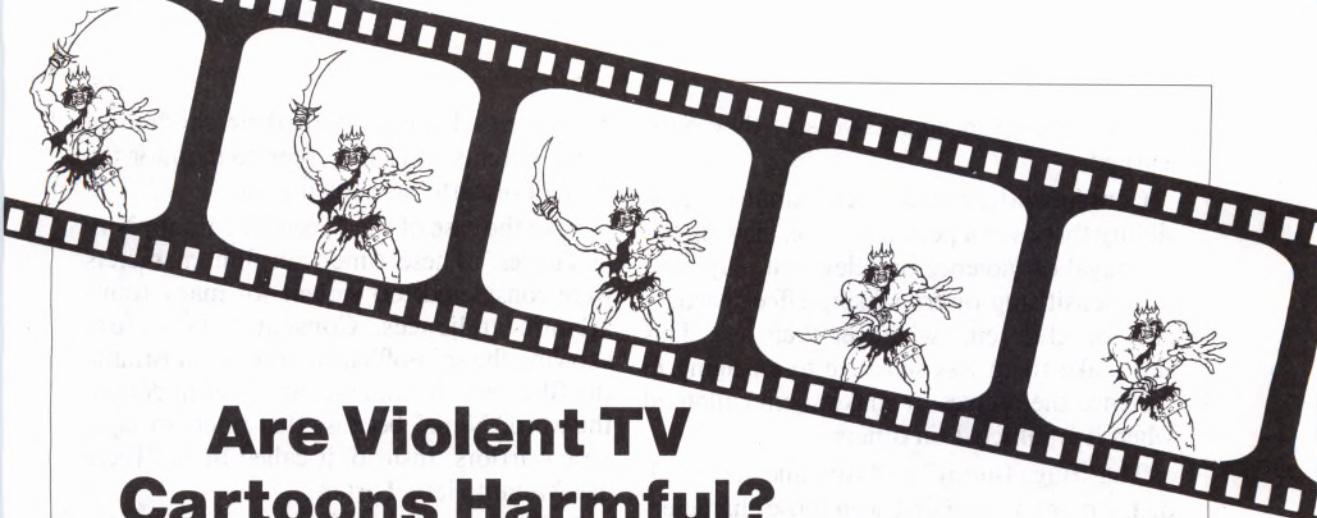
Christians thus have hope, not for a mere temporary treatment, but for a permanent release from imperfection, disease, and death. They look forward to the complete fulfillment of God's promise: "I am Jehovah who is healing you." "I shall indeed turn malady away from your midst."—Exodus 15:26; 23:25.

In Our Next Issue

What Will Unite the World?

What Happened to the Traditional Christmas?

Live a Double Life—Why Not?



Are Violent TV Cartoons Harmful?

By Awake! correspondent in Britain

BUGS Bunny Blamed for School Fights," headlined *The Times* of London. The newspaper reported how some teachers feel about the behavior of youngsters who, it is claimed, imitate violent scenes from TV cartoons.

"Most cartoons are violent," asserted one deputy head of a primary school, "and even if the good guy wins in the end, the way he does so leaves much to be desired." Do you feel the same way about the trend of TV cartoons?

Faced with the increasing popularity of animation, which is now widely available on video, many parents feel concerned. Some are anguished by their youngsters' "cartoon mentality" and even accuse cartoons of promoting violence, deceit, and disobedience.

But can there really be any harm in viewing cartoons, even if they do contain some violent scenes?

Any Harm?

According to BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) guidelines, TV producers must carefully consider the effects of any violence their programs portray, cartoons included.

"Emotional arousal as a result of violence increases with the ability of the viewer to identify with the situation" is the official view.

By their very nature, cartoons present fanciful situations; so is the danger minimal? Most youngsters who avidly watch TV cartoons obviously do so for amusement. Cartoons do amuse. But can they do more? Yes, indeed, since any cartoon can make a lasting impression. Dr. Gregory Stores of Oxford University told the program-listing magazine *TV Times* that the cartoons children watch are one source of the "monsters, ghosts or wild animals" that are widely present in children's nightmares.

Similarly, the British government study *Screen Violence and Film Censorship* acknowledges that the company in which a child views a film influences the effect it has on him. So a danger for children can lie in un-supervised cartoon viewing.

The same report contends that preschool children readily imitate violent actions they watch and that with "some sort of emotional 'push,'" older children about the age of five or

six will engage in aggressive acts they have learned.

Consequently, broadcasters admit the possibility that over a period of time, viewing the portrayal of violence on television may have "a desensitising or trivialising effect particularly on children," whatever their age. This can make them less sensitive to engaging in violence themselves or make them calloused when it is inflicted on others.

The "Bugs Bunny" or "Tom and Jerry" addict, who may have first seen those characters years ago on the movie screen, may now be a parent and can, at the touch of a button, tune the TV in to their modern antics. But stan-

dards have changed. With their children in mind, parents will surely seek to monitor the content of cartoons shown today.

Take the case of the "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles." These American film characters were considered too violent for many transatlantic audiences. Consequently, before showing the spin-off cartoon series in Britain, the BBC cut out some scenes. It even deleted the word "Ninja" because that refers to Japanese warriors. Instead, it called them "Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles."

Even so, parents expressed some disquiet. One mother told the *Scotsman* newspaper: "Children are very gullible. I have a five-year-old who is a turtle maniac. When I go to collect him from school the children in the playground are all trying to kick each other."

The concern felt by parents and teachers is unexpectedly shared by some toy-store owners. One British store announced a ban on sales of the reptile warriors amid fears of children "terrorising each other with karate kicks and risking death by hiding in sewers." Are there any other dangers?

Hidden Dangers

"Perhaps the most cynically successful children's marketing ploy of all time" is how one newspaper described the link between the "Turtles" cartoons and the marketing of associated products. Although such linking is not new, "what is new with the Turtles is the sheer size" of the market.

In this case the licensees are eager to sell an estimated 400 Turtle products,

Do cartoons promote violence?



such as comics and T-shirts, to enthralled youngsters. Now if cartoon viewing so entices children to want these goods, the scenes they watch in those same cartoons must surely have some effect! However, some may say that these new fads do not last long.

Even if such fads do not persist, old cartoon favorites retain their appeal. "Mutant Turtles may come and go, but Tom and Jerry are for ever," claims *The Times* of London. So you may need to ask yourself some questions. Does viewing such cartoons in your home indicate to your children that you approve every action depicted? What about scenes of cruelty to animals? You may, of course, reason that cartoons cannot be equated with real life. But do you know what is now happening to cartoons? *Animatronics!*

"Animatronics" is electronic wizardry that makes cartoon fantasies look real, so real that audiences find it difficult to distinguish between cartoon and reality. "The animatronic kingdom is so convincing in close-up," reports *The Sunday Times Magazine*, "that even the most cynical of viewers, used to fantastical movie tricks, are not distracted by a false pore or fake wrinkle." Violent scenes presented this way possess a shocking realism.

Consider also the standards of behavior modern cartoons offer the next generation. The characters featured in one new cartoon craze are "an obnoxious family of loudmouths, layabouts and 'underachievers,'" reports *The Times* of London. They appeal "partly because they are so anti-establishment."

Yes, parents, you may well have cause for concern when you consider your children's cartoon viewing. What, then, can you do?

