

NOVEMBER 8, 1979

# Awake!

## Why Should You Believe in God?

**Why do many not believe?  
How some have been helped  
to believe**

## FEATURE ARTICLES

In centuries past, almost everyone professed to believe in God. Today many persons do not believe. What sound reasons are there for belief in God? How can such belief benefit those who have it? The following articles, prepared by our correspondent in the Philippines, examine the evidence

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### WHY THIS MAGAZINE IS PUBLISHED

"Awake!" is for the enlightenment of the entire family. 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 stays politically neutral and does not exalt one race above another. It also shows how to cope with today's problems. Most importantly, "Awake!" builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new order within our generation.

The Bible translation used in "Awake!" is the modern-language "New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures," unless otherwise indicated.

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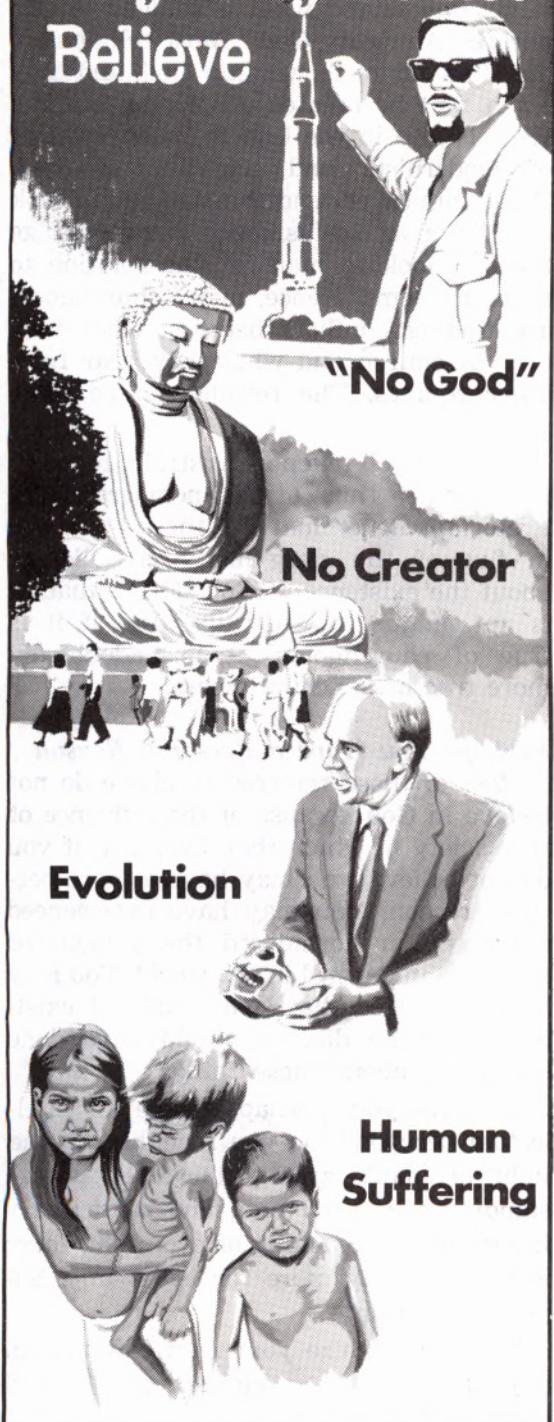
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# Why They Do Not Believe



"WE LIVE in a secular society in which God plays no significant part in the lives, thoughts, or actions of men; men know today that they can get along practically, emotionally, and intellectually without reference to God."

These are the words of a philosopher studying the problem of unbelief, as he was quoted in the book *Religion in a Secular Age*. Do you agree with him?

If you do, doubtless you think of yourself as an atheist, convinced that God does not exist. Or perhaps you are an agnostic, considering that, well, God may exist or he may not; but since we have no way of knowing, it does not make too much difference. Alternatively, you may be what the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* calls a "practical atheist." Perhaps you believe in God; but your belief makes no practical difference in your life.

Whatever way you describe yourself, why not pause and think for a moment? If there is a God, and he really does have a purpose for you, is not denying his very existence serious? Would it not be like living in a country and refusing to recognize the existence of the government of that country? Very soon you would be in trouble with the government. And you would not be able to take advantage of any services, protection or rewards that the government provided.

Hence, you need to be sure. And we urge you to consider seriously your own thinking on this matter. If you do not believe in God, why not? Is it a decision that you made on your own? Is it because of your education? Or is it because of the influence of people around you? What are some of the commonest reasons why people do not believe in God?

## In the East

If a person lives in the Soviet Union, the most likely reason why he would not believe in God would be that he was edu-

cated that way. There is a government policy in that land to discourage religion, and atheism is officially taught in the schools.

If he lives farther east, it could be because of his religious background. Religious background? Yes, because while many Oriental people are deeply religious, often their religions do not teach belief in an Almighty God who is the Creator.

For example, one of the most widespread Eastern religions is Buddhism. According to one source, this religion has affected the thinking of "perhaps one-fourth of all human beings who have lived in the 2,500 years since the Buddha's death." That is a lot of people! Of this influential man, we read: "He preached a practical religion devoid of ritual, and he eliminated philosophical speculation, even leaving unsettled the question of God's existence." (Italics ours) Hence, while Buddhists in some countries may worship at the shrines of their ancestors, they often do not understand the concept of an Almighty God who created everything.

Some other Oriental religions are similar. Even Hinduism, with its millions of gods and goddesses, is described by the same source in this way: "A man might not believe in God and still call himself a Hindu."

## In Future Issues

- **Today's Children, Tomorrow's World**
- **Lasers, Light and Communications**
- **For Your Child . . . You Are the Greatest Gift!**

### In the West

If you live in the West, you will certainly understand what is implied by the phrase "Almighty God." Most religions in the West claim to worship God, and they teach that he created all things. But the West is also in the lead in the movement of modernism and scientific progress. These influences tend to make people look on religion as old-fashioned and encourage them to look to man for the solution to their problems. Hence, many churchgoers are finding conflicts between what they hear at church and what they hear from other sources. The results can be quite surprising.

A recent poll taken in Australia revealed that about a third of the members of the Protestant denominations there—and one in five of the clergymen—have doubts about the existence of God. That situation is not unique to Australia. And if it is true of churchgoers, it is undoubtedly more true of nonchurchgoers.

### Perhaps You Have a Personal Reason

Most of those referred to above do not believe in God because of the influence of the society in which they live. But, if you do not believe, you may have a more personal reason. You may have experienced a tragedy or considered the amount of suffering in general in the world. You may have concluded that God could not exist, because if he did, he would have done something about these things.

Or have you, perhaps, made an intellectual decision? Do you feel that, in the light of man's greatly increased understanding of the universe, and particularly in view of the teaching of evolution, there is no room any more for belief in a Supreme Creator?

If you recognize your own thinking in any of this, we encourage you to read the following articles.

# Are Their Reasons Sound?

DO YOU believe that man can get along without reference to God? It may be true that he *tries* to get along in this way. But does he succeed?

What you see happening in the world today is a result of man's trying to get along without God. True, some of the world's leaders claim to be believers; but the French philosopher Voltaire once correctly pointed out: "Most of the great men of this world live as if they were atheists. . . . The knowledge of a God, his presence, and his justice, has not the slightest influence over the wars, the treaties, the objects of ambition, interest, or pleasure, in the pursuit of which they are wholly occupied."

What has been the fruitage of this "living as if they were atheists"? Hunger, oppression, crime, disease and unhappiness. Human existence is made miserable by pollution and overcrowding. A newspaper article dated March 6, 1979, listed a number of lands with populations totaling a quarter of mankind that, on that particular day, were embroiled in terrorist activity, civil strife or outright war.

The Bible insists that man cannot rule himself successfully without help. At Jeremiah 10:23 it states: "The course of man is not in his control, nor is it in man's power . . . to guide his steps." (*The Jerusalem Bible*) Events today bear out the truth of this. However, the Bible tells us that God's guidance is there for those who really want it.

## Do We Need God Emotionally?

Atheists feel that man can "get along . . . emotionally . . . without reference to God." Is that so?

The evidence shows that man is religious by nature. All civilizations throughout history have featured some system of worship.

And what happens when people resist what has been described as their "need to believe"? They may turn to the worship of money, power, science, political dogmas or self. Even atheism can become a religion. Psychiatrist Stafford-Clark says of those who argue in favor of atheism: "The passion with which they will defend this . . . is yet further vivid evidence of the emotional necessity of belief."

## How About Intellectually?

Is it not true that men can explain the existence of things without referring to God? They try to. There has been a growing movement to relegate God to the background.

Do you agree with that point of view?

"In the Middle Ages, most people believed in God. That was the kind of society that existed then. . . . These days, the shoe is on the other foot."

If so, reflect for a moment. To what extent is this due to your own thinking? And how much is due to the influence of the "intellectual climate" that exists in the world today?

Philosopher Leslie Dewart, as quoted in the book *Religion in a Secular Age*, says that "contemporary men . . . are shaped by the scientific culture of the day, as medieval men were shaped by the theological culture of their day." In the Middle Ages, most people believed in God. That was the kind of society that existed then. Besides, it was often dangerous not to! However, their belief was often unreasoning and superstitious. Sometimes the "theological culture" of those days tended to block the progress of science. Hence, when Galileo came up with

## Scientists Raise Doubts

Are scientists united in accepting evolution? That is what many have been led to believe. However, literally thousands of reputable scientists in the United States alone reject evolution or question it on scientific grounds, and evolutionary scientists themselves often admit great flaws in the theory. Note the observations of some of these:

"In recent decades, the interpretations about man's possible origins have changed so considerably that there's room for caution in saying where man came from and when. A lot of scientists just give back the party line. But there are adequate grounds to question evolution without any religious presuppositions."—King's College biologist Wayne F. Friar.

"It's dogmatism, not science. It doesn't make sense in terms of today's scientific knowledge."—Michigan State University natural scientist John N. Moore.

"I should remind the reader that some of the oldest and most troublesome questions about human evolution remain unanswered. . . . As in the past, the present proponents of various hypotheses may be wrong on the very points on which they are surest they are right. . . . all views of human evolution are built on seeming facts that vary widely in their degree of reliability."—Professor of Physical Anthropology Sherwood L. Washburn, University of California at Berkeley.

