

Awake!

March 22, 1990

RAIN
FORESTS
UNDER SIEGE



Man is ravaging the earth's rain forests.

Yet, these forests are very important to life on this planet. They are silent, beautiful factories —producers of oxygen, of food, of living things beyond number. If all forests are destroyed, life on earth will suffer immeasurably. And they are vanishing fast! "Only God can make a tree," wrote a poet. True. But no one destroys them like man.

YOU are wandering through a realm of green twilight, among the buttressed columns of trees that soar up to 15 stories overhead. Above you is a vast tangle of life, the densest, richest ecosphere on earth. The trees are festooned with vines hundreds or even thousands of feet long and are wreathed with plants that anchor themselves all over the trunks and branches. Lush tropical blossoms scent the still hothouse air.

Gone in One Second!

This is the tropical rain forest. But it is more than a beauty spot, more than vaulted corridors of misty forest shot through with shafts of light. It is a mechanism of incredible complexity whose parts work together with humming precision.

Life is profuse here, a variety unequaled elsewhere on the land surface of our planet. The rain forests take up only 6 percent of the earth's land area but have as much as half of all the plant and animal species. They produce about a third of all living material on the land. Far above you, the forest canopy is home to exotic insects and birds, to monkeys and other mammals. Most never come down to the ground at all. The trees feed and house them, and they in turn pollinate the trees or eat their fruits, scattering the seeds in their droppings.

Rains pour down daily, drenching the forests and fueling their elaborate cycle of life. Rain washes leaves and wastes down the trunks in a nutrient-rich soup that nourishes the plants called epiphytes that grow on the trees. The epiphytes in turn help the tree pull its main food, nitrogen, from the air. Many epiphytes have leafy "tanks" that hold gallons of water, creating little ponds high in the air that are habitats for tree frogs, salamanders, and birds.

Whatever nourishment reaches the forest floor is quickly devoured. Mammals, hordes of insects, and bacteria all work together to reduce nuts, animal carcasses, and foliage to the level of waste material. Then the floor itself eagerly receives it. If you were to brush away the debris at your feet, you would find a thick, spongy mat of white fibers, a network of roots and fungi. These fungi help the roots to absorb the nutrients rapidly, before the rains wash them away.

But now suppose your wandering through the rain forest was limited to a small section, an area about the size of an American

football field. Suddenly, that whole section of forest vanishes. It is completely destroyed—in a single second! And as you watch in horror, the section next to yours, of the same size, is wiped out in the following second, and another in the next, and on and on. Finally, you stand alone on an empty plain, on earth-baked hard under the glaring tropical sun.

According to some estimates, that is how fast the tropical rain forests of the world are being destroyed. Some put the rate even higher. According to *Newsweek* magazine, an area half the size of California is razed each year. *Scientific American* magazine of September 1989 calls it an area the size of Switzerland and the Netherlands combined.

But whatever the extent, the damage is appalling. Deforestation has raised a global furor, and it is focused largely on a single country,

Brazilian environmentalist José Lutzenberger called it “the biggest holocaust in the history of life.” The world over, environmentalists are up in arms. They put the plight of the rain forests into the public spotlight. Even T-shirts and rock concerts proclaimed, “Save the rain forest.” Then came financial pressure.

Brazil owes over a hundred thousand million dollars in foreign debt and must spend about 40 percent of its export earnings just to pay the interest. It is heavily dependent on foreign aid and loans. So international banks began to hold back loans that might be used to damage the forests. Developed nations offered to swap some of Brazil’s debt for improved protection of their environment. U.S. president Bush even asked Japan not to lend Brazil funds to build a highway through virgin rain forests.

Case in Point: Brazil

In 1987 satellite photographs of the Amazon basin showed that deforestation rates in this one area were higher than some estimates had been for deforestation of the whole planet! As people burned the forest to clear it, fires by the thousands lighted the nights. The smoke cloud was the size of India and so dense that some airports had to close. By one estimate, the Amazon basin every year loses an area of rain forest the size of Belgium.

A Global Dilemma

To many Brazilians, all this pressure reeks of hypocrisy. The developed countries had long since decimated their own forests and would scarcely have allowed any foreign power to prevent them from doing so. The United States is currently wiping out the last of its own rain forests. They are not tropical, to be sure; they are the temperate rain forests of the Pacific Northwest. Species will vanish there too.

Awake!

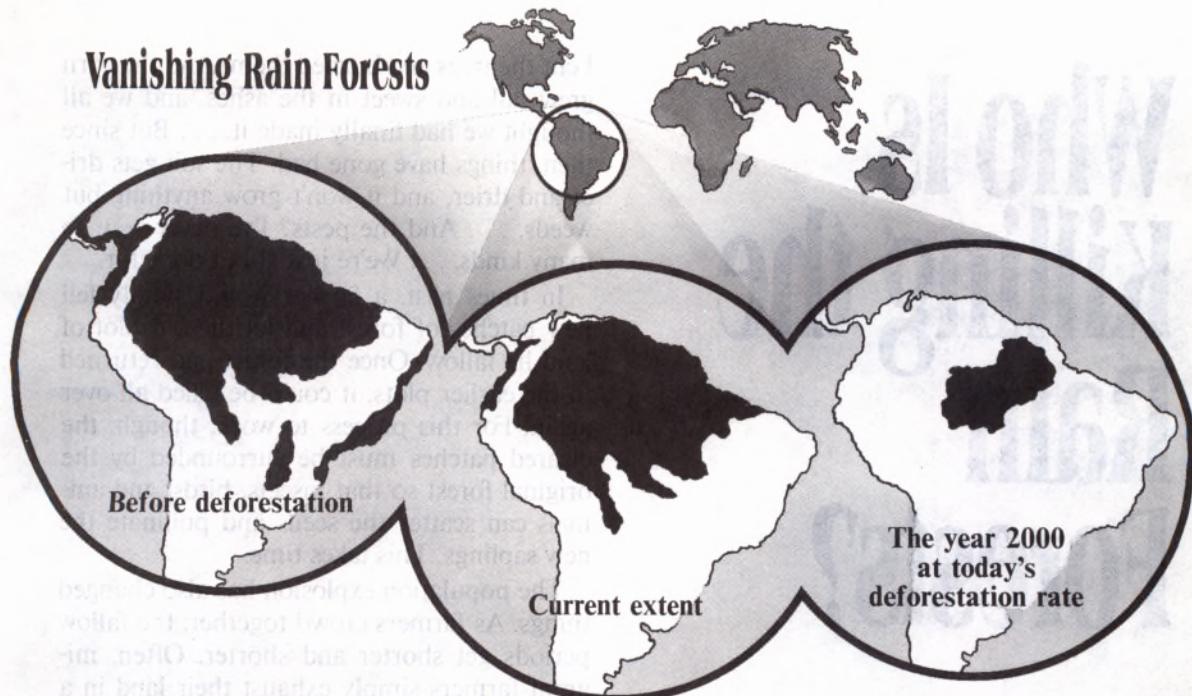
March 22, 1990
Vol. 71, No. 6

Average Printing: 11,930,000 Published in 55 Languages

Printed in U.S.A.

© 1990 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved.
Unless otherwise indicated, *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* used.

Vanishing Rain Forests



So deforestation is a global problem, not just a Brazilian one. Tropical rain forest losses are most critical right now. Over half of those losses occur outside Brazil. Central Africa and Southeast Asia are the other two of the world's great rain forest regions, and there too the forests are vanishing fast.

Deforestation has effects that are equally global. It means hunger, thirst, and death among millions. It is a problem that reaches right into your life. It touches the food you

eat, the medicines you use, the weather where you live—perhaps even the future of mankind.

But you may well wonder: 'How can these rain forests have such far-reaching effects? What if they do vanish in a few decades, as some experts say they will? Will it really be that great a tragedy?'

Before we can answer those questions, another must come first: What causes the destruction of rain forests to begin with?

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.

Contents: Feature Articles

Gone in One Second!	3
Who Is Killing the Rain Forests?	6
Why Save the Rain Forests?	8
Do the Forests Have a Future?	12

Also in This Issue

Understanding Asthma	15
Judged out of Their Own Mouth	19
I Tried to Change the World	21
Young People Ask... Should I Get Baptized?	25
Watching the World	28
From Our Readers	30
A Marvel in Pink	31

Who Is Killing the Rain Forests?

THAT question is often answered by blaming the world's poor. For centuries, peasants in tropical countries have farmed the land by slash-and-burn agriculture. They fell a patch of forest and burn it, and either just before or just after the burning, they plant crops. The forest's ashes provide nutrients for the crops.

This type of farming long ago uncovered a surprising truth about tropical rain forests. About 95 percent of them grow on very poor soils. The forest recycles nutrients so fast that they are mostly kept in the trees and vegetation well above ground, safe from the rains that would wash them out of the soil. The rain forest is therefore perfectly suited to its environment. The news is not quite as good for the farmer.

The Plight of the Poor

All too soon, the rains carry off the nutrients the ashes leave from the burned forest. Slowly, farming becomes a nightmare. A poor Bolivian farmer put it this way: "The first year,

I cut the trees and burned them. And the corn grew tall and sweet in the ashes, and we all thought we had finally made it. . . . But since then, things have gone bad. The soil gets drier and drier, and it won't grow anything but weeds. . . . And the pests? I've never seen so many kinds. . . . We're just about done for."