Banish 'Violence for Fun'

Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of prepared entertainment. With family wel-

fare in mind, some parents have decided to do without TV. Others help their children weigh the pros and cons of the programs they are allowed to watch. "The more equipped a child (or even a grown-up) is to look at a cartoon, an advertisement, or a news broadcast critically and analytically," explains *The Independent* of London, "the more she or he is going to get out of the media." Parents are certainly in the best position to help their children do this.

A recent study of television's involvement in family life focused on two different methods of teaching. One involves reasoning and explaining, coupled with an appeal to the child's sense of achievement. The other basically uses punishment and threats. What did the results show?

The children whose parents threatened them with punishment displayed a preference for "antisocial television content," whereas "children with mothers who primarily disciplined with reasoning and explanation were least affected" by such scenes. Thus, caring parents explain to their children why it is unwise to watch violent cartoons. But remember, youngsters are born imitators, and this places a heavy responsibility on parents to avoid watching violence for fun. If you watch it, your children will see nothing wrong in watching it themselves.

'How, then, can I keep my children amused?' you may ask. One suggestion: Why not seek amusement by watching real-life animal antics? Do you live near a nature reserve or zoological park that you can visit as a family? If not, you can always choose suitable wildlife videos to watch at home.

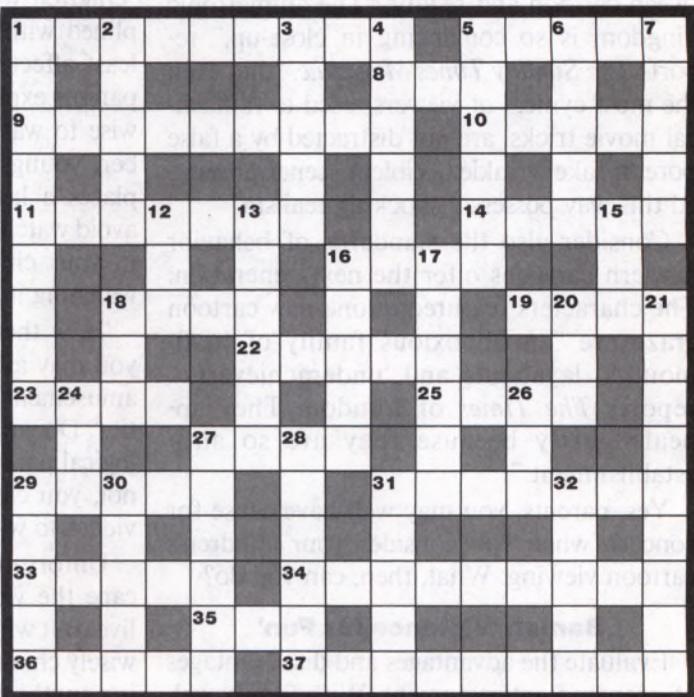
Unfortunately, none of us can presently escape the violence of the world in which we live. But whether we are young or old, we can wisely choose, if we so desire, to avoid watching anything that nurtures violence.

Crossword Puzzle

Clues Across

1. Also known as Mars' Hill (Acts 17:19)
 5. One of the substances used in preparing Jesus' body for burial (John 19:39, 40)
 8. Two of David's mighty men shared this name (2 Samuel 23:8, 26, 38)
 9. Baptized by Philip, the man of this nationality was not viewed as a Gentile and so did not precede Cornelius as the first Gentile convert to Christianity (Acts 8:27)
 10. Most frequently mentioned weapon in the Hebrew Scriptures (Judges 7:20)
 11. The name of King Saul's wife as well as David's second wife (1 Samuel 14:50; 25:43)
 14. "This is the book of ----' history" (Genesis 5:1)
 16. Father of Shecaniah, the father-in-law of Tobiah the Ammonite (Nehemiah 6:18)
 18. This tribe of unusually tall men struck fear into the hearts of most of the spies sent into the Promised Land (Numbers 13:33)
 19. What Naomi asked to be called, expressing the bitterness she felt in being bereaved of husband and children (Ruth 1:20)
 22. The river location where Ezra gathered together the Jews returning to Jerusalem (Ezra 8:31)
 23. What word from Jehovah had become in Eli's time (1 Samuel 3:1)
 25. Device for fastening a door to restrict entrance (Song of Solomon 5:5)
 27. What the 700 left-handed Benjamite slingers of stones would not do (Judges 20:16)
 29. A descendant of Gad (1 Chronicles 5:13)
 31. Samson used one to slay 1,000 Philistines (Judges 15:15)
 33. A son of Abishur of the tribe of Judah by his wife Abihail (1 Chronicles 2:29)
 34. Although a second wife to Abraham, Keturah was called this, as she never attained the same position as Sarah (1 Chronicles 1:32)
 35. Consume or destroy (2 Samuel 2:26)
 36. Used by Jesus to indicate a minor flaw (Luke 6:41)
 37. Mother of John the Baptizer (Luke 1:57)
2. This descendant of Levi was a forefather of the musician Asaph (1 Chronicles 6:41)
 3. Its king, Tidal, was one of four kings who took Lot captive when he was at Sodom (Genesis 14:9)
 4. Reputation of the woman who wet Jesus' feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair (Luke 7:37)
 5. A location where Israel was said to have put Jehovah "to the test" (Deuteronomy 6:16)
 6. She was accused of being "mad" (Acts 12:13-15)
 7. Where Jesus was not forsaken (Acts 2:31)
 12. Joshua's father (Joshua 2:1)
 13. An effective cleaner (Jeremiah 2:22)
 15. Spoil (2 Kings 3:19)
 16. They paid Jehoshaphat a tribute of 7,700 rams and 7,700 he-goats (2 Chronicles 17:11)
 17. One of Haman's ten sons (Esther 9:8, 10)
 18. Demeanor (Job 36:9)
 20. The acacia wood container where the second set of stone tablets of the Law given Moses was temporarily kept (Deuteronomy 10:1-5)
 21. A high priest who was killed because of giving aid to David (1 Samuel 22:16)
 24. Earlier (Acts 10:30)
 26. During famine, a quarter of this measure of dove's dung was worth five silver pieces (2 Kings 6:25)
 27. This calamity struck Israel's crops because of the nation's unfaithfulness (Haggai 2:17)
 28. An ingredient of the holy incense (Exodus 30:34)
 29. He was present, along with Peter and John, when Jesus was transfigured (Mark 9:2)
 30. What one must obey God as, rather than men (Acts 5:29)
 31. A Gadite who lived in the territory of Bashan (1 Chronicles 5:12)
 32. After the Flood the dove sent out by Noah brought back a leaf from this tree (Genesis 8:11)

Crossword Solutions Page 21



Clues Down

1. An apostle who was disfellowshipped along with Hymenaeus (1 Timothy 1:20)



Who Can Help Me Solve My Problems?

MAN himself is born for trouble." So said a distressed man named Job about four thousand years ago. (Job 5:7) Your life is probably not nearly as tragic as Job's. But no doubt you have your fair share of problems and difficulties.

When one group of American youths were asked, "What bothers you the most?" many pointed to school, parents, money, friends,

and siblings as sources of anxiety. What about you? Are you faced with peer pressure, money worries, or school problems? Are you finding it difficult to cope with the physical and emotional ups and downs of puberty? Are you worried about your future?

With all these problems in your head, it is easy to become weighed down and depressed. In fact, were you to keep such worries to yourself, you might find yourself emotionally isolated from others. (Compare Proverbs 18:1.) How, then, should you go about solving personal problems? Do you really have to face them alone?

