

Awake!

July 22, 1995

Will Man Ever Cope With Disaster?



**Can I Really Be a Friend of God? 13**

Some who have made mistakes and feel unworthy wonder if it is possible.

**The Family That Truly Loved Me 21**

Twice I was thrown out of my home, but I was taken in by a spiritual family—parents, brothers, sisters, children.

Will Man Ever Cope With Disaster? 3-9

Floods in Europe! Earthquake in Japan! Hurricanes! Volcanic eruptions! It seems man's fight against disasters will never end. What are governments doing about it? What will God do about it?

When Disaster Strikes	3
Man's Fight Against Disasters	4
The Fight Against Disasters Won	9
Where AIDS Is Pandemic	10
Women of India —Moving Into the 21st Century	16
Ordination of Women Infuriates Anglican Clergy	20
The Water Buffalo —Faithful and Useful	25
Watching the World	28
From Our Readers	30
An "Electronic Assault on the Brain"	31
"Thank You for Your Existence"	32

When Disaster Strikes

THE 20th century has been marked by great disasters, and most of them have been man-made. Some, though, have not. Foretelling our days, Jesus Christ said: "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another." (Matthew 24:7) True, man is to blame for wars and food shortages, but he is not responsible for earthquakes. In a similar way, while some disastrous floods have been caused by man's activity, he cannot be blamed for earthquakes. Neither are hurricanes or volcanic eruptions the fault of man.

Whatever their cause, natural disasters show the smallness of man, his impotence

in the face of awesome natural forces. This earth, our home, usually feels so secure and solid. But when it shakes in an earthquake, gets inundated by flooding waters, or is swept by violent winds that bear down relentlessly as if with the force of an explosion, that feeling of security vanishes.

Natural disasters have caused immense damage and great loss of life during the 20th century. Could this have been avoided? Can anything be done to reduce the catastrophic effects? As individuals, what can we do to protect ourselves? Are we completely helpless when disaster strikes? Will mankind always be victimized in this way? The following articles will discuss these questions.





Man's Fight Against Disasters

THREE years had passed, and UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali was not cheering. "We have not moved fast enough," he told a group of experts early in 1993. "In asking you to meet now rather than later, my aim was to see whether we could make up for lost time." Lost time? What was on his mind? Five letters: IDNDR. What do they mean? And why the haste?

One of the experts attending that meeting was Frank Press, a geophysicist and the "father" of the IDNDR. Eleven years ago, Dr. Press began rallying the worldwide scientific community to step up its fight against natural disasters. Five years later, in December 1989, the United Nations responded to his call for an end to passivity by designating the years from 1990 to 2000 as the International Decade for Natural Di-

Awake!

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 important, 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.

Would you welcome more information? Write Watch Tower at the appropriate address on page 5. Publication of Awake! is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.

Unless otherwise indicated, New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References is used.

Awake! (ISSN 0005-237X) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Second-class postage paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to Awake!, c/o Watchtower, Wallkill, NY 12589. Printed in U.S.A.

saster Reduction, or IDNDR. What is its aim?

A Change of Mind Needed

Brazilian geology professor and member of the IDNDR's Scientific and Technical Committee, Umberto G. Cordani, told *Awake!* that the IDNDR is an appeal to the international community to pool its knowledge and resources and work together in reducing the suffering, destruction, disruption, and loss of life caused by natural disasters. "Reaching that objective," stressed Professor Cordani, "requires a worldwide shift of focus from post-disaster reaction to pre-disaster action."

Changing global thinking is, however, far more difficult than naming a decade, for "decision makers," states *UNESCO Environment and Development Briefs*, "tend to focus on relief to the exclusion of prevention." Of all money spent today on natural hazard management in Latin America, for example, over 90 percent goes to hazard relief and less than 10 percent to prevention. After all, notes the IDNDR's newsletter *Stop Disasters*, politicians "obtain more support consoling disaster victims than from requesting taxes for the undramatic measures that would have avoided or reduced the disaster."

Setting the Targets

To alter this spending pattern, the United Nations defined three targets for the de-

cade. By the year 2000, all countries should have in place their (1) assessment of the risks posed by natural hazards, (2) long-term preparedness and prevention plans, and (3) warning systems. National committees were formed to translate the IDNDR's philosophy and good intentions into concrete plans, and in May 1994, Japan was host to a UN-sponsored World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction. With all these activities planned or under way, why was Boutros-Ghali not content? Because of a disturbing trend.

Troublesome Trend

On the one hand, the efforts of the IDNDR are paying off. Scientists' awareness about disaster reduction has increased, and some measures, like improved warning systems, are saving lives and reducing losses. However, despite these gains, notes Dr. Kaarle Olavi Elo, director of the IDNDR's secretariat, "the number and the magnitude of disasters continues to grow, affecting more and more people." We have seen "a 3-fold increase from the 1960's to the 1980's," confirms another UN expert, "and a further major rise in the 90's." Indeed, in 1991, 434 major disasters killed 162,000 people worldwide, and in 1992, losses exceeded \$62 billion (U.S.). The world, concludes UNDP (United Nations Development Program) administrator James G. Speth, has become "a disaster machine, producing crises with distressing

Semimonthly Languages Available by Mail:

Afrikaans, Arabic, Cebuano, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Iloko, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Malayalam, Norwegian, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tagalog, Tamil, Yoruba, Zulu

Monthly Languages Available by Mail:

Chichewa, Cibemba, Ewe, Gujarati, Hiligaynon, Igbo, Indonesian, Kannada, New Guinea Pidgin, Polish, Russian, Sepedi, Serbian, Sesotho, Shona, Sinhalese, Slovenian, Tahitian, Telugu, Thai, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Twi, Ukrainian, Xhosa

* Audiocassettes also available.

© 1995 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society
of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved.

Offices of the Watch Tower Society in selected countries

America, United States of, Wallkill, NY 12589	New Zealand, P.O. Box 142, Manurewa
Australia, Box 280, Ingleburn, N.S.W. 2565	Nigeria, P.M.B. 1090, Benin City, Edo State
Canada, Box 4100, Halton Hills (Georgetown), Ontario L7G 4Y4	South Africa, Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740
England, The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN	Zambia, Box 33459, Lusaka 10101
Ghana, Box 760, Accra	Zimbabwe, 35 Fife Avenue, Harare
Jamaica, Box 180, Kingston 10	

Changes of address should reach us 30 days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label).

Are You Prepared?

THE U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends a number of ways to cope with hazards. The following are some highlights.

Get *information*. Contact your local emergency management office and find out which disasters could strike your community. You may be aware of some, but others may surprise you. If you learn that your home is exposed to natural hazards:

- Meet with your family and discuss the types of hazards that could threaten you. Explain what to do in each case.
- Plan how your family will maintain contact with one another if separated by such an event. Pick two meeting places: one outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire, and the other outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home.
- Ask a friend to be your family contact so that if you cannot reach your arranged meeting places, all family members can call this contact and tell where they are. Choose a friend who lives away from your area because after a disaster it's often easier to call long-distance than to call within the affected area. Teach children how to call this friend. Discuss what to do when you have to evacuate. Consider how you would help your neighbors who may need special assistance. Plan how to take care of your pets.
- Post emergency telephone numbers by every phone.
- Locate the main electric fuse box, water main, and natural gas main. Show responsible family members how and when to turn these off, and keep necessary tools near the main switches.
- Prepare for fire. Install smoke detectors, especially near bedrooms.

regularity." (*UNDP Update*, November 1993) What is behind this disturbing trend?

Why the Increase?

To answer, first note the difference between a natural hazard and a natural disas-

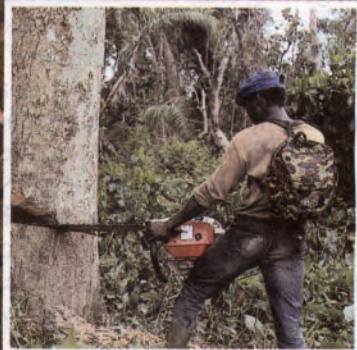
ter. The first is a natural event—such as a flood or an earthquake—which has the *potential* to become a disaster yet does not always do so. For instance, floods in Brazil's uninhabited Amazon basin are natural events doing little harm. However, floods striking Bangladesh in its densely populated Ganges delta cause widespread human, material, and environmental losses. Often such losses are so disastrous that stricken communities cannot cope without help from outside. In that case, the natural hazard has become a natural disaster. Why, though, are these disastrous collisions between man and nature on the increase?

Disaster expert James P. Bruce notes that "a trend towards more severe and frequent hazards" may be "a contributing cause." He and other scientists concur, however, that the main cause for the increase in disasters is not an increase in natural hazards but an increase in man's *exposure* to these hazards. This increased exposure, points out *World Health* magazine, is caused by a "mix of demographic, ecological and technological conditions." What are some components of this disaster-triggering mix?

