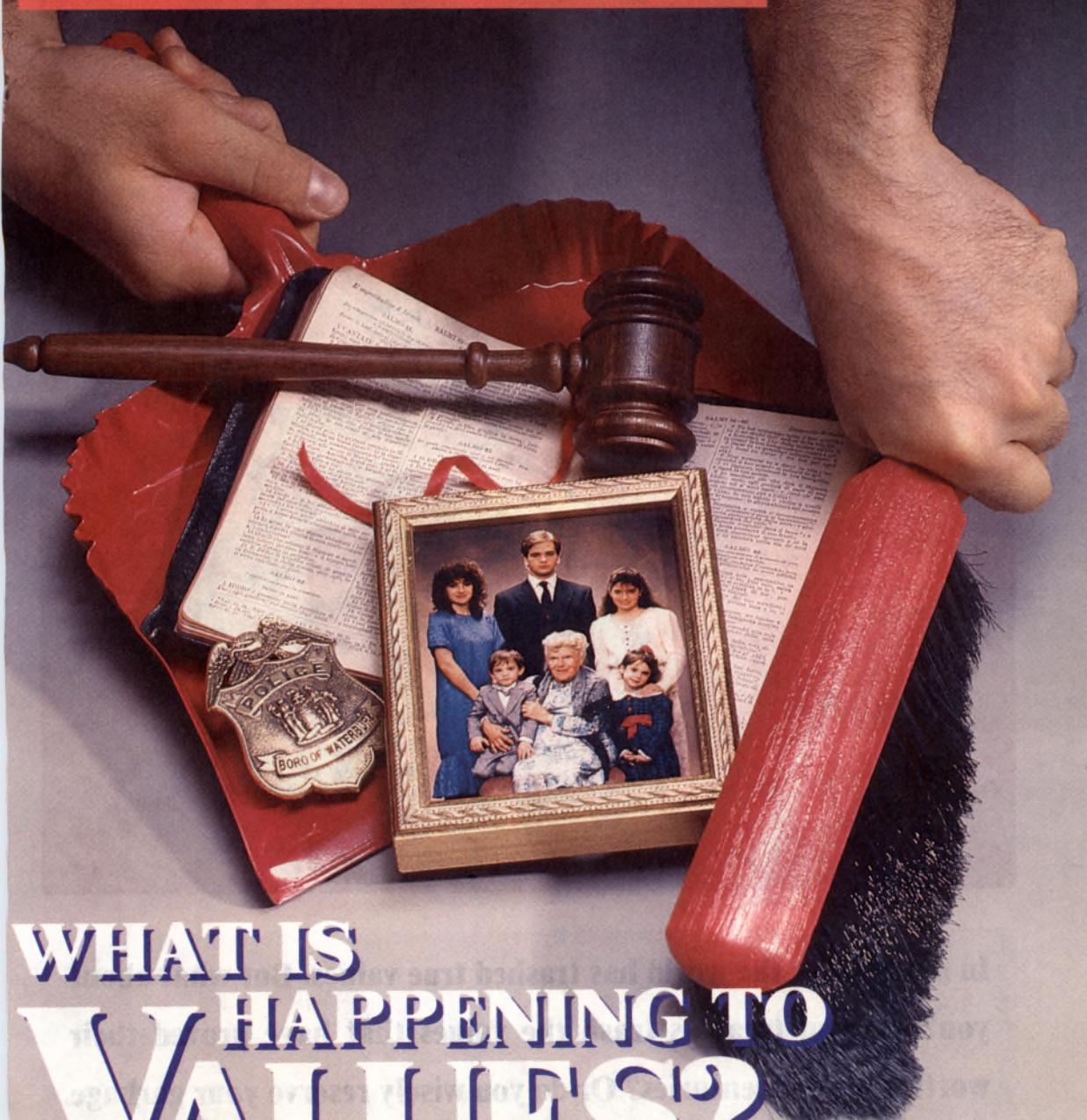


# Awake!

March 22, 1989



**WHAT IS  
HAPPENING TO  
VALUES?**



**In many ways the world has trashed true values. But what about you? Do you treat as trash the values that have proved their worth over the centuries? Or do you wisely reserve your garbage can for rubbish and keep values as a guiding force in your life?**

# WHAT IS HAPPENING TO VALUES?

**In a 1948 Armistice Day address, General Omar N. Bradley said: "We have too many men of science, too few men of God. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. . . . Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living." "Humanity," he said, "is in danger of being trapped in this world by moral adolescence."**

**A**T ONE time there were traditional values based on Biblical sources. But no more. Now they are pushed aside as no longer fashionable. New life-styles are in vogue. "Truth" is relative. There is no right or wrong anymore. No need to be judgmental. Each one has his own set of values, decides what is right for him, does his own thing. No-fault fornication. No-fault adultery. No-fault divorce. No-fault child neglect. And no blame for any of the consequences—the soaring teenage pregnancies, the millions of abortions, the ruined lives of children. And since there is no fault and no blame, there is no guilt. In these ways the world throws true values in the trash can.

The first human pair decided to determine for themselves what was right and what was wrong. (Genesis 2:17; 3:5) Today, millions have decided that there is no right and no wrong. Motivated by the wish to do as they please, they toss aside the traditional values and cry out: "Free at last! Anything goes!" What goes are the restraints—then the woes pour in!

A headline in a prominent magazine asks, "A Nation of Liars?" and follows up

with this blurb: "Government officials dissemble. Scientists falsify research. Workers alter career credentials to get jobs. What's going on here? The answer, a growing number of social critics fear, is an alarming decline in basic honesty."

Another major magazine runs a series of articles on ethics, sprinkled with such tidbits as: Scandal-scarred business deals, public trust betrayed, transgressions that run the gamut of human failings. Mistakes admitted, but not bad mistakes, and nothing so damning as sins.

That series of articles concludes: "If Americans wish to strike a truer ethical balance, they may need to re-examine the values that society so seductively parades before them: a top job, political power, sexual allure, a penthouse or lakefront spread, a killing on the market. The real challenge would then become a redefinition of wants so that they serve society as well as self, defining a single ethic that guides means while it also achieves rightful ends."

The following headline appeared in *The New York Times*: "Public Officials Around the State Accepted 105 of 106 Bribes Offered, the F.B.I. Says." Was the 106th bribe

offered to an honest man? No, "he didn't think the amount was enough."

Matthew Troy, former city councilman and Democratic Party leader from Queens, New York City, speaking on the subject "Corruption and Integrity in Government" told a university class that bribes are commonplace. State Assembly votes are swapped for judgeships. "The usual price for a judgeship on the State Supreme Court was \$75,000, with lower court posts going for \$35,000."

Novelist James A. Michener highlights such shenanigans as: glorifying financial adventurers who amass hundreds of millions of other people's money, insider-trading scandals, takeover artists orchestrating green-mail coups, scandalous religious forces running amok for money, AIDS frightening the populace, terrorists disrupting society, politicians savaging national parks and permitting ecological disasters, an administration that sells arms to a proclaimed enemy and then illegally funnels the profits into a Central American revolution.

Michener's overall conclusion: "The 1980's will have to be remembered as The Ugly Decade, because so many distasteful things have surfaced." And all of this because of one simple development: True values have been tossed into the trash can.

William J. Bennett, then U.S. Secretary of Education, criticized the failure to teach moral values in school and itemized teenage problems that result from this omission:

"Item: Some forty percent of today's 14-year-olds will be pregnant at least once before the age of twenty, and more than half of those births will be illegitimate.

"Item: Teenage suicide is at a record high, and is the second leading cause of teenage deaths.

"Item: The United States leads the industrialized world in the percentage of youthful drug users.

"Can our schools 'solve' these problems? No. Can they help? Yes. Are they doing as much as they can to help? No.

"Why not? In part, because they are reluctant to address one of the chief goals of education: moral education. Take, for example, a recent article quoting several New York area educators proclaiming that 'they deliberately avoid trying to tell students what is ethically right and wrong.'

"The article tells of an actual counseling session involving fifteen high school juniors and seniors. During the session the students concluded that a fellow student had been foolish to return \$1,000 she found in a purse at the school." The counselor did not pass judgment on their con-

#### WHY "AWAKE!" IS PUBLISHED

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

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

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clusion, explaining: "If I come from the position of what is right and what is wrong, then I'm not their counselor."

Bennett's comment: "Once upon a time, a counselor offered counsel. He counseled students about many things—and among them, about right and wrong."

### **Failure of Homes, Schools, Churches**

The home is rapidly becoming a wasteland as far as the teaching of values is concerned. The disintegration of families makes the home a poor schoolroom—both parents working, divorces, single-parent families with the parent working, children left to sitters or day-care schools or alone in empty homes with TV as a companion pushing sex for fun and teaching violence as the solution to problems. Syndicated columnist Norman Podhoretz comments on the results: "These effects include a rise in criminal behavior; a rise in drug and alcohol use; a rise in teenage pregnancy, abortion and venereal disease, and a rise in the adolescent death rate from violent causes (homicide, motor vehicle accidents, suicide). The only thing that seems to have declined is academic achievement."

Podhoretz continues: "Two sociologists find hard statistical evidence for what we all know simply from looking around. They find more and more people for whom 'self-

fulfillment' takes precedence over all other values. They find fewer and fewer people who believe in sacrificing themselves, or even their own convenience, to the needs and demands of their children. An astonishing two-thirds of all American parents feel that 'parents should be free to live their own lives even if it means spending less time with their children.'"

