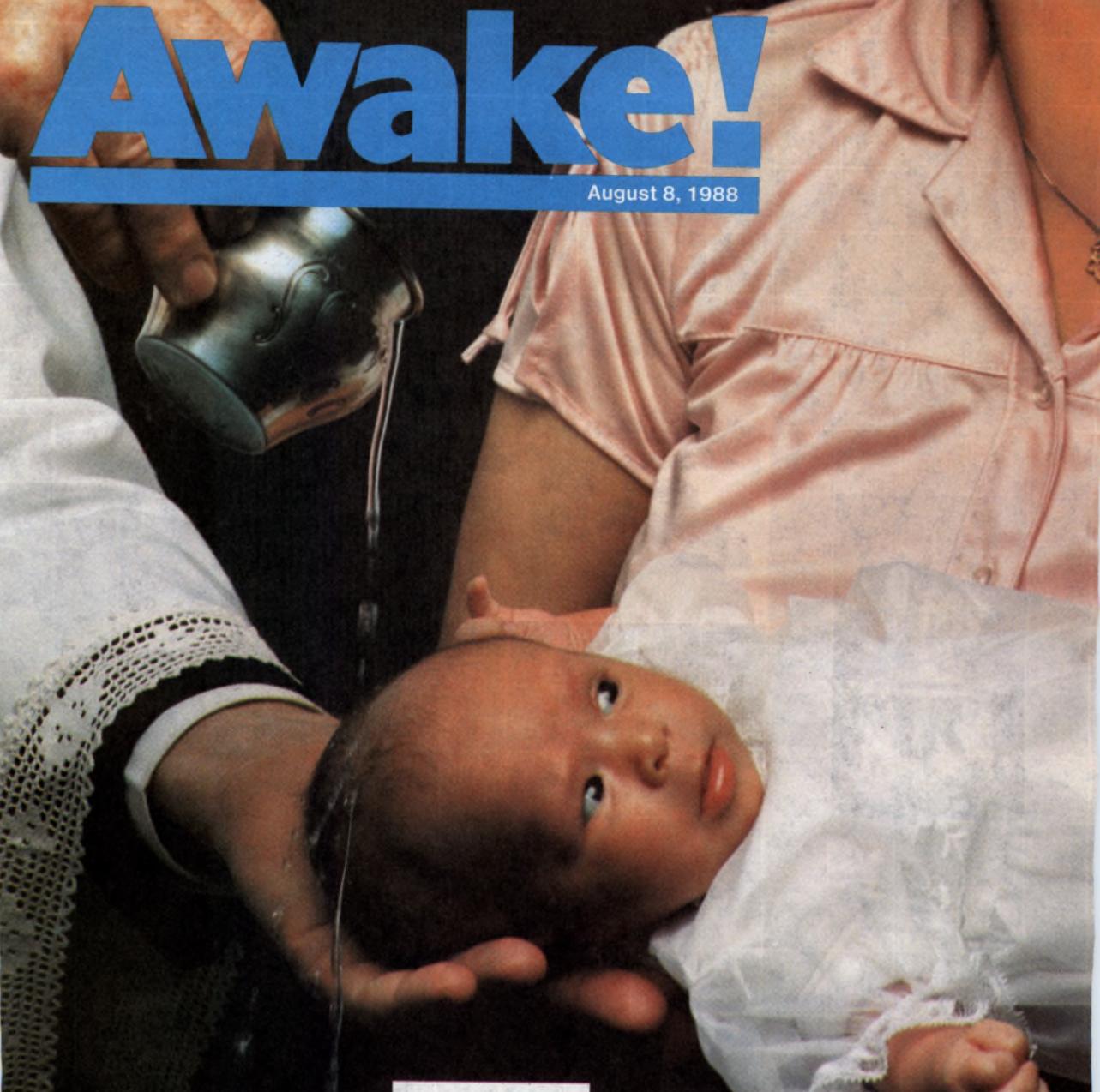
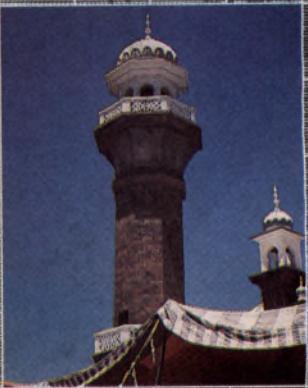
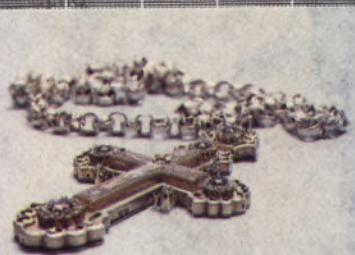


Awake!