For one, the expanding world population. As the size of the human family keeps growing, the likelihood that a natural hazard will find some of the world's 5.6 billion people in its path is growing as well. Moreover, population pressure keeps forcing millions of poor people to settle in unsafe buildings in areas notorious for receiving regular assaults from nature. The result is not surprising: Since 1960, the world population has doubled, but disaster losses have increased almost tenfold!

Environmental changes add to the problems. From Nepal to the Amazon and from the North American plains to the islands of the Pacific, man is cutting down forests, overcultivating the land, destroying coast-

In some places man is recklessly cutting down forests, opening the way for more natural disasters



al barriers, and leaving a trail of other ecological footprints—but not without a price. “As we stress the bearing capacity of our environment and modify its character,” says a former IDNDR director, Robert Hamilton, “the greater the likelihood that a natural hazard might become a disaster.”

If man’s actions, however, are contributing to the increasing appearance of disasters in today’s headlines, then the opposite would be true as well: By taking preventive measures, man can change tomorrow’s headlines. Death and destruction can be minimized. For example, 90 percent of deaths from earthquakes, say experts, can be avoided. Nevertheless, although the arguments for prevention are compelling, many people continue to regard disasters as inevitable. This fatalistic view, reports *UNESCO Environment and Development*

Briefs, is “the single greatest barrier to disaster reduction.” On what side of that barrier are you?

Inevitable or Reducible?

Especially in the developing world, this feeling of helplessness is widespread—and no wonder! Of all the people killed by natural disasters during the last 50 years, 97 percent lived in the developing world! In some of these countries, notes *Stop Disasters*, “the frequency of disasters is so high that it is difficult to delineate between the end of one disaster and the beginning of another.” In fact, 95 percent of all disasters occur in the developing world. Add to this an endless cycle of personal disasters—poverty, unemployment, cruel living conditions—and you can see why helplessness engulfs the poor like a rising tide. They accept the losses caused by recurrent disasters as a bitter but

fated part of life. However, are these losses inevitable?

What You Can and Cannot Do

True, you *cannot* control the frequency or intensity of natural hazards, but that does not make you completely helpless. You *can* reduce your exposure to these events. How? Think of this comparison.

Let us say a person wants to limit his exposure to the sun (the natural event) to prevent getting skin cancer (the disaster). What measures can he take? Obviously, he *cannot* control the rising and setting of the sun (the frequency of the event). Nor can he diminish the amount of sunshine reaching his environment (the intensity of the event). But does that make him helpless? No, he *can* reduce his exposure to the sun. For instance, he can stay inside during the hottest part of the day, or if that is not possible, he can wear a hat and protective clothing while outside.

This *increases* his *protection* against the sun (the event) and lowers his risk of becoming a victim of skin cancer (the disaster). His preventive actions can make a difference!

Likewise, you too can take steps that *increase* your *protection* against the impact of some natural hazard. In that way, you will reduce your vulnerability and losses when a disaster strikes. For those living in the developed world, the tips in the box "Are You Prepared?" may be useful. And if you live in the developing world, the examples in the box "Low-Cost Improvements That Work" may give you an idea of the type of simple measures now available. They may go a long way in saving lives and reducing losses. With today's available technology, reminds geophysicist Frank Press, "fatalism is no longer acceptable." No doubt, when it comes to natural disasters, prevention is definitely better than cure.

Low-Cost Improvements That Work

JUST under half the world population, reports the World Bank, survive on five dollars a week or less. Even if you are in that position, say experts, there are proven measures that you can apply. Inform yourself about them, because education, stresses Peruvian disaster expert Alberto Giesecke, "is a key low-cost mitigation measure." Here are two examples from South America:

The UN manual *Mitigating Natural Disasters* explains what can be done to build better adobe, or mud, houses:

- In mountainous terrain, excavate the land to form a platform for the house.
- Square houses are strongest; if you need a rectangular shape, build one wall two and a half times longer than the other.
- Use rock or concrete foundations to dampen seismic forces.
- Build parallel walls with the same weight,

strength, and height. Keep them thin and low. Houses built in this manner incurred less damage during earthquakes than standard mud houses.

Traditional latticework (*quincha*) construction is another proven technique. *Quincha* houses, says *Stop Disasters*, have a framework of woven reeds and small branches supported by horizontal and vertical poles and have only a small amount of earth-fill. This type of structure, with 4- to 6-inch-thick walls, allows the houses to shake during an earthquake, and when the earthquake stops, the buildings adjust to their original positions again. When an earthquake hit in 1991, all such houses remained standing while 10,000 other houses, with solid 40-inch-thick walls, were shaken to the ground, killing 35 people. According to UNESCO architect John Beynon, earthquakes don't kill people; collapsing buildings do.



The Fight Against Disasters Won

THE efforts of the United Nations and of individual governments to mitigate the effects of natural disasters are surely laudable. Projects such as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction suggest that mankind need not be helpless in the face of such calamities. If individuals, communities, and governments take appropriate steps, lives can be saved.

This is very interesting, because the Bible tells us that soon there will be a change in the governmental oversight of mankind. Since the days of Jesus, Christians have prayed the Lord's Prayer (the "Our Father"), which includes the expression: "Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth." (Matthew 6: 9, 10) God's Kingdom is an actual government. According to Bible prophecy, very soon it will "crush and put an end to all [human] kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite." (Daniel 2:44) Imagine all mankind under one perfect government. What a change that will be!

If present-day governments see the need to take steps so that natural hazards do not become natural disasters, we can be confident that God's government will ensure that its subjects never suffer in this way. God's Kingdom will bring lasting peace to this planet for the first time since Cain killed Abel. Under that Kingdom, "the meek ones

themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:11) The Kingdom will educate mankind so that in a very real sense 'all persons will be taught by Jehovah, and their peace will be abundant.'—Isaiah 54:13.

Today, most victims of natural disasters are among the poor. However, with perfect oversight and proper education, under God's Kingdom, mankind will not suffer the pangs of poverty. Foretelling such conditions in a way that people of his day would understand, the prophet Isaiah wrote: "Jehovah of armies will certainly make for all the peoples, in this mountain, a banquet of well-oiled dishes, a banquet of wine kept on the dregs, of well-oiled dishes filled with marrow, of wine kept on the dregs, filtered." (Isaiah 25:6) Yes, a banquet of good things! Further describing life under Kingdom rule, the psalmist wrote: "There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains there will be an overflow. His fruit will be as in Lebanon, and those who are from the city will blossom like the vegetation of the earth."—Psalm 72:16.

Clearly, man's fight against natural disasters will be over. With the guidance of God's spirit and the oversight of God's Kingdom, God-fearing humans will have won that fight. What a relief that will be!

Where AIDS Is Pandemic

IN LESS than 15 years, AIDS has cast its shadow over every continent on earth. In just a few years, this biological bomb has exploded to pandemic proportions. WHO (World Health Organization) has estimated that throughout the world 5,000 people are being infected every day. That is more than three people every minute! The countries affected the most have been the poorer ones, those of the so-called developing world. WHO predicted that these countries will, by the year 2000, account for 90 percent of all HIV infections and eventually 90 percent of all AIDS cases.

Those Hardest Hit

Rose was 27 years old and married with three children when her husband suddenly fell sick. He died some months later. The cause of her husband's death was not certain at the time. Doctors diagnosed tuberculosis. Relatives said he had been bewitched. The relatives of her husband started grabbing Rose's property. Her in-laws forcibly took her children while she was out. Rose was compelled to return to her own village. Two years later she developed bouts of vomiting and diarrhea. That was when she realized that her husband had died of AIDS and that she too had been infected. Rose died three years later, at 32 years of age.



A father takes his son, who died of AIDS, to be buried

Tragic stories such as this one are now common. In some areas whole families and even villages have been wiped out.

"The Greatest Health Problem of Our Time"

Governments in developing countries are severely handicapped when trying to cope. Because of lack of financial resources and the presence of other urgent and costly priorities, AIDS is proving to be the proverbial last straw. The worldwide recession, food shortages, natural disasters, wars, cultural practices, and superstitions only compound the problem. Providing special care involving equipment and medication for the frequent infections of AIDS patients is expensive. Many of the major hospitals are now overcrowded, run-down, and understaffed. The majority of patients with AIDS are now sent home to die in order to make room for an ever-growing number of other needy patients. Related to AIDS has been an alarming increase in secondary infections such as tuberculosis. Some countries have reported that tuberculosis deaths have doubled in the last three years, and up to 80 percent of hospital patients with AIDS have tuberculosis.

The Social Impact of AIDS

The AIDS pandemic impacts not only the health-care system but also all sectors of the economy and of society. As much as

WHO/E. Hooper

80 percent of those infected are between 16 and 40 years of age, the most productive age-group in society. The majority of family wage earners are in this age bracket. Most families are dependent on them, but as they fall sick and eventually die, the very young and elderly are left without support. In any African society, when the parents of a child die, traditionally the child is adopted and absorbed into the extended family system. Today, however, when the parents die, the grandparents or other surviving relatives are often too old or are already loaded down trying to provide for the needs of their own children. This situation has led to an orphan crisis and an increase in the number of street children. WHO predicts that in sub-Saharan Africa alone, over 10 million children will be orphaned by the end of this century.