John D. Garwood, when dean of instruction at Fort Hays State University, Kansas, commented on the loss of true values: "The failure of our homes, schools and churches to transmit a solid, lasting value system for those they influence, has brought about many of our problems today. The great British historian Arnold Toynbee sees in the Western World today a decline in honesty, lack of national purpose and a disastrous emphasis upon materialism, a decline in pride of workmanship, a dedication to a high consumption level with an emphasis upon self-gratification. He sees in our nation's life styles many of the elements which led to the fall of the Roman empire."

The trashing of true values has left this world in a mindless pursuit of more of everything. Rich in things but poor in spirit, man is left floundering and directionless. His rescue lies in a return to the source of true values.

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# THE SOURCE OF TRUE VALUES

A MORAL code is present in all human societies. Whether they wish to admit it or not, all peoples feel a need for a guiding force above and beyond themselves. They instinctively look to a higher power to worship or serve. It may be the sun, the moon, a star, a mountain, a river, an animal, a man, or an organization. Their moral code may be set forth in one of the many sacred writings of different cultures. The need is found in people everywhere. It is instinctive in man.

"Religion," according to prominent psychiatrist C. G. Jung, "is an *instinctive attitude* peculiar to man, and its manifestations can be followed all through human history." The well-known scientist Fred Hoyle wrote of "the moral code present in all human societies" and added: "It would be easy to build a considerable argument to show that the moral sense in man persists despite all the temptations [and persecutions] which constantly work against it."

The best known and most widely circulated of all the sacred writings, the Bible, recognizes this inherent moral sense in man. It says at Romans 2:14, 15: "For whenever people of the nations that do not have law do by nature the things of the law, these people, although not having law, are a law to themselves. They are the very ones who demonstrate the matter of the law to be written in their hearts, while their conscience is bearing witness with them and, between their own thoughts, they are being accused or even excused."

Hoyle considers evolution "an open charter for any form of opportunistic behaviour," and he continues: "Frankly, I am haunted by a conviction that the nihilistic philosophy which so-called educated opinion chose to adopt following the publication of *The Origin of Species* committed mankind to a course of automatic self-destruction. A Doomsday machine was then set ticking. . . . The number of people who nowadays sense that something is fundamentally amiss with society is not small, but sadly they dissipate their energies in protesting against one inconsequential matter after another."

## **Intelligence Behind Life's Origin**

Then, with mathematical precision, Hoyle proceeds to show that the probabilities for life to have originated on earth by chance are nil. Orthodox scientists, he says, have been turned away from the idea of a creative force by "the religious excesses of the past." But Hoyle believes that life was created by some intelligent force out in universal space. He believes that what was impossible on earth was possible in outer space—but he postulates that even out there some kind of intelligence was at work. Even the simplest form of life, a bacterium, is so amazingly complex that intelligence had to be involved in its creation, but he can't bring himself to call that intelligence God.

Others who "sense that something is fundamentally amiss with society" are not so reluctant to do so. One of such is psychia-

trist Jung, previously quoted: "The individual who is not anchored in God can offer no resistance on his own resources to the physical and moral blandishments of the world. For this he needs the evidence of inner, transcendent experience which alone can protect him from the otherwise inevitable submersion in the mass."

Presiding Justice Francis T. Murphy of the Appellate Division says that modern man "does not know the ultimate meaning of his life and doubts that life has any meaning. Whatever his moral pretensions may be, he has in fact driven God out of his life, out of his office, out of his home. He therefore lacks a moral center." From the sports world, Howard Cosell voiced the same opinion when discussing the problem

## VALUES TO LIVE BY

- Love Jehovah God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.
- Love your neighbor as yourself.
- Do to others as you want others to do to you.
- Follow Jesus as your Exemplar.
- Forgive others as you want to be forgiven.
- Honor your father and your mother.
- In honor preferring others.
- Be faithful in all your dealings.
- Pursue peace with all.
- Seek mildness, kindness, self-control.
- Return evil for evil to no man.
- Be conquering the evil with the good.
- Do not worship false gods.
- Do not bow down to images.
- Do not commit murder.
- Do not steal.
- Do not bear false witness.
- Do not take God's name in vain.
- Do not covet your neighbor's belongings.
- Do not let the sun go down on your wrath.

of drug abuse by athletes. He said: "There is no definable moral center in America anymore . . . and that is a problem for the entire culture."

"It is impossible," says syndicated columnist Georgie Anne Geyer, "to have a moral community or nation without faith in God, because everything rapidly comes down to 'me,' and 'me' alone is meaningless. . . . When 'me' becomes the measure of all things—at the expense of God, of church, of family and of the accepted norms of civil and civic human behavior—we are in trouble."

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said that if asked to identify in a few words the principal trait of the 20th century, he would say: "Men have forgotten God." He continued: "The entire twentieth century is being sucked into the vortex of atheism and self-destruction. . . . All attempts to find a way out of the plight of today's world are fruitless unless we redirect our consciousness, in repentance, to the Creator of all: without this, no exit will be illumined, and we shall seek it in vain."

For six thousand years, man has tried it his way, deciding what is right and what is wrong. Now the modern trend is to do your own thing—there is no right and wrong. History has recorded the horrendous consequences of both ways, proving that it is not in man to direct his steps. "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." (*Proverbs 14:12, Revised Standard Version*; *Jeremiah 10:23*) Jehovah God made man, knows him inside and out, and has provided the map to happiness: "Your word is a lamp to my foot, and a light to my roadway." (*Psalm 119:105*) His Word, the Bible, identifies the true values for man's blessing. The accompanying box lists some of the dos and don'ts.

# WHAT VALUES GOVERN YOUR LIFE?

BEFORE answering that question, you may need to consider this one: What do you want out of life? Riches, fame, excitement, sensational adventure, sexual fulfillment? Or perhaps your goal is a reputation for honesty, charity, compassion, public service, spirituality? Whatever it is, this Biblical rule holds true: 'Whatever you are sowing, that is what you will reap.'—Galatians 6:7.

If you trash true values, you must be willing to live with the consequences. Superior Court judge Paul R. Huot pinpoints some of them. Citing a drift away from respect for law, social decorum, and discipline, he said: "Things aren't black and white anymore. Everything is gray. We've lost good manners. We've lost courtesy. We've lost decency. Fewer people recognize the difference between right and wrong. The sin now is getting caught, not the violation."

As knowledge grows and power increases, there is greater need for morality to govern their use. (Proverbs 24:5) Unfortunately, the increase of knowledge and power has been accompanied by a collapse in morality. Historian Arnold Toynbee comments on this: "It is tragic to think that we have been so successful in the technological field, whereas our record of moral failures is almost immeasurable. . . . If the morality gap continues to widen, I foresee a time when private citizens may be walking round with pocket atomic bombs."

The current trend is to devalue true values and relegate sin to the garbage dump. The attitude is the same as that of the adulterous woman of Proverbs 30:20: "Here is the way of an adulterous woman: she has eaten and has wiped her mouth and she has said: 'I have committed no wrong.'" But sin is still with us, hale and hearty, only operating under such aliases as openness, freedom, relativism, values clarification, non-judgmentalism—all summed up as "the new morality."

## ***Making Wrong Look Right***

Nothing has really changed since Isaiah's time. His words are still on target: "Woe to those who are saying that good is bad and bad is good, those who are putting darkness for light and light for darkness, those who are putting bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20) To make the wrongs look right, they change the marks on the thermometer to make the fever normal.

Which values produce good results? Which ones make you happy, produce loyal friends, make for inner peace and contentment? Do you want a reputation for honesty, truthfulness, concern for others? To be liked, respected, loved? Or do you value more the having of unlimited possessions, to taste the power of great wealth? Is the satisfaction of fleshly desires of paramount importance? Is it vital for you to concentrate on self-fulfillment?

Illicit sex is widespread, enjoying a pat of approval from the media and society in general. But how destructive to marriage and family and the welfare of children! Growing out of this sexual permissiveness are the gross extremes of unnatural homosexual perversions so rampant today and which are tolerated and even sanctioned by some of the mainstream religions of Christendom. Relative to such practices, God's Word asks and answers: "Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush."—Jeremiah 6:15, *New International Version*.

Jesus stressed the spiritual need, saying: "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need, since the kingdom of the heavens belongs to them." (Matthew 5:3) But many dismiss this need as of little value and do nothing to fulfill it; yet lives devoid of it end up being superficial. Even with many worldly accomplishments, such lives are still superficial and lacking in genuine happiness and contentment of spirit. And sadly, those aware of the need and seeking its fulfillment in the churches of Christendom come away empty, for in Christendom there is, as the prophet Amos foretold, "a famine, not for bread, and a thirst, not for water, but for hearing the words of Jehovah."—Amos 8:11.

Moreover, many in the churches are not in the mood for healthful spiritual teaching, but 'in accord with their own desires, they accumulate teachers for themselves to have their ears tickled; and they turn their ears away from the truth, whereas they are turned aside to false stories.' (2 Timothy 4:3, 4) Both clergy and laity feel as did those in Isaiah's day, saying to those seeing the spiritual need: "'You must not see,' and to the ones having visions, 'You must not en-

vision for us any straightforward things. Speak to us smooth things; envision deceptive things. Turn aside from the way; deviate from the path. Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease just on account of us.'"—Isaiah 30:10, 11.

Godly values need to be deep within you. If your decision is to reflect the true values recommended by God, the formula for you to follow is outlined in God's Word: "Strip off the old personality with its practices, and clothe yourselves with the new personality, which through accurate knowledge is being made new according to the image of the One who created it."—Colossians 3:9, 10.