Could any microscopic life-form that supposedly evolves from the inanimate reproduce itself?

"It is particularly pertinent to point out that the eminent theoretical physicist, Eugene P. Wigner, in a little known publication, gave an elegant and rigorous proof from group theory, that the probability for spontaneous existence of a self-reproducing unit of any kind is zero."—Edward A. Boudreaux, Associate Professor of Chemistry, University of New Orleans.

his revolutionary discoveries, the religious leaders then tried to make him "recant" (although, in fact, what he had discovered in no way contradicted what the Bible said).

These days, the shoe is on the other foot, as it were. There is almost as much pressure not to believe in God as there used to be to believe in him. Even clergymen abandon parts of the Bible in favor of modern theories such as evolution. Some even reject Bible standards of morality and approve such things as homosexuality and fornication.

Is either of these situations, the medieval or the modern, correct? The fact that the medieval superstitious view was unbalanced does not make the modern, materialistic view right. For example, Doctor Wernher von Braun, prominent American rocket engineer, is on record as saying: "It is as difficult for me to understand a scientist who does not acknowledge the presence of a superior rationality behind the existence of the universe, as it is to comprehend a theologian who would deny the advances of science."

## Can Evolution Replace Belief in God?

Before Darwin popularized the theory of evolution, most people supposed that there had to be a God, since there was no other way to explain the existence of things. But with acceptance of the theory of evolution, many apparently felt that there was no longer any need for belief in God.

However, if you believe in evolution, you may be interested in the comments that appeared in a recent issue of *Harper's* magazine as to what shaped Darwin's thinking. Was it really based on an objective analysis of living things and of the fossil record? Stephen J. Gould, a professor of biology at Harvard University, is quoted as saying: "Phyletic gradualism was an *a priori* assumption from the start

—it was never ‘seen’ in the rocks; it expressed the cultural and political biases of nineteenth-century liberalism.” In other words, Darwin’s thinking was conditioned by the society in which he lived. Karl Marx is quoted as saying: “It is remarkable how Darwin recognizes among the beasts and plants his English society with its divisions of labor, competition, [and so forth].”

Many scientists today raise serious questions as to the validity of theories set forth in support of evolution. Why, then, is belief in Darwin’s teaching still advocated? The article goes on to say: “There are those who argue that the abandonment of the evolutionary mechanism would inevitably lead to doubts that evolution had occurred at all. *That is undoubtedly*

why Darwin is still defended so stoutly . . . because [his supporters] are materialists.”

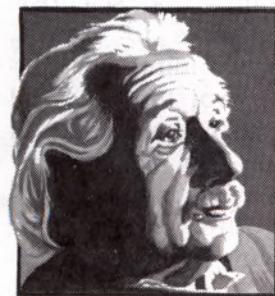
But their unwillingness to consider an alternative does not mean that evolution *has* to be right, does it?\* No more than the stubbornness of the religious leaders in Galileo’s day meant that he *had* to be wrong. Emotion and prejudice can blind scientists just as easily as it can blind religious leaders.

The truth is that, in spite of all the pressures of “modernism” to abandon belief in God, or at least to relegate him to the background, many persons are firmly convinced as to the existence of God. And the increase of scientific knowledge in our days only makes their conviction stronger.

\* For further information on this subject, see the book *Did Man Get Here by Evolution or by Creation?*

# Why Should They Believe?

WHAT kind of reasoning leads one to a belief in the existence of God? The Bible gives us a guide. It says: “[God’s] invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world’s creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made.”—Rom. 1:20.



Considering the “things made”—the creation itself—has led many to a realization that there must be *something* or *someone* behind it all. Einstein, whose theories have influenced so much of modern scientific thought, said: “Everyone who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes

convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the Universe—a spirit vastly superior to that of man, and one in the face of which we with our modest powers must feel humble.”

## Look at Yourself

The Bible says: “The heavens are declaring the glory of God; and of the work of his hands the expanse is telling.” (Ps. 19:1) And how eloquently they do so!

However, we do not have to view the vast starry heavens to see demonstrations of God’s power and qualities. Just consider yourself.

Look at your hands. Are they holding the magazine that you are reading? If so, no doubt your arm is bent so as to keep the magazine at the right distance from your eyes. Each finger is exerting just enough pressure to prevent the magazine

from falling, but not so much that you tear the paper. Did you think all of this out before you started to read? Of course not. Your body organized the whole thing for you, with just a minimum of decision-making by you.

Although your body is comparatively at rest, what are your eyes doing? They are automatically focusing on successive words or groups of words. The visual impressions are being changed in the back of your eyes to electrical impulses. These are being carried to your brain. If you are concentrating, the brain is storing up information for future use and comparing new material with what was received previously.

Meanwhile, without your giving a thought to it, your heart is busily pumping, sending blood on its complicated journey through your body. That blood is carrying essential substances to places where these are needed, then carrying waste products to locations where these can be expelled from the body.

Additionally, the movement of the diaphragm is filling your lungs with oxygen, then squeezing them to get rid of the carbon dioxide.

If you have eaten recently, your food is now being digested, without your conscious direction. The food is either being mixed with acids in your stomach to break it down to its basic constituents or being squeezed by a complicated muscular action known as "peristalsis" through your intestines, allowing the nutrients to be absorbed into the bloodstream.

There is much other activity going on too. Your bone marrow is making replacement blood cells. Your skin is manufacturing new parts to replace the worn-out surface cells. Your toenails, fingernails and hair are growing. Glands are manufacturing complicated substances to keep your body chemistry balanced. All of this is

happening *right at this moment* even when your body is apparently resting!

The technology of our bodily mechanisms is incredibly more advanced than anything man has been able to accomplish in this space age. Is it logical to view such a masterpiece as the product of mere chance?

The theory of evolution says that mankind is a product of the working of natural laws, but it does not explain who the "law-maker" is. In effect, it says that we made ourselves. But is it not more logical—more according to the way we know things *really happen*—to follow the reasoning of the Bible writer who proclaimed: "In a fear-inspiring way I am wonderfully made"? And: "Know that Jehovah is God. It is he that has made us, and not we ourselves"?—Ps. 139:14; 100:3.

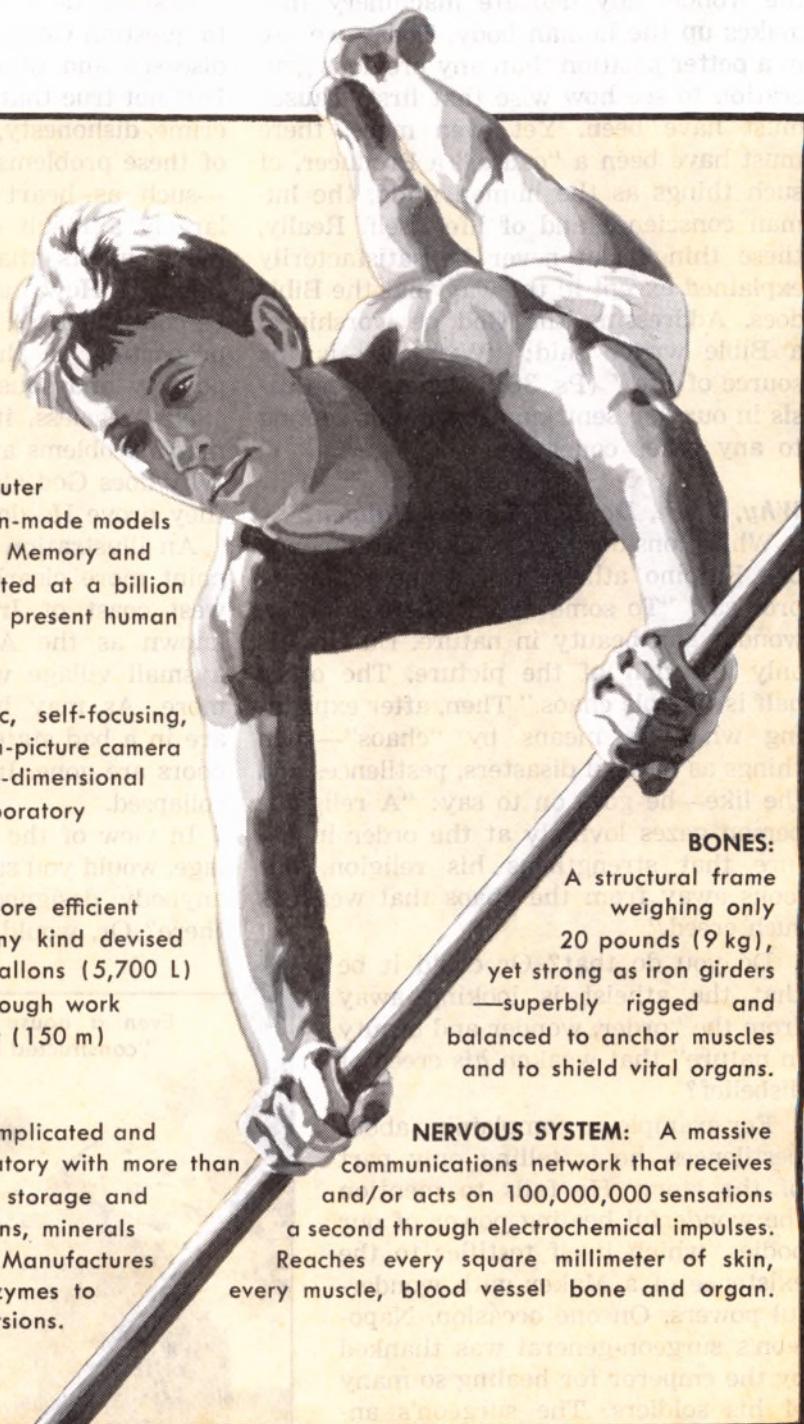
### *Let's Face Reality*

Because of the materialistic trend of thinking in the West, many persons feel uneasy about admitting that there is a God and acknowledging a spiritual answer to the question: "Where did we come from?" One freethinker stated: "We can be sensible and rational only when we express ourselves in terms of and within the realm of present knowledge." But is that really so?