Women are finding the AIDS scourge doubly distressing and burdensome. It is women who are primarily called upon to provide the 24-hour-a-day nursing care needed by the sick and dying—this on top of all the other household duties they have to perform.

What Is Being Done

In the early 1980's, many government officials, prejudiced by the stigma associated with AIDS and unaware of the rapidity with which it would spread, were apathetic and complacent. However, in 1986 the Ugandan government declared war on AIDS. Over the last nine years, Uganda has been credited with having "the most innovative AIDS efforts developed to date."

Today, there are over 600 national and international organizations and agencies in Uganda that are concerned with trying to control the spread of AIDS. These humanitarian agencies have set up a network of AIDS education centers throughout the

country. Public awareness of the AIDS scourge is being brought to people's attention through dramas, dances, songs, radio and TV programs, newspapers, and telephone. Along with home care and material assistance, counseling is provided for those with AIDS as well as for widows and orphans.

Among Jehovah's Witnesses, care for orphans and widows is viewed as part of Christian worship. (James 1:27; 2:15-17; 1 John 3:17, 18) The congregation does not take over the responsibility of family members to care for their own. But if there are no close family members, or if orphans and widows are just unable to provide for themselves, the congregation lovingly comes to their assistance.

Joyce, for example, was one of Jehovah's Witnesses living in Kampala, the capital of Uganda. She was a victim of AIDS and died in August 1993. Before she died she wrote the following account: "I grew up as a Protestant and later married a Catholic. However, I could see many in my church behaving immorally, and so I stopped going. My eldest sister was studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, and when she came to visit, she told me about the things she was learning from the Bible.

"My husband was very much opposed to my studying the Bible. Even my parents started to oppose me, especially my father. This opposition went on for two years, but it did not discourage me, as I was convinced that I was learning the truth. When I told my husband that I wished to be baptized, he was furious. He physically abused me and told me to leave the house. So I left and lived alone in a small rented room.

"Some time later my husband asked me to return. It was not long after I returned that he started to become weak and sickly.

I was surprised, as he had always enjoyed such good health. Eventually we came to understand that he had AIDS. He died in 1987. By this time I was a regular pioneer [full-time evangelizer], and even though I was now widowed with five children, I continued in the pioneer service.

"Four years later, in 1991, I realized that I had contracted AIDS from my husband. I started to degenerate physically and suffered from a skin rash, rapid weight loss, and constant bouts of the flu. I still continued pioneering and was conducting 20 Bible studies, but as my strength deteriorated, I had to reduce them to 16. Seven of these students eventually got baptized.

"I never felt isolated or depressed, as the congregation was a real support to me. Eventually, I had to miss some meetings because of physical weakness. The brothers recorded them for me on an audiocassette, and I was continually fed spiritually. The congregation elders made up a roster so that my spiritual sisters could take turns tending to my needs and even staying by my side overnight. One thing though was bothering me—my children. 'What will happen to them when I am gone?' I wondered.

"In Africa the property of a dead person is often taken by the relatives, so I constantly prayed to Jehovah about this. I decided to sell my house and build smaller rental units so that my children would always have a place to live and some regular income. The brothers in the congregation sold my house for me and managed to buy another plot of land, and they built the units for me. I lived in one of them and felt peace of mind knowing that my children would be taken care of.

"My relatives were very angry that I had sold the house, and they started a legal battle against me. Once again, the brothers

came to my assistance and dealt with the matter for me. We won the legal case. Although I now feel much weaker, Jehovah's loving organization and the Kingdom hope keep me going. Because of my condition I have now been admitted to a hospital. I still have my spiritual sisters at my side tending to my needs day and night, as the hospital cannot provide adequate food and bedding."

After spending six months in the hospital, Joyce was sent home. Two days later she died. Her five children are now being cared for by a pioneer sister in the congregation who also has three children of her own.

The Solution

In Uganda, where AIDS is already pandemic, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni stated: "I believe that the best response to the threat posed by AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases is to reaffirm publicly and forthrightly the reverence, respect and responsibility every person owes to his or her neighbour." In short, there is a need for a return to monogamous morality within the marriage arrangement. Everyone agrees that this is the only way to be safe and the only way AIDS can be controlled. Few, however, believe such a moral standard to be attainable.

Jehovah's Witnesses are among those who not only believe such morality is possible but practice it. Further, they believe, as did Joyce, in God's promise of new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness is to dwell. (2 Peter 3:13) In a world wiped clean of all wickedness, Jehovah God will then fulfill the promise recorded at Revelation 21:4: "He will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."

Young People Ask...



Can I Really Be a Friend of God?

BE A friend of God? No way, believes 20-year-old Doris. "I feel so inferior and so unworthy of anyone's liking me," bemoans this young woman. "I even avoid praying to Jehovah God because I don't think I deserve being in his presence." Deep inside, some youngsters feel totally unworthy of God's friendship. While they may cherish the idea of being a friend of God, they feel such is unattainable for them. Have you ever felt that way?

At times, his own weaknesses may make a youth feel unworthy of even approaching God. Take young Michael, for instance. He says that before coming to appreciate godly ways, he was "infested with nearly every sinful and hurtful thought and deed there is." However, what he learned from his study of the Bible made him realize the grief and disappointment he was causing God. He explained: "Each congregation meeting made at least one more of my flaws apparent to me. . . . I could not foresee Jehovah's forgiveness of my seemingly endless sins when I could not even forgive myself."

In other cases, the way a youth is treated by others may make him feel unworthy of Jehovah's friendship. For instance, Doris, quoted previously, was abandoned as a small child by her mother. She revealed: "I don't think anybody loves me. If my own mother and family have left me alone, what chances are there of anybody else caring for me?" When a youth has been treated in a demeaning and abusive way since childhood, he may sincerely believe that God could never want him as a friend.

On the other hand, a young person may have had a friendship with God but, because of weakness, falls into serious sin. This happened to Tracy. "I feel so ashamed," laments this 21-year-old, "my pain and guilt are unbearable. I have hurt my Father, Jehovah, so much."

Perhaps you find yourself in a situation similar to one of the foregoing. But there is hope: You can have God as your friend!

Why You Can Be God's Friend

It is true that sinful acts can prevent one from being God's friend. Fortunately, our loving Father has taken the initiative to help us. "God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," writes the apostle Paul. (Romans

5:8) By his death, Jesus paid a ransom to redeem appreciative ones from total domination by sin. (Matthew 20:28) Thus, the apostle adds: "We were God's enemies, but he made us his friends through the death of his Son."—Romans 5:10, *Today's English Version*.¹²

Before coming to appreciate Jehovah's standards, some youths, like Michael mentioned earlier, may have engaged in gross wrongdoing. Yet, through Jesus' ransom sacrifice, one can be forgiven for past sins, no matter how serious these may have been. The Bible gives this heartwarming assurance: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous so as to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) Nevertheless, a person must take steps to show God that he appreciates such cleansing. The apostle Paul states a principle that can be applied: "'Quit touching the unclean thing,' says Jehovah, 'and I will take you in. And I shall be a father to you.'" (2 Corinthians 6:17, 18) How touching it is to know that if a person turns from such wrongdoing and is genuinely repentant, God is willing to receive him into His favor as a friend.

What about youths who have been reared in an abusive environment? Realize that God does not consider people guilty because things were done to them against their will. Such ones were *victims* rather than participants in sin. Remember, too, that your worth as a person does not depend on the judgment of another human. Jehovah can become your Friend despite your circumstances. Maureen was reared by a Christian mother in a home full of violence because of her alcoholic father. Yet she said: "In the middle of all this mess, somehow I was able to develop a relationship with Jehovah. I came to know him as the One who would never abandon me."¹³

What If You Fall Into Serious Sin?

Doug, who was reared by godly parents, became involved in sexual immorality at age 18. This was due to his bad associations. "I knew it was wrong, but I kept doing it because I wanted to have a good time," confessed Doug. Some time later, Doug saw the futility of his course. He admitted: "I began to see that all my so-called friends were just using me to get my money or have a good time." He then began to take steps to regain Jehovah's friendship. But a huge obstacle blocked his progress.

"The main thing that made it so hard to come back was that I felt so unworthy," confided Doug. "I felt that all I had done was bad in Jehovah's eyes. Knowing how good he is and how much he had put up with me, there seemed to be no way that he would want to forgive me because I was just so bad." Yet, Doug was able to get over this hurdle with the help of a congregation elder and by carefully considering the Bible account of Manasseh.