No, because your problems—huge as they might seem—are not unique. After carefully studying human behavior, wise King Solomon concluded that "there is nothing new under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 1:9) Yes, others have faced and successfully solved problems just like yours. So you do not always have to figure things out yourself; sometimes you can get help from someone who has already done so. After all, if you were traveling to an unknown location, wouldn't you try to get directions from someone who had already been there? The question is, To whom should you turn for such help?

Peers—The Best Source of Advice?

Many youths choose to share their troubles with their peers. "Sometimes I think that some of the changes I'm going through are unique," explains young Anita. "I feel, 'Does anybody else go through this?' I ask myself if I'm crazy for feeling this way." You may feel that someone your own age would understand your feelings and that an adult—especially a parent—would be too judgmental, or critical.

But while your peers may understand, empathize, and sympathize, they may not always offer the soundest advice. As the Bible

explains, "mature people . . . have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong." How? Answers the Bible: "By long use," that is, experience! (Hebrews 5:14; *The New English Bible*) Lacking such experience, young people have rarely developed their "practical wisdom and thinking ability" to an adult level. (Proverbs 3:21) Heeding the advice of a fellow youth is therefore risky. Proverbs 11:14 warns: "When there is no skillful direction, the people fall."

The Value of God-Fearing Parents

Adults are generally in a better position to give skillful direction. Righteous Job put it this way: "Is there not wisdom among the aged and understanding in length of days?" (Job 12:12) Likely, the ones who are the very best qualified to help you in this regard are your God-fearing parents. For one thing, they know you better than anyone else does. Having confronted some of the same situations you now face, they can do much to help steer you away from trouble. Speaking as a parent, Solomon advised: "Listen, O sons, to the discipline of a father and pay attention, so as to know understanding. For good instruction is what I certainly shall give to you."—Proverbs 4:1, 2.

Consider a young Ghanaian man named Samuel. While in secondary school (high school), he had to decide whether to pursue secular education or a career as a full-time minister of Jehovah's Witnesses. "Since mine was a close-knit family with good communication," he explains, "it was easy to confide in my parents." Samuel's folks steered him in the direction of the full-time ministry—a career in which he continues to thrive. Samuel recommends that young ones involve their parents in solving personal problems because "they are more experienced in life and may have faced the same problems . . .

and are in a better position to give the clear view of both sides of the matter."

Interestingly, according to a recent Gallup survey, a large number of youths want parental direction—even on such subjects as drugs, school, and sex.

'They Don't Understand Me!'

Sadly, though, many youths pull away from their parents when they get into their teen years. Some feel like the teenage boy who said: "I've tried to talk to my parents about how scared I am about grades and I think this school is too hard, but they just tell me I'm lazy and should study more." A young Christian girl in Africa expressed a similar concern, saying: "Deep inside me, I know that I have personal problems for which I need help, but I fear that my parents will not understand me."

Accepting parental guidance may be the quickest route to mature adulthood



Of course, even God-fearing parents fall short at times. They may overreact to things, fail to listen, misunderstand you, or be judgmental. This does not mean, however, that you should cast them out of your life. Jesus Christ was raised by parents who were less than perfect. Yet, the Bible shows that Jesus "continued subject to them." No doubt their influence helped him to go on "progressing in wisdom . . . and in favor with God and men."—Luke 2:51, 52.

Are you benefiting from your own parents' wisdom and experience? If not, consider what is said in the book *Adolescence*, by Eastwood Atwater: "When teenagers become unduly influenced by their peers, it is more likely because of something lacking in the parent-adolescent relationship than because of the greater attractiveness of peers." What kind of relationship do you have with your parents? (Galatians 6:5) Could it be that you have avoided communicating with them of late? Then why not do what you can to improve things?* This is a part of what Solomon called being "a real son" or daughter to one's parents.—Proverbs 4:3.

Malcolm, a Ghanaian youth now living in the United States, once thought his parents did not understand his feelings. But they persisted in imparting to him both their life experience and the discipline of God's Word. In a recent letter to his parents, Malcolm wrote: "I know we've had our differences in the past. But thinking back, I marvel at the way you put up with my hardheadedness and calmly accepted some of the decisions I made along the way. Believe me, I know what happens in other homes, and the Bible sure made a difference [in ours]. Thanks again."

* For a number of helpful suggestions along this line, see chapter 2 of the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

Gain Practical Wisdom Yourself!

Far from stifling your growth, accepting your parents' guidance may be the quickest route to mature adulthood. In time you can likewise develop 'shrewdness, knowledge, and thinking ability.' (Proverbs 1:4) You will be equipped to analyze problems and to draw sound conclusions as to how to solve them.

Granted, not all youths are blessed with God-fearing parents. It would be a mistake, though, to conclude that you should give little heed to what your parents say simply because they may not be Christians. They are still your parents, and they should be honored as such. (Ephesians 6:1-3) Besides, if you give them a chance, you may just discover that they have much to offer in the way of practical advice. When you need spiritual direction, try confiding in a trusted member of the Christian congregation. There it should not be hard to find a God-fearing adult who will listen objectively, with an understanding and sympathetic heart.

Remember, too, that Jehovah's spirit is an ever-ready source of help and strength for those who ask for it. (Luke 11:13) Jehovah has also provided a wealth of information that is available to you in the Bible and in the Bible-based publications of the Watch Tower Society. Why, this very series has helped thousands of youths find practical answers to their problems! By learning to dig and do research, you may be able to resolve many problems on your own.—Proverbs 2:4.

Of course, experiencing problems is a part of life. But it helps to have the positive view that the psalmist had. He wrote: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, in order that I may learn your regulations." (Psalm 119:71) Yes, solving problems can mold and train you. But you need not face them all alone. Find help. Usually it is there for the asking.

How Complete Is God's Forgiveness?

"I feel that God will never forgive my sins. He will never want me because of what I did."—Gloria.

GLORIA had no problem telling others that Jehovah could forgive *their* sins.* But when she reflected on her own mistakes, Gloria felt condemned. Jehovah's forgiveness seemed unattainable.

Recognition of a wrong act or course of life can agitate the conscience. "I was worn out from crying all day long," wrote David after he sinned. "My strength was completely drained." (Psalm 32:3, 4, *Today's English Version*; compare Psalm 51:3.) Happily, Jehovah delights in pardoning error. He is "ready to forgive."—Psalm 86:5; Ezekiel 33:11.

However, Jehovah sees the heart. His forgiveness is not based on mere sentiment. (Exodus 34:7; 1 Samuel 16:7) The sinner must openly acknowledge his wrong, show genuine regret, and reject his bad course as something repugnant and hateful. (Psalm 32:5; Romans 12:9; 2 Corinthians 7:11) Only then can a wrongdoer be forgiven and

experience "seasons of refreshing" from Jehovah.—Acts 3:19.

But even after repenting, some still feel condemned. Must they carry the burden of guilt forever? What consolation can be found in the Bible for those who have repented of their sins and left them behind but who still feel plagued at heart?—Psalm 94:19.

Lifting the Weight

Distressed over his mistakes, David prayed to Jehovah: "See my affliction and my trouble, and pardon all my sins." (Psalm 25:18) Here David requested that Jehovah do more

than forgive. He asked that Jehovah "pardon" his sins, that he lift or bear them, carry them off. Sin has severe consequences, and undoubtedly for David this included the burden of an afflicted conscience.