There are many things that scientists know exist but are unable to explain. Such things as the human mind, our conscience, our instinct for worship—they all certainly exist. But science cannot explain them in terms of "present knowledge." What about life itself? What is this powerful "life energy" that differentiates living things from the nonliving? Scientists cannot say. Yet it is a part of our everyday experience. In fact, it is so common that we tend to forget how truly miraculous life itself really is.

The familiar law of cause and effect

# WHO DESIGNED THE HUMAN BODY?



## BRAIN: A living computer

so complex that best man-made models are toys by comparison. Memory and learning capacity estimated at a billion times more than used in present human lifetime.

## EYE: A fully automatic, self-focusing, nonblurring, color motion-picture camera that takes instant three-dimensional pictures needing no laboratory development.

**HEART:** A pump far more efficient than any machine of any kind devised by man. Pumps 1,500 gallons (5,700 L) or more daily, doing enough work to lift your body 500 feet (150 m) straight up.

**LIVER:** An extremely complicated and versatile chemical laboratory with more than 500 functions, including storage and release of blood, vitamins, minerals and nutrients as needed. Manufactures over 1,000 different enzymes to promote chemical conversions.

**BONES:** A structural frame weighing only 20 pounds (9 kg), yet strong as iron girders—superbly rigged and balanced to anchor muscles and to shield vital organs.

**NERVOUS SYSTEM:** A massive communications network that receives and/or acts on 100,000,000 sensations a second through electrochemical impulses. Reaches every square millimeter of skin, every muscle, blood vessel bone and organ.

states that every effect must have a cause. There must have been a "cause" for the wonderfully delicate machinery that makes up the human body. Today we are in a better position than any previous generation to see how wise that first "cause" must have been. Yet even more, there must have been a "cause," a Producer, of such things as the human mind, the human conscience and of life itself. Really, these things can never be satisfactorily explained except in the way that the Bible does. Addressing the God he worshiped, a Bible writer said: "With *you* is the source of life." (Ps. 36:9) There is no basis in our "present knowledge" for coming to any other conclusion.

### **Why, Then, Do Bad Things Happen?**

While considering the above arguments, one Filipino atheist raised the following problem: "To some extent there is order, wonder and beauty in nature. But this is only one half of the picture. The other half is terrible chaos." Then, after explaining what he means by "chaos"—such things as natural disasters, pestilences and the like—he goes on to say: "A religious person gazes lovingly at the order in nature that strengthens his religion, but looks away from the chaos that weakens such creed."

Do you do that? Or could it be that the atheist is looking away from the "order, wonder and beauty in nature" that weaken *his* creed of disbelief?

For example, in complaining about pestilences, he is telling only part of the story. He fails to mention the wonderful healing power of our bodies, which itself testifies to the existence of a Maker with wonderful powers. On one occasion, Napoleon's surgeon-general was thanked by the emperor for healing so many of *his* soldiers. The surgeon's an-

swer, according to one version, was: "I tended them, God healed them."

Besides, does man have a moral right to question God's existence because of the diseases and other problems that exist? Is it not true that man's misrule, his wars, crime, dishonesty, and so forth, cause most of these problems? How many pestilences—such as heart disease or cancer—are largely a result of the environment and living habits that man himself has developed? How many other diseases could be controlled but for the fact that a huge proportion of the human race lives in poverty and squalor?

Nevertheless, it is true that not *all* of man's problems are directly his own fault. Why does God allow them to happen? Do they prove He does not exist?

An illustration may help us to see this point more clearly. On an island off the west coast of Ireland, there is a place known as the Abandoned Village. It is a small village where nobody lives anymore. As may be imagined, the houses are in a bad state. The roofs are off. The doors are gone. In many cases, walls have collapsed.

In view of the ruinous state of the village, would you say that it is unlikely that anybody designed and built the houses there? Or, would you rather instinctively



Even a house in ruins was  
"constructed by someone"

agree with the Bible's statement: "Of course, every house is constructed by someone"—yes, even a house now ruined? (Heb. 3:4) Despite the neglected state of those houses, we know they were built by *someone*. We know, too, that their present condition is not necessarily the fault of the builder. There are ways of preventing houses from deteriorating. But the owners abandoned them. Hence, they are now in ruins.

The situation of mankind is similar. The Bible tells us that man was created perfect by his Maker. He was given a responsibility to subdue the earth and fill it with his children. (Gen. 1:28) Success in this would depend on following the instructions of his Maker. If he had followed these instructions, there would have been no "chaos," no lives lost because of natural disasters or pestilences in the subdued earth. However, man rejected the guidance of his Creator; so now the human "house"

is undeniably in a bad state of repair.

God gave mankind free will to choose his own course. God does not *force* humans to be obedient. Nevertheless, throughout the long centuries of human misrule, He has been seeking out those who are willing to use their free will to serve him. The Bible explains that those who refuse to acknowledge God's right to rule his own creation will soon be destroyed. Their lives will be forfeited because they reject the Source of life. But those who appreciatively conform their lives to God's requirements will have the joy of seeing the earth transformed into a global paradise under a heavenly government of God. They will enjoy all the blessings of which man's imperfections and misrule have deprived them.—Rev. 21:3-5.

Therefore, it is very important for everyone to get to know about God now. It is enlightening to know how some have been helped to do that.

## How Some Have Been Helped To Believe

HOW can a person who does not believe in the existence of God come to know him? Many who now do believe found that, first of all, they had to face up to a certain problem. What is that?

A former member of an Eastern religion admitted: "Perhaps one of the strong reasons [for clinging to the belief that there is no Creator] is that this religion encourages one to live a carefree life, to be content."

Similarly in the West, author John Cogley observes: "Modernity (at least the non-Marxist sort) puts tremendous emphasis on personal freedom—in thought, politics, matters pertaining to sexual behavior, and above all in speculation about the great issues of life."

This freedom—and the easygoingness referred to above—can be heady stuff. To give them up and recognize a superior Authority requires a humility and an open-mindedness that not everyone possesses.

### ***Freedom for What?***

Freedom, of course, can be desirable. But freedom can be harmful too. Giving a child too much freedom may lead to his playing games on a busy street or his putting a hand on a hot stove. Complete freedom to make all our own decisions without any outside help can cause all kinds of problems, if the decisions are wrong.

When we accept the truth about God's existence, we do not lose out. True, there is a measure of restriction of a person's free-

dom—but only in ways that help us to avoid hurting ourselves and others. Those who truly believe in God have been willing to face up to the need for such limitations. Accepting the truths about God has also given them freedom: freedom from being deceived by persons who seek to exploit others by their own philosophy and from hopelessness because of not knowing the purpose of life. Just as Jesus once said: "The truth will set you free."—John 8:32; Col. 2:8.

### **Help to Recognize the Existence of God**

In the West, most people know what is meant by the term "Supreme Being," although many claim not to believe in him. In the East, the problem is more difficult. Many do not understand the expression. A former non-Christian said about his onetime fellow religionists: "Most of them lack imagination as to the existence of the Supreme Being."

For both these kinds of person, however, the first step in helping them to know God has often been to point to the creation and the reason that there must be an original Maker, an original Designer. One Christian who has served a long time in Japan explained: "We make use of illustrations. It takes an intelligent person to make a watch, camera, etc., but these things are without life. Look at a flower, a bird or the human body. Who designed these?" With such reasoning, he tries to build up in the Oriental mind the idea of the existence of God.

### **Helping Them to Know God**

To progress from recognizing that a creative force exists, to coming to *know* God as a loving, heavenly Father is quite a big step. Even Einstein, evidently, could not accept that the creative spirit that he discerned behind the universe was really a personality who could be approached by mankind. He once commented: "The main source of the present-day conflicts between the spheres of religion and science lies in the concept of a *personal* God."

How have persons who now believe become acquainted with God as a *person*? Here, they had to rely on God himself. In a large country, most of the citizens may know about the existence of their head of state. Their lives are affected daily by him. Nevertheless, those who become his *friends* are only those to whom he makes himself accessible. Similarly, we can learn from the creation about the undoubtedly existence of God, and our lives are daily affected by him, in that we enjoy his gifts of food, air, sunlight, rain, and so forth. Nevertheless, we could never get to *know* him unless he made himself accessible to us.

Happily, he has done this. How? Well, one way is by means of the Bible. In that book, he has had recorded his dealings with mankind over the years. He has

The bird must have had an original designer



shown us his qualities, and even given us a name by which we can speak to him. That name is "Jehovah." (Ps. 83:18) Hence, those persons who have truly come to know God have first had to cultivate an appreciation for that amazing book.

Most people recognize that there is something different about the Bible. It has been translated into far more languages than any other book. It is *the* all-time best seller. It has survived over the centuries despite determined efforts to destroy it. It goes farther back in history than any other book. What many do not accept, however, is the Bible's own claim to be inspired.

But the Bible clearly states: "All Scripture is inspired of God." (2 Tim. 3:16) Can this claim be demonstrated as true? Yes, and persons who at one time did not believe, but now have come to know Jehovah, were willing to take the needed time to examine the evidence personally. What did they find?