Who was Manasseh? A king of ancient Judah. The Bible indicates that he had been taught by his godly father, Hezekiah, to love Jehovah. But after his father died and he became king at age 12, he thought he could now do as he pleased. He forsook Jehovah for the worship of Baal. Such worship was marked by grossly immoral and unrestrained sex orgies. Manasseh "did on a grand scale what was bad in the eyes of Jehovah, to offend him." Through faithful spokesmen, "Jehovah kept speaking to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention." Then, as an expression of Jehovah's judgment, Manasseh was taken to Babylon as a shackled prisoner.—2 Chronicles 31:20, 21; 33:1-6, 10, 11.

When Manasseh reflected on his past deeds and compared them with what he remembered about Jehovah's laws, he was

Some youths may feel unworthy to be God's friend

overwhelmed with guilt and begged for forgiveness. He humbled himself before God and "kept praying to Him." And God "let himself be entreated by him and He heard his request for favor and restored him to Jerusalem to his kingship." Yes, "the Father of tender mercies" was willing to allow this repentant sinner to draw close to him again. After receiving such mercy, Manasseh, by personal experience, now "came to know that Jehovah is the true God."—2 Chronicles 33:12, 13; 2 Corinthians 1:3.

If Jehovah could take Manasseh back, surely he would also allow a wayward youth today to regain a relationship with Him if the youth shows a repentant attitude. Doug responded to the help of the spiritual shepherds in his congregation. He was helped to see clearly that God "will not for all time keep finding fault, neither will he to time indefinite keep resentful."—Psalm 103:9.

Stay God's Friend

Once God becomes your Friend, you must cherish this relationship in order to keep it. One 18-year-old baptized girl became an unwed mother. Even so, she was helped to set matters straight with Jehovah. (See Isaiah 1:18.) The turning point in her recovery? "I learned that Jehovah was a loving Father and not an executioner," she explained. "I realized that he was hurt by what I had done. It is so important to look upon God as a Friend, someone with emotions, and not merely an abstract Spirit to be paid homage but never truly loved." Like Manasseh, she was impelled to become fully involved in Jehovah's worship. (2 Chronicles 33:14-16) This has proved to be a protection to her. She advises other youths: "Keep striving to praise Jehovah even if the going



gets rough. Jehovah will lovingly straighten your paths once again."

It is also important that you seek friendship with those who are God's friends. Avoid like the plague, however, those who clearly have no respect for godly principles. (Proverbs 13:20) Young Linda became involved in sexual immorality with a youth whose friendship became "more important than *anything*." After her spiritual recovery, Linda admitted: "You can destroy your whole life by not having that personal bond between Jehovah and you."

Do you have such a bond? If not, work to obtain it. Linda sums up the value of having God's friendship by saying: "The most important thing in the whole world is a good personal relationship with Jehovah. No boy or girl or anything else in this world is greater than that. If friendship with Jehovah is not there, then *nothing else matters*."

WOMEN OF INDIA

MOVING INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN INDIA

They are tall, they are short. They are slim, they are stout. They are humorous, they are dour. They are immensely rich, they are absolutely poverty-stricken. They are highly educated, they are totally illiterate. Who are they? The women of India. And where are they going? They are moving into the 21st century.

TO MOST people living outside India, the image of an Indian woman is one of grace, beauty, mystery, and charm. Many men turn to India to look for wives, partly because of the view that Indian women are more inclined to be submissive, to please their husbands, and to be good home-makers than their more independent sisters in the West. However, it is misleading to speak of a typical Indian woman in this vast melting pot of varied ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds. All types of women live in this fascinating land.

The history of India is one of many cultures merged either peacefully or by force. There is speculation about where the early settlers, the Dravidians, came from. Their origin seems to be through a mixture of Australian and southern Mediterranean peoples, with particular connections to



Carrying bricks to a building site

Crete. As the Aryans and Persians moved into India from the northwest and the Mongols from the northeast, the Dravidians withdrew to the south. So we find, generally, that the women of south India are of a smaller build and are darker skinned than the women of the north, who tend to be taller and fairer skinned but still have dark hair and eyes. People in the northeast often have Oriental features.

Religion has played a major role in establishing the status of women in India. Because modern India is a secular state, every effort is being made to change traditional views that have kept women from progressing. Great steps are being taken to increase educational opportunities, not for just wealthy or influential women but for all. Literacy classes, job-oriented training in villages, and free schooling for girls

are changing the face of Indian womanhood.

On June 22, 1994, in the state of Maharashtra, a big step forward was taken when a government policy on women was released. Described by India's vice president, K. R. Narayanan, as "historic" and "revolutionary," it addressed basic problems of women, such as joint-ownership rights, guardianship, housing benefits, and equal opportunities in employment.

As more women attend colleges and enter the job market, no longer restricted to the home, the question of changes in the moral climate has been raised. Reports appear of drug abuse and declining morals in colleges. The media play a major role in the metamorphosis of some younger Indian women. Comparing Indian motion pictures of 30 years ago with today's, many find that the portrayal of women has vastly changed. One Indian woman commented: "The former demure, gentle, self-sacrificing heroine of movies when I was in school has given way to the modern girl who, when unhappy, walks out on her husband and in-laws and fights for her rights and her independence."

But India is still, on the whole, restrained in conduct and dress compared with many countries. The most commonly worn dress, the beautiful sari, modestly covers most of the body. With younger women, especially in the north, the *shalwar-kameez*, a loose dress worn over pajama-type slacks, is popular. Western fashions, seen mainly in Bombay, Goa, and Calcutta, are usually of a modest style and length.



Drawing water for home use

New Openings in Employment

What sort of employment is open to Indian women as they move toward the 21st century? A large proportion of India's population live in villages, and their work is agricultural. Millions work in the fields. Women work alongside the men doing all types of farm work. They also carry water long distances from rivers and wells and laboriously collect wood for fuel. During work, babies are perched on the hip or laid in hammocks strung from trees.

Since the turn of the 20th century, rural Indian families have flooded into urban areas seeking employment. Women have worked in textile mills and factories. Modernization of industry, however, affected women workers more than

men. Men were trained to operate the machinery, but women were not. This caused much hardship for women. They were reduced to carrying materials on building sites, pulling handcarts loaded with heavy sacks, selling used clothing, or doing other low-paying work.

Social reformers made efforts to improve the lot of women. Movements such as SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) sprang up, their goal being to help the uneducated women workers to take care of their health so that they could work, to be sufficiently literate to escape being trapped in corrupt practices, to improve their working skills, and to learn to save so as to build their own capital and avoid the high interest rates exacted by unscrupulous money-lenders. When asked about using feminism

as a social tool, prominent sociologist Zarina Bhatti stated: "In India feminism means to listen to the problems of women, organise them, try to impart technical education to them along with health and nutrition."

At the same time, views have been changing about the situation of educated women from wealthy families considered higher on the social

scale, as well as women from middle-class families. Now women from both backgrounds can be found in all fields of activity, not just teaching or medicine. They have careers as airline pilots, models, air hostesses, and police and are found in top executive posts. For many years India had a woman as prime minister, elected in the world's largest democracy. Indian women hold commissions in the armed forces and are lawyers and chief justices, and thousands have gone into business as entrepreneurs.

Changes in the Marriage Field

With this trend toward independent employment, how does the modern Indian woman feel about marriage? The 19th and 20th centuries brought great changes for married Indian women. The ancient custom called suttee, in which a widow voluntarily burned herself on her husband's funeral pyre, was abolished under British rule. Child marriage has been banned by legislation so that



In conference with men



Operating a computer

now a girl under the age of 18 cannot legally marry. Demanding dowry from a girl's family has also been legally banned, but this evil still exists. Many thousands of young brides have been murdered in one way or another, either because their family failed to provide sufficient dowry or because more money could be obtained from a second marriage.

Gradually, the underlying causes of dowry deaths are being addressed. Traditionally, at marriage an Indian girl went to her husband in his parents' home and remained there until her death. Under no circumstances would her parents take her back into their home. Lacking a formal education, most women could not leave their husband's home and work to support themselves. So young women were often tortured and had the threat of death hanging over them, and if their parents could not provide more money or goods to satisfy greedy in-laws, the brides simply waited in mute agony for their eventual fate, usually a staged fatal accident in which a cookstove would explode or a flimsy sari would catch fire.

Now legislation, women's police units, and women's courts and support groups offer a married woman a place to turn for help if she feels her life is in danger. With more education available and job opportu-

nities opening up to them, some women choose not to marry or to marry much later in life after making a career for themselves. Thus, dependence on males, often leading to harsh domination, is not as great.

Girl Babies Getting More Attention

Another problem that affects women, and that is changing as the 21st century approaches, is the inordinate desire for male children. Based on ancient religious teachings, along with economic considerations, this concept has often led to infanticide of female babies and mistreatment of girls by giving them less food, education, and health care than that given to boys.

In recent times the use of amniocentesis to determine the sex of the fetus, frequently leading to abortion of females, has become widespread. Although regulated by law, the procedure is still quite a common practice. Earnest efforts are being made to change the view that a male child is to be preferred.