Each year the Israelites were visually reminded that Jehovah could carry away the sins of the nation. On Atonement Day the

Return of the Prodigal Son by Rembrandt: Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.



* Name has been changed.

high priest laid his hands upon the head of a goat, confessed the sins of the people over it, and then sent the goat far off into the wilderness. Anyone present could visualize the removal of the nation's sins.—Leviticus 16:20-22.

Individuals who have repented of their sins can therefore take comfort. The proceedings of Atonement Day prefigured a far greater provision for carrying away sin—the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Isaiah prophetically wrote of Jesus: “He himself carried the very sin of many people.” (Isaiah 53:12) Hence, past sins need not weigh down the conscience. But will Jehovah call these sins to mind at a later time?

Cancelling the Debt

In his model prayer, Jesus said: “Forgive us our debts.” (Matthew 6:12) The Greek word here translated “forgive” is a form of a verb that means “let go.” Thus, forgiveness of sin is likened to letting go of, or canceling, a debt.—Compare Matthew 18:23-35.

Peter enlarged on this when he said: “Repent, therefore, and turn around so as to get your sins blotted out.” (Acts 3:19) “Blotted out” means to destroy, or to obliterate. It suggests the erasing of a written record, wiping the slate clean.—Compare Colossians 2:13, 14.

Therefore, those who have repented need not fear that God will demand payment for a debt that he has canceled. He states: “Your sins I shall not remember.” (Isaiah 43:25; Romans 4:7, 8) What does this mean for the repentant sinner?

Removing the Stain

Through the prophet Isaiah, Jehovah said: “Though the sins of you people should prove to be as scarlet, they will be made white just like snow; though they should be red like

crimson cloth, they will become even like wool.”—Isaiah 1:18.

Efforts to remove a deep stain from a garment are often futile. At best the stain is dulled but nonetheless noticeable. How comforting that Jehovah can take sins that are as glaring as scarlet or crimson and make them as white as snow.—Compare Psalm 51:7.

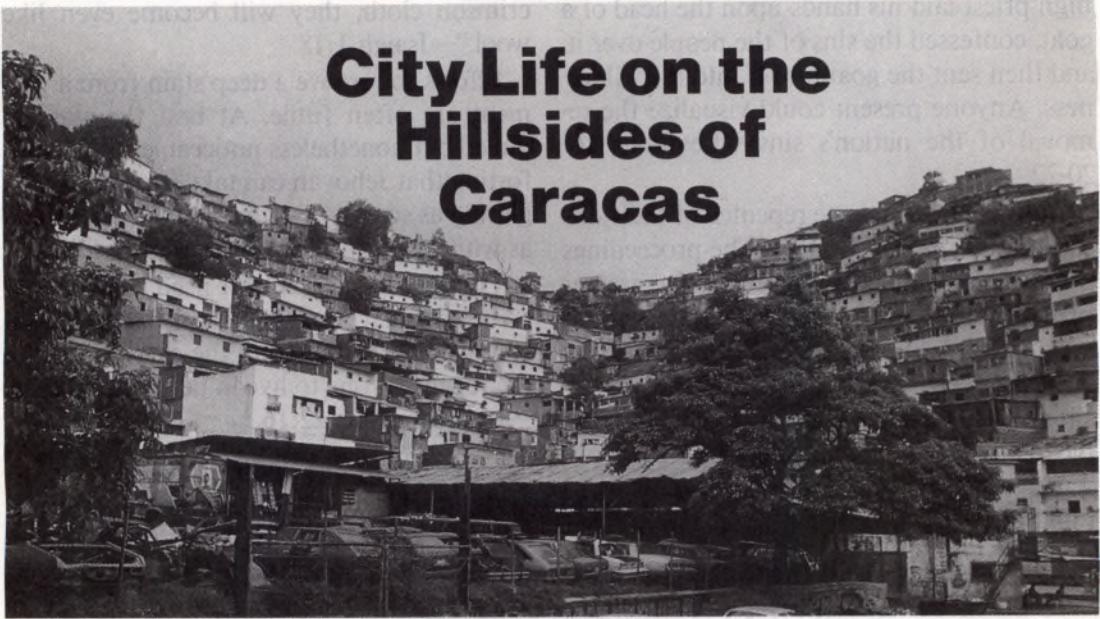
Thus, a repentant sinner need not feel that he bears a mark for the rest of his life. Jehovah does not merely dull the errors, causing the repentant one to live in perpetual shame.—Compare Acts 22:16.

Support From Others

Although Jehovah lifts the weight, cancels the debt, and removes the stain of sin, a repentant one may yet at times feel overwhelmed with remorse. Paul wrote about a repentant wrongdoer in the congregation at Corinth who was forgiven by God but who could have been “swallowed up by his being overly sad [“becoming so sad as to give up completely,” TEV].”—2 Corinthians 2:7.

How could this person be helped? Paul continues: “I exhort you to confirm your love for him.” (2 Corinthians 2:8) The word Paul used for “confirm” is a legal term meaning “to validate.” Yes, repentant ones who have the forgiveness of Jehovah also need the validation, or stamp of approval, from fellow Christians.

Understandably, this may take time. The repentant one must live down the reproach of his sin and build up a convincing record of righteousness. He must patiently endure the feelings of any who have been personally affected by his past wrongs. Meanwhile, he may be confident of Jehovah’s complete forgiveness, as was David: “As far off as the sunrise is from the sunset, so far off from us [Jehovah] has put our transgressions.” —Psalm 103:12.



By Awake! correspondent in Venezuela

CARACAS, Venezuela. Tall, modern office blocks loom over noisy traffic, busy shops, and crowded restaurants. Tourists roam the plazas in their shorts and sun hats, festooned with cameras. The sidewalks teem with people.

But there is another side to Caracas. Beyond the chrome, steel, and glass lie *los cerros* (the hills), unusual communities built on hillsides. They cling to the steep slopes that surround the city to the east, west, and south. Almost two million people live there, in hundreds of neighborhoods called barrios.

How did these communities come into existence? In 1958 the government established a plan that gave money to unemployed city dwellers. So people flooded into the capital to take advantage of the provision. Many abandoned the provinces to seek out the benefits of the city—hospitals, schools, universities.

Political violence and economic depression in neighboring countries also triggered an im-

migration as people came to Caracas in search of work. Soon the flat area of the valley of Caracas was fully occupied, forcing people to move upward in search of a place to live. Thus were born the hillside communities.

The Journey Upward

We begin our trip by joining a long line of people. They are waiting not for a bus but for a jeep, which is better suited for the steep climb that lies ahead. A long-chassis jeep draws up, and a dozen people scramble on board. Five sit along each bench running lengthwise along the back; two share the prized front seat. Soon we are bending ourselves double to get in through the back door. We squeeze into a space on the bench, tuck our knees under our chin, and try to keep from treading on one lady's bag of vegetables.

We begin a steep climb. The streets are narrow and often winding. At times they seem almost vertical. The driver inserts his favorite

music cassette, and soon feet are tapping to the Latin beat. Suddenly someone calls out to the driver: "*¡Donde pueda!*" (Wherever you can!) It seems a strange way to ask him to stop. But it is best to rely on his judgment. If the jeep was to stop on one of the steeper stretches of road, it might not get moving again—at least, not forward! A few disheveled passengers tumble out of the back door, after treading on some toes en route.