They saw in the Bible hundreds of prophecies that have come true. They realized that no human could have known all these details of human affairs centuries, even thousands of years, in advance. The Bible itself indicates that the ability to prophesy correctly is one proof of godship. (Isa. 46:8-10) Regarding Bible prophecies that had been fulfilled up to his time, one of God's ancient servants said: "Not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed. They have all come true for you. Not one word of them has failed." (Josh. 23:14) Those who are convinced of this have also found that fulfillment of prophecy is not simply a thing of the past. More prophecies are coming true in our own

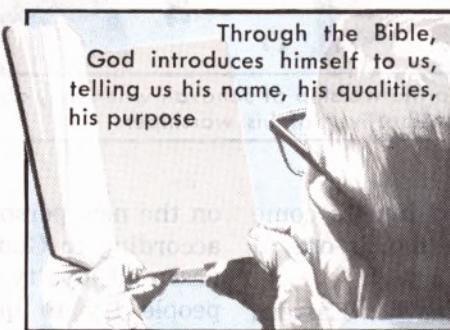
day. As they have examined the facts, they have felt compelled to acknowledge that the Bible must be God's inspired word.—See Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

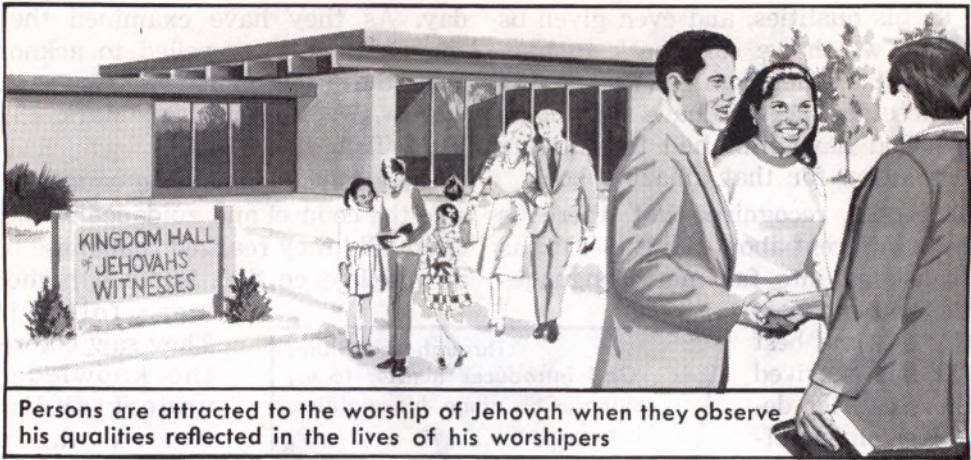
They have found to be equally impressive the counsel and guidance in the Bible. Gradually they realized that these bespeak an intelligence that is much higher than mere folk wisdom. They saw before them the knowledge and understanding of someone who has observed mankind for thousands of years and who *knows* what is best for us. They found the Bible's advice for married couples, for youths, for

poor and rich people, to be a constant source of wonderment because of the insight it reflected and its practicality. (See, for example, Colossians 3:5-8, 18-25; 1 Timothy 6:9-11, 17-19; Matthew 6:24-34; Proverbs 7:1-27.) As they personally began to apply this counsel, they experienced the truth of Psalm 119:2: "Happy are those observing [God's] reminders; with all the heart they keep searching for him."

#### **Other Ways to Get to Know God**

In Japan, a few years ago, a gentleman happened to ride a train several days in succession with a group of Christians attending an assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses. Their conduct impressed him so much that he investigated. Long ago, the apostle Paul told all Christians to "become imitators of God." (Eph. 5:1) Just as children often become reflections of their parents, so true Christians try to reflect their heavenly Father in their lives and conduct. It was the fruitage of these efforts that so impressed the Japanese gentleman





Persons are attracted to the worship of Jehovah when they observe his qualities reflected in the lives of his worshipers

referred to here, and helped him to come to know Jehovah. Now he, too, is one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

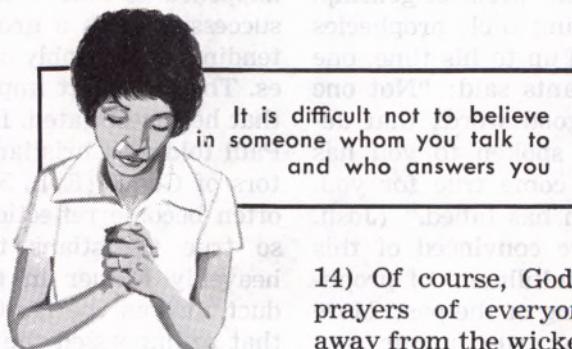
Similarly, a lady from another Eastern country, when asked to list the things that helped her to come to know God, mentioned among other things: "The knowledge of the governing laws and principles that are able to unite all kinds of men, regardless of racial differences, as proved by the example of Jehovah's Witnesses." And: "Observing the personalities of Jehovah's Witnesses." Hence, in the conduct and activities of his worshipers, the Creator reveals himself to seeking ones.

The above-mentioned lady also referred to another thought-provoking thing that led her to know the Creator. She said: "Many of my personality traits have been changed—to my own amazement!"

How was that possible? The apostle Paul said we should expect such a thing to happen. He told Christians: 'Be made new in the force actuating your mind. Put

on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty.' (Eph. 4:23, 24) Honest people try to quell bad tendencies that they find in themselves. It is difficult. But those who worship the Creator have a 'force actuating their minds' that enables them to do it. This is fortified by God's own holy spirit. Strengthened by this "force," some have been cured of drug addiction, sexual perversion, criminal tendencies, and so forth. They have become loving, joyful, peaceful, long-suffering, kind, good, faithful, mild and self-controlled. (Gal. 5:22, 23) This has been a strong confirmation to them of God's existence, and of his desire to help them.

Prayer is another way by which they have come to know God. The apostle John said: "No matter what it is that we ask according to his will, he hears us." (1 John 5:14) Of course, God does not answer the prayers of everyone. "Jehovah is far away from the wicked ones, but the prayer



It is difficult not to believe in someone whom you talk to and who answers you

of the righteous ones he hears," says Proverbs 15:29. However, those who serve God faithfully do pray, and their prayers are answered. It is difficult *not* to believe in someone that you talk to constantly, and who answers you in various ways.

### **Yes, Jehovah Exists**

Yes, Jehovah God does exist. Of this there is no doubt. And he wants his creatures to know him. He has revealed himself by means of his created works, by

means of the Bible, as well as by the way his spirit works on his organization and on individuals.

Why not come to him as your heavenly Father and enjoy the freedom that comes from knowing the truth? Follow his counsel. Accept his heartwarming promises for the future. Yes, just as the psalmist long ago exhorted: "Taste and see that Jehovah is good, O you people; happy is the able-bodied man that takes refuge in him."—Ps. 34:8.

## **OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO BELIEF**

**B**EFORE they can genuinely believe in God and accept the Bible as being his Word, many persons find that they have obstacles that must be overcome. That was true of an atheist in Japan, who later said:

'My parents are confirmed atheists and two of my sisters are devotees of Sokagakkai. Grandmother worshiped a famous ancient Buddhist named Kobodaishi, engaged in fortunetelling and sometimes did faith healing. For that we would usually get a large sum of money and plenty of rice, vegetables and other necessary things. I was deeply influenced by this background. I knew that worshiping my grandmother's god was a means to get material riches. From childhood I was well acquainted with the hypocrisy of persons who professed to believe, so I personally was not interested in God.'

'At the same time, my private life was a shameful one. Every night I went out to play Mah-Jongg (a Chinese gambling game) and to bowl. When I came home, at about dawn, I was drunk. Around noon I would get up and do some work around the house. Then back for more of the same. As a result of how I was living, I became sick and had a serious operation on my stomach. I constantly quarreled with my wife.'

'About that time I heard that a friend of mine who is a serious fellow was studying the Bible. When he first spoke to me about God from the Bible, I reacted with hatred. I feared that my friend would be cheated by religion, so I earnestly tried to stop him from studying the Bible. Though I tried time and again, he was determined and would not stop. So I began to study the Bible, but not because I wanted

to understand it. My objective was to find fault with the Bible in order to convince my friend to stop studying.'

'But as I studied I began to understand the truth. I became convinced that Jehovah is different from all other gods, that he is a God of love and mercy, that he is Almighty, our Creator as well as our Life-Giver. At Hebrews 4:12, the Bible says that "the word of God is alive and exerts power." I am convinced of that, because studying it led me to change from my former immoderate way of life. When I ceased to quarrel with my wife, she noticed the change and began to attend the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses with me. Now, as she often tells me, she really trusts me, and our family life is happy.'

Another former atheist, also in Japan, later made these comments: 'I had attended a university, participated in the activities of Communism, pursued pleasure, and now was a married woman. But I was surprised one day to learn from one of Jehovah's Witnesses what the Bible says that God's government will do for this earth and what life will really be like then. I read some of the Watch Tower books, including one entitled "Is the Bible Really the Word of God?" From what I read I could see that these people have something, a confidence based on the objective truths of the Bible, a record free from hypocrisy, a willingness to risk their lives for what they believe. I wanted to attend their meetings. And I began to pray, "If God does exist, please teach me." Soon I realized that I had found what I was searching for. If even in a small way, I want to show Jehovah my appreciation for his mercy in letting me hear the "good news."

I GREW up in a small coal-mining village in Yorkshire, England. Though I hated school, the one thing that I did get pleasure from was sports. Especially did I enjoy football (soccer).

One day, after playing for the school team, I was asked by a talent scout if I would like to play for the Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club. I was unimpressed. Upon leaving school I nat-



# From SOCCER STARDOM to GODLY DEVOTION



urally expected to start work at the local coal mine, but my mother suggested we should at least travel to Wolverhampton to hear what the Club had to say, in view of their offer. So I agreed.

The visit was memorable. I felt an atmosphere of excitement. The manager was a sincere man and he persuaded me to sign on for the "Wolves," as the team was called.

I was 17 when given my chance to play in the first team. The game was at Leicester and we won. The next match was at home and I scored. Headlines on the sports pages declared, "New Star Is Born!"

### **Life as a Soccer Star**

The only time I was really happy was when I was playing football, especially scoring goals. I remember on one occasion at Preston kicking the ball some 35 yards (32 m) for a goal. I can see the ball now going straight into the top corner of the net like a rocket. Then I ran the 35 yards to where the Wolves' supporters were standing behind the goal, and raised my clenched fists, asking them, in effect, if they had ever seen anything like that before. The crowd responded by chanting my name over and over.

I was chosen to play for the England Under-18 team a number of times, eventually being selected for the England Under-23 National side. Many said it was now only a matter of time before I would be picked to play for the full England team.

Being a soccer star did not solve the really personal problems of life, however. I had trouble with a rebellious attitude; I didn't care what happened to others. So bad was it that the manager arranged for me to visit a psychiatrist. But I did not change. Then one day I met Jean and soon we decided to get married. The team manager was delighted. He hoped that marriage would stabilize me.