Man-made philosophies have downgraded women in many ways. The treatment of widows is an example. In ancient India, remarriage of widows was acceptable. But from about the sixth century C.E., law-givers opposed this, and the lot of widows became pitiable. Refused remarriage, often robbed by relatives of the possessions of their dead husbands, treated as a curse on the family, many widows chose immolation on their husband's funeral pyre rather than a life of abuse and indignity.

From the late 19th century, reformers tried to ease the burden of such women, but deeply embedded emotions die hard. In many communities the lot of the widow, sometimes a very young woman whose aged husband has died, is truly a miserable one. Says Dr. Saharada Jain of the Institute for Development Studies: "The trauma of widowhood mainly stems from the fact that

women are so conditioned that their entire psyche is built upon the husband's identity." Efforts are being made to help widows move toward the 21st century with dignity.

Rural and Urban Differences

There is a vast difference between urban women and those in the rurals. It is estimated that 25 percent of rural women are literate; in cities a much higher percentage benefit from schools and colleges. To help rural women, social workers arrange literacy classes, health-care training, and employment schemes. Some state governments have reserved 30 percent of the openings in the public sector, cooperative societies, and local self-government for women. Women's movements seek to alleviate the pain and misery that is the lot of millions in India. To some extent these have had success. So, what can we say about the future of the women of India?

On Into the 21st Century!

Is the role of the Indian woman changing as she moves into the 21st century? Yes, and rapidly at that. But Indian women face a situation similar to that of their sisters all over the world. There is progress, but there are setbacks. There is hope, but there is despair. There are beautiful homes and luxurious life-styles, but there are slums, grinding poverty, and numbing hunger. For millions anything more than bare subsistence is beyond reach. Others appear to possess all the world has to offer. For most the future is uncertain; they have dreams but also reservations.

For some, however, the future is bright with promise, especially for those who have hope in the Paradise earth to come under the reign of Jehovah's Kingdom by Christ Jesus. (Revelation 21:1, 4, 5) These look forward with total confidence to a 21st century in which women will enjoy life to the full.

Ordination of Women Infuriates Anglican Clergy

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN BRITAIN

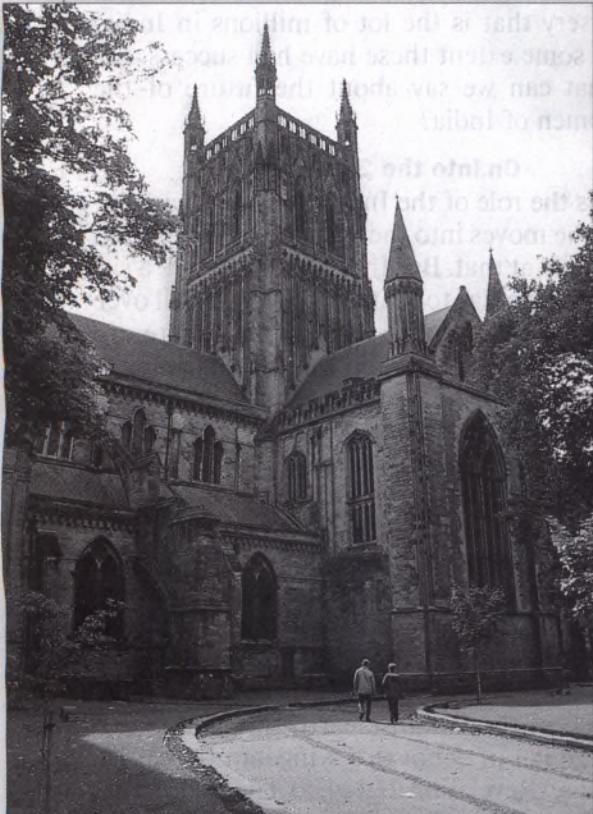
IN November 1992, the General Synod of the Church of England adopted a proposal to ordain women as priests. As a result, about 150 disgruntled Anglican clergymen have announced their intention to resign by 1995. Many of them plan to defect to the Roman Catholic Church. One senior clergyman wants to take his entire par-

ish along—including the church building! *The Sunday Times* of London anticipated that the ordination of the first group (which eventually took place in March 1994) would be “the most controversial ceremony of the Church of England’s 450-year history.”

Why are many clergymen enraged? Some simply feel that it is not proper for women to officiate as priests. Others fear that the synod’s decision damages recent efforts to unite the Church of England with the Catholic and Orthodox religions. Indeed, a Vatican spokesman declared that the pope himself regards the Church of England’s ruling to be “a profound obstacle to every hope of reunion.”

However, individual parishes of the Church of England may still vote to bar women priests. They can even decide to reject their bishop in favor of a traveling clergyman who will, according to the *New York Times*, “give pastoral care to those who refuse to accept it from female priests.”

How different from Paul’s counsel to first-century Christians that “you should all speak in agreement, and that there should not be divisions among you, but that you may be fitly united in the same mind and in the same line of thought.” (1 Corinthians 1:10) As the controversy rages on, many parishioners are making decisions of their own. “We don’t seem to have anything left to believe in here in the Church of England any more,” said one woman. “I have only a sense of joy and relief to be leaving.”



The Family That Truly Loved Me

TO A child, any child, a family is so important. A warm, loving family helps meet a child's physical and emotional needs. It plays a vital role in training, education, and development. It makes a child feel secure. What a blow it is to be cast off by your family, as I was!

I was born into a big family in eastern Nigeria. My father was a chief with seven wives. He fathered 30 children, and I was the 29th.

One day in 1965, when I was ten, I came home from school and met my dad sitting on the veranda. Two men came into the compound carrying briefcases, and after a cheerful greeting, they identified themselves as Jehovah's Witnesses. My father listened attentively to them. When they offered him two magazines, my dad looked at me and asked if I wanted them. I nodded, so he got them for me.

The Witnesses promised to call back, and they did. For the next two years, they came to discuss the Bible with me. However, their visits were not regular, since it was a six-mile walk from my village to the place where they lived.

My Family Rejects Me

I was 12 years old when my father became ill and died. Eight days after the burial, my oldest brother summoned the family for a meeting. About 20 people were there. We all thought he was going to talk about the funeral expenses. To my astonishment, however, he said that he had called the meeting to discuss his younger brother—me! He told

them that I was interested in going about "begging" for four pence as though the family had no money to feed me. He added that to go around peddling magazines for four pence was to rub the family's name in the mud. He said that I must choose whom I wanted to belong to—the Witnesses or my family.

My mother had died, but one of my stepmothers wept and pleaded for me. She begged that they not use this as an excuse to deprive me of my share in the inheritance. But to them a woman's opinion meant little. The family sided with my brother and demanded a decision from me.

I asked for time to think over the matter. They agreed to give me until the following evening. Alone in my room, I began to cry. I felt weak, rejected, and afraid. I wondered what would happen to me.

Up to that time, I had never attended a Kingdom Hall and had never shared in preaching with the Witnesses. I had only a shallow knowledge of Bible teachings, and there were no Witnesses in my village for me to talk to.

I prayed to Jehovah, calling on him by name for the first time in my life. I told him that I had been learning that he was the true God. I begged that he stand by me and help me to make the right decision, one that would not displease him.

The next evening the family reconvened and demanded my decision. I explained that my father, who had given me life, was the one who initiated my study with

the Witnesses. He had paid for my magazines and Bible. Since he was not offended that I was studying with the Witnesses, I could not understand why my older brother should use this against me. Then I said that I didn't care what they did to me, I had to serve Jehovah.

They were not happy with this speech. One of them said: "Who is this little rat that he should speak to us like this?" Immediately my brother stamped into my room, grabbed my clothes, my books, and my small cardboard suitcase and threw them on the ground outside.

I found shelter with a schoolmate who lived in the village, and I stayed with his family for about five months. Meanwhile, I wrote to my uncle in Lagos, who invited me to come stay with him.

For several months I saved money by collecting and selling palm kernels. My stepmother who had spoken up for me gave me some money too. When I had enough, I set out for Lagos. Part of the way, I rode in the back of a sand truck.

Thrown Out a Second Time

When I arrived in Lagos, I rejoiced to learn that my uncle was studying with the Witnesses. Immediately I began attending congregation meetings at the Kingdom Hall. However, my uncle's interest in serving Jehovah quickly vanished when my senior brother came to visit. He told my uncle that it was the decision of the family that I should be neither supported nor allowed to go to school, since I continued to associate with Jehovah's Witnesses. He threatened my uncle and then went back home.

A week after my brother's departure, my uncle awakened me at midnight and thrust a paper at me with writing on it. He put a pen in my hand and demanded that I sign my name. When I looked at the scowl on his

face, I knew this was something serious. I said: "Uncle, why don't you allow me to sign it in the morning?"