August 8, 1988



IS YOUR RELIGION
A MATTER OF CHOICE
OR CHANCE?





Should Your Birthplace Determine Your Religion?

For the majority of people on earth, the answer to the question, "Which religion do you belong to?" has already been decided by events that took place in the past. Political intrigue, religious wars, and colonial expansion centuries ago redrew the religious map of the world.

But should a conquistador, a prince, or an emperor who lived hundreds of years ago decide which religion you profess? Should your religious convictions be determined by quirks of history and place of birth?

THE way you speak and the way you eat; the way you dress and the way you sleep—all of that, and much more, may well depend on where you were born. Although we may be unaware of it, our roots affect us throughout our lives, molding our customs, our thinking, and our beliefs.

María, a Spaniard, is a Catholic because she was born in Catholic Spain. Martin is a Lutheran Protestant because he was born in Lübeck in northern Germany. Abdullam was born in West Beirut, so he is a Muslim.

Today, they, together with millions of others like them, adhere to their respective religions. The fact is that people often owe their religion to nothing more than geography and quirks of history. Unknown to them, their religion may have been decided by the whim of a political ruler centuries ago.

This was the case with Lisette, born in a village in the Federal Republic of Germany's Black Forest. She was baptized as a Lutheran because for generations everybody in that part of her village was a loyal subject of the duke of Württemberg, a Protestant. Had she been born just a short distance down the road, she would have been a staunch Catholic because that part of the village was the domain of a Catholic ruler.

These artificial religious barriers date from the time of the Reformation in the 16th century. After a long and violent period of religious upheaval, it was agreed that each prince should determine the religion

practiced in his domain. The argument was, Since men cannot agree, the monarch must decide.

Some unfortunate villagers found themselves on a religious merry-go-round as consecutive rulers changed religious horses. Other towns were arbitrarily divided on religion because the regional frontier happened to go through the town.

Not all rulers joined the Protestant bandwagon for pious reasons. Henry VIII of England, a former prominent defender of the Catholic faith, was annoyed when the pope refused to grant him a divorce from his first wife. His solution was simple. He broke with Rome and made himself the head of the Church of England, expecting his sub-

jects to follow suit dutifully, which most of them eventually did.

Occasionally, whole countries were "converted" by missionaries who appeared close on the heels of foreign invaders. In Mexico the first Franciscan friars arrived a few years after the Spanish conquest. They claimed to have baptized more than five million natives in just 30 years, even though at first they did not speak the indigenous languages. This national conversion was described by one historian as "an extraordinary mixture of force, cruelty, stupidity and greed, redeemed by occasional flashes of imagination and charity." Thus the European powers of the day cut up the world religiously as well as politically.

Centuries earlier the Muslim conquests of North Africa, the Middle East, and large areas of Asia led to the vast majority of the people in these lands becoming Muslims.

Today, the historical reasons for the religious divisions of mankind are largely forgotten; nevertheless, most people remain in the religion of their birthplace. But should the religion of our "choice" be left to chance? Should religion be a mere hand-me-down? Or should it result from a deliberate, rational decision? A look at Christianity in the first century will help to answer these questions.

Henry VIII decided the religion of millions



WHY "AWAKE!" IS PUBLISHED

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

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

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Early Christianity Not a Matter of Chance

IN THE first century, there were gods galore and gods for every taste. From the cradle to the grave, citizens of the Roman Empire counted on gods and goddesses to succor and protect them.

Cuba cared for the newborn baby, and *Ossipago* strengthened the toddler's bones. *Adeona* guided his first steps, and *Fabulinus* taught him to speak. In battle he would be protected by *Mars*. When he got sick, *Aesculapius* would care for him. When he died, he would be watched over by *Orcus*, god of the underworld.