I liked Jean because she was pretty. She liked me, she said, because I made her laugh, but we did not truly love each other. Jean said that dating a soccer star was one thing but being married to one was a completely different matter. After a few weeks our marriage became a very stormy one. On one occasion, in a fit of temper, I threw a teapot at Jean, which hit her on the thigh and then shattered a glass door. She responded by taking a pair of scissors and cutting up into pieces the latest suit I had bought. I thought of leaving Jean and, because of the way I acted, she even threatened to commit suicide.

### **Contact with Jehovah's Witnesses**

After two months of marriage there was a knock at our door and a man I later came to know as Ken introduced himself as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. As soon as I realized he was representing a religion I told him I was not interested. But before I closed the door he asked me if I would like to see a peaceful earth. I did not answer his question, but I felt that I wanted to tell him about the way my father and baby sister had died. And I did.

My father had been a popular, well-respected man, just 42 years of age, when he died of cancer. I could still remember the wave of bitterness that swept over me as I stood by his grave. Just two weeks later my baby sister died. My mother was brokenhearted. And I could not forget how, as an 11-year-old boy, I had walked up the stairs with the dead infant in my arms and laid it on the bed. Why had these things happened?

Ken asked me if I thought God could put all things right. I remember saying emphatically, "Never!" Ken then showed me 2 Timothy 3:1-5, and one phrase caught my attention, namely, "men will be lovers of themselves." I said: "People today are like that." In fact, I admitted, "I'm like that!" He went on to explain what conditions would prevail in the time period the Bible calls the "last days." He suggested we continue our discussion the following week, and I agreed. We began to study the Bible with the aid of the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*. Jean laughed at the idea of my reading the Bible, but when she walked through the room on the fourth week she asked a question and Ken answered it. So she asked another, and it was not long before Jean was taking part in the study.

Soon Ken began inviting us to the Kingdom Hall. Being very self-centred, I wondered what kind of impression I would

make. During my first meeting I was talking to the person sitting next to me in what I imagined to be a whisper, but an attendant politely asked me if I would mind keeping quiet. This did nothing for my ego. After the meeting concluded, quite a few people introduced themselves and asked my name. Surprised that they did not recognize me, I told them I was Peter Knowles. They did not even know I played football. When they asked, "Whom do you play for?" that was the last straw. I thought everyone in Wolverhampton knew me. The experiences of that night were the first of many that were to result in my seeing myself in true perspective.

Jean and I continued learning, but our problem was in applying God's Word in our lives. In our home the principle "Let the sun not set with you in a provoked state" was never practised. (Eph. 4:26) I found it difficult to relax. I was always on edge, a bag of nerves. Even in our Bible study I would sit in one chair, then another, often ending up sitting on the floor. Playing football brought pressures. As a result, I was tense, and this led to quarrels with Jean. Soccer stardom was not helping our marriage.

### **Loving Help When We Needed It**

One thing that made a great impression upon us during this period was the kindness of the congregation. They showed us wonderful hospitality. How different this was from my association with other footballers! We had never been invited to their homes, nor had we ever considered asking them to visit us. But here we had found people who really could live in the new order we had been studying about.

The 1968-1969 season had come to an end, and during the off-season, along with several other British clubs, we had agreed to play a tournament in the United States to promote soccer. While there I got in touch with Jehovah's Witnesses. One of

them in particular looked after me when we were in Kansas for six weeks, taking me to some meetings as well as to the offices where volunteers were busy preparing for an assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses. Looking back, I now realize that this was a critical time in my spiritual advancement.

### **Two Different Ways of Life**

Back home, the training for the new season had begun, but the congregation was looking forward to going to Wembley Stadium, not to watch football, but to attend the "Peace on Earth" International Assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses. That week is one I will never forget, for, in addition to attending my first assembly, I also had to play three football matches. Here was a unique opportunity to contrast the atmosphere of the dressing room with the family spirit of the convention. I looked at the crowds at the games where I played, then compared them to the 82,000 who attended the convention of Jehovah's Witnesses on Sunday. That week brought home to me very forcefully the tremendous difference that existed between a life of soccer stardom and one of godly devotion.

However, I still did not think it inconsistent for me to play football and to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses. One night I invited the presiding overseer of our congregation to come and watch me play. We won and I scored one of the goals. Later that evening he called at our home and we chatted for a while. Finally I asked him what he thought about the game. I was shocked when he said I was a different person on the field from the one who attended meetings in the Kingdom Hall. I explained that before every match I prayed to Jehovah to help me not to lose my temper. However, he told me that on the field sometimes I acted as if I were a gladiator. But I was not convinced.

Later, when we were playing against Manchester United, the crowd gave me a tremendous ovation. They would sing, "Give it to Knowles; we want goals!" And whenever I scored they would go wild, shouting my name all the more. Slowly I began to realize that what the overseer had said was true. Many in the crowd were treating me almost like a god. It was a form of idolatry, and I knew it was wrong. But I still did not want to give up the game. I remember before one match praying to Jehovah: "Please help me to mix the two. Please help me to keep my self-control and please, Jehovah, help me to score three goals, through Jesus' name. Amen." But in my heart I knew my days of soccer stardom were nearing their end.

#### ***My Choice—The Results***

One day when being interviewed by a national sportswriter I mentioned that

I was thinking of giving up the game. He rushed off to get a photographer, and the next morning it was all over the sports pages in the newspaper! "Peter Knowles becomes one of Jehovah's Witnesses—thinking of giving up the game!" From then on, things moved quickly. I knew that being one of Jehovah's Witnesses and serving Jehovah with godly devotion could bring me the reward of everlasting life. Soccer stardom could never do that. So I set a date just a few weeks off. My last game was when we played against Nottingham Forest.

Three weeks later, Jean and I were baptized in symbol of our dedication to Jehovah. Apart from later playing in my brother Cyril's testimonial game to fulfill a promise I had made to him, I have never returned to my former life in the soccer world.

In the congregation at the time were

## **Spectator Madness**

In a discussion of how a nation's sports activities are a reflection of its society, Britain's "New Scientist" magazine observed: "Soccer permits only minimal expressions of aggressive behaviour [among the players], but this combative role seems to shift to spectators. . . . The armed guards, barbed-wire fences and escape tunnels, which are deemed necessary in some places to protect players and officials from those they have come to entertain, remind [one] of a security system more suitable for a prison." Some of this spectator madness is chronicled by the "Encyclopædia Britannica" in recent editions of its annual "Book of the Year":

"The story of violence surrounding soccer continued in 1975, and England seemed to be spawning the worst offenders . . . But England had no monopoly on this modern disease. In Santiago, Chile, on June 25, after no fewer than 19 players had been sent [from play] following a brawl on the

field, the players could not leave the playing area for another quarter of an hour because of a hail of stones from the spectators. . . . Riots elsewhere in South America and in Italy were also reported."—1976, p. 350.

1977: "A spin-off from the world's warring factionalism was the recurring violence surrounding soccer. During a European championship match in Cardiff [Wales], . . . spectators hurled beer cans onto the field to show their anger at some decisions by the East German referee. . . . In Malta several brawling players were given jail sentences, and one referee in a South American game died after having been attacked by the players."—P. 350.

1978: "Crowd problems persisted worldwide, and more and more countries were fencing in the hooligans. Barcelona, Spain, dug a moat at a cost of \$150,000 to keep fans off the playing field."—P. 394.

two full-time teachers of the Bible and we spent a lot of time with them preaching the good news of God's kingdom from house to house. We were often invited into the homes, and frequently would leave a copy of the *Truth* book. But it was difficult to talk about the Bible, and for over two years we could never start a Bible study with anyone. All that everyone wanted to talk about was football. A lot of pressure from many sources was brought to bear to persuade me to return to football. But in addition to letters asking me to return to the game, there were many from Witnesses all over the world encouraging me not to give up my faith. We really felt that we were now part of a worldwide association of brothers and

sisters. We stayed with it, and within six months we had the privilege of devoting our full time to preaching the good news of God's kingdom, and then, nine years later, I was privileged to begin serving as an elder in our congregation.

If we had not started to serve Jehovah, there is no doubt that Jean and I would no longer be together. Our faith has truly united us. Now we are content because we know what the future holds. We still have our ups and downs of course, but thanks to the counsel from God's Word, we are now well able to cope with any problems that may come along our way.

One Bible text that really impressed me was 1 Timothy 4:8, which says: "Bodily training is beneficial for a little; but godly devotion is beneficial for all things, as it holds promise of the life now *and* that which is to come." Thinking of the "life . . . to come," I look forward very much to seeing both my father and my baby sister, along with many millions of others, resurrected here on earth in God's new order of righteousness in the near future. Considering the "life now," I am far more content than I ever was when playing football.

Some may feel that they can play professional football and still be Christians, but for me that could not be. During the game, maintaining self-control becomes difficult, if not impossible. The game is fiercely competitive and so often promotes idolatry. When I think back to the time when the crowd was chanting my name, viewing me almost as a god, I realize how dangerous it can be. Now I feel settled. My worship of Jehovah has brought me peace of mind as well as many genuine friends. It has helped me to love, not just myself, but also my wife and, most of all, Jehovah God.—Matt. 22:37-39.

I have had a life of soccer stardom. Now I only want to live a life of godly devotion. —Contributed.

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# "Should Our Baby Be Circumcised?"

-How one couple answered the question



If YOU are expecting a baby, you may be considering this question. As the parents of two sons, we too had our season for thinking, reading and talking about it. And as Bible students, we had a special interest in the subject, remembering that circumcision was for many centuries an inviolable law given to the descendants of Abraham by the Great Physician himself, Jehovah.—Gen. 17:10.

Due to this very special aspect of circumcision, we have viewed with interest a recent trend in some circles to question the wisdom of routine circumcision. Although about 90 percent of all United States males are routinely circumcised at birth, several articles have appeared in recent medical journals advocating a cessation of the practice.

Upon examination, it seemed to us that some of these articles voiced rather extreme opinions. Others, however, seemed serious enough to merit our parental attention. These refer to the risks involved in circumcision. Some also quote certain child psychiatrists such as the late Dr. Rene Spitz, who said: "This is one of the cruelties the medical profession thoughtlessly inflicts on infants."