In times past, a farmer would simply fell new patches of forest and let the old plot of land lie fallow. Once the forest had returned to the earlier plots, it could be felled all over again. For this process to work, though, the cleared patches must be surrounded by the original forest so that insects, birds, and animals can scatter the seeds and pollinate the new saplings. This takes time.

The population explosion has also changed things. As farmers crowd together, the fallow periods get shorter and shorter. Often, migrant farmers simply exhaust their land in a few years and move on into the forest, burning it along a broad front.

Another factor aggravates the situation. Some two thirds of the people in less developed countries depend on wood as fuel for cooking and heating. Over a thousand million people can meet their fuel needs only by cutting firewood faster than it is currently being replaced.

Deeper Causes

It is easy to blame the poor. But as ecologists James D. Nations and Daniel I. Kommer put it, that is like "blaming soldiers for causing wars." They add: "They are mere pawns in a general's game. To understand the colonists' role in deforestation, one must ask why these families enter the rainforest in the first place. The answer is simple: because there is no land for them elsewhere."

In one tropical country, some 72 percent of the land is owned by a mere 2 percent of the landowners. Meanwhile, some 83 percent of the farm families either have not enough land

to survive on or have none at all. That pattern is repeated in varying degrees around the globe. Vast expanses of privately owned land are used, not to grow food for the local people, but to raise export crops to sell to wealthy nations in the temperate zones.

The logging industry is another famous culprit. Besides the direct damage it does to the forest, logging also makes rain forests more vulnerable to fires—and to humans. Logging roads forged by bulldozer into virgin forest pave the way for advancing crowds of migrant farmers.

And when the farms fail, as they so often do, cattle ranchers buy up the land and turn it into pasture for grazing cattle. This is particularly

so in South and Central America. Most of the beef they raise is exported to wealthier nations. The average house cat in the United States eats more beef in a year than the average Central American does.

In the end, it is the developed nations that finance the demise of the tropical rain forests—to fill their own voracious appetites. The exotic tropical woods, the produce, the beef, that they eagerly buy from tropical nations all require displacing or degrading the forest. American and European lust for cocaine has meant the clearing of hundreds of thousands of acres of rain forest in Peru to make way for the lucrative coca crops.

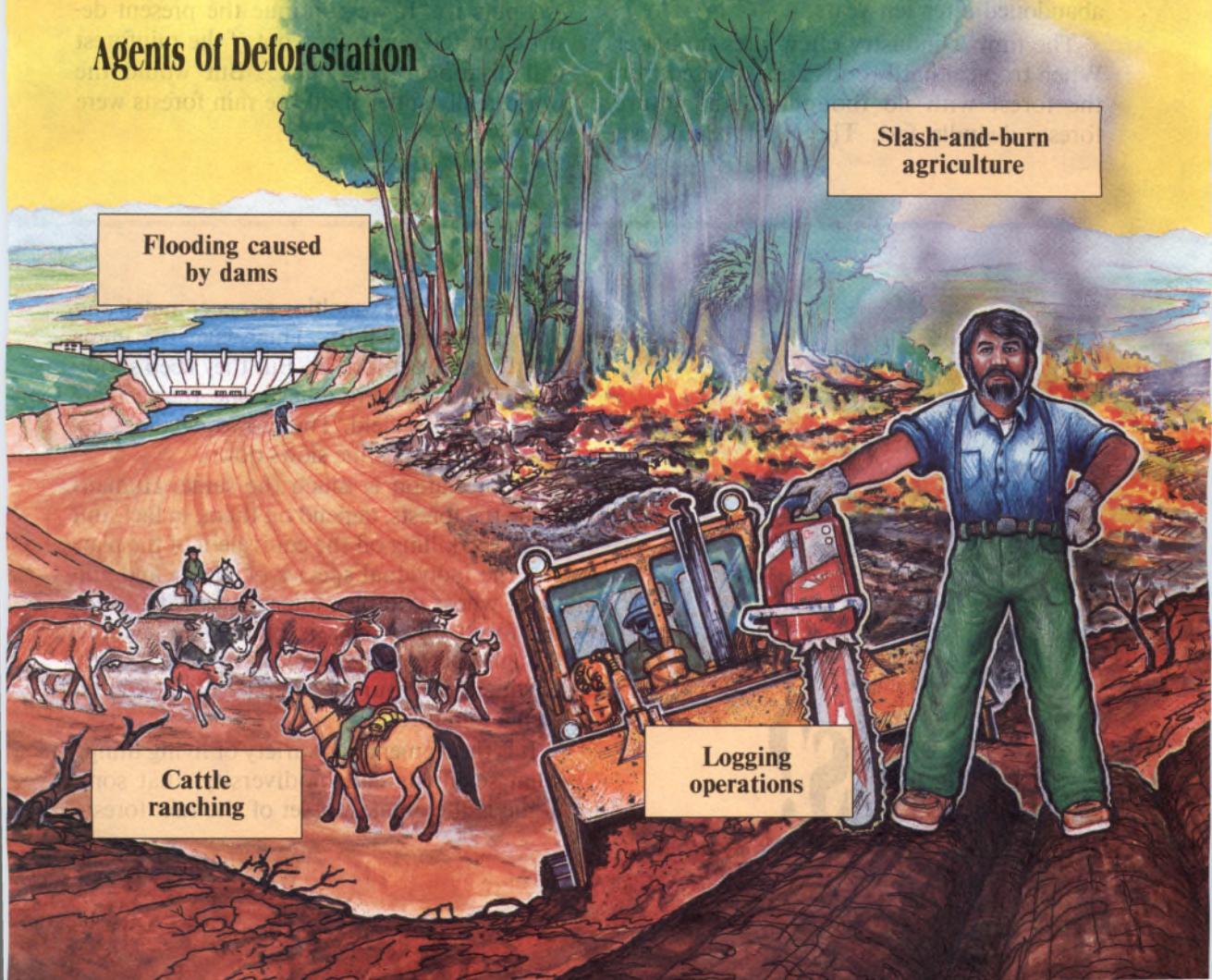
Agents of Deforestation

Flooding caused
by dams

Cattle
ranching

Slash-and-burn
agriculture

Logging
operations



The Gains That Sour

Many governments actively promote deforestation. They provide tax breaks for ranchers, timber companies, and export agriculture. Some nations will give a piece of land to a farmer if he "improves" it by clearing it of forest. One country in Southeast Asia has transported migrant farmers by the millions into its remote rain forests.

Such policies are defended as making use of the forests to benefit the poor or to boost sagging economies. But as critics see it, even these short-term gains are illusory. For instance, land that was inhospitable to the farmer's crops may be no friendlier to the rancher's cattle. Ranches are commonly abandoned after ten years.

The timber industry often fares no better. When tropical hardwoods are extracted from the forest with no thought to the future, forests dwindle fast. The World Bank esti-

mates that more than 20 of 33 countries currently exporting their tropical wood will run out of it within ten years. Thailand was so drastically deforested that it had to outlaw all logging. It is estimated that the Philippines will be completely logged by the mid-1990's.

But the bitterest irony is this: Studies have shown that a plot of rain forest can generate more income when it is left intact and its products—the fruit and the rubber, for instance—are harvested. Yes, more money than farming, ranching, or logging the same land. Yet the destruction goes on.

The globe cannot support this treatment forever. As the book *Saving the Tropical Forests* puts it: "If we continue the present destruction the question is not *if* the rainforest will disappear but *when*." But would the world really suffer if all the rain forests were destroyed?

Why Save the Rain Forests?

A CROWD is watching a soccer match and cheering wildly. They wish the game would last forever. But they keep shooting the players. One by one, the dead are carried off the field. The crowd becomes enraged when the game slows down.

Deforestation is much the same. Humans enjoy the forests, depend on them, in fact. But they keep killing off the equivalent of the players: the individual species of plants and animals, whose complex interplay is what keeps the forest alive. This is more than a game, though. Deforestation affects you. It touches the quality of your life, even if you have never seen a rain forest.

It is the tremendous variety of living things, what scientists call biodiversity, that some argue is the greatest asset of the rain forests.

A fifth of a square mile of Malaysian rain forest may grow some 835 species of trees, more than in the United States and Canada combined.

But this lush complex of life is fragile. One scientist compared the individual species to the rivets on an airplane. The more rivets that pop loose, the more others begin to fail under increased stress. If that comparison is valid, our planet is one troubled "airplane." As the rain forests shrink, some estimate that ten thousand species of plants and animals are lost every year, that the extinction rate is now some

400 times faster than it has ever been in the history of the planet.

Scientists bemoan the sheer loss of knowledge that comes from this drop in biodiversity. They say it is like burning a library before having read its books. But there are more tangible losses too. For example, some 25 percent of the medicines prescribed in the United States are based on tropical forest plants. One such medicine raised the remission rate for childhood leukemia from 20 percent in the 1960's to 80 percent in 1985. So, according to the World Wildlife Fund, the rain forests "represent a

The Role of the Forest



Forests add moisture and oxygen to atmosphere

Canopy protects soil from pelting rains

Vegetation absorbs and stores carbon

Root systems help regulate flow of moisture to rivers

vast pharmacy." And countless plants are yet undiscovered, let alone examined for possible medical uses.