However, you may have no confidence in the Bible as being God's Word. You may have been turned off by such doctrines as eternal torment for immortal souls in a fiery hell, or by the higher criticism that brushes the Bible aside as mere myth, or by the pious, hypocritical, money-grabbing misconduct of preachers falsely claiming to represent it.

#### Peace like a river



Personal investigation will show that "the wages sin pays is death," not torment in fire; that modern archaeology confirms the Bible as accurate history, not myth; that many of Christendom's clergy are like the false clergy of Bible times, not the faithful prophets and apostles of those days.—Romans 6:23; Matthew, chapters 5–7, 23.

The Bible is the source of true values. Allowing them to govern your life will mean God's approval and will lead to everlasting life in a new world of righteousness, where "he will wipe out every tear from [mankind's] eyes, and death will be

no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."—Revelation 21:4; John 17:3.

So let the true values extolled in God's Word govern your life, thereby benefiting yourself: "I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk. O if only you would actually pay attention to my commandments! Then your peace would become just like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea."—Isaiah 48:17, 18.

## RELIGION'S FUTURE IN VIEW OF ITS PAST

Part 6: 1513 B.C.E. Onward

# Religious Best-Sellers

"Our religion is in a book."  
Samuel Johnson, 18th-century English  
essayist and poet

EVERY major religion has its book or books. Whereas they may "vary greatly in form, volume, age, and degree of sacredness," says *The New Encyclopædia Britannica*, "their common attribute is that their words are regarded by the devout as sacred." The very existence of so many sacred books proves in itself that mankind is basically religious in makeup.

The Bible (of Christianity), the Koran (of Islam), the Talmud (of Judaism), the Vedas (of Hinduism), and the Tripitaka (of Bud-

dhisim) are official sacred writings of major religions.\*

Other books, while not recognized by any organized religions as their official holy books, are nonetheless religious in nature. This is true of the *Kojiki* and the *Nihongi*, books that for centuries have had a tremendous impact on Japanese life and on Shinto. Chinese life has been similarly influenced by the 13 Confucian Classics. The latter are

\* This article will discuss only the books themselves; future articles will discuss in more detail the religions that use them.

based on the teachings of Confucius, a Chinese sage who was scarcely a teenager when Babylon fell to Medo-Persia in 539 B.C.E. The basic textbook of Confucianism, the Analects (*Lun yü*), is said to contain in its 496 chapters the words of Confucius himself.

More recent religious writings have also attained sacred status. Some are considered necessary additions to accepted scripture. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for example, believe that the Book of Mormon was written on gold plates by a prophet named Mormon; that it was later buried by his son Moroni; and that some 1,400 years later, during the first half of the 19th century, it was found by an angel and given to Joseph Smith, who translated it.

The book *Science and Health With Key to the Scriptures*, by Mary Baker Eddy, first published in 1875 as *Science and Health*, is viewed similarly. For years she opposed having her book translated into other languages but finally relented, stipulating: "This new edition shall be printed with alternate pages of English and German, one side to contain the *divinely inspired English version* which shall be the standard, the other to contain the German text which shall be a translation."—Italics ours.

Even nonreligious books have been elevated to the status of sacred scripture. In this category are the 19th- and 20th-century writings of men like Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, and Mao Tse-tung, whose ideas on evolution and communism are religiously championed by millions of people.

#### **Establishing a Canon**

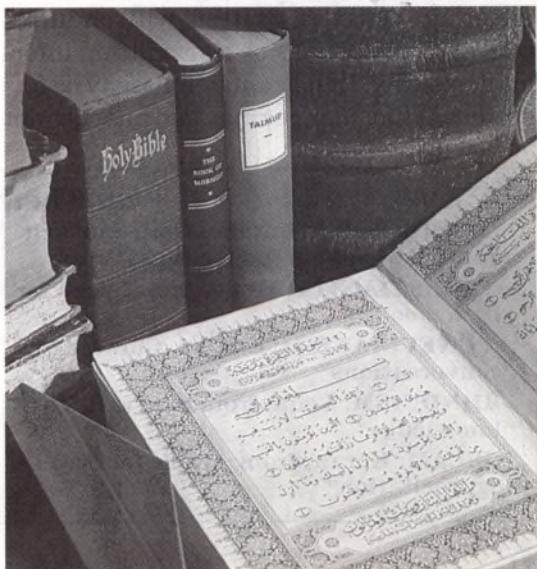
Most sacred writings were originally handed down by word of mouth, sometimes for centuries. But generally, at some point, it was considered necessary to determine

what parts of the accumulated material—either oral or written—were to serve as the official canon of a particular religion. The word "canon" is defined as "a collection or authoritative list of books accepted as holy scripture."

Establishing a uniform canon was not easy, at times not even possible. For example, *The Encyclopedia of Religion* calls Buddhist literature unique among the religious scriptures of the world because there are a number of canons. It says: "The scriptural collections vary from one another in significant ways, and there are few texts that can be found in every tradition." This confusion resulted in the formation of sectarian groups and in what history calls the "Eighteen Schools" of Buddhist thought.

Hinduism, on the other hand, makes a distinction between an accepted canon and other material granted semisacred status. That class of Hindu sacred writings called the Sruti, meaning "learning by hearing," refers to the primary revelation and includes the Vedas and the Upanishads. The

#### **The Bible and the Koran are among the religious best-sellers**



Smṛti, meaning "recollection," complements the Sruti, explaining it and enlarging upon it. So the Smṛti is considered secondary, semicanonical, although in actuality Hindus derive most of what they know about their religion from it.

Professed Christians have also had difficulties in establishing a canon for the Bible. The Roman Catholic Church and most Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches view some or all of 13 additional writings as deuterocanonical, meaning "of the second (or later) canon." Protestants call them apocryphal, which originally meant "carefully concealed" because they were not read publicly but today implies that their authenticity is doubtful. James H. Charlesworth of Princeton Theological Seminary says: "When the canons of scripture were closed, first by Jewish and then by Christian authorities, these writings were not included, and they quickly began to lose their influence and importance." It was not until 1546 that the Council of Trent declared them part of the Bible canon.

### **"Wat schrift, blifft"**

This rhyming Low German proverb, meaning "what is written will endure," points up the pitfalls of transmitting information orally. Important details may be forgotten; slight changes may add nuances not

originally intended. Thus, it is significant that of sacred books, the Bible was one of the first to be put into writing. In fact, Moses completed its first section in 1513 B.C.E.<sup>80</sup>

By contrast, according to *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, the Upanishads, an extension of the Vedas dating from the eighth to the fourth century B.C.E. and compiled in Sanskrit, were "first put into written form in 1656 CE." But this was not a case of negligence. It was intentional. Historian Will Durant explains: "The Vedas and the epics were songs that grew with the generations of those that recited them; they were intended not for sight but for sound."<sup>81</sup>

Some Hindus and Buddhists still claim that only oral recitation of scripture gives it maximum meaning and significance. They place great emphasis on mantras, words or formulas with supposedly inherent powers of salvation. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* says that "by pronouncing a *mantra* in the correct manner it is believed that one may induce or even coerce the gods to bestow upon the devotee magical and spiritual powers not available to him otherwise."

### **Whose Word, and for How Many?**

Not all sacred scriptures lay claim to divine authorship or ask to be widely distributed and made available to all peoples. For example, the Hindu Upanishads (meaning

### **What Their Names Mean**

**BUDDHISM:** Tripitaka, from Sanskrit for "three baskets [collections]"

**CHRISTIANITY:** Bible, from Greek for "little books"

**CONFUCIANISM:** *Lun yü*, Chinese for "conversations"

**HINDUISM:** Veda, from Sanskrit for "knowledge"

**ISLAM:** Koran, from Arabic for "reading, recitation"

**JUDAISM:** Talmud, from Hebrew for "study, learning"

**SHINTŌ:** *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*, Japanese for "records of ancient matters" and "chronicles of Japan"

**TAOISM:** *Tao-te Ching*, Chinese for "classic of the way of power"

**ZOROASTRIANISM:** Avesta, named after Avestan, dead Iranian language in which it was written

## *How They Compare in Size*

Some religious best-sellers are extremely lengthy. A major exception is the Koran, which is about one fourth the size of the Bible. Just one collection of Hindu sacred works, called the Samhitas, is estimated to contain upwards of a million stanzas. In comparison, the *King James*

*Version* contains only 31,102 verses. And whereas the *King James* has 773,746 words, the Babylonian Talmud has some 2.5 million. Even more voluminous, the Chinese Buddhist canon is said to cover nearly a hundred thousand printed pages.

"sitting near") came to be called such because religious teachers were accustomed to confiding secret doctrines to their best and favorite pupils, to those "sitting near." "The term *upaniṣad* thus connotes an element of esotericism," explains *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, adding: "In fact, the Upaniṣads state explicitly that such lessons are not intended for the general population . . . [but] were to be heard by only select ears."

Likewise, the Arabic Koran was considered by Muhammad to be a book intended solely for the Arabs. This was despite the fact that the one represented as speaking is almost exclusively God himself, the Creator of all peoples. Translating the Koran into other languages is considered unfitting; therefore, only the Arabic text can be recited and used for ritual purposes. This may remind some Catholics that prior to the Second Vatican Council, held in the 1960's, only Latin could be used in Roman Catholic liturgy.