We soon find ourselves behind a slow-moving vehicle that is dripping from every seam. It is the water truck, carrying its precious cargo to homes where running water is a virtually unknown luxury. People usually store it in tanks or used oil drums.

The jeep jerks to another of its many stops, and we realize it is time to get out. The solid ground seems almost strange beneath our feet, and we pause to get our bearings.

The Hillside Homes

The houses are built anywhere and in any way. It seems that extra rooms or even extra stories are simply added on as the families grow. Some are solid little dwellings made of terra-cotta bricks. But others are made of planks, flattened cans, or even packing cases still stamped with the words "This side up."

It is fairly quiet, now that the jeep has growled its way out of sight. The view is breathtaking. There, far below, is the center of Caracas. Suddenly the silence is shattered by a voice shouting scratchily from a loud-speaker: "Yes, there are onions. Yes, there are potatoes, yucca, and plantains." Turning, we see that a truck that was quietly parked nearby has burst into life. A boy serves the customers from the back of the truck.

There are an estimated 500 barrios in Caracas. Some are named after "saints," others after famous dates or political figures. Still other names reflect the aspirations of the inhabitants rather than the reality. Examples:

El Progreso (Progress), *Nuevo Mundo* (New World), and *El Encanto* (Delight).

Life in the Barrio

Here a community spirit thrives. Often, united efforts are made to rid a barrio of drug abuse or crime. Most barrios have bodegas—general stores selling a variety of items—as well as a school and a pharmacy, where the pharmacist is always ready to help diagnose and recommend treatments for minor ailments.

Yet, life here is difficult. The problems are described by criminologist Dr. Elio Gómez Grillo: "Presently two million people who can barely afford to meet life's basic needs live in these marginal zones. The delinquency rate is soaring . . . Suicides, muggings, bank robberies, and armed robbery resulting in homicide are worrisome." Water shortages and power cuts are the order of the day.

In the rainy season, *los cerros* change completely. Earth turns into mud, steps turn into miniature cataracts, and garbage comes tobogganing through the rivers that swell in the gutters. The noise of rain on the zinc roofs

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is deafening; conversation ceases inside as the inhabitants concentrate on finding bowls and buckets to put under the leaks. But the sun soon comes out again, drying the soaked roofs and roads. Likewise, the indomitable Venezuelan spirit resurfaces. Life goes on.

Onward and Upward on Foot

Our trip is not over yet. We still have to reach our friends' home. Between two houses a steep, irregular concrete stairway runs up the hill. Signs compete for our attention on cramped houses that seem to vie for space: *Pego Cierres* (I Put In Zippers); *Cortes de Pelo* (Haircuts); *Se Venden Helados* (Ice Cream Sold). Residents devise all sorts of ways to make a living. Some spray-paint cars, change the oil, and do repairs—all right there in the street.

Catching our breath as we reach the top of the stairway, we then turn in to a labyrinth of narrow passageways between houses. We emerge from this warren blinking in the bright sunlight. Our friends' home is along this unpaved track. No house numbers here—and no mail service either. The smell of freshly brewed coffee hangs in the air. No doubt our hosts will welcome us with coffee served in tiny cups, along with an *arepa* (a bland maize bread made tasty by a variety of fillings).

Welcomed

As expected, with the customary hospitality the family welcomes us into their spartan but clean *ranchito*, as these little houses are called. "*Están en su casa*" (Make yourselves at home) is one of the first things they say.

As the sun beats down on the zinc roof, we are thankful for the breeze blowing in through the glassless windows. The windows do have bars over them, however, as burglary is quite common. Noticing that we are feeling the heat, our hosts bring out an electric fan, which, like a refrigerator and television, is

standard equipment here. The floor is cement. Many of the neighbors have only an earthen floor.

The husband, father of five small children, moved into Caracas from the country as a teenager to seek better prospects in the big city. He went to live with his older, married brother who, like so many before him, had simply staked his claim for a piece of unoccupied land high up on the hillside. When our friend later met his wife-to-be, his brother generously said that they could use the available bit of land at the side of his house to build a makeshift home. With the help of neighbors and relatives, this couple built their brick house little by little, right on that spot.

The family feel that the location is far from ideal, but they have resigned themselves to it. They make the best of what they have. 'Maybe one day we'll be able to move farther down the hill,' they say, "*si Dios quiere*" (if God wills).

A very pleasant afternoon passes with this poor but kind family. Occasionally, the conversation is interrupted by small children coming to buy candy at the front window. This is the wife's way of helping to supplement her husband's income.

The Descent

We want to leave before it gets dark. Today is Friday, and the barrio livens up as the men come home with their wages. The bodegas do a brisk business in beer, and the sounds of salsa and merengue rhythms contribute to a relaxed weekend atmosphere.

Once we get to the bottom, we walk toward the nearest metro station. There an efficient subway train will take us to the city center. We are a bit relieved to return to more familiar ground. But as we look back up at *los cerros*, now a mass of lights twinkling in the darkness, we are glad that we were able to become better acquainted with this other side of Caracas.



Impressive Giants of Canada's North

By Awake! correspondent in Canada

"KING of the North" and "Lords of the Arctic" are striking titles shared by some 30,000 polar bears that wander about the whole North Polar Basin.

There are several distinct polar bear populations. One group has chosen the southwestern coast of Canada's Hudson Bay, from Akimiski Island in James Bay to Chesterfield Inlet, to the north, as their domain. Thus, Churchill, Manitoba, located between the two, has been dubbed the "polar bear capital of the world."

The male polar bear roams his domain with curiosity and tirelessness. This has earned for him the poetic Inuit name *Pihogahiak*, meaning "the ever-wandering one."

Early northern explorers were intrigued by the polar bear. John Muir, an American naturalist, described it as 'a noble-looking animal and of enormous strength, living bravely and warm amid eternal ice.'

Though weighing from 1,000 to 1,400 pounds, they are almost catlike in their agility. One biologist said: "They are like big cats. It is absolutely

unbelievable how fast they are—oh, do they come fast."

Mating and Denning

The male bear is no 'family man.' After mating, he leaves the female on her own with all the responsibility of rearing the cubs. The fertilized egg inside the mother divides a number of times, then it remains dormant for the next four or five months.

When implantation occurs and growth begins, the female digs a snow den in the deepest drift she can find or an earthen one along the bank of a lakeshore. There she remains without food, neither urinating nor defecating until the end of March.

The den is well engineered. From the entrance a tunnel slopes upward for six or seven feet to the sizable living quarters. Here her body heat is trapped, so that the den is often 40 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than the temperature outside. A small opening in the roof allows stale air to escape. A fresh floor covering is made, as needed, by trampling down snow scraped from the roof.

You would expect such a huge bear to give birth to sizable replicas of herself. But the newborn cubs weigh only about a pound! They normally arrive sometime in December or early January.

Born blind and deaf, the cubs are covered with fuzzy wool except for the pads of their paws and their nose. With sickle-shaped claws, they creep along the mother's fur to suckle on her rich, creamy, cod-liver-oil-flavored milk.

Females usually bear twin cubs every three years in most regions of the North. However, those in the Hudson Bay area sometimes have triplets, and once in a while quadruplets, every second year. The cubs grow rapidly. At about 26 days, they hear their first sounds. Seven days later their eyes open. Natal fuzz

turns into real fur, which has much greater density.