Furthermore, few of us realize how many of our food crops are derived from plants that were originally found in the rain forests. (See box on page 11.) To this day, scientists gather genes from the hardy, forest-dwelling varieties of these plants and use them to bolster resistance to disease in their more fragile descendants, the domestic crops. Scientists have saved hundreds of millions of dollars in crop losses that way.

Furthermore, we do not know what rain forest foods may yet emerge as global favorites. Most North Americans do not know that just a hundred years ago, their forebears viewed the banana as a strange, exotic fruit and paid two dollars for one banana, individually wrapped.

The Global Picture

Man himself is the ultimate victim of deforestation. The effects on the global environment ripple outward until they circle the world. How? Let's take another look at the typ-

Effects of Deforestation



Burning trees release carbon and add to the greenhouse effect

Decrease in moisture to atmosphere means more droughts

Rain erodes the unprotected soil. Floods increase

ical rain forest. As the name implies, rain is its outstanding feature. Over 8 inches may fall in a day, over 30 feet in a year! The rain forest is perfectly designed to cope with this torrential downpour.

The canopy breaks the force of the droplets so that they cannot scour the earth away. Many leaves are equipped with elongated ends, or drip tips, that break up the heavy droplets. Thus, the pelting rain is reduced to a steady dripping, which falls to the ground beneath with a softer impact. The tips also allow the leaves to shed water quickly so that they can get back to transpiration, returning moisture to the atmosphere. The root systems suck in 95 percent of the water that reaches the forest floor. As a whole, the forest absorbs rainfall like a gigantic sponge and then releases it slowly.

But with the forest gone, the rain falls straight and hard to the exposed soil and carries it off by the ton. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa, two and a half acres of slightly sloped tropical rain forest loses only about three hundredths of a ton of soil per year. The same two and a half acres, as a deforested, cultivated plot, loses 90 tons of soil per year; as bare ground, 138 tons.

That kind of soil loss does more than ruin the ground for farming or grazing. Ironically, dams, which cause colossal amounts of deforestation, are themselves ruined by it. Overwhelmed by the silt carried by rivers from deforested areas, they swiftly clog up and are rendered useless. Coastal regions and spawning grounds are also fouled by the excess silt.

Effects on rain and weather patterns are even more disastrous. Rivers emerging from tropical rain forests are generally full year round. But without the forest to regulate the flow of water into the rivers, they overflow

Bounty From the Rain Forests

Is there a piece of tropical rain forest near you right now? Consider some of the foods that were originally found in the rain forests around the world: rice, corn, sweet potatoes, manioc (cassava, or tapioca), sugarcane, bananas, oranges, coffee, tomatoes, chocolate, pineapples, avocados, vanilla, grapefruit, a variety of nuts, spices, and tea. Fully half of the world's food crops are based on plants that came from rain forests! And those are just some of the foods.

Consider the medicines: Alkaloids from vines are used as muscle relaxants prior to surgery; the active ingredients of hydrocortisone to fight inflammation, quinine to fight malaria, digitalis to treat heart failure, diosgenin in birth control pills, and ipecac to induce vomiting all come from rain forest plants. Other plants have shown promise in fighting AIDS and cancer, as well as diarrhea, fever, snakebite, and conjunctivitis and other eye disorders. What other cures might still lie hidden is unknown. Less than 1 percent of rain forest plant species have been examined by scientists. Lamented one botanist: "We're destroying things we don't even know exist."

Yet more products come from the vanishing forests: latex, resins, waxes, acids, alcohols, flavorings, sweeteners, dyes, fibers such as those used in life jackets, the gum used to make chewing gum, bamboo, and rattan—in itself the basis for a vast, global industry.

with sudden rains and then run dry. A cycle of floods and droughts emerges. Rain patterns may be affected for thousands of miles around, since a rain forest by transpiration contributes as much as half of the moisture in the local atmosphere. Thus, deforestation may have contributed to both the floods of Bangladesh and the droughts of Ethiopia that killed so many in this past decade.

But deforestation may also affect the climate of the entire planet. Rain forests have been called the earth's green lung because they draw carbon dioxide from the air and use the carbon to build trunks and limbs and bark. When a

forest is burned down, all that carbon is dumped into the atmosphere. The problem is, man is dumping so much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere (both by burning fossil fuels and by deforestation) that he may already have triggered a global warming trend called the greenhouse effect, which threatens to melt the planet's polar ice caps and raise sea levels, inundating coastal regions.*

Little wonder, then, that people all over the world are getting involved in the crisis. Are they helping? Is any solution held out? What hope is there in this dismal situation?

* See *Awake!*, September 8, 1989.

Do the Forests Have a Future?

ON EASTER ISLAND in the South Pacific, great stone heads loom over grassy hillsides, staring blankly out over the sea. The people who built them dwindled away centuries ago. In the western

United States, the ruins of ancient buildings in lonely wastelands are the only relics of a people who disappeared long before white men ever ventured there. Some Bible lands where civilization and commerce once prospered are now windswept deserts. Why?

In all three cases, part of the answer may be deforestation. Some experts feel that people had to abandon these areas because they wiped out the forests there. Without trees the land turned barren, so man moved on. But today man threatens to do the same to the entire planet. Will he? Can nothing stop the process?

Many are trying. In the Himalayas, women have reportedly hugged trees in desperate attempts to prevent loggers from felling them. In Malaysia, tribal forest dwellers have formed human chains to block oncoming loggers and their heavy machines.

The two hundred million people who make a living from rain forests have a very personal stake in the crisis. As civilization advances, native tribes retreat ever deeper into the forests, sometimes until they meet colonists advancing from the other side. Many tribes are

wiped out by the outsiders' diseases. Others, forced to adapt to the outside world, end up among the urban poor—alienated and dissolute. But the world is waking up to their plight. A mood of environmentalism has begun to sweep the globe.

Can Environmentalists Make the Difference?

"Both the knowledge and technology exist to save the world's tropical forests," begins the book *Saving the Tropical Forests*. The point has been demonstrated in parks around the world. Guanacaste National Park in Costa Rica is dedicated to replanting vast tracts of forest. Trees have been planted by the millions in such countries as Kenya, India, Haiti, and China. But planting trees is not quite the same thing as restoring forests.

Sometimes "reforestation" is actually the commercial planting of a single species of tree, later to be harvested. This is hardly the same as the complex ecosystem of a rain forest. Besides, some say that a moist tropical rain forest can never be restored in its original complexity. No wonder that many environmentalists insist that preservation is better than restoration.

Deforestation here on Easter Island may have caused a civilization to vanish

But preservation is not as easy as it sounds. If a tract of forest is too small, it won't survive. Some environmentalists suggest that at least from 10 to 20 percent of the world's rain forests should be set aside in reserves if they are to retain their wealth of diversity. But at present, only 3 percent of the rain forests of Africa are protected. In Southeast Asia the figure is 2 percent; in South America, 1 percent.

And some of those areas are protected only on paper. Parks and reserves fail when they are poorly planned or managed or when corrupt officials siphon park funds into their own pockets. Some even make money by granting logging concessions on the sly. Manpower is scarce too. In the Amazon, a single guard was assigned to protect an area of rain forest the size of France.

Environmentalists also urge that farmers be taught how to farm without depleting the soil so that they wouldn't be forced to move on and fell more forest. Some have tried growing a wide variety of produce mixed in a single field, which discourages pests who feed on a single species. Fruit trees can shelter the soil from the tropical rains. Others have

H. Armstrong Roberts



revived an ancient technique. They dig canals around small garden plots and shovel mud and algae from the canals onto the plots as nutrients for the crops. Fish may be raised in the canals as an additional food source. Such methods have already met with great success in experiments.

But teaching people "how" costs time and money and requires skill. Tropical nations often have too many immediate economic problems to make that kind of long-term investment. Even if technical know-how were widespread, however, it would not solve the problem. As Michael H. Robinson writes in *Saving the Tropical Forests*: "The rainforests are being destroyed not out of ignorance or stupidity but largely because of poverty and greed."

The Root of the Problem

Poverty and greed. It seems that the deforestation crisis runs its roots deep into the fabric of human society, far deeper than the rain forest trees run their roots into the thin tropical soil. Is mankind capable of uprooting the problem?

A 24-nation summit meeting at The Hague, Netherlands, last year proposed the creation of a new authority within the United Nations, to be called Globe. According to the London *Financial Times*, Globe would have "an unprecedented range of powers to establish and enforce environmental standards." Although nations would have to give up some of their cherished national sovereignty in order for Globe to have any real power, some say that it is inevitable that such an organization will emerge one day. Only a unified, global agency could address global problems.

That stands to reason. But what human government or agency can eradicate greed and poverty? What government ever has? All too often they are based on greed, so they per-

petuate poverty. No, if we are to wait for some human agency to solve the deforestation crisis, then the forests have no future; nor, in fact, do humans.

But consider this. Do not the forests give evidence that they were designed by an immensely intelligent being? Yes, they do! From their roots to their leaves, the rain forests declare that they are the handiwork of a Master Architect.