The Bible, on the other hand, makes clear that its message is not to be restricted to any one group. This is in keeping with its claim that it is not "the word of men, but . . . the word of God." (1 Thessalonians 2:13) Its proponents strive to distribute it widely, reasoning that every individual has equal right to benefit from his Creator's words of wisdom. So by the end of 1987, it had been translated, at least in part, into 1,884 languages or dialects. In 1977 *The Book of*

*Lists* estimated the Bible's circulation to be 2,458 million copies, saying, however, that 3,000 million would probably be more correct.

## *Religions—Judged by Their Books*

In 1933 English philosopher Alfred Whitehead wrote: "No religion can be considered in abstraction from its followers." Accordingly, on the basis of the kind of people it produces, a religion can be judged as true or false, good or bad. And, of course, the sacred scriptures it professes to follow—to the extent that their teachings are applied—has much to do with molding its believers into what they are.

Sacred scriptures should offer proper guidance. They should—as the Bible expresses it—be "beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness," assisting people to become "fully competent, completely equipped for every good work."

—2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

How do religious best-sellers measure up? To what extent, for example, have Hindu and Buddhist sacred writings equipped their readers to cope with life's problems? To find out, we must turn to India, of which historian Durant says: "In no other country is religion so powerful, or so important." In our April issues, two articles dealing with this fascinating subject will appear, the first entitled "Hinduism—Your Name Is Tolerance."

# India's Holy Ganga

## Why Worshiped by Millions?

By "Awake!" correspondent in India

*The Ganges River, or Ganga as it is known in India, has been revered by Hindus throughout history as the holiest river in the world. For centuries millions of worshipers have flocked to its banks. Why do people come? What are they seeking? A brief look at the river in this article will help in finding the answer.*

**A**T THE holy city of Hardwar, near the Himalayan foothills, a shining white Mercedes-Benz swerves through the narrow streets. Carefully, it overtakes bicycle rickshas, horsedrawn tongas, scooters, and pedestrians. Finally, near the edge of the city, the vehicle halts at a spot overlooking the Ganga.

Although the river is heavily polluted downstream, here at Hardwar, the blue-green waters, arriving fresh from a downward journey through the mountains, provide a pleasant feast for the eyes. But it is not for mere sight-seeing that the car has come this far.

The car door opens and out comes an obviously well-educated, modern Indian family. As the mother straightens her scarlet sari, her gold bangles and necklaces catch sunrays and glimmer brightly. The father locks his car and gathers the children, all clad in fashionable jeans and sports clothing. From mere appearances, there is prosperity and an apparent freedom from the anxieties plaguing the poor. Yet, like those from far more modest backgrounds, they have come to worship the goddess Ganga, hoping to benefit from her powers.

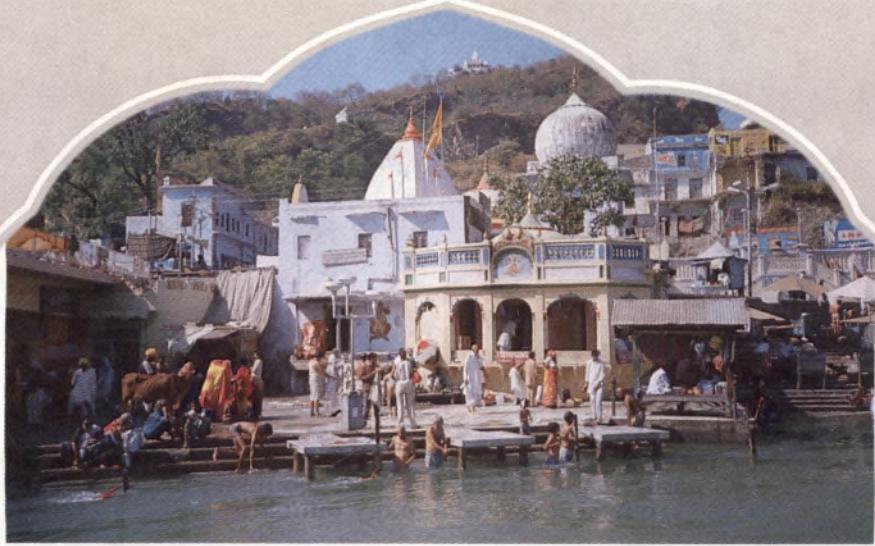
Near the sacred bathing ghat of Hari Ki

Pauri, they remove their shoes and then descend the steps to the river. In a moment, they are lost among the multitude of colorful saris and other regional garb. Here, on any given day, a cross section of India's people, rich and poor, come to Ganga's banks. They are drawn by a basic spiritual need, one that has parallels worldwide.

### Sacred Rituals and Fearless Devotion

At the bathing area, priests are eagerly waiting to assist the pilgrims in performing the rituals of Ganga puja (worship). They offer flowers and chant prayers. Then the priest applies a mark, or tilak, of red or yellow paste to the foreheads of the worshipers. Next comes a remarkable display of fearless devotion.

The cold, rushing waters of a November day do not deter the pilgrims. Bravely, young and old enter the chilling river. Savoring this perhaps once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, they allow Ganga's waters to numb their bodies. Even young children, in the arms of cautious parents, are dunked in the water. Shivering but satisfied, the bathers step out to warm themselves before Surya, the sun-god. Later, they will visit some of Hardwar's numerous temples



**Amid numerous temples and shrines, people of all types come to bathe in the Ganga**

or perhaps head upstream 16 miles to Rishikesh. There, dozens of ashrams line Ganga's banks, and foreigners flock for meditation and Yoga studies.

By nightfall, the pilgrims have returned to the bathing area for a time of special worship. Family groups and couples come with sturdy little boats made from green leaves. These are filled with colorful marigolds, fragrant rose petals, and a small clay

cup with a wick. One young couple slip off their footwear, pray together, light the wick, and gently deposit their boat in the rushing waters. Like many newly married people, they may have asked Ganga's blessing of a healthy young son. After making petitions, others likewise launch their small vessels. Soon a flotilla of bobbing lights fill the water and are quickly carried downstream by the strong current.

Suddenly, the evening peace is broken by the furious clanging of temple bells. The din continues for some minutes while the priests wave flaming lamps at the river's edge and chant praises to Ganga. Thus concludes another day of worship and devotion.

#### ***"Drinking at Your Mother's Breast"***

Unquestionably, the Ganga is unique among rivers but not for its physical attributes. Nearly 30 rivers in the world are longer, and in India itself, the Brahmaputra and Indus rivers are far larger. Yet, from its humble glacial origin to its sweeping exit into the Bay of Bengal, Ganga is worshiped along its entire 1,678-mile length. A third of the country's 800 million people live in the Ganga river basin and are materially dependent on the river for food,





A pantheon of Hindu gods and goddesses at one of Hardwar's many temples

water, and irrigation. Far more than any other river, Ganga symbolizes India.

So to Hindu believers, Ganga is *Ganga Ma*, or Mother Ganges. The river is viewed as a faithful mother who feeds and cleanses her children, both spiritually and physically. Hence, Indian poet Tulsidas described Ganga as *bhukti mukti dayini*, namely, the giver of both salvation and material enjoyment. Drinking from her, is "like drinking at your mother's breast," said one devotee. Such feelings reflect the intimate relationship between the river and its worshipers. So strong has this bond been that pilgrims of years past unhesitatingly gave their 'life sacrifice' by deliberately drowning themselves in its waters.

This idealistic picture takes on a new character and color today. Twisting its way past prospering cities, the Ganga absorbs a steady invasion of sewage and chemicals. One civil engineer, bemoaning the situation, commented: "The poor simply defecate into the river, the rich dispose of industrial wastes and the religious throw their dead bodies into it." It is estimated that at least ten thousand dead bodies are thrown into the river each day. Yet, daily at the city of Varanasi (Banaras), elated bathers take ritual dips in the now murky, brown water, oblivious to the floating debris from nearby cremation sites. Confi-

dently, they perform *achaman*, the swallowing of a bit of Ganga water as part of sun worship.

"I will continue taking the holy dip till I die," said one scientist who resides next to the Ganga. "But everytime I do *achaman* . . . , there is a tremendous conflict within me." Commenting on this statement, one Indian magazine noted: "As a scientist, Professor Mishra knows that the water he is swallowing is contaminated. But Mahant Veerbhadrā Mishra cannot but sip the holy water of the Ganga and perhaps, there is no better example of the feelings which Hindus have towards the Ganga."

Why are Hindu worshipers so devoted to the Ganga? Such devotion may be a puzzle-  
ment to those unacquainted with the myth of its legendary origin and the powers credited to its waters. In these lie the secrets of the mystical hold of the Ganga on its people.

#### **Descent From the Heavens—Why?**

The legend of the Ganga is as elaborately woven as any of the stories of Hindu gods and goddesses. Exact details vary, but, briefly, the story goes like this:

King Sagara had 60,000 sons, who were killed by the sage Kapila. Their souls were condemned to roam the earth forever unless the goddess Ganga would come down



A young woman prepares to launch her leaf boat on the Ganga

from heaven to cleanse them and release them from the curse. On account of penance done by another king, Bhagirathi, Ganga came to earth and was caught in the god Shiva's hair—the Himalayan snow peaks. From there, she rushed to the sea, and her waters purified the souls of King Sagara's 60,000 sons and restored them to paradise.