Toward the end of March, the family emerges from the den into the sunshine of an Arctic spring. With plenty of snow about, the



Mother trains her cubs for some two and a half years

cubs romp and tumble. Finding a steep hillside, they slide down it on their fat little tummies, front paws and hind legs outstretched, into the waiting arms of mother below.

The cubs at times find it difficult to follow in their mother's tracks through deep snow. The solution? Why, a piggyback ride! A photographer once saw female bears, who had been disturbed by a helicopter, fleeing with their cubs riding on their backs "like frightened little jockeys."

Carefully, mother trains them for some two and a half years. Then she abandons them. The young bears are now on their own.

Other Characteristics

According to an article in *Life* magazine, "polar bears are the most powerful four-footed swimmers in the world." They can swim among ice floes across wide bays. Since neither water nor ice crystals adhere to their

oily fur, a good shake sends out a halo of droplets. A roll in dry snow blots up any remaining moisture, and in a few minutes the coat is dry.

Scientists have only recently learned amaz-

ing secrets of the bear's coat. The way light is absorbed and reflected from it not only helps to keep the body warm but also gives the coat its dazzling white appearance.*

But how do they find their way in the ever-changing Arctic seascape that contains few, if any, permanent features that might help them navigate? According to the book *Arctic Dreams*, the bear "must have a map in its head . . . Memory is no help. How bears create and use such maps is one of the most intriguing of all the questions about them." They can wander for weeks and not get lost.

Although polar bears rarely attack humans, visitors need to respect their great power and agility. Said this same book: "Polar bears are rather retiring and unaggressive, especially in comparison with grizzly bears." However, they could surprise you, for their thickly furred feet make their footfalls almost soundless.

Visiting the Polar Bear

How can we visit these interesting creatures? Scientists have erected 45-foot steel towers along the Hudson Bay coast from which the bears are monitored.

Tundra Buggies are available for tourists at the town of Churchill. These are large, metal-sheathed vehicles accommodating a number of passengers on sight-seeing expeditions. Sometimes a close-up view occurs when a bear leans against the metal sheathing or pounds it with a paw to attract attention or seek a food handout.

We hope you have enjoyed this visit with the giant bears of the North, which are reported to be among the ten "most popular" animals of the world. Truly, they are beautiful creatures, a production of an all-wise Creator, who gave them the ability to adapt to the icy wastes of earth's North Polar Basin.

* See "The Polar Bear's Engineering Feat" in the May 22, 1991, issue of *Awake!*



Young males enjoy a mock battle, then cool off in the snow



All photos: Mike Beedell/Adventure Canada

PLASTIC MONEY

Is It for You?

A CALIFORNIA man, known by some as "Mr. Plastic Fantastic," amassed a collection of 1,265 valid credit cards. Granted, this man hardly represents the average credit-card holder. However, it is widely acknowledged that the credit-card phenomenon has become a well-established feature of modern Western society.

American Demographics states that in 1986 almost three-quarters of U.S. households had one or more credit cards. There are over 25,000 different credit cards

available in the United States alone. Oil companies, retail stores, and airlines issue their own cards. In 1991, Americans held 232 million valid MasterCards and Visas, the two most popular cards.

The so-called plastic-money industry is also growing in Europe, sparking intense battles among rival banks and credit companies for the patronage of eager consumers. The total number of valid credit cards worldwide is well over a billion! Why this abundance of plastic money? Who benefits the most from its use?

What are some of the dangers and problems that credit-card holders face?

Who Benefits?

Banks and credit-card companies earn substantial profits, not only from the fees—including annual membership fees, late-payment fees, over-limit fees—but also from the high interest they charge on the money owed them. But, of course, they cannot profit from finance charges unless credit-card holders incur sizable debts. In the United States alone, millions have obligingly spent themselves into perpetual debt. About 75 percent of American credit-card holders have outstanding balances on their accounts, for which they must pay exorbitant interest each month. The average American credit-card debtor owes over \$2,000 on his monthly account.

In his book *The Credit Jungle*, Al Griffin observes that the “15 to 20 percent of cardholders who do pay their statements in full as soon as they get them do not contribute a dime to the bank’s operations.” He adds that “the other 80 to 85 percent of the cardholders make a credit card plan the most profitable operation the bank has. A modest-sized \$10 million bank card operation can gross a \$1.8 million profit per year.” In 1990 the U.S. bank with the largest share in the credit-card business made almost \$1 billion in profit from its consumer operations, mainly its credit-card subsidiary.

Beware of the Dangers

There is a dark side to these small pieces of plastic. For example, have you ever received a telephone call from an obscure company informing you of a prize you’ve just won? Many have. To get your gift, all you have to do is answer some basic questions. But then the caller asks for your credit-card number. Why? Because in reality you have won no gift. Such a caller just wants your credit-card number so that he can make mail-order or telephone purchases on your account.

There are several types of credit-card fraud, costing hundreds of millions of dollars each year. And even when this problem does not directly affect you, if you have a credit card,

you are probably paying for such scams through higher fees and interest rates.*

The real danger in credit cards lies in the hardships and suffering that come if you fall deep into debt. *The Credit Jungle* notes that “countless people who are able to resist the temptation to buy luxurious goods and services they can’t afford when paying cash, are totally helpless to resist temptation when they have a credit card in their hands. Many a family eats beans for a couple of weeks after paying for the lobster dinners charged on the credit card the previous month.”

But more than your eating habits can suffer if your debts consume a major portion of your income. The book *Credit—The Cutting Edge* reports that “on the average, Americans spend approximately 75% of their income each month repaying loans, debts, and credit cards.”

Sadly, for too many consumers, a credit card is, not a gateway to economic paradise, but a slippery slide to long-term debt and anxiety. American consumers, for example, have in recent years been piling up credit-card debt, which has resulted in more credit-card delinquencies, defaults, and bankruptcies. In 1990, U.S. consumers owed a total of \$3.2 trillion on credit cards, car loans, and mortgages! The average household owed about \$35,000 and paid about \$3,500 a year in interest.

Not surprisingly, personal bankruptcies have soared. In 1990 a record 720,000 Americans filed for bankruptcy, nearly a 17-percent increase over 1989. In 1991 this number went up to 800,000, and in 1992 the new record was 971,517 personal bankruptcies.

Some who find it difficult to control their use of credit cards have chosen to get rid of them. On the other hand, many are able to make wise use of credit cards without unnecessarily complicating their lives.

* For more information on ways to avoid credit-card fraud, please see the article “Credit Cards—A ‘Plastic Trap?’” in the December 8, 1986, *Awake!*

Watching the World

Wood Versus Plastic

When cutting up raw meat and poultry, one might assume that a plastic cutting board is more sanitary than a wooden one. A recent study has found the opposite. According to the *Berkeley Wellness Letter*, two microbiologists at the University of Wisconsin, U.S.A., intentionally contaminated wooden and plastic cutting boards with bacteria, such as salmonella, that cause food poisoning. Surprisingly, the bacteria thrived on the plastic boards, whereas they died or were rendered harmless on the wooden boards—in some cases within only three minutes. When contaminated and stored overnight, the wooden boards were bacteria-free in the morning, while the plastic ones carried abundant bacteria populations. Old wood proved more effective than new wood in this regard. Plastic also proved harder to wash clean than expected, especially if the surface was scratched. Regardless of board type, washing it with soap and hot water after cutting raw meats is crucial.