Well, then, will this Great Architect allow man to wipe out all the rain forests and ruin our earth? An outstanding prophecy in the Bible answers this question directly. It reads: "But the nations became wrathful, and your [God's] own wrath came, and the appointed time . . . to bring to ruin those ruining the earth."—Revelation 11:18.

There are two remarkable things about that prophecy. First, it points to the time when man would actually be able to ruin the entire earth. When those words were written nearly two thousand years ago, man could no more ruin the earth than fly to the moon. But today he does both. Second, the prophecy answers the question of whether man will completely ruin the earth—with a resounding no!

God made man to take care of the earth and cultivate it, not strip it bare. In ancient Israel he set limits on the deforestation his people carried out as they conquered the Promised Land. (Deuteronomy 20:19, 20) He promises that all mankind in the near future will live in harmony with the environment.—1 John 2:17; Jeremiah 10:10-12.

The Bible offers hope, hope for a time when man will cultivate the earth into a paradise instead of bulldozing it into a desert, mend it instead of mauling it, tend it farsightedly instead of greedily milking it dry for a moment's gain. The forests have a future. The corrupt system of things that is ruining them and all the earth has none.

UNDERSTANDING ASTHMA



ASTHMA is a worldwide affliction. Here in New Zealand, it is estimated that 1 in 10 suffers from it. Young and old alike, townsfolk and countryfolk, manual workers and office workers, are among the sufferers.

Yet, asthma is little understood, especially by nonsufferers. Even asthmatics often do not understand what is happening to them, and this can create anxiety that only aggravates the condition. Perhaps the following comments, based on experiences and research in New Zealand, will help to lessen somewhat that lack of understanding.

What Is Asthma?

In a typical asthma attack, the sufferer feels a tightness in the chest. Wheezing and coughing, he struggles to breathe. The experience is frightening! An asthma attack may be severe or quite mild. Symptoms may vary, as may the frequency of attacks. Some persons always have the symptoms, although they differ in severity.

What causes these unpleasant sensations? As you probably know, air is channeled into our lungs through the bronchial tubes. In many asthmatic patients, allergic reactions cause oversensitivity in these tubes. The muscles in the bronchial wall may contract, the membrane lining the tubes may swell, and the glands in the bronchial wall may produce excess mucus. The result? The tubes get narrower. No wonder the patient has difficulty breathing!

What Causes Asthma?

What triggers an asthma attack? Perhaps an infection, an emotional upset, or a severe allergic reaction to something. However, once the disease has been triggered in a person, there may be several antigens, or specific substances, that will produce an oversensitivity

in the bronchial tubes. And once the bronchial tubes are sensitized to these, other factors, such as temperature changes, varying humidity, emotional upsets, or exercise, may also cause attacks.

Doctors may be able to identify some of the antigens that bring on an asthma attack, but it is not often possible to find all of them. And even when they are found, it is not always possible to avoid them. Thorough investigation to find the causes of asthma and the best way to manage it may take time. It may involve much patience on the part of the sufferer and the doctor. But such time spent will likely result in greater ability to control the symptoms.

How to Prevent Attacks

Many things irritate the lungs and can provoke an attack in an asthma sufferer. Try to avoid contact with the following.

Tobacco Smoke: Do not smoke, and avoid smoke-filled rooms. Doctors quickly lose sympathy for asthmatics who insist on smoking. And friends of someone who suffers from asthma should not smoke in the person's presence. Although the person may not suffer an attack immediately, hours later the individual may be in dire straits because of the effects of the smoke.

Dust: Try to avoid dusty, enclosed areas as well as activities that stir up dust. If your job brings you into contact with a lot of dust, give serious consideration to changing it. Some asthmatics find that their symptoms occur only at night or in the bedroom. Could this be due to house dust or those tiny house-dust mites? In many cases it is; hence, the asthmatic's bedroom should be as free of dust as possible. Following are some housekeeping suggestions especially designed for asthmatics.

Clean the bedroom daily.

Each week, thoroughly clean and vacuum mattress, bed base, blankets, and floor. Hard-

wood floors are better than rugs or carpets, and venetian blinds than drapes.

Dust furniture, tops of doors, window frames, and windowsills with a damp or oily cloth.

The room should be aired thoroughly and the doors and windows closed after the airing, at least three to four hours before the person retires.

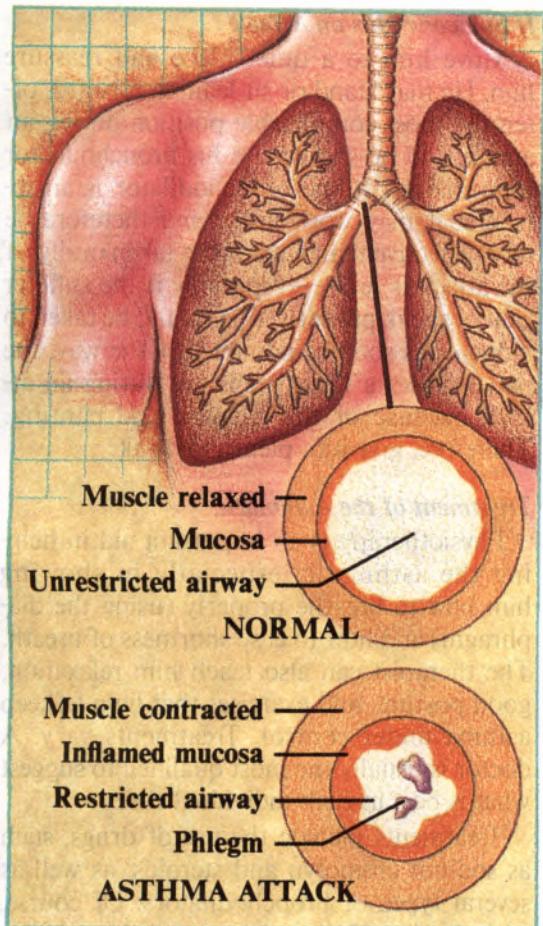
Mattress, blankets, and pillows should not be of allergy-causing materials, and they should regularly be aired in the sun if at all possible.*

One more thing. Do not allow pets into the bedroom. And if there is *any* evidence that you are allergic to your pet, find another home for it—or, at least, always keep it out of the house.

Temperature and Humidity: Sudden temperature changes and extremes of heat and cold may provoke an attack. The ideal is air that is slightly warm and moist. Hence, if you suffer from asthma, go out as little as possible in foggy or crisp, cold weather. Avoid hot, dry central heating. If temperature changes cause attacks during the night, try having a thermostatically controlled heater in your room during the winter months. If humidity brings on your symptoms, try using a humidity controller.

Emotional Stress and Fatigue: Either of these may cause an asthma attack. True, we cannot always control emotional stress. But many asthmatics have found that Bible principles help them in this area. The Bible tells us: "The life of the body is a tranquil heart." (Proverbs 14:30, *The Jerusalem Bible*) Also, wise sufferers of asthma try to be aware of their physical limitations, avoiding fatigue, which can also trigger an attack.

* Sometimes an asthmatic may be too sick to perform these household chores. For helpful suggestions, please refer to the article "A Clean Home Despite Ill Health" in *Awake!* of February 22, 1982.



Food: Food allergies may be causes of asthma attacks, especially in children or in adults whose asthma started in childhood. Even common foods, such as milk, eggs, and cereals, may be suspect. But it may take a lot of detective work to determine the culprit, especially if it is a widely used substance, such as sugar. And, of course, it could be that more than one food is involved. Adult patients would be well-advised to consider alcoholic drinks, especially beer and wine, to be possible aggravating factors.

Exercise: Sometimes an asthma attack is triggered by overexertion, usually striking af-

ter the exercise is completed. If this is your experience, avoid exercises, such as squash, that involve sudden bursts of energy and try a more gradual form of exercise, such as swimming and bicycling. Perhaps it may help to use a bronchodilator (a medicine that relieves congestion in the bronchial tubes) prior to any strenuous activity. A physiotherapist may be able to help you with a program that will increase your tolerance of exercise. This will enable you to take part in more activities without becoming short of breath.

Infection: Often, minor respiratory infections, such as a cold or influenza, will provoke asthma attacks or make the symptoms worse. The usual medication for relief of asthma is not always effective when an infection is present.

Living With Pollens: While the winter months cause many problems to those with respiratory disease, many suffer from what is called seasonal asthma. Microscopically small particles of pollen floating in the summer air can cause untold misery and discomfort to asthma sufferers. It is impossible to eradicate the sources of this pollen, but some common-sense measures may help. For instance, try to avoid freshly mowed lawns, as well as wilderness or country areas during pollen seasons, and use effective air-conditioning if possible.

Living With Molds: Thousands of molds, or fungi, inhabit our environment. Molds and fungal spores (reproductive bodies) grow on vegetable or animal matter. They are also abundant on wheat, oats, corn, grasses, and leaves. While only a small number have been shown to cause problems for asthma sufferers, a study in New Zealand suggested that spores may be a major allergy factor. Hence, while it is impossible to eradicate airborne spores, the following measures may help:

- Avoid damp, musty basements and buildings.