Each prominent city and tribe could boast its patron god, and incense was daily offered to the Roman emperor, himself considered a god incarnate. Oriental deities were in vogue, and temples were erected in honor of *Mithras*, *Isis*, and *Osiris*. Even the Jews, who professed to worship the invisible almighty God, were hopelessly divided into numerous religious sects.

At that moment in history, amid all that religious confusion, Jesus Christ appeared. He taught something new: a universal religion, transcending racial and national distinctions; a religion based on the truth about the almighty God, the truth that could set men free from bondage to superstition and falsehood. (John 8:32) As he explained to Pilate: "For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." (John 18:37) How did he accomplish this enormous task?

Preaching to "the Poor in Spirit"

It has been observed that there are basically two methods of proselytizing on a large scale. One is to evangelize the populace in general and then work upward from the common people. Another is to aim at the elite, or even at individuals at the head of the elite, and then work downward by authority or by force. This latter method,

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Ancient Rome worshiped many gods, such as Mars, the god of war; Jupiter, the chief Roman god; and Aesculapius, the god of medicine

so favored by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox churches, was not even contemplated by Jesus and his followers.

From the outset of his public ministry, Jesus explained that he was going to direct his attention to "the poor in spirit" or, literally, the "beggars for the spirit." These were the humble folk who were hungering for righteousness, who were "conscious of their spiritual need."—Matthew 5:3, *King James Version; New World Translation Reference Bible*, footnote.

Thus, after Jesus' apostles returned from a preaching campaign, Christ said: "I publicly praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intellectual ones and have revealed them to babes." (Matthew 11:25) The bulk of his preaching work was done in Galilee, homeland of

humble fishermen and farmers, rather than in Judea, where the Pharisees and Jewish aristocrats had their stronghold.

Jesus himself came from Nazareth, an obscure village that had never produced anyone of importance. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" asked Nathanael. (John 1:46) But what he heard and saw enabled him to overcome this regional prejudice because he had an open mind. On the other hand, the haughty Pharisees boasted: "Not one of the rulers or of the Pharisees has put faith in him, has he?"

—John 7:48.

Christian Faith Not Left to Chance

Jesus' goal was to reach the heart and convince the mind. He taught his disciples to search out deserving individuals and to stay in the homes of these long enough for them to become sincere believers—if such was their desire. Some in a Samaritan village who listened to Christ's teaching said: "We have heard for ourselves and we know that this man is for a certainty the savior of the world."—John 4:42.

Each convert to Christianity had to make a rational choice after listening and meditating on what he had heard. He needed to have a firm conviction because opposition had to be faced. All the early disciples were expelled from the synagogue, which meant being ostracized by the local community.

Furthermore, each disciple felt obligated to defend his newfound belief and share it with others. Celsus, a second-century critic of Christianity, made it a matter of mockery that "labourers, shoemakers, farmers, the most uninformed and clownish of men, should be zealous preachers of the Gospel." —Compare John 9:24-34.

This method of conversion, together with the proselytizing zeal of the converts, resulted in the rapid spread of Christianity.

Soon it became an international rather than a regional religion. Jesus had specifically told his followers to preach "to the most distant part of the earth."—Acts 1:8.

True, the first disciples were Jewish, and the initial conversions were among Jews, according to God's purpose. Jerusalem became the center where the apostles convened to direct the fledgling church. Because of this, the Christians were often mistakenly maligned as Jews by people of the first century, even though the Jews were the most ardent persecutors of Christians. And a Roman historian wrote Christianity off as a mischievous superstition.

Peter, before baptizing the first non-Jew, declared: "For a certainty I perceive that

God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34, 35) Thus, the Christians' zeal, fired by an unwavering faith, carried the message of Christ throughout the Roman Empire. Persecution could not stamp out these Christians, and many died because they would not reject this religion of their choice. Their enthusiasm and devotion are a far cry from the apathy in 20th-century Christendom.

Could it be that this spirit is missing because relatively few have made a conscious choice in the matter of faith? If religion still matters to you, why not consider seriously the following article?