These suggestions interest Bible students whether they are parents or not. After all, did Jehovah give his chosen people a mandate that, in the light of modern science, involved grave risk and even cruelty? We wanted to know more about it.

## *Origin of the Practice*

A review of the history of circumcision reveals that it is an ancient practice indeed. Some authorities believe that except for omphalotomy, the severance of

the navel cord, circumcision is probably the oldest type of surgery. The word circumcision is formed from the Latin words meaning "around+cut," and refers to the cutting off of the prepuce or sleeve-like foreskin of the penis. This surgery has been practiced by many tribes and peoples other than the Jews.

But modern science has provided fresh reason for our faith that circumcision was *divinely prescribed* to the Jews; for their practice of it was unique in one particular aspect: the timing. Commenting on this unique factor, the noted Dr. Alan F. Guttmacher says:

"It is noteworthy that the early Jews, who made many interesting observations in both medicine and hygiene, fixed the operation for the eighth day. This was probably arrived at by trial and error. Not an inconsiderable number of those done before the eighth day probably bled dangerously, while those done on the eighth day rarely bled excessively. Modern medicine has found a possible explanation in Vitamin K. This vitamin . . . contributes to the process of blood-clotting. . . . At birth the level in the baby's blood is relatively low, and it drops even lower during the first few days of life, since the child cannot manufacture its own Vitamin K until it swallows a healthy supply of germs. The baby's intestinal tract then begins to

produce its own Vitamin K, and the supply gradually rises until it reaches an adequate level when the baby is a week old."

Of course, Bible students will dispute one point with Dr. Guttmacher. The "many interesting observations" made by the early Jews, such as the diagnosis and treatment of disease, the importance of clean water, quarantine, the value of frequent washing and bathing, and precautionary measures in the handling of blood, cadavers, wastes, and sexual matters, including circumcision on the eighth day, were not arrived at by "trial and error," but by divine revelation.

Nor is Vitamin K the only factor involved in the divinely prescribed timing of circumcision. Another necessary blood-clotting element is prothrombin. Summarizing data that appear in *Holt Pediatrics*, Dr. S. I. McMillen notes that "on the third day of a baby's life the available prothrombin is only thirty percent of normal. Any surgical operation performed on a baby during that time would predispose to serious hemorrhage . . . the prothrombin skyrockets on the eighth day to a level even better than normal—110 percent. It then levels off . . . It appears that an eight-day-old baby has more available prothrombin than on any other day in its entire life. Thus one observes that . . . the perfect day to perform a circumcision is the eighth day."

These medical discoveries made thousands of years after Jehovah's mandate to Abraham to circumcise *precisely* on the eighth day are significant. We are once again reminded that Jehovah not only knows what is best for us, but applies his knowledge for our good.

Today, however, medical circumcisions are almost all performed before the eighth day of life. Why? Well, it is more convenient to do it before the baby leaves the hospital.

We concluded that circumcision, per-

formed at the time prescribed by the Creator, did not involve any extraordinary risk. Nevertheless, opponents of routine circumcision do refer to "risks." How great are these risks of modern circumcision?

### **Weighing the Risks**

Captain E. Noel Preston, MC USAF, lists such possibilities as hemorrhage, infections, the removal of too much skin, accidental lacerations, incomplete circumcision (resulting in the formation of adhesions and secondary penile deformity), and even accidental amputation.

As parents, we were frankly overwhelmed by such a list of horrifying possibilities! But after discussing the matter, we began to gain some perspective. We reasoned that, although we live in a country where 90 percent of all boys are circumcised, we personally had never heard of a single complication—not even a little infection, much less a mutilation. What do the statistics say?

According to one report, an average of 16 children died annually in England and Wales between 1942 and 1947, as a direct result of circumcision. On the other hand, we have the observation of Dr. M. S. Eiger, a pediatrician, who states: "In ten years of practice at two large New York hospitals, I have never seen a complication of circumcision that I would consider of serious proportions." Several studies made in the U.S. would seem to corroborate this later observation. In one New York hospital there were six complications and no deaths in a series of more than 10,000 circumcisions performed between 1933 and 1951; three cases of bleeding requiring stitches and no deaths among 1,878 cases reported from California in 1951, and only one death in more than half a million circumcisions performed in New York city from 1939 to 1951.

Now, even one death in more than

half a million is a terrible loss; but we wonder if even these rare cases might be eliminated if the operation was performed on a scientifically sound day. After due consideration, we decided that, if performed on the eighth day by an experienced physician, circumcision was probably one of the smallest risks our sons would ever face, and that the possible risks were overshadowed by the probable benefits.

### ***Anticipated Benefits***

Since mandatory circumcision was divinely abolished during the first century, we realized that our sons could boast no religious merit through circumcision. (Acts 15:1-29; 1 Cor. 7:19) We also realized that the foreskin is a part of Jehovah's creation and that he did not require his servants prior to Abraham to have it removed, nor does he require it of his Christian worshipers. We knew that the prospects of our sons as servants of the Most High would depend on the more important 'circumcision of the heart,' that is, the removal from the heart of that which is superfluous and would contribute to the growth of uncleanness.—Rom. 2:29; Col. 3:5-11.

However, that there is practical value in circumcision was explained in *Science News Letter*, Oct. 31, 1964: "The reason for circumcision is cleanliness, to prevent accumulation of an irritating mixture called smegma in the narrow space between the male glans and the overlying foreskin." An article in *Today's Health* explains that "smegma . . . if it is not removed . . . becomes a malodorous breeding ground for bacteria which cause irritations and infection."

Opponents of routine circumcision suggest that "if a child can be taught to tie his shoes or brush his teeth or wash behind his ears, he can also be taught to wash beneath his foreskin." That is no

doubt true of many children. But, I regret to say, our boys have never been diligent or thorough at any of these tasks! And while the worst that one may expect from improperly cleaned teeth is dental decay, a good deal more may be involved in the case of an unclean foreskin.

Studies made in America, Europe and Asia have disclosed a much higher incidence of cancer of the penis in uncircumcised men than in circumcised. In fact, as M. S. Eiger, M.D., observes, "Cancer of the penis virtually never occurs in a man who was circumcised in infancy." These studies have been so conclusive that even an outspoken opponent of routine circumcision in the U.S. admits: "Poor sexual hygiene, inadequate hygienic facilities, and venereal diseases tend to increase the incidence of genitourinary cancers in the ethnic groups or populations that do not practice circumcision. In these groups, then, circumcision would seem to be indicated."

This same doctor, however, does not feel that routine circumcision is necessary in the U.S., where a high degree of personal hygiene is convenient (for most people). An article in *Woman's Day* states that "adequate hygiene confers nearly as much protection against cancer of the penis as circumcision."

However, cancer of the cervix, the third most common cancer killer of American women, is virtually unknown among Jewish women. Many authorities feel that the fact that Jewish men are circumcised is a factor contributing to this.

A study made in Yugoslavia compared circumcised emancipated Moslems and uncircumcised non-Moslems. They found twice as many pre-malignant cervical lesions in the wives of the uncircumcised non-Moslems as in the circumcised emancipated Moslems (11 per 1,000 in the former, 5.5 per 1,000 in the latter). Interestingly, they found that in the Ortho-

dox Moslems (who practice adolescent circumcision *along with other forms of sexual hygiene*) the occurrence of this malady was *nil*.

But is circumcision cruel? Well, to us the protection afforded by circumcision seemed to more than compensate for the momentary pain. We remembered that, in many of life's better investments, "better is the end afterward of a matter than its beginning." (Eccl. 7:8) We weren't afraid of causing scarred personalities in our sons, remembering the many desirable personalities among the ranks of the circumcised.

### ***It Was OUR Decision***

We realize that not all parents agree with our decision. Whether parents opt for circumcision or not, their decision merits the respect of others. Particularly if

they are Christians, we may be sure that they have not lightly made any decision involving their children. One Christian father explained their decision in this way: "Gabriel was born prematurely, and we felt that we shouldn't add to his difficulties the wound of circumcision. Of course, Jehovah's reminders have made us aware of the importance of genital cleanliness; so we have carefully instructed him in this regard."

Other parents may feel that they cannot afford the expense of the operation, or it may not be readily available to them. Finally, some may reason that if Jehovah had thought circumcision to be indispensable, he would not have caused the termination of the ancient mandate.

This, then, brings our discussion full circle, leaving the decision right where it belongs, with you, the parents.—*Contributed.*

## **BIBLE KNOWLEDGE TEST ANSWERS**

**See the Bible quiz, page 32.**

### **● 'A CALM HEART'—**

The expression 'I was so mad I could have died' has a serious literal meaning, in the view of a psychiatrist who thinks 'anger' might well often be the cause of death. Heart attacks and strokes have frequently been preceded by an episode of severe emotional stress.—"Awake!" 9/8/78, p. 4.

### **● 'YOU MUST BE PERFECT'—**

This is not a command to become physically and morally flawless, for at present that is impossible due to inherited sin. (Rom. 3:23; 5:12) Rather, these words encourage people to imitate the 'heavenly Father,' Jehovah, by perfecting their love, bringing it to full measure and making it complete by including their enemies in its embrace.—"Watchtower," 7/1/78, p. 6.

### **● THE HUMAN BRAIN—**

All wrong. Four thousand brain experts observe that comparisons with a telephone system, a radio station or even a computer have not, as a New York "Times" report says, "lasted very long because the brain proved to be so much more complex than the latest man-made machine. The new view is that nothing in technology can match the brain even metaphorically."—"Watchtower," 5/1/78, p. 15.

### **● WHAT IS SPOKEN WITH THE LIPS—**

Rather than proclaiming God's truth, the "false prophets" of ancient Israel spoke what people wanted to hear, and the people loved it that way. It would mean "woe" for us if people spoke well of us, as they did of those false prophets. But the approval of Jehovah rests only upon persons who speak and act in accord with his Word.—"Watchtower," 3/1/78, p. 6.

### **● YOUR RIGHT HAND—**

If the right hand (meaning what one does, as with one's hands) were to cause a person to "stumble," that is, to fall from the path of obedience, he must take action similar to cutting off one's hand. He must "deaden" his body members to avoid such behavior as fornication, uncleanness, hurtful desire, and covetousness.—"Watchtower," 5/15/78, pp. 28, 29.