- Do not rake or burn leaves or dry grass.
- Disinfect or destroy any moldy articles.
- Do not keep plants indoors or establish a compost pile in the garden.
- Decontaminate household areas infected with mold.

Is Your Child Asthmatic?

If so, he will need your support. You, as well as his teachers, will need to understand his problem and help him to cope with it. The child must not be pushed to do more than he can manage, but neither should he be allowed to hide behind his asthma and avoid doing things that would be good for him.

His physical activities should preferably be noncompetitive, although many children with asthma can play most games when they are free of symptoms. However, the child with chronic asthma may be able to enjoy only limited activity, and adults should be careful not to push him to try too hard. The intelligent use of medication may help him to enjoy regular activities such as physical education, and the instructor should know when and how to use a bronchodilator aerosol.

A few children are so severely affected by asthma that they persistently have difficulty in breathing and are frequently wheezy. Such children are often anxious and tense, and their parents and teachers worry a lot about them. The children frequently miss school and may be unable to join in games.

A parent may be overprotective of such a child. If the child comes from a home where there is constant tension and argument, he may lack the support, love, understanding, and encouragement he so desperately needs. Parents who adopt a healthy, optimistic approach to asthma help reduce anxiety in the child, minimizing the severity of the disorder.

If Someone Has an Attack . . .

Move him to a quiet place and reassure him. He may stand or sit leaning forward, often the most comfortable position during an attack, and he should use his bronchodilator immediately. If the bronchodilator is an inhalant, it may work faster and therefore be more effective than a medicine taken orally. If the attack is severe—especially if the sufferer cannot speak properly—he should be taken to a doctor as soon as possible. By the way, the patient loses a lot of moisture during an attack because of the gasping and panting. Therefore, give him plenty to drink.

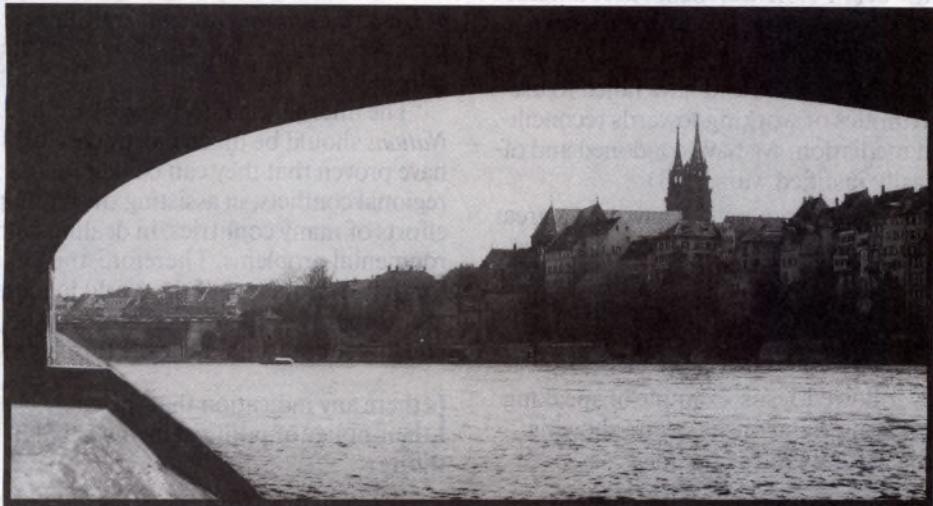
Treatment of the Asthmatic

Physiotherapy is an important aid in helping the asthmatic, especially in showing him how to breathe properly (using the diaphragm) and how to ease shortness of breath. The therapist can also teach him relaxation, good posture, and exercises that help to keep asthma under control. Treatments vary. A doctor is usually the most qualified to suggest what is best in each individual case.

Treatments include the use of drugs, such as sodium cromolyn and steroids, as well as several types of bronchodilators. Of course, with the use of drugs, there may be possible side effects. A doctor may be able to recommend other treatments.

Asthma is complex. Relatives and friends must understand this if they are going to be of any help. Avoid saying things like, 'Just get your mind off it' or, 'You look quite well to me.' Asthma sufferers who learn to understand their affliction can take comfort in knowing that even before humankind is cured of all ills in God's new world, they can be better prepared for asthma attacks, better equipped to avoid things that trigger them, and have their stress, anxiety, and discomfort greatly lessened. (Isaiah 33:22, 24)
—Contributed by an asthma sufferer.

JUDGED OUT OF THEIR OWN MOUTH



REPRESENTING all of Europe's professed Christian churches, 638 delegates met last May in Basel, Switzerland, for the European Ecumenical Assembly "Peace With Justice." They adopted, by a vote of 94.5 percent, a final document that can therefore be viewed as a consensus document of European Christendom. Let this document answer a few questions we might appropriately ask. (The numbers in parentheses refer to document sections.)

Are these churches worshiping the one true God, Jehovah, and maintaining proper Christian unity?

"We owe our life to God the Creator, the triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit; who in his mercy has revealed himself to humanity

in Jesus Christ. Irrespective of persisting confessional differences we all share in this faith." (21)

"As a result of baptism and the response in faith to the hearing of God's word, we Christians are already one in Christ, even though we are not yet in full communion. We seek to overcome the differences which still exist in doctrine and practice in order to come to a full communion." (39)

"We have failed to overcome the divisions among the churches and have often misused the authority and power given to us to strengthen limited and false solidarities like racism, sexism and nationalism." (43)

Have they lived up to their claim of being followers of the Prince of Peace?

"As Christians we believe that true peace will be granted by walking with Christ, even though we often shy away from following him to the end. His renunciation of violence flows from that love which seeks even the enemy in order to transform him or her and to overcome enmity as well as violence. This love is ready to suffer in an active way. It exposes the unjust character of the act of violence, makes accountable those who use violence and draws the enemy into a relationship of peace." (32)

"We have caused wars and have failed to use all opportunities of working towards reconciliation and mediation; we have condoned and often too easily justified wars." (43)

"Schisms and religious strife have had a great impact on European history. Many wars have been religious wars. Millions of men and women have been tortured and killed for their beliefs." (48)

Have they followed Jesus' example of speaking truth, seeking righteousness, and showing respect for life and God's creation?

"Churches and Christians have failed in many respects and have not always lived up to the standards of God's calling sometimes even failing to proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ . . . For too long we have been blind to the implications and demands of the Gospel in respect to justice, peace and the integrity of creation." (42)

"We have failed to witness to God's care for all and every creature and to develop a life-style expressing our self-understanding as part of God's creation." (43)

Are they ignorant of the reason for world problems?

"What are the root causes of the threats we are facing today? . . . The real causes . . . are to be sought in the very heart of humankind, in human attitudes and mentalities." (18, 19)

"The impasses in which we find ourselves ultimately have their roots in the fact that God's ways have been abandoned." (41)

Despite this admission, are they turning their back on rule by man and putting their trust in God's established Kingdom?

"Three important and momentous developments call for special attention: the *improvement of East-West relations* in the CSCE [Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe] process; the *democratic reforms* in the Soviet Union and other East European countries; the *process of Western European integration* (Single European Act, which takes full effect as of the beginning of 1993)." (51)

"The international framework of the *United Nations* should be made more effective. They have proven that they can be helpful in solving regional conflicts, in assisting the development efforts of many countries, in dealing with environmental problems. Therefore, there is a need for the governments of the world to increase their support of the United Nations and to translate this support into tangible form." (83)

Is there any indication that they may change their policy of political involvement in the near future?

"1992 will moreover mark the *500th anniversary of the beginning of a period of European expansion* to the detriment of other peoples. This calls us to work for a just and peaceful relationship both between the countries within Europe and between Europe and the other parts of the world in particular the Middle East for which Europe bears much historic responsibility. We urge our churches to support the struggle of the people in Latin America, Africa and Asia for social justice, human dignity and the preservation of their environment." (84n)

What is the Bible principle to be applied in judging the religions that drew up this final document?

Matthew 12:37 says: "By your words you will be declared righteous, and by your words you will be condemned." (See also Luke 19:22.) How does European Christendom measure up? Do her words declare her righteous, or do they condemn her? In view of the above quotations, can there be any doubt?

I Tried to Change the World

I WAS born in New Orleans, Louisiana, in June 1954. I was the 5th child of 11. My parents were devout Catholics and as such sent us to parochial school. I was an altar boy in church, got up early many mornings to go to Mass, and from a very early age aspired to become a Catholic priest and to serve God and man. So when I graduated from the eighth grade, I entered St. Augustine's Divine Word Seminary in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.

Once there, I discovered that the priests were not as holy as I had thought. I saw lying, profanity, and drunkenness. One priest had homosexual interests. Another was visited frequently by the niece of another priest, and she later became pregnant with his baby. The solution to that was his transfer to another religious institution. Disillusionment set in, and my ambition to become a priest died, but my desire to serve God survived.

I lived in the seminary and worshiped there, but I attended a predominantly white high school. There I experienced racism. Not that I hadn't been victimized before by discrimination in its many guises, especially those ever-present reminders of my "inferior status," the signs by water fountains and rest rooms saying "White Only" and "Colored Only" and the racial slurs scrawled on buildings, such as "No niggers allowed."