Therein lies the answer to why millions have visited and worshiped the Ganga for centuries. Ganga, according to her worshipers, has the power of release, purification, cleansing, and cure. An ancient Hindu writing, *The Brahmandapurana*, states: "Those who bathe devoutly once in the pure currents of the Ganga, their tribes are protected by Her from hundreds of thousands of dangers. Evils accumulated through generations are destroyed. Just by bathing in the Ganga one gets immediately purified." Further, by drinking Ganga's water, it is said, immortality is attained. Dying at the Ganga, being cremated on its banks, and having one's ashes thrown into the river is thought to lead to eternal bliss. The soul—believed by many to be immortal—is said to be released from the cycle of rebirths, so that it can finally rest, merging with the very essence of god.

#### Curing of All Nations Near

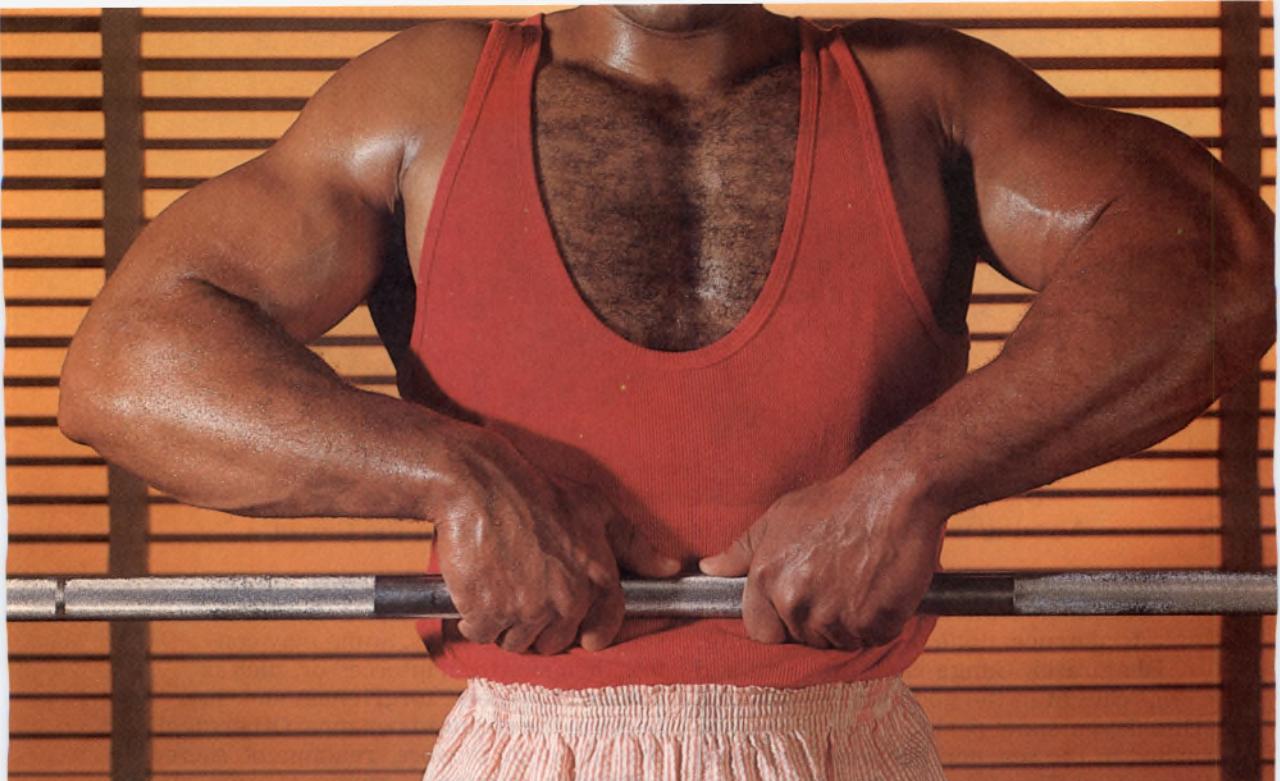
The desire for spiritual cleansing and release from suffering seems basic to humans

everywhere. In other areas of the world, such salvation, or *mukti*, is sought in other ways. Some may confess their sins to an intercessor, such as a priest, to receive forgiveness and then perform the required penance. Others feel that through prayers, reading of sacred scriptures, sacrifices, giving of gifts and alms, or self-denial a man can be purged of his errors and receive blessings after death. But with such conflicting ideas, is there any sure way to find a release from sin and death?

Interestingly, an ancient book of sacred writings, the Bible, also speaks of mankind's spiritual cleansing and healing in connection with a river. The prophet and writer John saw a vision of "a river of water of life" issuing forth from the throne of God. Instead of bathers, along its banks were bountiful fruit trees "for the curing of the nations."—Revelation 22:1, 2.

Symbolically, the Bible here speaks about the Creator's marvelous provision to free mankind from sin and death forever and to provide life everlasting. Under this provision, multitudes who have bathed in Ganga's waters—along with millions who have never seen the Ganga—will have opportunity for cleansing from sin and release from death in the very near future.\*

\* See the booklet *Victory Over Death—Is It Possible for You?* available from the publishers of this magazine.



# S T E R O I D S

## What They Do for You and to You

**S**TEROIDS! The very word cast a long scandalous shadow over the 1988 Olympic Games held in Seoul, Republic of Korea. A number of hope-filled athletes were suspended by the International Olympic Committee for the alleged use of the drug. The world's fastest sprinter in the 100-meter final basked in the glory of his gold medal—but not for long. Tests taken after the race revealed steroid use. He lost his medal, and his world record.

This, however, should not have taken the sports world by surprise. In the 1988 Winter Olympics at Calgary, Canada, an athlete was banned from the games after testing positive for steroid use. It is reported that at the

prestigious World Class track-and-field meet in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1987, half of the 28 athletes scheduled to participate in the "power" events—shot put, hammer, javelin, and discuss—did not show up after learning of steroid tests.

At Caracas, Venezuela, in 1983, 15 athletes were barred from the Pan-American games for steroid use. The 1984 Olympics was not without its steroid shame as winners were stripped of medals.

Almost every sport has a steroid scandal of its own—track and field, bodybuilding, weight lifting, and football, to name a few. More than 20 college football players from a number of U.S. universities were barred

from playing in the postseason bowl games because of steroid use. In the world of professional football, one famed 14-year NFL veteran was quoted as saying: "On some teams, between 75 and 90 percent of all athletes use steroids." Reported the magazine *Psychology Today*: "Many of those . . . interviewed put steroid use among competitive body-builders at 100 percent."

Furthermore, the abuse of steroids is not limited to professional and collegiate athletes. Today, steroids are widely used by both male and female bodybuilders and athletes and also by boys not yet in their teens.

Dr. William N. Taylor, a member of the U.S. Olympic Drug Control Program, warned that the use of these drugs has reached "epidemic proportions." How far-reaching is this epidemic? Taylor noted that in addition to athletes, accountants and professors as well as unskilled workers and police officers abuse steroids. "It's not a sports problem anymore," he said, "it's a social problem. And these users are playing with dynamite."

Anabolic steroids are powerful synthetic versions of the male hormone testosterone. Over the years steroids have been used clinically, and under careful supervision, as an aid in bringing on puberty that is delayed, in building up muscles withered by disease or surgery, and for the protection of blood cells during radiation or chemotherapy. For these and other physiological problems apparent to doctors, steroids have been a potent tool in the hands of the medical profession.

In the 1950's Russian doctors and scientists reasoned that by giving athletes megadoses of the male hormone testosterone, muscles and body mass should build up more quickly, thus enhancing the performance of their athletes. Their goal was to empower them to run faster, jump higher, throw the discus and javelin farther, lift heavier

weights, and excel in all power events. As a result, Russian athletes went into the world arena of international sports competition with a marked edge, dominating most of the sports events at the time.

Nationalism raised its ugly head. An American doctor decided to even the odds on the sports battlefield by formulating a synthetic form of anabolic steroid—a drug related to testosterone—that was easier and cheaper to produce, with the option of being taken in pill form or by injection. The doctor's formula proved alarmingly successful. Bigger bodies and better sports performances through chemistry were now possible. The sports war was on!

There are also those on an ego trip. "Bulging muscles are in," said an official of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. "Guys want to look good at the beach. High-school kids think steroids may enhance their ability to get an athletic scholarship, play pro sports or win the girl of their heart." *The Wall Street Journal*, October 4, 1988, reported: "Hundreds of thousands of American teen-agers are taking anabolic steroids, orally or by injection, to play better or to simply look better."

### ***The Pressure Is On***

High-school athletes aspiring to be stars in the sports world, their coaches, and possibly their parents know that a few more pounds, a few more muscles in the right places may mean the difference between stardom and mediocrity. With handsome six- and seven-figure salaries being paid those reaching star status and fame for the schools and colleges and their coaches, plus the glory it will bring to their parents, the pressure is on for the would-be star to get the jump on his competition by turning to steroids.

Dr. Taylor, writing in the magazine *Psychology Today*, said: "I have received

dozens of calls from fathers who want to make their average-sized children bigger. I've had offers of tens of thousands of dollars to chemically manipulate children." One noted expert on physical education claims that high-school athletes have the backing of both parents and coaches for steroid use.

Users of steroids admit that the drug works—it does deliver the muscles and the strength as promised. Said one former professional wrestler: "I took oral steroids, 15 milligrams per day. In 30 days, my bench press went from 315 pounds to 390 pounds. Normally, it takes six months." Weight lifters claim that they can work out with heavier weights for longer periods of time and that the recovery time between workouts is dramatically reduced.

In other countries as well, bodybuilding is a growing craze. In China, for example, according to the magazine *Women's Sports & Fitness* of August 1987, physical fitness and body culture are "sweeping the country . . . Bodybuilding magazines are now available in all large cities."