A Daily Slaughter

"Daily, at least four women die in Brazil because of abortion complications—1,460 every year," reports the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo*. The paper acknowledges that this estimate is "optimistic" and that the actual figure may be three times higher. It adds: "The average in Latin America is more dramatic. The UN estimates that 50 percent of all maternal deaths result from abortions, which means 15 thousand women annually—an aver-

age of 41 Latin-American women killed every day."

Stand Straight

Slouch, and your back suffers. According to a report in the *International Herald Tribune*, poor posture puts 15 times more pressure on the lower back than does standing up straight. Slouching also results in shallower breathing, and that means less oxygen to nourish the body. It can drain your energy and result in aches and pains, especially in the neck and back. It may also make you



look older, fatter, and less confident than you do when you stand erect. Good posture, the report says, means that your earlobes, shoulders, center of the hips, kneecaps, and anklebones should align vertically. However, it does not mean a ramrod military posture with knees locked and head and shoulders thrust back. This puts excessive strain on the spine. Experts say that poor posture is usually a bad habit that can be corrected.

Accidents Waiting to Happen

"A fleet of floating catastrophes waiting to happen"—that, according to *International Environmental Update*, is what some critics have dubbed the world's oil tankers.

The journal alleges that "the world still relies on hundreds of rusting, aging, unregulated tankers with ill-trained crews to transport its most critical fuel." A big tanker is expected to last for about 15 years. But some 65 percent of the global tanker fleet is at least that old. Even some oil industry officials admit that many of these obsolete tankers should be scrapped. No one agency, it seems, has the authority to order the ships out of service. However, the problem may lie more in how these ships are handled than in the vessels themselves. The journal quotes one oil pollution expert as saying: "The vast majority of tanker accidents are caused by human error."

Coping Strategies for Children

What enables some children to cope with the heavy pressures of modern life? To find out, researchers at Loyola University of Chicago, U.S.A., conducted a study of 400 children, 9 to 13 years old, from wide-ranging backgrounds. Among approximately half who routinely handled difficult situations well, the researchers found three common characteristics, reports *American Health* magazine. One, they were willing to ask for help, share their concerns, and seek emotional support from an adult—often, but not always, a parent. Two, they tended to take responsibility for their own behavior and sought to influence their peers to avoid harm. Three, they sought out quiet time or recreation to relieve stress. On the other hand, the researchers found three tendencies that reduced children's

resiliency: resorting to aggression; self-destructive behavior such as drug abuse; and avoiding problems rather than dealing with them.

Happiness in Asia

A poll taken by Survey Research Hong Kong Limited found that the happiest people in both Taiwan and the Republic of Korea are poor and in their 30's. In the Philippines, where the GNP (gross national product) is just \$500 (U.S.) per capita and 41 percent of the people live in poverty, 94 percent claim happiness. This same attitude toward life is shared by almost all their neighbors in Asia, bar one. "In a region generally bubbling over with cheer," said *Mainichi Daily News*, Asia's richest country "came out as the least happy place." Even with a GNP exceeding \$27,000 (U.S.) per capita, 40 percent of the Japanese confess that they are not happy.

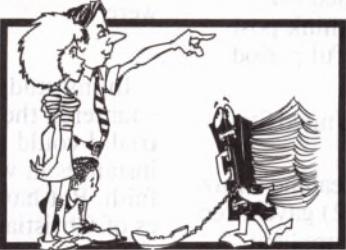
A Failure to Communicate

"The average married couple in Germany spend scarcely 10 minutes a day talking to each other," reports the German newspaper *Nassauische Neue Presse*. So most couples devote far too little time to working out their problems. Furthermore, family counselors in Germany note that young couples in particular do not know how to handle their differences of opinion. This is a major cause of early breakdown of partnerships; two out of five marriages fail within the first four years. The paper quotes counselor Rosemarie Breindl as saying: "There are hardly any models who show by example how to solve conflicts." The report adds: "Hence, there is a growing willingness to dispense

with marriage problems simply by separation."

Keep Work in Its Place

Ulcers, heart ailments, nervous exhaustion, absenteeism, and accidents—these are the price of too much stress, which costs both the employee and the employer. According to a report by the French International Office of Labor, work-related stress has become "one of the most serious problems of our time." In Europe, staff reductions and the increasing responsibilities of employees, together with the desire for increased production and profits,



have markedly increased stress in the workplace, notes the French medical journal *Le Concours Médical*, adding that some in France are even dying from overwork. Interestingly, several studies show that an individual best resists stress when he cultivates warm and loving friendships with those around him. Doctors also recommend relaxation, physical exercise, a balanced diet, and keeping work in its place—reserving time for family and recreation.

Police Learn About Cults

Police officers from around the country gathered in Rhode Island, U.S.A., earlier this year for a three-day conference on an unusual subject: satanic worship, cults, and witchcraft. The New York *Daily News* reported that

the purpose of the seminar was to train veteran police officers to detect the violence perpetrated by such cults. Sergeant Edmund Pierce of the Warwick Police Department is quoted as saying: "What we're doing is focusing on crimes ranging from cruelty to animals, grave desecrations and robberies, to assaults, ritualistic child abuse and even murder." The *Daily News* quotes Dr. Carl Raschke, a professor at the University of Denver, as commenting: "I see a lot more violent cults forming, and violent abuse occurring in the guise of occult beliefs." Experts at the seminar also warned that such hate groups as the neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan are using occult trappings to attract members and gain more control over them.

A Lethal Trade Makes a Comeback

Despite some gains in recent years, conservation efforts in India have been set back by poachers, reports *India Today*. In 1988 there were an estimated 4,500 tigers left in the wild in India. By 1992, that number had been reduced to 1,500. The tiger is sold for its skin, its blood, its bones (which are used in folk medicines), its claws, and even its genitals. But the tiger is not the only victim of the army of poachers. Forty-eight Indian rhino were slaughtered for their horns in 1992, the highest number in decades. Indian elephants have plummeted in numbers from 5,000 ten years ago to about 1,500 today. Forest guards are reportedly so fearful of today's heavily armed poachers that some no longer wear their official uniforms; others refuse outright to do their job until they are properly equipped to defend themselves.

From Our Readers

Failed Romance I am 17 years old and have found the article "Young People Ask... How Can I Cope With a Failed Romance?" (May 8, 1993) to be very helpful. I was always depressed about not being loved by someone. Now I am putting my mind on other things and am not worrying about getting married so soon.

S. M., Australia

I got involved with a boy who is not a Christian and found myself falling in love. I came to my senses and broke up with him, but I had suicidal feelings. I felt I couldn't live without him and was depressed for weeks. The article helped me to think positively and to know that this painful period will soon pass.

A. H., United States

Recipes Your article "New Zealand's Fuzzy Little Fruit" (October 22, 1992) gave a recipe using orange liqueur as an ingredient. Your readers should be reminded that they should not drive immediately after eating anything containing alcohol.

J. S., United States

Certainly it would be appropriate to inform guests if a food item contains alcohol. The recipe in question called for a tablespoon of orange liqueur in a fruit salad serving up to six people—which would not be an intoxicating dose. The danger of intoxication is even less in recipes that call for cooking the ingredients. Since alcohol has a low boiling point, most, if not all, will evaporate.—ED.

Joshua's Wish Thank you for publishing the article "Joshua's Wish." (June 22, 1993) It was encouraging to me. If he could be that faithful with a deadly disease [leukemia], how easy it is for me to be faithful too! I am nine years old.