But in high school, it was on a more personal level. The derogatory name-calling, the endless stream of racial jokes, the favoritism shown white students, the discrimination against blacks—it left me bitter. Some of the outnumbered black students felt it necessary to carry knives or razors, just in case. I became involved in activist issues, such as leading boycotts.

'How Can People Do This to People?'

In my 11th year in high school, I read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. I became totally absorbed in that book. At night, after lights were to be turned off, I took the book to bed and with a flashlight read it under the blankets. I also read books about the African slave trade. I had books with diagrams describing the slave ships, showing how blacks were packed in like sardines; when one of them would die, he would just be thrown overboard to be eaten by the sharks that followed those ships. Such things were burned into my memory. Asleep at night, I'd see those things happening to people and wonder, 'How can people do this to people?' I built up a hatred for white people.

By the time I was in college and the Black Panthers came on campus, I was ripe for them. They believed that power came from the barrel of a gun and that there had to be bloodshed in America between the races. I

shared their view. They wanted me to join their ranks, but I didn't. I sold their Black Panther newspaper, I did drugs with them, but I could not share their atheism. I still believed in God, though disillusioned with Catholicism because of the immorality and hypocrisy of the priests in the seminary. It was at this time that I seriously considered committing suicide by jumping off the Mississippi River bridge.

Shortly after that, a Black Muslim came on campus, selling the newspaper *Muhammad Speaks*. We talked about the plight of the black man, and I began going to Black Muslim meetings. They hated white people—they were the ones that introduced me to the idea that the white man was the Devil. No, not that he is just devilish, or diabolic, but that he is, in fact, the Devil—which explained why the whites committed such atrocities against the black people. What did they do to the American Indian and to blacks in the slave trade? Killed millions, that's what!

Surely Not All Could Be Devils

So I became a Black Muslim. I renounced my last name, Dugué being French, and I substituted an X. I became Virgil X. As a

Black Muslim, I was very zealous in selling their newspaper and in other activities. I felt that this was the right way to serve God. But after a period of time with the Black Muslims, I started to question some of their teachings, some of their practices—even the idea that the white man was the Devil.

True, I had had bad experiences with whites in my life, but were all of them categorically devils? I thought about the white basketball coach who was sympathetic toward blacks. Then there was a young white lawyer who represented me in a discrimination case against the New Orleans School Board. There were other decent whites I had known in my lifetime—surely not all could be devils.

Also, I reflected on the resurrection. The Black Muslims taught that when you die, you're finished—that was it! But I reasoned, 'If God could create man from dust, surely he can resurrect him from the grave.' Then there is the financial aspect of the Black Muslims. I was selling 300 *Muhammad Speaks* newspapers a week, 1,200 a month, bringing the money to them. The dues we had to pay. So much of the preaching revolved around money. I was getting about four hours of sleep a night. I was devoting my entire life to the Black Muslims. And now doubts were growing in my mind about some of their teachings. All of that was going around in my head, was weighing on my mind.

One day in December 1974 at my secular job at a community center, all these thoughts began racing back and forth through my mind. It was a feeling I'd never had before. I thought I was going out of my mind. I had to get out fast before something bad happened. I had to have some breathing room, some time to reflect on where my life was taking me. I told those at the center that I had to leave for the day. I gave them no explanation.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

*Is There Life
Beyond the Earth?*

*Where Is the Labor
Movement Headed?*

*The Prostate
and Its Problems*

I Begged God to Show Me the Truth

I left work and hurried home. I got down on my knees and prayed to God. I prayed for the truth. For the first time, I begged God to show me the truth, show me the organization that had it. Previously I had prayed for a way to help black people, for the right racist organization that hated whites. But now I just prayed for the truth, whatever it was, wherever it was. "If you are Allah, help me. If you are not Allah, whoever you are, please help me. Help me find the truth."

By this time I was again using my proper name, Virgil Dugué. I was still living with my mother and father in New Orleans. When I awakened the next day after my fervently praying to God, I found a *Watchtower* magazine in the house. I don't know how it got there. It was unusual because I had never seen any literature from Jehovah's Witnesses in the house before. I asked if any in the family knew where it came from. Nobody did. It must have been slipped under the door.

It was the December 15, 1974, issue. On the cover there was a picture of Mary and Joseph and of Jesus in the manger—white people! And the question: "Is This the Way to Honor Jesus Christ?" I thought, 'They are going to answer yes and say you should worship Jesus.' If it had been any other issue of the magazine, I would probably have tossed it aside. But I opened it up and scanned the first article and realized that they were saying that Jesus is not God and that you should not worship Jesus. To me that was a revelation! I had thought that all the sects of Christendom worshiped Jesus and that all of them thought that Jesus was God.

But I knew from being a Black Muslim that Jesus was not God. They read many scriptures showing that Jesus was not God, including the one at John 14:28: "The Father is greater than I am." They taught that Jesus



Virgil and Brenda Dugué

was a prophet, and Elijah Muhammad, a leader of the Black Muslims, was supposed to be the last prophet. So I knew Jesus was not God, and when I read that in this article, it was as if I had thrown off weights. By the time I got to the end of the article, I sat there speechless. I did not know what to think. I wasn't convinced that this was the truth. But for the first time, I realized that not all so-called Christian religions celebrated Christmas or other pagan holidays. And since I had prayed for the truth, I thought, 'Could this be it? Is this the answer to my prayer?'

In the phone book, I looked up all the so-called Christian churches. I called them and simply asked, "Do you celebrate Christmas?" They would say yes, and I would hang up. Finally I was left with Jehovah's Witnesses. Could this be an answer to my prayer? I had never listened to them. Perhaps it was time I

did. I telephoned their Kingdom Hall. It was a white man who answered. He wanted to come to my home to study the Bible with me. But I was cautious. I said no. He was white; he could still be the devil.

I Asked Questions, I Got Answers

So we talked over the telephone. For the first time in my life, I felt satisfied. I called him daily, asked more questions, got more answers. He gave me proof. He backed up what he said with scriptures from the Bible. I was impressed. It was the first time anyone had used the Bible to answer my questions. A ray of hope began to dawn inside me. I got a *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* that had a small concordance in the back. I pored over it and learned many more truths.

A month later, I moved to Dallas, Texas. After I got settled, I called the local Kingdom Hall. The one who answered picked me up and took me to a meeting at the hall. There I was introduced to a Witness who agreed to study with me. I went to his home for the study. I felt spiritually starved, so we studied three times a week, several hours each study. His name was Curtis. I would be waiting on his doorstep when he came home from work. He was so patient with me. I did not realize that the home Bible studies were usually conducted once a week and for only one hour, and Curtis never told me. He started studying with me in January or February of 1975; we finished *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life* book in May of that year.

Soon after, I returned to New Orleans, associated with the Witnesses at the Kingdom Hall, and began going from house to house, publishing the good news of the Kingdom. I felt that since I had been so zealous as a Black Muslim, spending 100 or 150 hours a month selling *Muhammad Speaks* newspapers and getting only four hours sleep, I had to be zealous as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. So besides

my studying, I preached and conducted many Bible studies in the homes of others. In fact, I recall that on one Service Meeting program, the chairman asked me:

"How much time did you put in field service last month?"

"About a hundred hours."

"How many Bible studies are you conducting?"

"Ten."

There were whispers throughout the audience at these high figures, but I wondered, 'Did I say something wrong? Am I not doing enough?'

My Aspirations Fulfilled

I progressed to the point of dedication and got baptized on December 21, 1975. The following year Jehovah blessed me with a wonderful wife, Brenda. In fact, I first met Brenda the day I got baptized. She was a full-time publisher of the Kingdom then and continued to be one after we were married. Two years later, in 1978, I started full-time publishing with her. Two years after that, in 1980, Brenda and I were invited to become members of the Bethel Family in Brooklyn, New York, the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses. We are still serving Jehovah there.

When I look back on my life, I think of my young years when I aspired to be a Catholic priest and serve God and man. I reflect on my search for purpose, first with the Black Panthers and then with the Black Muslims, and I remember the days of disillusionment with these movements, just as disillusionment had come earlier with the priesthood. But through it all, my faith in God never faltered. I thank Jehovah that he rescued me from false religious and political starts and put me on the road to truth and life.

Finally, my youthful aspirations to serve God and man have been fulfilled!—*As told by Virgil Dugué*.



Should I Get Baptized?

THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD Susana was in the final stages of cancer when she attended her last convention of Jehovah's Witnesses. She did not know that she would die within just ten days. However, not even cancer could stop her from fulfilling her most cherished desire: to be baptized as a dedicated Witness of Jehovah and a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Susana was just one of thousands of young people among Jehovah's Witnesses in recent years who have cherished the privilege of being baptized. But perhaps you find the prospect of taking such a bold stand rather frightening. Not that you do not believe the Bible-based truths you have been taught. You may be a regular attender at Christian meetings and you may regularly participate in sharing the Bible's truths with others. Yet, when it comes to dedicating your life to God, you may hesitate. How important, then, is baptism? And why do so many youths shy away from it?

Religion Without Dedication

In Christendom, the question of baptism is often answered for youths by their parents. Some sects encourage parents to have their children baptized as infants. And even when the baptism rite is reserved for adulthood, youths are usually expected to follow their parents' religion as a matter of course, not choice.