A world away from China, in East Germany, steroids are playing a large part in the lives of athletes. Sufficient is this quote from *The Wall Street Journal*: "'East German steroids are rated the best,' says a California

lawman. 'Their athletes have the reputation of being better, bigger and stronger.'"

### **What Price Glory?**

"People think the cocaine issue is big," said one noted physical therapist who works with athletes. "It's not as big as anabolic steroids. Among kids, it's epidemic." Young people worldwide are jumping on the steroid bandwagon. They are playing a deadly game for body enhancement, for which they may pay a costly price.

"Paranoia, hallucinations, delusions of grandeur and violent tendencies are frightening whenever they appear," said *Psychology Today*. "Bodybuilders using steroids may be prone to such psychotic and manic symptoms, according to ongoing research at McLean Hospital in Belmont, Massachusetts."

In men, added to these side effects are the dangers of suffering from atrophy of the testicles, enlarged breasts—sometimes requiring surgery—sterility, and impotence. There is also the risk of liver tumors, kidney damage, strokes, heart disease, and a change in personality that can lead to violence and suicidal tendencies.

Steroid side effects can cause irreversible masculinization in women—growth of body and facial hair, lower voices, shrinkage of the breasts, interruption of the menstrual cycle.

When one considers those who use drugs to build bigger and better bodies in this so-called fitness boom, one must ask if it is fitness reality or fitness illusion? What happens to fitness after the glory has faded? Will they look back at their young lives and determine that they have paid an enormous price for sports stardom or narcissistic vanity? The wise youth will realize that to sacrifice one's body for short-lived glory and admiration by those of this system of things is indeed a striving after the wind.

## **In Our Next Issue**

- *The Holocaust—Why Did God Allow It?*
- *Is There Something Wrong With Me?*
- *Hinduism—Your Name Is Tolerance*

# Young People Ask . . .



## How Can I Convince My Parents That I'm Ready to Drive?

**You've passed! Oh, you were nervous all right. And the burly state trooper conducting your test never cracked a smile the whole time. Nevertheless, you somehow managed to put your dad's car through the assigned maneuvers and to park it like a pro. Yes, you are now the proud possessor of a driver's license!**

**Somehow, though, your parents do not seem to share your excitement. When you asked your dad to let you use the car this weekend, all you got was a vague, "I'll think about it." And when you pressed him for an answer, he said, "No!"**

**"That's not fair!" you say. "I've got a license!"**

WITH that new driver's license safely tucked away in your wallet, your dreams of driving the family car seem close to fulfillment. But when your parents seem less than enthralled at the prospect, it can be crushing. As an ancient proverb put it: "Expectation postponed is making the heart sick, but the thing desired is a tree of life when it does come." (Proverbs 13:12) How can you convince your folks that you are ready to drive?

### Your Parents' Point of View

Obtaining a driver's license is something to be pleased with. But driving is not a right. It is a privilege, subject to the judgment not only of local authorities but also

of your parents. And your parents may fear your becoming another highway fatality statistic. Said one mother: "Last week my son passed his driving test. Since then, I can't sleep. Yesterday, he drove my car for the first time by himself. It was the longest drive in my life."

Financial concerns also enter into the picture. Car-insurance companies automatically raise premiums when a teenager is added to a family's list of drivers. Another driver means added wear and tear on the car—and more repairs. And while your health and safety are of paramount concern to your parents, the thought of a dent in their car's shiny new fender no doubt crosses their mind.

### Proving Faithful in Small Things

A principle stated by Jesus Christ is germane: "The person faithful in what is least is faithful also in much, and the person unrighteous in what is least is unrighteous also in much." (Luke 16:10) *The Family Handbook of Adolescence* tells parents: "The best indicator of driving responsibility is the adolescent's history of responsibility in other matters. When the teenager can be trusted to follow rules and is generally reliable, it is likely that these same traits will control his or her behavior while driving." So before whining that you 'need the car

Saturday night,' ask yourself to what extent you have built up a record before your parents of being trustworthy and reliable.

For example, what kind of school grades have you been getting? There may seem to be little connection between passing math and getting the car keys. But if you don't take school seriously, why should your parents think you'll be any more serious about obeying traffic rules? Consider, too, your assigned household chores. If your parents can't depend on you to take the garbage out on time, can they depend on you to be home on time from some excursion in their car? And what about your room? If mom can't see the floor for your clothes strewed all over it, will she be inclined to let you drive her immaculately clean car?

How safety-conscious you are in smaller matters may also have a bearing on your access to the family car. If you are a daredevil on a skateboard, bicycle, or basketball court, your folks will think twice before entrusting you with a potential instrument of death. Yes, you may have to make some basic changes before your parents even consider giving you the car keys.

### **The Angry Driver**

Says the book *Licensed to Kill*: "From behind the wheel of the . . . automobile are unleashed some of the ugliest of all human emotions—hate, impatience, inconsideration and selfishness, to name but a few. . . . It seems that when one is behind the wheel of his automobile, he feels as though he is insulated from harm, and is therefore free to unleash his pent-up anger and frustrations without having to worry about reprisal."

Far too often, though, hostile drivers do face reprisal—in the form of mangled limbs, facial contusions, broken and crushed bones, and at times death. How,

then, will you react when another driver cuts in front of you, impatiently honks his horn at you, or drives at a snail's pace when you are in a hurry? Christians are commanded to "put on the new personality." This means letting "all malicious bitterness and anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech be taken away from you." —Ephesians 4:24, 31.

But if you are prone to temper tantrums or displays of impatience, your parents may rightly fear that you would unleash such feelings on the road.

### **Honing Your Driving Skills**

Dr. Robert B. McCall asks parents: "Are you comfortable with [your teenager's] skill, attitude, patience, speed, defensiveness, and risk taking?" Many parents are not.

You should therefore hone your driving skills beyond learning how to parallel park. If available, have you taken seriously any driver's training offered in school? You must *know* the rules of the road—not simply cram them so as to pass a test. Remember, too, that just as one's perceptive powers are trained "through use," driving skills are developed through experience. (Hebrews 5:14) "Practice, practice, practice," advises professional driver Lyn St. James in *Seventeen* magazine. "Give yourself plenty of time to feel comfortable behind the wheel."

Some advise that a teenager acquire up to six months of driving experience before getting an unrestricted license. After all, there is a wide spectrum of skills you must master: turns, lateral maneuvers, evasive actions, plus handling skids, grades, and heavy traffic. The more skilled you become as a driver, the more confidence your parents will have in you.

Your parents will also be impressed if you show yourself to be safety-conscious. Al-



**Always return your parents' car in good condition**

though you may view seat belts as somewhat of a nuisance, some say they reduce the odds of dying in an accident by 50 percent! It is also wise to develop a routine of safety checks (mirrors, tire inflation, door locks, fluid leaks, and so forth) before turning the key in the ignition.

#### **"May I Use the Car Tonight, Dad?"**

If you have proved yourself to be a safe driver, your parents may (perhaps reluctantly) give you access to the car. Such access, though, is bound to be limited—at least at first. For one thing, your parents also have transportation needs, and you cannot expect them always to drop their plans so as to accommodate yours.

Much will also depend on how you handle your newfound freedom. Bringing back the family car with an empty gas tank or a floor littered with soda cans and paper bags is a surefire way to get your driving privileges curtailed. Your parents may want to specify (in writing if necessary) conditions for using the car. On your part, perhaps you can agree to wash and wax the car, fill its gas tank, and check the tires and fluid levels in exchange for use of the car on a certain evening. If you have an after-school job,

you may offer to help pay for the auto insurance or other car expenses.

Knowing that the Bible condemns letting a son or a daughter "on the loose," your parents may rightly want to know exactly where you are going, with whom, and when you'll get back. (Proverbs 29:15) After all, a driver's license is not a license to run wild or to misbehave with the opposite sex. So be honest with your parents, letting them know that you have nothing to hide. And when you agree to be back by a certain hour, make it your business to keep your word. (Matthew 5:37) This will go a long way in seeing to it that you get to borrow the car again.

Remember, though: You have a responsibility before your parents and God to obey the traffic laws. (Romans 13:1-5) More importantly, you have a responsibility to show respect for life—your life and that of others. (Psalm 36:9; 55:23) So suppress the urge to show off or to take foolish risks. *Never mix drinking and driving.\* Drive responsibly, sanely, safely—and your parents may be glad to give you reasonable use of the family car!*

\* See "What's Wrong With Drinking and Driving?" in the February 22, 1986, issue of *Awake!*

# Soft Coral

## *Flower Animals of the Sea*

**W**HAT do you think of when you hear someone mention coral?

Perhaps you think of it as the basic building material of which many tropical islands and sandy beaches are formed. If you live in the Caribbean, perhaps your house is built of coral blocks cut from the ground. Or perhaps a favorite piece of jewelry made of gem-quality coral comes to mind. This type of coral is, no doubt, what the writer of Proverbs was alluding to when describing how precious a good wife is to her husband.—Proverbs 31:10.

The individual coral animal, the polyp, begins life as a tiny mass of cells that is ejected from the parent body and swept along by ocean currents until it reaches a suitable site where it can anchor permanently. In stony coral, the skeleton begins to form



**Top:**  
*Leather daisy*  
**Bottom:**  
*Soft coral trees*

**Opposite page:**

**Top:**  
*Trunk of  
soft coral*  
**Bottom:**  
*Soft coral and  
small grouper*

soon after the larva is attached to a firm bottom and begins to secrete calcium carbonate to form a hard, stony external skeleton. These corals grow at the rate of up to four inches a year.