### **● WHAT THE EYE HAS NOT SEEN—**

The apostle Paul was not here referring to the glorious things of the New Order that our eyes and ears might someday perceive. Rather, he was calling attention to the treasures of spiritual wisdom relating to the 'sacred secret of the seed' that were beyond the comprehension of the eyes and ears of unenlightened worldlings.—"Awake!" 7/8/78, p. 28.

# The Suburb That Slipped Away

THIS past August 7 New Zealand's Auckland Star carried the headline "THE SUBURB THAT'S JUST SLIPPING AWAY . . ."

"Early in May a watermain burst in the quiet residential area of Abbotsford, near Dunedin," the paper explained. This, continued the story, was "the signal for the beginning of the Abbotsford slip which has forced 200 people out of their homes."

Abbotsford is a developing suburb that spreads up a hillside into farmland. Early in June some of the beautiful new houses began to crack. The land literally split and began slipping away, eventually creating a chasm. Strong pleas from evacuated families resulted in their being allowed brief sorties to their homes to salvage belongings. A couple of houses were considered so dangerous by local authorities that they were demolished. But this was nothing compared to the destruction that was to follow.

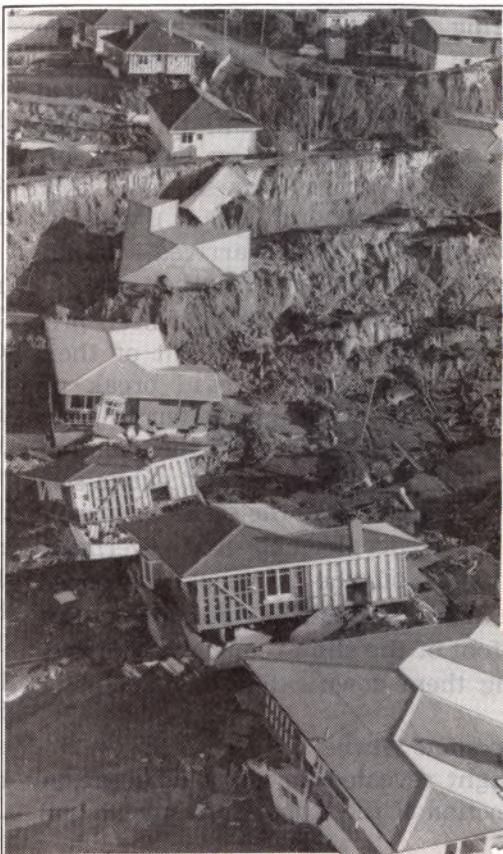
### A Major Disaster

On Wednesday, August 8, a family to the west of the split were gathered in their lounge. A rending sound from behind their back fence brought them outside. All was quiet except for a strange "pinging" noise in the overhead power lines. And then a house farther down the road "backed out like a car"!

A family living three houses away were planning to evacuate on Friday,

August 10. Hearing unusual sounds, the husband peered into the darkness of the back garden. In disbelief, he watched as the shadowy shapes of familiar shrubs sank out of sight below ground level.

The family left the house and went to a



neighbor's house. As they stood together trying to determine a course of action, a power pole leaned over almost to the ground and lines snapped amid showers of sparks. The house that they had just come out of tilted up gracefully and sank rapidly over the edge of a widening crevasse.

At the information center on the hill, the operator on duty closed down the radio link for the night at about nine o'clock. As he walked down the deserted streets, he heard the crash of glass and other sounds of demolition. He ran in the direction of the noise and saw a chasm opening in the road ahead of him. The opposite side was slithering away "like toothpaste." Overhead lines hissed and snapped, plunging all Abbotsford into darkness.

Hearing people screaming beyond the chasm, he called Civil Defense headquarters on his walkie-talkie and requested assistance. In astonishment, he watched as the gap widened in the light of his torch. The movement was so rapid that the gap was some 20 m (66 ft.) wide by the time the fire brigade arrived—too far to reach the people on the other side.

Across the gap a family had been preparing to evacuate. In the light of their headlights they saw the road break up before them. They leaped in terror from their vehicle and ran toward the sound of other voices. Soon hundreds of public service personnel were on the scene with spotlights. A helicopter hovered overhead, ready to lift off the 17 people marooned on the land that had slipped away. But at the foot of the slip firemen found a way to bring them down safely.

### **An Awesome Scene**

Daylight revealed an awesome scene. A large section of the Abbotsford suburb had

tobogganed down the hillside, still bearing two streets lined with houses, sidewalks, fences, postboxes and parked vehicles. A concrete path dangled over the cliff edge. A car and caravan lay crushed together, half-buried under mud. A garden stood high, undisturbed and orderly in the middle of the giant slide, but the house it belonged to had vanished.

Strangely, a small, lonely glasshouse stood among broken and twisted houses, with not so much as a crack in a single pane of glass. Higher up the hill, strung across the ravine, lay a tumbled line of homes, their brick-veneer walls gone, exposing their framework, giving them an odd Tudor appearance.

### ***Relief, and Assessing Damages***

Food, blankets, money and offers of accommodations poured into Civil Defense headquarters from all over New Zealand. Trucks and their drivers parked outside for two days in case their assistance was needed.

Financial losses were tremendous, estimated to be in the millions of dollars. Some 70 houses were destroyed or had to be demolished. Others were severely damaged. But, amazingly, amid all the destruction, not one person was killed. And the only injury sustained was by a workman who trod on a nail.

After recovering from the shock, the mood of many victims turned to anger. It was learned that less serious landslips had occurred in the area in 1870, 1925, 1939 and 1968. Prior knowledge of this perhaps would have affected the building plans of many. This hill-suburb disaster may encourage others to re-evaluate the safety of their home location.

—Contributed.

# *The Bible's View*



## *How Absolute a Guide Is Knowledge?*

**K**NOWLEDGE is necessary for a person to make wise decisions in life. Lack of knowledge, on the other hand, may result in our wasting time, energies and assets. This is true even in connection with simple tasks. For example, wise King Solomon noted: "If an iron tool has become blunt and someone has not whetted its edge, then he will exert his own vital energies. So the using of wisdom [based on knowledge] to success means advantage."—Eccl. 10:10.

However, in itself, knowledge on certain matters may not provide safe guidance. Something additional is needed. Especially is this the case with regard to relations with fellow humans. Our simply acting in harmony with what we personally know to be true could lead to serious problems.

The Christian apostle Paul made this clear in his letter to the Corinthians. When discussing the matter of "foods offered to idols," he wrote: "We know we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone thinks he has acquired knowledge of something, he does not yet know it just as he ought to know it."—1 Cor. 8:1, 2.

Christians at Corinth knew that there was but one God, Je-

hovah, and one Lord, Jesus Christ. They knew that the many gods and lords venerated by the nations were actually nonexistent. Idols were merely objects of wood, stone or metal that had no power. Based on such knowledge, certain members of the Corinthian congregation may have concluded that there was no harm in eating foods that had been earlier offered to idols. These believers were correct in concluding that such food was no different from any other food. The lifeless, powerless idols had in no way effected a change in it, nor could they take possession of it.

But was this particular knowledge respecting the nothingness of idols a safe guide in determining whether it was proper to partake of food offered to idols? No. Why not? The apostle explained: "There is not this knowledge in all persons; but some, being accustomed until now to the idol, eat food as something sacrificed to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled."—1 Cor. 8:7.

On account of their having been idolaters in the past, some of the believers at Corinth had not progressed to the point where they had gotten over the religious feelings that used to accompany their eating foods offered to idols. Hence, they felt that it was wrong for them to do so, and in such case it would have been. Their weak conscience did not allow them to regard food offered to idols just like any other food. The Bible states: "If he has doubts, he is already condemned if he eats, because he does not eat out of faith. Indeed, everything that is not out of faith is sin."—Rom. 14:23.

If such believers saw another Christian eating food offered to idols, they would become greatly disturbed. They might conclude that this Christian was actually worshiping an idol. This could lead to their being stumbled, taking offense at what they believed to be a serious wrongdoing on

the part of one of their brothers. Or, they might be emboldened to eat meats offered to idols and be ensnared into giving way to the worshipful attitude that they had while they were still idol worshipers.

So the Christian who simply acted in harmony with what he knew to be true about idols and about foods offered to idols would have become responsible for bringing about the spiritual ruin of his brother. Emphasizing this point, the apostle Paul wrote: "Keep watching that this authority of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone should see you, the one having knowledge, reclining at a meal in an idol temple, will not the conscience of that one who is weak be built up to the point of eating foods offered to idols? Really, by your knowledge, the man that is weak is being ruined, your brother for whose sake Christ died."—1 Cor. 8:9-11.

The person who fails to take into consideration the weak consciences of others is really puffed up with his knowledge. He tends to look down on others as being overly scrupulous and yet fails to recognize that for those of weak conscience a particular course of action could be spiritually damaging. Thus, his knowledge alone does not prove to be a safe guide, as it ignores the hurtful effect that his course may have on others. Only when love directs the application of knowledge is knowledge an absolute guide. When love is lacking, the possessor of knowledge generates in others feelings of inferiority and shame. His associates will not be encouraged. However, whenever love prompts the individual to use his knowledge in furthering the welfare of others, those so helped will be built up.

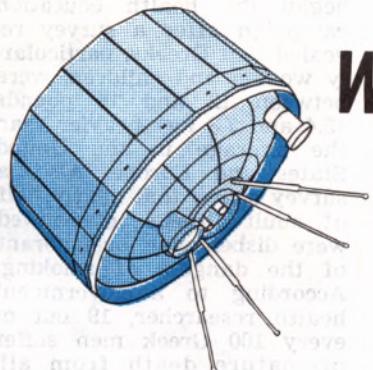
When a person merely thinks that he knows something, reflecting an attitude of superiority toward others, he does not really know the matter as he should.

(1 Cor. 8:2) He has lost sight of the basic objective of sound knowledge, that is, its being used to promote the welfare and happiness of others. Furthermore, the more a person knows, the more he may come to realize that there is much that he does not know. This may make him more aware of his limitations and less likely to be dogmatic and unreasonable in his views.