He said that I should not "uncle" him but that I should sign the paper immediately. I replied that even a murderer had a right to know the charges against him. Surely I had the right to read the paper before signing it.

He then agreed, with annoyance, to let me read it. It began something like this: "I, U. U. Udoh, have vowed not to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I have agreed to burn my bags and books and promise never to have anything to do with Jehovah's Witnesses. . . ." After reading the first few lines, I began to laugh. I quickly explained that I did not mean to be disrespectful to him but that there was no way that I could sign such a document.

My uncle was very angry and ordered me to get out. I quietly packed my clothes and books in my case, went into the hallway outside his apartment, and lay down on the floor to sleep. When my uncle saw me there, he said that since the rent he paid extended to the hallway too, I had to leave the building.

A Tempting Offer

I had been in Lagos for only two weeks and did not know where to go. I did not know where the brother lived who used to come to take me to the Kingdom Hall. So when dawn came, I started walking and wandering, praying to Jehovah to help me.

By the end of the day, I found myself by a gasoline station. I approached the owner and asked if he would lock my case in the office overnight so that thieves would not steal it from me. This request made him curious enough to ask why I did not go home. I told him my story.

The man was sympathetic and offered to employ me as his houseboy. He even said he

Udom and Sarah Udo

would send me to school if I helped him in his house. It was a tempting offer, but I knew that being a houseboy involved working every day from early in the morning till late at night. Also, houseboys were discouraged from mixing with people outside the household, for fear that they might conspire with thieves to rob the house. At best, I would probably have only one Sunday a month off. So I sincerely thanked him for his interest but declined his offer. I said that if I worked as a houseboy for him, it would be difficult for me to attend meetings at the Kingdom Hall.

The man said: "How can you be talking of meetings when you don't even have a place to stay?" I replied that if I were willing not to attend meetings, I could live at my father's home. It was because of my religion that I was driven out. All I needed from him was to have a place for my case. With that, he agreed to keep it safe for me.

Finding Another Family

I slept outside the filling station for three days. I had no money to buy food, so I had absolutely nothing to eat during that time. The fourth day, as I was wandering around, I saw a young man offering the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines to people along the street. I ran to him with joy and asked him if he knew Brother Godwin Ideh. He wanted to know why I asked, so I explained all that had happened to me.

When I finished, he immediately put his magazines in his bag and asked: "Why should you be suffering so when there are thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses here in Lagos?" He flagged down a taxi and took me to the filling station to pick up my case. Next he took me to his apartment and fixed a meal for me. Then he sent for Brother Ideh, who lived nearby.



When Brother Ideh came, they argued about which of them I should stay with. Both wanted me! Eventually they agreed to share me—part of the time I would stay with one and part of the time with the other.

Shortly after that I got a job as a messenger boy. When I received my first pay, I spoke with both brothers and asked them how much they wanted me to contribute toward food and rent. They laughed and said that I didn't have to pay anything.

Soon I registered for evening classes as well as private lessons, and eventually I completed my basic education. Things improved for me financially. I got a better job, as a secretary, and in time secured a place of my own.

I was baptized in April 1972. I was 17 years old. I wanted to enter the pioneer service to show my appreciation to Jehovah for all he had done for me, especially during that difficult period. I enrolled as a temporary pioneer when I could, but it took

some years to become established. Finally, in 1983, I enrolled as a regular pioneer.

By then I fully appreciated my spiritual family. These words of Jesus certainly proved true for me: "Truly I say to you, There is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not in any way get many times more in this period of time, and in the coming system of things everlasting life."—Luke 18:29, 30.

The Witnesses had really shown love to me and cared for me. They had taken me in when I was penniless. With their help and the help of my heavenly Father, I had prospered spiritually. Not only had I received a secular education but I had also learned the ways of Jehovah.

These were the people whom my natural family pressured me to reject. When I refused, my family rejected me. Did my spiritual brothers and sisters now encourage me to reject my natural family? Not at all. The Bible teaches: "Just as you want men to do to you, do the same way to them."—Luke 6:31.

Helping the Family That Rejected Me

Soon after I left home, the Nigerian civil war broke out. My village was devastated. Many of my friends and relatives lost their lives, including my stepmother who had pleaded in my behalf. The economy was in ruins.

When the war was over, I traveled home and visited one of my brothers who had shared in driving me away when I was a boy. His wife and two daughters were sick and had been hospitalized. So I sympathized with him and asked what I could do to help.

Perhaps because of a guilty conscience, he told me that there was nothing he needed. I explained that he should not think that I might seek revenge for what the family

had done to me. I told him that I knew that they had acted in ignorance and that I really wanted to help him.

He then started crying and confessed that he had no money and that his children were suffering. I gave him the equivalent of \$300 (U.S.) and asked him if he would like to work in Lagos. When I returned to Lagos, I found him a job and invited him to come and live with me. He stayed with me for two years, earning money to send home to his wife and children. During that time I happily paid for his room and board.

He said that he knew that Jehovah's Witnesses were practicing the true religion. He also said that if he had not gone so far into the world, he too would become a Witness. But he promised he would arrange for his wife and children to have a Bible study.

In 1987, I was invited to take up circuit work. In April 1991, I married Sarah Ukpong. In 1993, we were invited to leave circuit work and serve at the Nigeria branch. We accepted that invitation and served there until my wife became pregnant.

Though in my youth my family threw me out, I was embraced by a spiritual family—parents, brothers, sisters, and children. What a joy it is to belong to this unique global family, one that I truly love and that truly loves me!—*As told by Udom Udo*.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

The Theory That Startled the World —What Is Its Legacy?

Adultery —To Forgive or Not to Forgive?

Premenstrual Syndrome —Myth or Reality?

THE WATER BUFFALO FAITHFUL AND USEFUL

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN BRAZIL

'Flee, flee! A tiger!' shout the boys. They rush to their buffalo, jump on their backs, and gallop away. Suddenly, Saïdjah, one of the boys, loses his balance and plunges into the rice field—prey for the approaching tiger. Saïdjah's buffalo, however, sees what happened. It turns back, places its broad body as a roof over its little friend, and faces the tiger. The big cat attacks, but the buffalo stands firm and saves Saïdjah's life.

THIS encounter, described by Eduard Douwes Dekker, a 19th-century writer living in Asia, shows an endearing trait of the water buffalo: faithfulness. Today, fidelity is still its earmark. "The water buffalo," says one expert, "is like a family dog. It gives you its lifelong affection as long as you treat it well."

Children in Asia, even at four years of age, know how to do that. Every day, they lead their bulky friends into the river, where they wash them down and, with their tiny hands, clean the animals' ears, eyes, and nostrils. The buffalo, in response, sighs in contentment. Its dark skin absorbs much heat, and because the buffalo has far fewer sweat glands proportionately than cattle, it has a problem cooling off. No wonder it loves these daily dips! "Immersed in water or mud, chewing with half-closed eyes," notes one source, buffalo "are a picture of bliss."

Their love of water, though, is only part of the picture. What other traits do they have? Why are they useful? To start with, what do they look like?

Muscular Globe-Trotter

The water buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*) looks like an oversize ox and weighs 2,000 pounds or more. It has an almost bald, slate-gray skin. Standing up to six feet high at the shoulder—with sweeping horns, a straight back, a long body, a droopy neck, and a muscular frame—it is the picture of strength. Its sturdy legs end in footwear ideal for mud treaders: large boxy hooves attached to extremely flexible joints. That suppleness enables the buffalo to bend back its hooves, step over obstacles, and plod through boggy fields where cattle lose footing.

The world's 150 million domesticated water buffalo come in two varieties: the swamp type and the river type. From the



Philippines to India, the swamp buffalo, with its four- to six-foot-long backswept horns, forms a favorite postcard model. When not posing, it is slushing knee deep through paddies or hauling carts over trails that would make any truck driver shiver.

The river buffalo is similar to the swamp type. Its body is slightly smaller and its horns more modest—tightly coiled or drooping straight. But weighing in at 2,000 pounds, it also looks impressive. In the past, Arab traders brought this variety from Asia to the Middle East; and later, returning Crusaders introduced it into Europe, where it is still thriving.

Though you will not find water buffalo in the fast lane—they trudge along at a steady two miles per hour—both swamp and river buffalo are circling the globe. They have settled along the coast of northern Australia, have walked ashore on the islands of the Pacific, and are even making trails in the Amazon forest. Amazon?

Thriving Immigrants

Ecotourists plying the Amazon often scan the riverbanks in vain for elusive jaguars or king-size anacondas. However, they do not need binoculars, or even glasses, to see the jungle's new arrivals—water buffalo, by the thousands.

If you feel that these Asian immigrants wallowing in the Amazon are threatening the ecosystem, you may consider demurring to the police on Marajó, an island in the river delta. But beware! You will not get an impartial hearing when you arrive at the station, for the officer on duty may be about to leave for street patrol on the back of an intimidating federal worker. That's right, a water buffalo—and a swamp type at that! Who wants to complain anyway?