But have you ever thought of coral as a soft, delicate flower? There are several varieties of soft coral that, because of their varied shapes and colors, have been called flower animals. Soft corals also begin life as swimming larvae but seldom secrete massive calcium carbonate skeletons. These fleshy and treelike corals can therefore grow more rapidly than the stony corals and are far less permanent.

One such soft coral has a big, rubbery, treelike body and is called a flower animal because it resembles a beautiful flower, even though coral is animal rather than plant life. The tree coral is support-

ed only by small needlelike calcite spicules (which resemble sliced almonds) and hydraulic pressure within the fleshy tissue of its body. These corals take in seawater to give form to their flesh, similar to the way heated air fills hot-air balloons, but the water pressure is not great, nor is the water hot. The pressure is enough, however, combined with the effect of the surrounding water, that the body and its branches are supported. Because of its structure, this variety of coral rarely grows to a height of more than three feet and prefers lagoons and calm ocean locations.

When inflated to their tree-like form, these tree corals are very beautiful, reminding the observer of a lovely multi-colored flower garden filled with delicate blooms and blossoms. Visually, their translucent or transparent bodies delight the eye as they capture the ambient light and the coloration of the water, while supporting branches having white, yellow, gold, pink, red, or purple polyps.

Another type of soft coral is the daisy coral. Daisy coral is so named because of its great resemblance to its namesake, the daisy. There are several varieties of daisy coral, and they are distinguished by the number of "petals" (tentacles) surrounding the mouth of the polyp.

These delicate white or tan-and-white corals are not so colorful as the tree corals, but their size, long stems, and shape are delightful to observe on the reef. A colony may grow to be 15 to 20 feet across and can give the diver a



feeling of observing a field of daisies covering rolling foothills. Currents move the polyps and give the illusion of a breeze moving the daisies, causing them to sway gently in rhythm to the movement of water.

One of the divers' favorite types of coral is the sea fan. A mature sea fan is a strikingly beautiful, majestic coral colony. The fan is a close relative to the soft corals, but because of its structure, it is designated as "horny coral." This type



of coral has polyps embedded in a soft layer of tissue that surrounds an internal, wood-like stalk. This stalk contains gorgonin (another common name for the sea fan is gorgonian), a protein resembling keratin, which is used in the biological production of fingernails, hair, and hooves.

The trunk of these fans is often very thick, strong, and rigid. As the branches reach outward to their extremities (often several feet), they become more flexible, gently waving in strong currents, which bring them the small organisms upon which they thrive.

The sea fan ranges in color from brown, gold, and orange to purple and brilliant red. It is particularly beautiful when the delicate-appearing polyps emerge to feed and completely cover the branches with their graceful featherlike tentacles.



*Top:  
Scarlet sea fan  
Bottom:  
Gold sea fan*

When considering coral, then, one must consider that not all coral is precious or functional as a building block, but all coral is beautiful. It gives us once again the opportunity to reflect upon the great variety of life found in creation and the many variations within each kind of life. When we do, we stand in awe of the creative ability, imagination, and ingenuity of the Creator. (Psalm 104:24) Who of man can even begin to comprehend Jehovah's wisdom and knowledge!

—Romans 11:33.

And when we consider life in the oceans, which cover over 70 percent of the earth's surface, we marvel at the words of the psalmist who stated at Psalm 104:25: "As for this sea so great and wide, there are moving things without number, living creatures, small as well as great."

# Acts of Kindness Soften the Blows of Hurricane Gilbert

DURING the early morning hours of September 14, 1988, hurricane Gilbert hit the Caribbean coast of Mexico. It slammed into the states of Quintana Roo and Yucatán. On the 15th and 16th, the northern states of Tamaulipas and Nuevo León took the battering. All along its path, Gilbert cut a swath of destruction. Strong winds and torrential rains caused heavy flooding. In the southeast, 50,000 families were left homeless. In the north, 30,000 lost their homes. Some 250 people died as the hurricane ran its course of 1,000 miles.

Immediately, the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses moved into action. By Saturday, September 17, the first trucks loaded with food, clothing, and roofing materials were on their way to the Yucatán Peninsula. Two representatives from the branch traveled there to make an inspection and set up local committees to distribute the relief supplies. Quickly, more truckloads were dispatched with food and roofing materials. Government authorities also acted to provide much-appreciated assistance.

First to arrive on the scene, however, were the shipments from Jehovah's Witnesses in Mexico City. This gave the Witnesses great comfort and joy. Other than the roofing materials trucked in by the Witnesses, there were none available locally, and there would be none for more than a month. It was thrilling to see how rapidly the brothers' homes were rebuilt. The place of worship for Jehovah's Witnesses in Colony Yucatán was the first structure that got its roof restored. In Mérida the building used for the circuit assemblies and district conventions of the Witnesses was flattened, and arrangements for the construction of a new place of assembly were quickly set in motion.

Damage was great in the states of Nuevo León and Tamaulipas. Local Witnesses received immediate relief through the committee set up in Monterrey. Basic furnishings, such as beds, tables, chairs, stoves, and cooking utensils, were provided. In Monterrey itself, 32 families of Jehovah's Witnesses had lost everything they had, including their homes. With the near-zero temperatures of winter approaching, something had to be done quickly.

Two Witnesses, one an architect, flew in

from Mexico City. They met with elders and traveling representatives. Soon, building operations were launched to provide new homes for the 32 families. This included the purchase of property and equipment to prefabricate the needed homes. When food, clothing, and beds were quickly provided for the Witnesses, the neighbors were very impressed with the love and generosity shown by other Witnesses to their needy brothers. How much more so will they be when they see the 32 families move into their new two-bedroom homes!

This is typical of the worldwide brotherhood of Jehovah's Witnesses. Not only did Witnesses in Mexico respond with materials, labor, and money to aid their brothers but so did Witnesses in other parts of the world. As soon as TV newscasts showed the devastation caused by hurricane Gilbert, contributions began coming to the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York. A small sampling follows:

"Please use this small contribution to help make our brothers comfortable who were stricken by the hurricane. I would like to send more, but I had to have engine work done on my wife's car this week. I will try to send more when my next paycheck clears."

"We contribute this to help our brothers in the hurricane area. We want them to know our love and concern. As Peter said: 'Have intense love for one another.'"—1 Peter 4:8.

"As a small contribution to the relief efforts, please accept this check for \$1,000. I wish it could be more, but what Jehovah has allowed me to have I wish to share."

"Please accept this money order for \$20. I needed all of my check and could not afford to help until I realized some of our brothers lost everything."

"Enclosed is a check for \$25. We would like to contribute it to the disaster fund. The gift is small, but our whole heart goes out to our dear sisters and brothers in this area."

Can you imagine lending to Jehovah, the Owner of the entire universe? Nevertheless, that is what such contributors are doing, for Proverbs 19:17 says: "He that is showing favor to the lowly one is lending to Jehovah, and his treatment He will repay to him."

# From Our Readers

## Mary

Your article on Mary, November 8, 1988, was, in my opinion, an attempt to portray Catholics as idolaters. It made several references to Catholics as Mary "worshippers." Let me set the record straight. I have been a Catholic for 35 years, and I know of no Catholic that "worships" Mary. Many of us pray to God through Mary. None of us would begin to equate or compare her with God.

G. A. H., United States

*"The Catholic Encyclopedia" (1912, Volume 15, page 463) states: "That popular devotion to the Blessed Virgin was often attended [in the middle ages] with extravagance and abuses, it is impossible to deny." A visit to locations in many Catholic lands today would confirm to G. A. H. that such excesses continue.—ED.*

Judge not that ye be not judged. If Catholics do worship Mary too much, let our Lord decide on judgment day. Remember, the truth will prevail. Write about the pros and cons of the situation and let the readers understand your concern.

R. W., United States

My family and I are Catholics and devotees of Mary but have, nevertheless, for many years found your magazines interesting and useful to read. The articles about Mary were, as always, objective and without disparagement. We should like to know, however, why you have so far not gone into detail on Lourdes and Fátima? Your sincerity when investigating subjects and reaching conclusions is well known. Could you be missing out on matters of Christian faith by refusing to

attach credence to post-Biblical revelations?

P. O., Federal Republic of Germany

*P. O. may already have seen our March 8, 1989, issue, which considers the Lourdes and Fátima phenomena in some detail.—ED.*

## Women's Movement

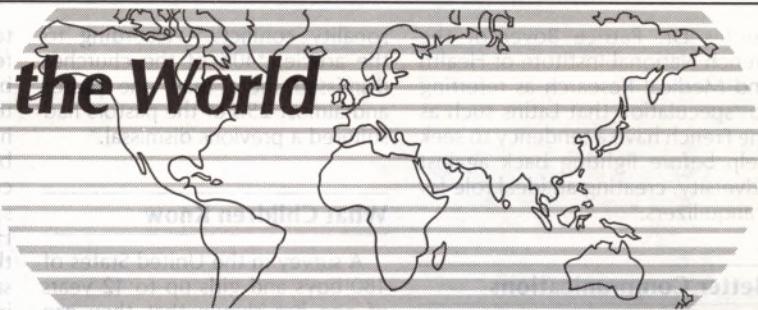
I was born in 1920. To understand the trend of working women (July 22, 1988) you should listen, not to the feminists, but to a conservative, middle-of-the-road, although working, woman. There are basically two reasons why women work. The first is economic. If a man is not able to support a family, and the woman has to work full-time, in all fairness he should do half the work at home, and the problem of the overworked career woman would go away immediately.