For it to serve a good purpose, knowledge must be seen in relationship to love for God. The apostle Paul wrote: "If anyone loves God, this one is known by him." (1 Cor. 8:3) The unmistakable evidence of a person's having love for God must be seen in that one's attitude and actions toward his fellow believers. The apostle John expressed this thought as follows: "Everyone who hates his brother is a manslayer, and you know that no manslayer has everlasting life remaining in him. By this we have come to know love, because that one surrendered his soul for us; and we are under obligation to surrender our souls for our brothers." (1 John 3:15, 16) "Let us continue loving one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born from God and gains the knowledge of God. He that does not love has not come to know God, because God is love."—1 John 4:7, 8.

Thus, in itself, knowledge is not an absolute guide in determining what is proper in a given situation. A particular course may be right for us. However, if we recognize that this course could injure the weak consciences of observers, we certainly would want to refrain from insisting on taking it. May we, therefore, continue 'seeking, not our own advantage, but that of the others,' thereby using our knowledge to build them up.—1 Cor. 10:24.





## Watching the World



### A Solvable Mystery

◆ In a recent discussion of the origin and development of the universe, Britain's *New Scientist* magazine noted that scientists "claim, by and large, to be able to describe in great detail" how the universe arrived at the state it is in today. However, the writer admits that "the instant of creation remains a mystery (maybe God did make it, after all)." He adds that the "fact that the subsequent history of the Universe can be explained in a self-consistent way by the laws of physics . . . is the most persuasive and dramatic evidence of the value of the scientific method." Does not that same "scientific method," consistently applied, also point to the fact that there must be a great Cause behind the "instant of creation" and a powerful Lawmaker behind the "laws of physics"?

### Half a Year in Outer Space

◆ When two Soviet cosmonauts returned from orbiting in space last August, they had spent a record 175 days in a space station. How did they feel? Said Vladimir Lyakhov: "We could have stayed up there longer, but we are really glad to have our feet on the ground." However, they had trouble adjusting to earth's gravitational pull, and they

were carried from their capsule. Doctors resisted their initial efforts to stand on their feet, as it was felt that it would take some time for them to adjust gradually to earth's gravity. Cosmonaut Valery Ryumin explained further: "In the descent the force of gravity is supposed to be four times normal but it felt to us like eight. Now we feel as though it's still two or three, and it's difficult to get the tongue around words."

### Sign of the Times

◆ With the number of bank robberies setting new records each month last summer in New York city, one bank decided to put up a sign for would-be robbers. In each of its 10 offices, the Banco de Ponce posted by the tellers' booths these words: "Attention Would-Be Bank Robbers. This is a Spanish-speaking bank. If you intend to rob us, please be patient for we might need an interpreter. Thank you, The Management." A banker explained the sign by saying: "We've had situations where a robber comes in talking English very fast and demanding money. Our people are bilingual, but they feel more at ease in Spanish and deal with Spanish-speaking customers all day. To be caught off guard and in a shocking situ-

ation they could revert to Spanish that the robber could interpret to be an underhanded signal to anybody."

### Spiders to the Rescue

◆ For some years now China has used chemical pesticides on rice crops to control harmful insects, but, in some provinces, the heavy use of pesticides has backfired. Said a report from the New China News Agency: "In previous years rice-growing areas in the south used large amounts of highly effective pesticides. As a result the spiders as well as the pests were killed and the harmful insects developed resistance to the pesticides. Thus they increased in number." To solve the problem, agricultural researchers and workers investigated the use of bug-eating spiders. They found 125 species that devour crop pests, 10 of them being extraordinarily good as pest eradicators. By last year more than 160,600 acres were under spider control. Said the report: "Since the spiders are voracious, they can destroy most of the harmful insects in the fields in six days when their number is 1 to 20 in proportion to that of the harmful insects."

### Religious Classes Optional

◆ The Spanish government has published an official decree that makes school religious classes in that country optional. Such classes were formerly mandatory, but, under the terms of the constitution adopted last year, Catholicism is no longer the state religion.

### Lottery Frustration

◆ A 42-year-old Toronto, Canada, electronics technician was recently enticed by a lottery advertisement: "Win instantly \$1 million in gold" and "Picture yourself as a millionaire." He sold his house and put all the money (\$50,000, Canadian) into lottery tickets. For six months he checked numbers,

but all he won was \$1,500 and two travel vouchers that expired the day he picked them up. The big prize eluded him. As he fingered bundles of useless lottery tickets that covered his kitchen table and other work surfaces, he told a news reporter: "This green paper is the criminal element of our society. . . . You know, these tickets look like money, but they're just garbage." He said he would never gamble another dollar on a lottery ticket. "After this," he added, "I wouldn't even trust a blind man."

#### Taj Mahal in Danger?

◆ The Taj Mahal at Agra, India, is the country's biggest tourist attraction, accounting for much of the \$500 million (U.S.) yearly tourist business. After surviving India's hot sun and monsoon rains for over 300 years, this gleaming mausoleum of white marble and alabaster now appears to be in danger. Air pollution from Agra's heavy industrialization during the past few years has caused "discoloration, flaking, pitting and blackening of fractured portions," declares India's former culture minister, Renuka Devi Barkataki. And there are plans for a new oil refinery to be built 24 miles (39 km) north of Agra. If the refinery is not moved farther away, claims an Indian environmental engineer, the Taj Mahal "will crumble down in 30 years."

#### Lowest Crime Rate in Europe

◆ The Greeks reportedly enjoy the lowest crime rate in Europe and one of the lowest crime rates in the world. For example, during 1978 the rate for murders was 1.3 per 100,000. By contrast, Italy's murder rate was 3.8, and in the United States, 8.8. According to criminal lawyer Alexander Lykourezos, one reason for the low crime rate is the attitude the family takes toward one of its members who commits a serious crime. "The

usual family response," said the lawyer, "is, 'How could you bring such shame on the family?'—not, 'Why did you do it?' or 'How have we failed you?'" A response like that from people you care about is the most effective deterrent there is." However, Nicholas Androulakis, professor of criminal law at Athens University, explains: "The incidence of those crimes condemned by the community—rape, murder, robbery—are very low in Greece, but those crimes not popularly considered reprehensible, like white-collar crime and tax evasion, which is endemic here, are quite high." Yet even when white-collar crimes are included, the arrest rate in Greece for 1977 was only 2,486 per 100,000, compared with a U.S. rate of 5,055 per 100,000.

#### Third-World Debt

◆ The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, meeting in Manila, reported that debt in the developing countries increased from \$74,000 million (U.S.) in 1970 to \$244,000 million in 1977. The cost of interest on these debts in 1976 alone came to \$37,000 million.

#### Greece: Health Education

◆ The Greek government is producing TV commercials to educate the population about the dangers of smoking and overeating. "Fatness shortens life," one commercial emphasizes. Dr. Spyros Doxiades, the Minister of Social Services and who began the health education campaign, said: "Greeks have to be told that many of their traditional habits are bad for their health." He added: "Greeks are heavier than they should be because they have traditionally associated obesity with health. . . . Greek mothers stuff their already overweight children and are proud of their kids' fatness and appetite because they think this spells health." The Minister of Social Services

began the health education campaign after a survey revealed that Greeks, particularly women and children, were between 12 and 16 pounds (5.4 and 7.3 kg) heavier than the average in the United States and Europe. Also, a survey shows that nearly half of adult Greeks interviewed were disbelieving or ignorant of the dangers of smoking. According to a government health researcher, 19 out of every 100 Greek men suffer premature death from ailments related to this habit.

#### Children with

##### Heart Risk Factors

◆ Professor Thomas B. Gilham of the University of Michigan's department of physical education has spent several years doing research on children's physical fitness. He found that about half of 400 Michigan schoolchildren showed one or more heart-disease risk factors, believed to be caused by a lack of exercise and a sedentary lifestyle. He explained: "Children are transported to and from school, extracurricular and even sports activities. They sit for long hours watching television and consume lots of high calorie junk food. As a result, children are showing increasing evidence of high cholesterol, high blood pressure, obesity, and other conditions which have been shown to be associated with heart disease in adults."

#### "Ponderous-Purse Disease"

◆ According to a report in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, many women are the victims of a common muscle and nerve disorder. It includes pain, tenderness and spasms in the muscles of the upper shoulders and side of the neck. It is attributed to the shoulder purses some women carry, which weigh more than 10 pounds. Hence, the tongue-in-cheek name, "ponderous-purse disease." The problem is usual-

ly simply remedied by lightening the contents of the purse. But many women fail to act. "Reduction of shoulder-purse contents is apparently more of a pain in the neck than the pain in the neck," the *Journal* notes.

#### **Antibiotics Neutralized**

◆ The Office of Technology Assessment in the United States concludes that various diseases in humans are becoming resistant to antibiotics such as penicillin and tetracycline. The reason given is that about 40 percent of all antibiotics produced in the country is used in animal feed to fatten poultry, hogs and cattle. Consumers of these animals, it is thought, develop an immunity to the antibiotics, hence these become ineffective when used in treating disease.

#### **More Wives Working**

◆ A recent census study reports that two thirds of the wives in the United States worked during the past year, one of the most fundamental changes in the family in the past 20 years. The most common reason for the increase is wanting to supplement family income. However, some wives worked because of wanting their own career. Whatever the reason, the ones most likely to be hurt will be children who will not get the attention they require.

#### **Karate Can Kill**

◆ An Illinois teen-ager recently was convicted of the karate-chop death of another youth. The two had become involved in an argument; then the karate student knocked the other youth unconscious by a

karate blow to the neck. Eight days later the victim died.

#### **Tough Teeth**

◆ Squirrels' teeth rank with the toughest of any in the animal realm. They have proved it in Queens, a section of New York city. In a 70-square-block area lined with trees, squirrels have bitten through the sheathing of telephone lines in 834 places. Five miles out of a total of nine miles of telephone cable will have to be replaced entirely. The squirrels eat through lead sheathing and also through polyethylene. Without protective covering, rainwater can seep through to the wires and cause short circuits or other electrical damage. Company engineers are 'going back to the drawing boards' to find solutions.