Actually, the water buffalo is an asset to the Amazon region, says Dr. Pietro Baruselli, a veterinarian working for one of the two

water-buffalo research centers in Brazil. He told *Awake!* that buffalo have a superb digestive system that enables them to fatten on pastures that leave cattle emaciated. Cattle farmers continually need to clear forest to create new pasture, but buffalo thrive on pastures that are already there. Dr. Baruselli says that water buffalo "can help to conserve the rain forest."

To survive in the jungle, however, the buffalo has to be an improviser—and it is. The book *The Water Buffalo: New Prospects for an Underutilized Animal* relates that in the rainy season, when the Amazon drowns pastures, the buffalo adapts to its wet surroundings. While cattle, marooned on patches of high ground, look on with envious eyes and empty stomachs, buffalo around them, treading water, feast on floating plants and even graze underwater. When the pastures emerge again, the buffalo looks as sleek as before.

Queen Mother

Water buffalo in other parts of Brazil are flourishing as well. Since the early 1980's, the country's herd has jumped from four hundred thousand to several million head. In fact, buffalo are increasing at a much higher rate than cattle. Why?

Wanderley Bernardes, a buffalo breeder in Brazil, explains that a buffalo is ready to mate at two years of age. After ten months of gestation, it gives birth to its first calf. Some 14 months later, the second calf is born. With low mortality among calves and high resistance to diseases, buffalo enjoy a long and fertile life. How long? An average of more than 20 years. How fertile?

"I'll show you," says Mr. Bernardes as he strides into the rolling pastures of his 750-acre farm, some 100 miles west of São Paulo. "This is Rainha (Queen)," he says with affection while pointing to an animal whose worn skin and chipped horns display

a record of long buffalo life. "She is 25 years old, a grandmother many times over, but," he adds, beaming, "she just gave birth to her 20th calf." With grandmas like Rainha, it is no wonder that some experts predict that in the next century, the world's largest buffalo herd may be grazing in Brazil!

A Living Tractor and More

For now, though, that claim belongs to India, home of nearly half the world's buffalo. There and in other Asian countries, thanks to the buffalo, millions of poor farm families are surviving on marginal land. Without needing diesel oil or spare parts, their "living tractor" pulls, plows, harrows, carts, and supports the family for over 20 years. "To my family," said an old Asian woman, "the buffalo is more important than I am. When I die, they'll weep for me; but if our buffalo dies, they may starve."

Besides being a farmhand, the buffalo is also a caterer. Some 70 percent of all milk produced in India comes from river-type water buffalo, and buffalo milk is in such demand that cow's milk can be hard to sell. Why do many prefer it? "Buffalo milk," explains the book *The Water Buffalo: New Prospects for an Underutilized Animal*, "contains less water, more total solids, more fat, slightly more lactose, and more protein than cow's milk." It gives a lot of energy, tastes good, and is used in making mozzarella, ricotta, and other delicious cheeses.

What about buffalo meat? "We can't keep up with the demand," says rancher Bernardes. In taste-preference tests in Australia, Venezuela, the United States, and other countries, buffalo steaks were preferred over those of cattle. In fact, millions of people around the world are often savoring buffalo meat while thinking they are nibbling on a juicy beefsteak. "Often people have a prejudice," observes Dr. Baruselli, "but buffalo meat is as good as, and often better than, beef."

Shrinking the Buffalo

Though the buffalo is growing in numbers, it is in trouble. "Large bulls that would be best for breeding purposes," notes *Earthscan Bulletin*, "are often selected as draft animals and castrated, or sent to slaughter." That way, hereditary traits for large size are lost, and the buffalo are shrinking in size. "Ten years ago in Thailand," say experts, "it was common to find buffalo weighing 1,000 kg [2,200 lb]; now it is hard to find 750-kg [1,700 lb] specimens." Can this problem be solved?

Yes, says a report compiled by 28 animal scientists, but "urgent action is needed . . . to preserve and protect outstanding buffalo specimens." So far, they admit, the buffalo has been neglected, but "better understanding of the water buffalo could be invaluable to many developing nations." More research, they say, will help its "true qualities to emerge."

At last, scientists worldwide are discovering what Asian farmers have known for centuries: The faithful and useful water buffalo is one of man's best friends.

Mistaken Identity

"IT IS widely believed," notes the book *The Water Buffalo: New Prospects for an Underutilized Animal*, "that the water buffalo is mean and vicious. Encyclopedias reinforce this perception." In reality, however, the domesticated water buffalo is "one of the gentlest of all farm animals. Despite an intimidating appearance, it is more like a household pet—sociable, gentle, and serene." How, then, did the water buffalo end up with this undeserved reputation? It may be confused with the African Cape buffalo (*Synceros caffer*), which is indeed mean-tempered although a distant relative. Yet, water buffalo will not breed with them. They prefer to keep such cranky relatives where they are—at a distance.

WATCHING THE WORLD

Brazil's Wasted Food

According to Brazil's Ministry of Agriculture, "the country annually throws away \$2.34 billion (U.S.) in rice, beans, corn, soya, wheat, vegetables, and fruits," says *O Estado de S. Paulo*. "Calculating the losses of other [farm] products and consumer waste, the amount runs up to \$4 billion (U.S.)." But why is 20 percent of the agricultural output and 30 percent of the fruit production wasted? Among the reasons given are 'low storage capacity on the farms, inadequate production technology, precarious highways, and poor management of crops.' Bemoaning the lack of rules to control the waste, Benedito Rosa of the Ministry of Agriculture is quoted as saying: "Such wasted food could feed people who need it."

Monday Morning Syndrome

"The stress of returning to work on Monday mornings increases the risk of a heart attack by 33 percent," reports *Jornal do Brasil*. A German study of 2,636 cases "revealed that the risk of suffering heart failure varies according to the day of the week and the hour." However, it was found that Mondays were especially dangerous and that heart attacks are three times more likely to occur in the morning than during the rest of the day. Factory workers are more affected by the Monday-morning syndrome than professionals and office workers. "We suspect that the change to a more intense rhythm, right after weekend re-

laxation, causes the [heart] attacks," says Professor Stefan Willrich, who directed the research. People with heart trouble should begin their week in a calm manner, it was suggested.

"World's Top Gambling Nation"

"Japan has become the world's top gambling nation," says the *Asahi Evening News*. The most money (65 percent) is gambled on *pachinko*, using pinball machines. The Japanese also spend more than any other nation on local horse racing. Sales in 1992 were more than double those of the United States and more than four



times those of Hong Kong, Britain, and France. To increase sales, young women are now being targeted. Said one from Nagoya: "My parents make a fuss but I always tell them, 'National and local governments are organizing them. How can they be bad?'" Actually, Japanese law prohibits gambling in principle, but public gambling exists as a "back alley economy," says researcher Hiroshi Takeuchi. He feels that when gambling proceeds exceed 4 percent of a country's gross national product, it becomes a social problem. Japan's now stand at 5.7 percent.

Churches Feel the Crime Wave

Until recent years, Australian churches were generally left unlocked, even when no services were being conducted. But things have changed now, reports the newspaper *The Weekend Australian*, because of robberies, break-ins, vandalism to church buildings, and a number of instances in which priests have been attacked. "Most of our parishes are now locking their churches up, I'm afraid. I think that's very sad," said Catholic archbishop John Bathersby. "I think there's been a breakdown in the reverence for religion. I think the whole secularisation of society has really brought a state of affairs where many people don't see the Church as any different from any other institution in society, and therefore that special aura of respect for it has disappeared. Some people see a church as just another building."

Versatile Pope

Not only is Pope John Paul II the spiritual head of the Roman Catholic Church but he is also a playwright, an author, and a recording artist. His recent book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, was on the best-seller list for many weeks. The play, a musical drama called *The Jeweler's Shop*, opened this past December in New York City for a limited engagement. It was written by the pope in 1960 under the pseudonym Andrzej Jawien. "The pope was a playwright, an actor, a director, a translator and a drama critic for the local paper

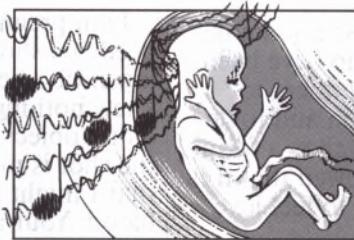
in Cracow," explained the play's producer. There is also a top-selling double CD recording of the pope reciting the Rosary. And the pontiff is a renowned world traveler, with plans to visit five continents this year. His 63rd trip, in January, was described by *The New York Times* as "an attempt by the 74-year-old Pope to shuck off the imagery of a papacy in decline and to project the idea that neither his health nor his age will deter him from injecting his moral vision into the world's business."