The other reason why a woman chooses to work is underappreciation at home. I have time and again seen a father and daughter gang up on the wife, and she feels squeezed out of the family. Or he likes his beer and his television better than his wife. For this reason she seeks employment where she has the satisfaction of getting something in return for her efforts. I observed in my parents' generation an attitude that does not exist anymore. Those men had not only love for their wives but also respect and consideration. I have found none of the three in this generation. Let men return to love, loyalty, and respect, and you'll see women returning to the hearth.

F. K., Canada

*F. K.'s comments about "this generation" bring to mind the "generation" prophesied about by Jesus and Paul that would experience a loss of "natural affection" in the family. (Matthew 24:3, 34; 2 Timothy 3:1-3)—ED.*

# Watching the World



## Horrifying Organ Source

Early in 1988 a not-much-publicized discovery was made at Santa Caterina Pinula, Guatemala. There, according to a resolution of the European Parliament, local authorities found a "casa de engorde," or "fattening center," where newborn babies purchased for as little as \$20 (U.S.) were sold to American or Israeli families for \$75,000. The purpose? So that the families purchasing them could use the infants' organs for their own children who were in need of organ transplants, said the resolution. It also states that in 1987 a similar "fattening center" was found in Honduras "near to which the bodies of many children were found, some of them new-born babies, from which one or more organs had been removed." Another was found in Guatemala City "whose register indicated the sale abroad . . . of 170 babies, the major part of which were sent to the United States for the removal of organs." The Parliament's resolution has been issued to various agencies and governments, calling for appropriate action to be taken against those responsible for this horrible practice.

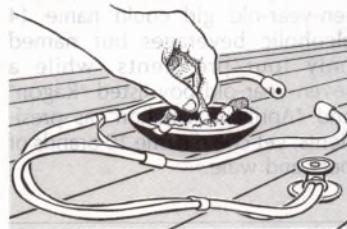
## Kidneys for Sale

Would you sell one of your healthy kidneys for money? A West German company that markets human organs for transplants has of-

fered to pay \$45,000 (U.S.) to anyone willing to make such a donation. As a result, a company spokesman said, they were "drowning in offers." People viewing this as a get-rich-quick opportunity provide an abundant organ source for companies dealing in the sale of human tissue. Unlike the illegal organ trafficking practiced in the Third World, "would-be organ brokers are operating openly (and legally) in West Germany," notes the report in *Newsweek* magazine. The company's charge for such organs: \$85,000.

## Hospitals Ban Smoking

Last December, a ban on smoking was imposed on all public hospitals in Australia. Anyone caught



smoking within a hospital building or hospital-owned vehicle is subject to a \$5,000 fine. Community-based services and area health services are also included under the Health Department's ban, reports *The Sun-Herald* of Australia. The recent decision reflects concern over the fact that about 16,500 Australians die each year from

smoking-related diseases, "more than five times the number who die on the roads," notes *The Sun-Herald*. According to the Health Department, smoking costs Australia 8,450,000 workdays and \$276 million annually.

## Uninhabitable

According to the Soviet newspaper *Pravda*, the 800-year-old Ukrainian town of Chernobyl has been scheduled to be razed two and a half years after suffering the world's worst nuclear power plant accident. The action was said to be necessary because radiation made the town unfit for human habitation for decades. The Chernobyl accident spread radiation on a worldwide scale and reportedly killed 31 individuals in the immediate vicinity.

## Tranquilizer Addicts

In 1984 French citizens over 20 were downing an average of 75 tranquilizers a year, reported the *International Herald Tribune*. Since then, says the newspaper, consumption "has been climbing at a 'lightning' pace." According to the article, two factors seem responsible for the rise. First, general practitioners prescribe this type of medicine "when they are unable to come up with a specific diagnosis for vague complaints from their patients." Second, the *Tribune*

quotes Dr. Patrice Boyer of the French National Institute of Health and Medical Research as referring to "speculation that Latins such as the French have a tendency to seek help before fighting back against adversity, creating an ideal role for tranquilizers."

## Better Communications

After six months of installation at a cost of \$362 million, the first fiber-optic telephone cable to cross the Atlantic went into service last December. The three existing copper cables coupled with satellites could carry a maximum of 20,000 overseas calls simultaneously. However, the fiber-optic cable is capable of carrying 40,000 calls. While a copper wire can carry only 48 calls, more than 8,000 calls and computer-data transmissions can be carried by a single optical fiber via pulses of laser light. As a result of this new technology, international calls and data transmissions can now be made more quickly and are virtually distortion free.

## Ousted Clergy

A survey by the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Church in the United States indicates that each month 116 of the denomination's churches "fire or force their unhappy pastors to quit," reports the *Los Angeles Times*. According to the survey, over 2,100 churches parted company with their pastors within a recent 18-month period. Second in frequency of reasons cited for the dismissals was "immorality—including sexual misconduct, theft, mismanagement of church money and problems with personal integrity," notes the *Times*. Also cited were "performance dissatisfaction," "authoritarian leadership style," "power struggles," and "per-

sonality conflicts." According to the article, "40% of the churches dismissed more than one pastor and almost 25% of the pastors had suffered a previous dismissal."

## What Children Know

A survey in the United States of 180 boys and girls up to 12 years of age has shown that they can name more brands of alcoholic beverages than they can presidents of the United States. The children were, on the average, able to name 5.2 alcoholic beverages but only 4.8 presidents. "This survey indicates the extent to which booze is part of the daily life of children who cannot drink legally for another 10 years," said Michael Jacobson, head of the Center for



Science in the Public Interest, which sponsored the survey. One ten-year-old girl could name 14 alcoholic beverages but named only four presidents, while a seven-year-old boy listed "Ragon" and "Aprilham Linchon" as presidents, yet could name 10 brands of beer and wine.

## Living Longer

Statistics show that more people are reaching the century mark than ever before. The *Vancouver Sun* reports that 2,850 Canadians were over the age of 100 in 1986—up 775 from 1981. Likewise in the United States, there were 25,000 centenarians in 1985—up 10,000 from 1980. The director of geron-

tology at Simon Fraser University feels that more people will live to be 100 and adds, "The very old tend to be survivors." The reasons he cites include: "Better nutrition, better health care and better living conditions." A geriatric psychiatry specialist at Vancouver General Hospital concurs, saying: "To live that long, you have to be pretty strong physically. You also need inner vitality. A lot of these people have experienced powerful stresses, but they're still here."

## Firearms' Heavy Toll

According to a report published in *JAMA (The Journal of the American Medical Association)*, hospital costs due to injuries caused by firearms may run an estimated \$429 million annually. Of that amount, taxpayers are said to be absorbing nearly 86 percent. However, researchers say that the annual figure would likely increase to more than \$1 billion if physicians' fees, physical therapy, ambulance services, rehabilitation services, and other follow-up care were included. "These findings have important implications for legislators considering bills to restrict the availability of firearms," says *JAMA*.

## Too Much Faith?

A South Carolina, U.S.A., faith-healing session called a "healing explosion" has resulted in a lawsuit against two Texas faith healers. A North Carolina woman claims that they are responsible for multiple fractures in her neck and back. Why? According to *The Greenville News*, her lawsuit "describes a procedure in which a minister lays his hand on a person who then is 'slain in the spirit' and falls backward into the arms of a 'catcher.' The problem in this case, the woman charged, was that there was no catcher—and thus her injuries."

# Amazing FEET



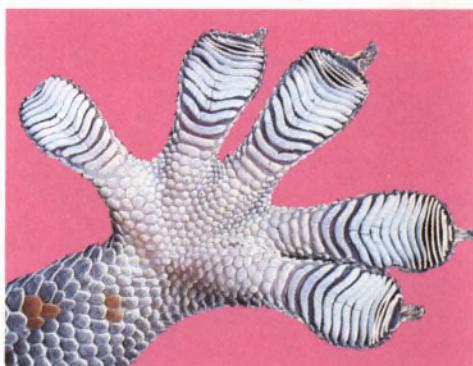
"THE gecko lizard takes hold with its own hands and it is in the grand palace of a king." So states the Bible at Proverbs 30:28. Its feet look like hands, but they perform feats no hands can. It is another case of Jehovah's creations preceding man's inventions by thousands of years—in this case the Velcro fabric fasteners so widely used today.

Visitors to the Mediterranean area are amazed to see the little common gecko, *Tarentola mauritanica*, scurry up walls and across ceilings, and even scamper up glass windows. Once it was thought that Mr. Gecko did it by suction cups on its feet or maybe even glue. But nothing so crude as that!

The book *The Grand Design* says on page 184: "Each of the gecko's toes has a pad bearing ridge-like scales. Under a microscope it can be seen that each scale bears hundreds of tiny, hairlike protrusions called setae. As if this were not enough, a further magnification shows that the individual setae are tipped by 'brushes' of up to 2000 incredibly small branched filaments, bearing saucer-shaped tips. This provides a phenomenal total of about 100 million points of contact."

Millions of microscopic hooklets fasten into the tiniest irregularities of a surface—even those present on glass. The mechanism of release and reattachment of the hooks is incredible. The gecko bends the ends of its toes upward, which draws the hooks out of the irregularities in the surface. With toes still bent upward, it advances its foot to the next step and then presses its toes down. The hooklets again interlock with the surface irregularities—somewhat as a cat alternately extends and withdraws its claws when climbing a tree.

Thus, the little gecko performs amazing feats with its amazing feet.



Breck P. Kent  
**The underside of the gecko's "Velcro" foot**