M. M., United States

I was deeply moved by "Joshua's Wish." His courage, faith, and love for Jehovah touched me very much.

K. M., United States

Modern-Day Martyrs I have just finished reading the series of articles entitled "Victorious in the Face of Death." (May 8, 1993) I am moved by the unjust atrocities suffered by our Christian brothers. As I reflect on their perseverance, my face is streaked with tears. What strikes me is their faith and loyalty even in the face of death. May Jehovah give us the strength and perseverance to continue being loyal, just as they were.

B. D., Italy

In my study of the Bible, when I first encountered the issue of keeping faith under trial, I could not accept that there are indeed instances in which we face severe tests of faith. But having read the touching experiences of Christians who kept their integrity in the face of death, I can't hold back my tears. My deepest appreciation for this series of articles.

J. P., Philippines

Family Planning Your series of articles "Family Planning—A Global Issue" (February 22, 1993) said that when progestin-only inserts are used [as a method of birth control], there is a possibility of its being abortive. My doctor says this is not true.

M. D., United States

Researchers do not know for sure exactly how progestin-only implants prevent pregnancy. Some believe they do so by preventing ovulation. Others claim there is evidence that they sometimes work by preventing a fertilized egg from attaching to the womb—hence, aborting the pregnancy. Since this method of birth control is not overtly abortive, Christian couples must decide for themselves whether they can conscientiously use it or not. (Galatians 6:5)
—ED.

Sold Out? A 25% Increase in Price

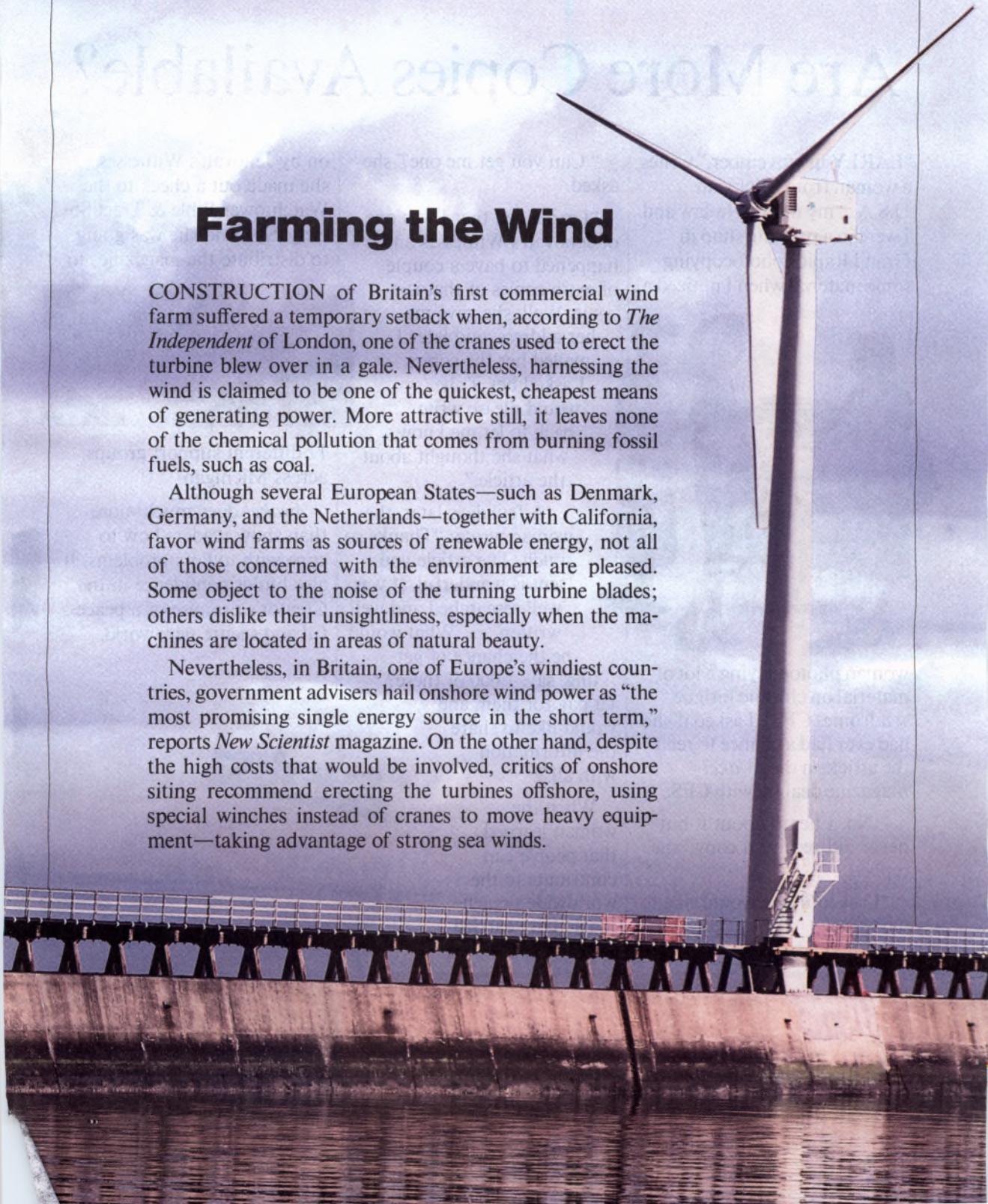
2000 Wind Turbines Sold Worldwide. 1000 Units in the U.S.

Farming the Wind

CONSTRUCTION of Britain's first commercial wind farm suffered a temporary setback when, according to *The Independent* of London, one of the cranes used to erect the turbine blew over in a gale. Nevertheless, harnessing the wind is claimed to be one of the quickest, cheapest means of generating power. More attractive still, it leaves none of the chemical pollution that comes from burning fossil fuels, such as coal.

Although several European States—such as Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands—together with California, favor wind farms as sources of renewable energy, not all of those concerned with the environment are pleased. Some object to the noise of the turning turbine blades; others dislike their unsightliness, especially when the machines are located in areas of natural beauty.

Nevertheless, in Britain, one of Europe's windiest countries, government advisers hail onshore wind power as "the most promising single energy source in the short term," reports *New Scientist* magazine. On the other hand, despite the high costs that would be involved, critics of onshore siting recommend erecting the turbines offshore, using special winches instead of cranes to move heavy equipment—taking advantage of strong sea winds.



Are More Copies Available?

"EARLY in November," writes a woman from Michigan, U.S.A., "my mother-in-law and I were in a printing shop in Grand Rapids photocopying some material when I noticed a



woman photocopying a lot of material on chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). I asked if she had ever had a chance to read the article in the *Awake!* magazine dealing with CFS.

"No. I heard about it but never did receive a copy," she replied.

"I asked if she would like to have one.

"Can you get me one?" she asked.

"I explained that I was one of Jehovah's Witnesses and happened to have a couple of extra copies of that issue. Well, she gave me her address, and later I mailed her the copies. I asked her if she would please write back to let me know what she thought about the article."

A few days later, the woman wrote: "Thanks so much. The article you sent is wonderful. It was well researched and well written. . . . What would be the chance of getting, say, 1,000 of these? I'd pay for them and would like to share the information with all."

When the woman learned that people can contribute to the worldwide preaching activity carried

on by Jehovah's Witnesses, she made out a check to the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society. She said she was going to distribute the magazines to



17 different support groups across Michigan.

Awake! does much more than show readers how to cope with today's problems. It also builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world.