Blood—A Dangerous "Drug"

"Could it be that the Jehovah's Witnesses are right in refusing blood transfusions?" asks England's *Sunday Telegraph*. Current transfusion scares involve blood contaminated by hepatitis C and the AIDS virus. "But infection is only one of a number of dangers that have been described in professional journals," says the *Telegraph*. "Studies such as the one that estimated the chances of an adverse reaction to a transfusion as high as 20 per cent are little known to the public. Equally unfamiliar are the studies that have found that having a transfusion is the best predictor of making a poor recovery after abdominal or colon operations." Studies also show that a high percentage of blood transfusions are given unnecessarily and that transfusion practices vary widely and are based more on habit than on scientific data. Calling blood "a powerful drug" with which "most surgeons are far too cavalier," Tom Lennard, consultant surgeon at the Royal Victoria Infirmary, commented: "If blood was a new drug it wouldn't receive a product license."

Protect Your Babies from Noise

"Too much noise can be harmful to unborn and newborn babies," says a press release by Radio France Internationale. A baby in its mother's womb is particularly susceptible to being traumatized by any loud noises to which its mother is exposed. Since a mother's abdominal wall and amniotic fluid offer very little protection from outside noises, a child may be handicapped before birth. For example, the risk



of high-frequency hearing loss is three times greater among children whose mothers were exposed to noise levels between 85 and 95 decibels—levels quite common for many rock concerts and discotheques. In addition to causing hearing damage, some researchers warn, frequent exposure to loud noises, especially during the mother's last months of pregnancy, can also increase an unborn baby's heart rate.

Emotional First Aid

First aid at the scene of an accident should include more than attention to physical injuries. Injured persons also need emotional help, reports the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. What sort of help? The Professional Association of German Psychologists suggests four simple steps

for rendering "emotional first aid." The suggestions, each of which begins with the letter *S* as a memory aid, were the result of interviews with accident victims and professionals. The recommendations are: "Say that you are there. Screen the injured person off from distractions. Seek bodily contact. Speak and listen." Efforts are being made to get the measures promoted through doctors and driving schools and to get them included in first-aid courses.

"India's Little Beasts of Burden"

That is what a *Times of India* report called India's 17 million to 44 million child laborers. Despite the availability of some 23 million able-bodied unemployed adults, factory owners often choose to employ children, who work without protest for half the adult wage and rarely question the health hazards of their jobs. It was only when some Western nations refused to import goods produced by child labor that some manufacturers replaced the children with adults. The government of India has promised more stringent laws to prevent such abuse and to compel parents to give their children basic education. Says India's president, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma: "Neither tradition nor economic necessity can justify child labour and eliminating such exploitation is one of the major challenges today." However, many justify the practice on the grounds that abject poverty is a "harsh reality" and that the wages earned by a child give desperately needed support to the family.

FROM OUR READERS

Response to First Person Account

Thank you so much for the heartrending story of Larry Rubin, "No Longer a Rock or an Island." (November 22, 1994) Many often fail to make allowance for those who have suffered in the past. My own son once told me that if I truly had faith, I would not be anxious! But not everyone can just leave the past behind. Please continue to feature human experiences of this sort. I pray it will soften some hearts.

M. L., Britain

I struggle for words to express my thanks. So often we encounter ones who have been scarred by past abuses. Helping them to function within the congregation and to develop a relationship with Jehovah is a formidable challenge. The article showed that it is possible for such ones to learn to feel love and trust.

J. D., Canada

I have been a Christian for 25 years now. I've served God faithfully with my brain, but my heart has felt like it was encased in solid concrete. I grew up in an alcoholic family and suffered beatings, sexual abuse, and other traumas. Jehovah has done so much for me, but I cannot feel love for him. Larry Rubin's story gave me a flicker of hope that maybe, just maybe, I will one day be able to cry about my past and have feelings. Maybe I'll also get what Larry Rubin now has—love, trust, and acceptance.

A. F., United States

Some previous life stories have been about people who seemed to be supermen—fearless, without internal conflicts, without weakness. Larry Rubin's story was told from a different angle. He was frank and exposed his intimate feelings. Life stories of this kind are real to us because they are about things that happen in our own lives.

F. D. S., Brazil

Rh Factor It is truly commendable how *Awake!* treats such controversial subjects. In the article "The Rh Factor and You" (December 8, 1994), the approach taken was not that of a religious fanatic. The subject was handled with scientific accuracy, using up-to-date medical terminology, yet in terms that were clear and understandable. It disproves the charge that Jehovah's Witnesses are blind fanatics who place no value on human life.

I. R., Germany

I am pregnant, and my doctor told me I needed a shot to prevent me from building antibodies against my baby's blood. I knew nothing about the Rh factor and didn't object. When I later learned that the shot is made from blood, I was scared that I might have violated God's law on blood. Your article helped me by explaining that taking the shot is ultimately a conscience matter.

C. W., United States

Talking About Religion Though I was raised as a Christian, I am very shy about participating fully in the public preaching work, especially around my schoolmates. The advice you gave in the article "Young People Ask . . . Why Talk About God?" (September 22, 1994) reminded me of the importance of that work. I will take to heart your encouragement to become adequately qualified as a teacher of God's Word.

K. K., Nigeria

I am 12 years of age, and I have really been ashamed to say that I am one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I hoped that my schoolmates would not see me in field service. The article helped me to see that I am not the only one who has had to deal with this problem, and it helped me overcome these feelings of shame.

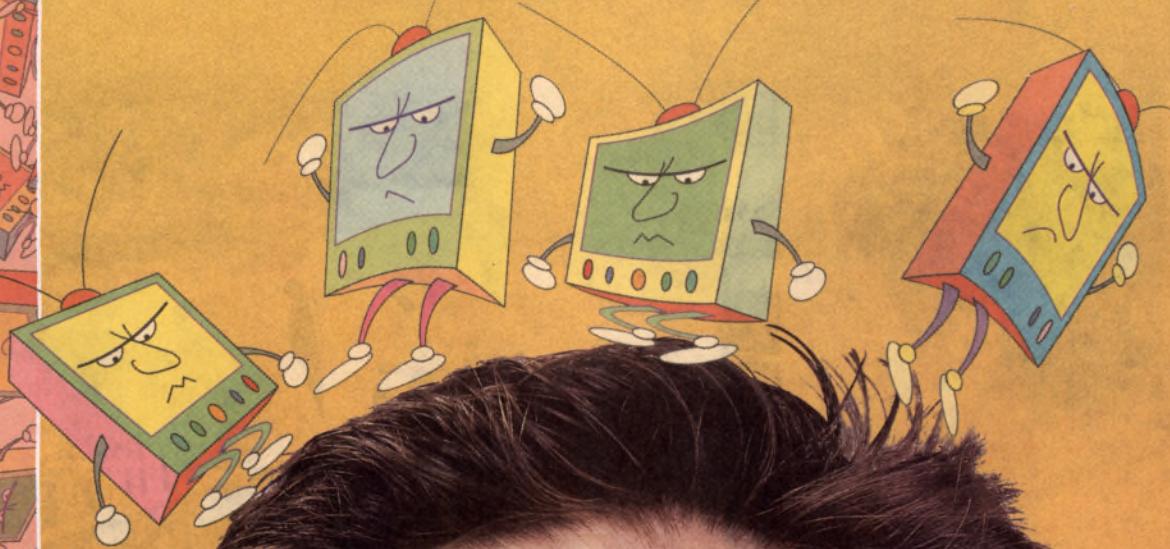
M. V. S., Brazil

AN "ELECTRONIC ASSAULT ON THE BRAIN"

TELEVISION can be entertaining and instructive. However, Professor Moshe Aronson of Tel-Aviv University warns that excessive TV watching can be hazardous to your health. How?

The passive viewer, Aronson claims, experiences a buildup of tension that cannot be relieved while sitting in front of the television set. This produces stress hormones that at high levels can impair nerve cells in the hippocampus—an area of the brain that is crucial to memory. While noting that more studies are needed, Aronson suspects that this breakdown can contribute to dementia, perhaps even making one more susceptible to Alzheimer's disease later in life. In any event, *New Scientist* magazine calls excessive television watching an "electronic assault on the brain."

In contrast with TV watching, reading stimulates the imagination and stirs the reasoning faculties—hardly a passive activity! While every sight and sound is interpreted for the TV viewer, the reader creates his own scenery and sound effects. This creative use of the mental powers thwarts mental stagnation, thus benefiting one's health. In view of this, would it not be wise to limit the amount of time you spend in front of the television set?



“Thank You for Your Existence”

That is what a man from North Carolina, U.S.A., wrote to the headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York. He also said: "I am requesting the home Bible study you offer in *Awake!* But also I am requesting any and all information you may be able to provide on the subject of hell. . . .

"I was reared in a Baptist Church, but even as a small child, something about their teachings or doctrine just did not balance out within me.

"I have been reading your publications since 1965. I refer to the Bible when reading, and everything in your literature corresponds to the Bible. I've always wanted to know the real truth about God and Jesus, and I honestly can say that I am finding true answers through your material and the Bible."