Interestingly, though, a Gallup survey in the United States revealed that while "nearly all teens (96 percent) believe there is a God," only 39 percent prayed frequently. And only 52 per-

cent had confidence in organized religion. Young Diane is thus typical in saying: "I believe in God and all that, but I believe more in just trying to be a good person than reading every line of the Bible."

Yes, religion can be a feeble force, indeed, when it has been imposed upon a youth by his parents. A study made of a group of Catholic juvenile delinquents further illustrates this. Half of them attended church. Most knew the basic doctrines of their faith. And almost 90 percent of them did not approve of stealing. Yet, over two thirds were thieves! Observed the book *The Adolescent*: "One reason may be that the boys' religious commitment was marginal. All were born Catholics; their initial commitment was made for them by their parents. Their religion was not their own."

Baptism—Why a Christian Requirement

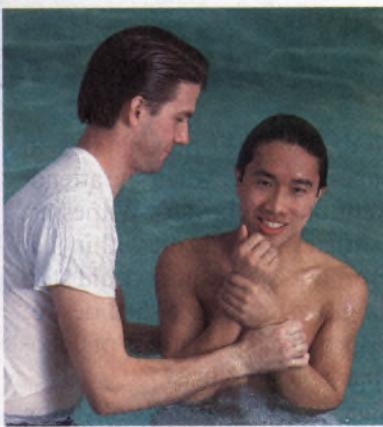
For good reason, then, the Bible requires that you—not your parents—make a personal dedication to God.* "Well and good," you might say, "but if dedication is personal, something between God and me, why do I have to get baptized?"

Because baptism involves "the salvation of your soul." (1 Peter 1:9) God has in mind bringing "vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus. These very ones

* The folly of infant baptism is discussed in the article "Should Babies Be Baptized" in *The Watchtower* of March 15, 1986.



The decision to serve God is one that only you can make. Baptism identifies one as a dedicated disciple of Christ Jesus



will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction." (2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9) All indications are that this destruction will come in our day.*

Yet, God's will is that "all sorts of men should be saved." (1 Timothy 2:4) He wants you to escape the end of this system of things and live forever in Paradise on earth! (Revelation 21:3, 4) But how can you identify yourself as one obeying the good news? It is not enough simply to believe the Bible truths you have been taught, nor is it enough simply to tag along with your parents to Christian meetings. (Compare James 2:19.) Those desiring salvation must dedicate themselves to God and do his will. Says the apostle Paul at Romans 12:1: "Consequently I entreat you by the compassions of God, brothers, to present your bodies a sacrifice living, holy, [“dedicated,” *The New English Bible*] acceptable to God, a sacred service with your power of reason."

But dedication cannot remain a strictly private matter. After all, how devoted, how dedicated, could a secret disciple really be? (Compare John 19:38.) Would you trust a friend who wanted to keep your friendship secret? Wisely, then, God requires all to 'make public declaration for salvation.' (Romans 10:10) This begins at baptism. At that time, one makes verbal declaration of one's faith. Then, baptism in water follows. (Matthew 28:19, 20) What value could there be, though, in being plunged into water?

Baptism is not a mere bath; it is a symbolic burial. When you go beneath the baptismal waters, it impresses upon you that you have died to your former life course. Previously, your personal ambitions, goals, and desires took first place in your life. But Jesus said that his disciples would 'disown themselves.' (Mark 8:34) So when you are raised up, you are reminded that you are now alive to do the will of God. This bold, public act is a vital part of the marking that identifies you for salvation! —Ezekiel 9:4-6; compare 1 Peter 3:21.

* See the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, (published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.), chapter 18.

'I'm Afraid I'll Get Disfellowshipped'

If baptism is so important, why, then, do some youths hold back from it? *Awake!* asked that very question to a number of Christian youths. One girl said: "A lot feel that they will have more freedom if they're not baptized. They feel that if they get into trouble, they won't be as responsible." A youth named Robert echoed this comment by saying: "I think a lot of young people hesitate to get baptized because they fear it's a final step that they can't back out of. They feel that if they do something wrong, they'll be put out of the congregation."

It is true that one cannot back out of a dedication to God. (Compare Ecclesiastes 5:4.) A person dedicating himself to God takes on a serious responsibility. He or she is obliged to "walk worthily of Jehovah to the end of fully pleasing him." (Colossians 1:10) One engaging in gross wrongdoing even risks being expelled from the Christian congregation.—1 Corinthians 5:11-13.

Yet, one cannot reason that as long as one is not baptized, anything goes. For "if one knows how to do what is right and yet does not do it, it is a sin for him"—baptized or unbaptized! (James 4:17) One may avert formal expulsion from the congregation, but one cannot escape Jehovah's judgment. "Make no mistake," warns Paul, "there is no thumbing your nose at God; for a man will reap just the same that he sows."—Galatians 6:7, *Byington*.

Often a fear of getting disfellowshipped really masks a secret desire to practice wrongdoing. A young woman named Natalie candidly observed: "I was raised in Satan's world and know what it is like. But a lot of young people want to get out and experience what's out there." Rather than letting wrong desires hold you back from baptism—or letting them

develop into wrong acts—why not get some help, perhaps talking matters over with a parent or a mature Christian?—James 1:14, 15.

Really, the freedom Satan's world offers is a mere illusion. As the apostle Peter said of some who were misled in his day: "While they are promising them freedom, they themselves are existing as slaves of corruption. For whoever is overcome by another is enslaved by this one." (2 Peter 2:19) Is it really freedom to have your thinking, conduct, and morals controlled by others? Is it really freedom to engage in acts that lead to disease, disgrace, and, ultimately, to death?—Proverbs 5:8-14.

A Japanese youth named Hitoshi faced those very questions. He was raised by Christian parents and recalls: "While others played, I had to go to meetings. I wanted more freedom. I thought I was missing out on something." Yes, like the psalmist Asaph, he became "envious" of wrongdoers. (Psalm 73:2, 3) But after giving sober thought to the matter, Hitoshi's feelings changed. He says: "I realized what my life would be without the truth—I could see myself living 70 or 80 years and then dying. But Jehovah holds out everlasting life!" Hitoshi thus made a dedication to God and was baptized.—Compare Psalm 73:19-28.

Are you moved to do likewise? A youth named David was. He recalls: "Getting baptized as a youngster was a protection for me. . . . Some unbaptized teenagers in the congregation felt free of the authority of the elders and as a consequence veered into bad conduct. But I always remembered that I had dedicated my life to God." Perhaps, though, you are not sure if you are really ready to take this step. Information to help you will be presented in a future article.

WATCHING THE WORLD

OUR POLLUTED PLANET

"Abuse of the environment is so bad that it can now be seen from outer space," reports *The Toronto Star*. Photographs taken from outer space by astronauts show that "the planet is being covered in dust from growing deserts, huge lakes are disappearing and weather patterns are being altered by pollution." Heat from steel mills, smog from large cities, and smoke from burning forests were cited as examples of environmental damage caused by humans. According to Dick Underwood, a consultant to the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the rapid growth of deserts presents "the biggest menace," as there may be no way to stop it. Expressing his concern, he said: "Earth is just a minor planet, but it's the only planet we've got."

SOVIET RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

According to President Mikhail Gorbachev, "the Soviet Union had erred in long rejecting religion and now needed its moral force," says *The New York Times*. It quoted him as saying: "The moral values that religion generated and embodied for centuries can help in the work of renewal in our country, too. In fact, this is already happening." A report in *The Wall Street Journal* concurs: "Even among people who aren't especially religious, it now is in vogue to lament the decline of the nation's morals and pour scorn on the Marxist-Leninist view of religion as the opium of the people." Although the change, continues the *Journal*, "has sparked a nationwide church revival, the Book of Books is in terribly short supply." Soviet book publishers, still

controlled "by a government that officially preaches atheism," have not been printing Bibles to meet the demand. Black-market copies, if they can be found, go for \$100 apiece, and theft of Bibles has been reported.

FATAL ADDICTION

"Every 13 seconds, someone dies from a tobacco-induced disease," reports the *UN Chronicle*. "Conservative estimates put the tobacco death toll at 2.5 million people every year." In most countries, the number of women who smoke has



been rapidly increasing. In addition to the risk of lung cancer and other respiratory ailments, women smokers using contraceptive pills run an increased risk of heart attack and stroke. Pregnant women also risk the health of their child.

THE LAST DALAI LAMA?

Tibet's Dalai Lama, winner of the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize, says he wants to step down and allow a popularly elected prime minister to take his place. According to Tibetan Buddhist doctrine, the present Dalai Lama is the 14th incarnation of Chen-re-zhi, the living Buddha, patron god of Tibet. A Dalai Lama has been looked to as the religious and political sovereign

of Tibet since the 17th century. Why is a change proposed now? Lodi Gyari, the Dalai Lama's foreign minister, thinks it was meant to force Tibetans to look to the future. "Buddhism teaches that everything is impermanent and everyone must go, even the Dalai Lama," he said. "So we have to plan for that." But Tibetan leaders, in exile with the Dalai Lama in India, oppose the idea. Tibet has been under Communist Chinese rule since 1950. The Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959 after an uprising against the Chinese rule failed.

LOTTERY WINNER LOSES

"I can buy what I want when I want it," says Jean-Guy Lavigueur, who won a \$7.6 million Canadian lottery jackpot in 1986, "but besides that I'm no more happy than anyone else." The former unemployed worker from Montreal declares that becoming a millionaire "hasn't changed me, but it's changed everyone around me." Now family and old friends alike have abandoned him because, as he puts it, "I didn't give them enough money."

MARIJUANA AND MEMORY

Researchers have found that "teenagers who abuse marijuana can suffer problems with their short-term memory up to six weeks after they stop smoking the drug," says the magazine *Science News*. Noting that teenagers who had abused marijuana "often had trouble remembering rules and following conversations" while in a drug treatment program, the researchers checked them against those who abused other drugs and those who abused no drugs at all.

The "boys and girls who abused marijuana did much worse on short-term memory tasks" than both the other groups, says the report, and six weeks later, "although their memories had improved slightly, still did worse than the other two groups."

HOMOSEXUAL CLERGY

"It's time that someone said it bluntly," writes cleric Andrew Greeley in the *National Catholic Reporter*. "Church leaders are guilty of yet one more folly, one that is destroying everything for which the Catholic priesthood once stood." What is that? "Church leadership is tolerating a double standard on celibacy and, because of stupidity and cowardice, permitting the priesthood to become substantially, perhaps in due course mostly, gay," says Greeley. While acknowledging that "many priests, bishops, popes and even saints in ages past have probably been more homosexual than heterosexual in their orientation," he believes that current ecclesiastical policy toward the sexuality of priests is causing the clergy to become predominantly homosexual, damaging even more "the already tarnished image of the priesthood." Greeley adds: "It appears that many homosexual priests ordained in the past two decades are sexually active and that some of them are also pedophiles [prefer children as sex objects]."

2,500-YEAR-OLD PUZZLE

How did King Nebuchadnezzar water the fabled Hanging Gardens of Babylon? That's what President Saddam Hussein of Iraq wants to know, says the *New York Post*. So much so that he is offering a prize of \$1.5 million to whoever comes up with the most plausible system

for watering the legendary seven-level terraced gardens. However, modern technology cannot be employed in the system, only what could have been used back there in the sixth century B.C.E. The Iraqi government wants to duplicate the gardens, which may have been as high as 365 feet. The contest is only open to Iraqis.

UNWANTED COIN

The penny (1 cent, U.S.) is becoming increasingly unpopular, as more merchants post signs reading: "No pennies accepted." Many pennies are just thrown away. A



Florida recycling plant says it finds \$1,000 worth of pennies each week mixed in with household garbage. The U.S. Treasury Department reports that over 6,000,000,000 pennies disappear each year.

WAR TOLL

Over 4.5 million people became war casualties in 1988, according to a study by William Eckhardt of the U.S.-based Lentz Peace Research Laboratory. "Three-quarters of the victims were civilians, the majority of whom were the elderly and children unable to find shelter quickly and most vulnerable to malnutrition," says the article in the *National Catholic Reporter*. Civil conflicts accounted for 18 of the 22 countries where wars were documented. However, Northern Ireland, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Namibia, and South

Africa were not included, as casualties in those nations numbered less than a thousand for the year. New wars broke out in Burundi and Northern Somalia in 1988.

SMALLEST OF THE SMALL

A new realm of aquatic microorganisms has been discovered: viruses no bigger than 0.000008 inch in diameter. Previously, the smallest forms of life were thought to be nanoplankton, organisms that measured from 0.0004 inch to 0.0008 inch in diameter, and picoplankton, which measured less than 0.00008 inch in diameter. It is estimated that from 160 million to 1,600 million of the viruses exist in a single cubic inch of unpolluted water—ten times the number of bacteria—making them "the most numerous life-forms on the earth," says *Scientific American*.

VIDEO VIOLENCE

The brutal murder of four little girls in Japan has unleashed a furor there over violent videotapes, reports *Asiaweek* magazine. The murderer, Miyazaki Tsutomu, claims that it was graphic video violence and pornography that inspired him to commit the gruesome sexual assaults and murders. Police found about 6,000 videotapes in Tsutomu's home; they featured real-life scenes of carnage, the dissection of human beings, and pornography. But spokesmen for the videotape industry dismissed any connection between the movies and the crimes as "ludicrous." While parents clamored for more curbs on such tapes, a government official mentioned only the possibility of limiting them to viewers 18 years of age or older. But as *Asiaweek* observed: "That hardly addressed the issue: Miyazaki is 26."

FROM OUR READERS

Aftermath of War I was thrilled when I opened up the October 8, 1989, issue. There on the inside of the front cover was a photograph of my husband when he was in the U.S. Marines in 1944. Although the picture was originally published some 45 years ago, we never could identify where it was taken. Your caption cleared this up for us. My husband read the articles and said they were very accurate. To my knowledge, it is the first time he has ever read *Awake!*

H. S., United States

Oil Spill As a seafood distributor, I appreciated the article in the September 22, 1989, issue on the Alaskan oil spill. It certainly did affect the lives of people living there, as well as the environment. We surely need direction from our Creator to direct our steps. But as far as Alaskan seafood is concerned, we do not have to fear purchasing such products, inasmuch as a thorough inspection program is now in progress.

A. C., United States

Future to Believe In I was really enlightened by the essay that a 16-year-old girl wrote on the future. (October 22, 1989) I particularly liked the poem she quoted: "Two men looked out of prison bars, one saw the mud hole, the other saw the stars." It was a very effective springboard for going into a discussion of the Bible.

D. B., Canada

As a teenager, I was greatly impressed that this girl entered her essay in a contest. That is a tribute to her faith and love of her Creator. Her essay painted a beautiful picture of the future of those who look to Jehovah God.

S. G., United States

Special Needs Your article (August 22, 1989) mentioned lipreading. Not all deaf people can lip-read, however. The average deaf person understands only 30 percent, and the rest is guesswork. (Try watching TV without sound, and you'll see that it is not easy.) People often try to force us to lip-read rather than write things down on paper for us. Or they will talk in our ears or talk loud to us or even yell. This doesn't work. It also hurts us very much when hearing people treat us as if we were mentally retarded.

F. B., United States

These reminders are appreciated. Lip-reading was mentioned merely as an option for individuals who become deaf later in life and find learning sign language too difficult. We did not mean to imply that all deaf people can lip-read.—ED.

Wayward Siblings I want to thank you for the article "Young People Ask . . . How Could They Do That to Me?" (November 8, 1989) My sister was disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation two years ago, and many of the thoughts brought out in that article described my own feelings. At the time it seemed as if our family would not survive this sad experience, but we did. And we were able to display our loyalty to Jehovah and his organization.

K. L., United States

Staying Friends The article "Young People Ask . . . Why Is It So Hard to Stay Friends?" (September 22, 1989) made me realize to what degree I had suffocated my friendships. I was jealous if others even talked with some of my friends! I am now making changes. I hope that this valuable feature never goes out of this magazine.

G. Z., Brazil

A flaming bird! That is how the ancient Greeks described the phoenix, a mythical bird that ended its life in flames and later emerged from the ashes. Centuries ago, the name of the phoenix was transferred to a real bird, the flamingo. It lives up to the name better than a legend ever could. A flock on the wing is a sight beyond the spectacular—a whirring, honking, “fire storm” of pink, black, and vermillion filling the sky.

And a single flamingo is a marvel of design, from head to foot. Consider the beak, an oblong, lidded box, turned down at the end so that it is parallel to the bottom of the pond as the head sweeps back and forth searching for food in the shallow water. Inside, the beak is lined with bristles that keep larger objects out while trapping small, edible bits of algae and such, as the tongue pumps water in and out. Only whales feed similarly, filtering tiny shrimps through their baleen.

The flamingo's neck and legs are, in proportion, the longest of any bird's. The flamingo may stand over six feet tall. Its stiltslike legs are suited to life in shallow, salty lakes. It even rests while standing in the water, safe from predators, and in the unlikeliest of positions—standing on one leg! Experts say that a flamingo stands on one leg in order to rest the other. A special tendon enables the bird to lock the leg rigidly in place, like a pole. A superb sense of balance helps too.

Evolutionists have a hard time with the flamingo's origin. To them, it is in some ways like a goose, in others like a stork, in still others like a heron. We might add that it eats like a whale and sleeps like a standing lamp. But we don't need to puzzle over where it came from. Only an intelligent Designer could devise such a marvel.

A Marvel in Pink





An Event to Remember!

Tuesday, April 10

It was Nisan 14 of the year 33 C.E. Jesus was sharing a cup of wine and a loaf of unleavened bread with his apostles. His instruction? "Keep doing this in remembrance of me."—Luke 22:19. So, once a year, Jehovah's Witnesses around the world gather to memorialize Jesus' death in the way he instructed on the night he made that statement.

This year, Nisan 14 begins on Tuesday, April 10, at sundown. You are cordially invited to join us in this remembrance meeting on that Tuesday evening. Please check with Jehovah's Witnesses locally for the exact time and place of the meeting.