Do You Choose —Or Let Others Choose for You?

UNTIL he was eight years old, Pedro worshiped *Maleiwa*, supposed creator of man and maker of the earth. He was afraid of *Yolujá*, said to be the harbinger of all evil and disease, and he sought to avoid the malevolent designs of *Pulowi*, alleged goddess of the underworld.

Pedro was a Guajiro, one of the many Indian tribes of Venezuela. He followed the traditional religion of his ancestors until one day the local schoolteacher arranged for him to be baptized—as a Catholic.

"Nobody consulted me, and I knew noth-

ing about my new religion," Pedro explained. "But I realized that it would not be difficult to adopt this new faith, which required no significant changes in my daily conduct. I was faithful to my new religion, as I always went to Mass sometime in December."

Despite belonging to two different religions, Pedro had not made a conscious choice in either case. The choice was made for him by others. His experience has been repeated countless times over the centuries. In fact, relatively few of the five billion people alive today have made a

Would you take the first medication you could reach, without reading the label?

deliberate choice in the matter of religion. Their religion is usually something that was inherited, much like their appearance, their traits, or the home where they live.

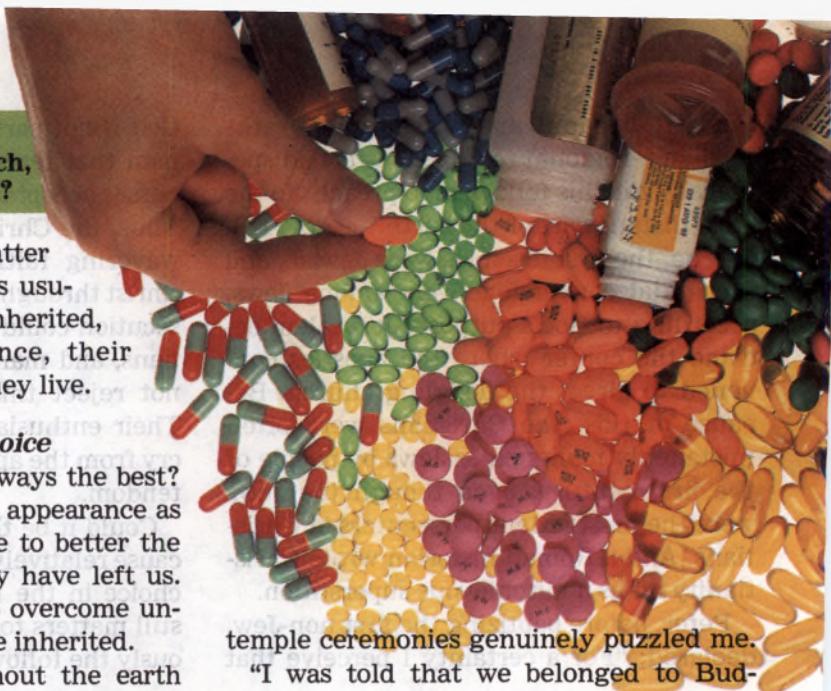
They Made Their Own Choice

But is what we inherit always the best? We may try to improve our appearance as best we can. We may strive to better the home that our parents may have left us. We may even fight hard to overcome undesirable traits that we have inherited.

For this reason, throughout the earth there are some who are taking a second look at the religion they have inherited from their forefathers. Instead of considering this a betrayal of a family tradition that must be cherished unquestioningly, their spiritual longing has moved them to search for something better. This was the case with Hiroko, whose father was a Buddhist priest at Myokyo Temple, Japan.

"When I was a child, during the coldest nights of winter, I used to trudge up and down the snowbound streets of our village carrying a lantern," Hiroko explains. "Father would walk in front, beating a drum and chanting sutras. From an early age, self-mortification rites and Buddhist ritual were a part of my life."

Nevertheless, Hiroko was unhappy with her inherited religion. "I could not find even one satisfying answer to the many questions I had. The posthumous changing of names of the dead, the tombstones that were treated as living beings as soon as sutras were chanted over them, the paper charms that were supposed to protect a believer magically, and many other

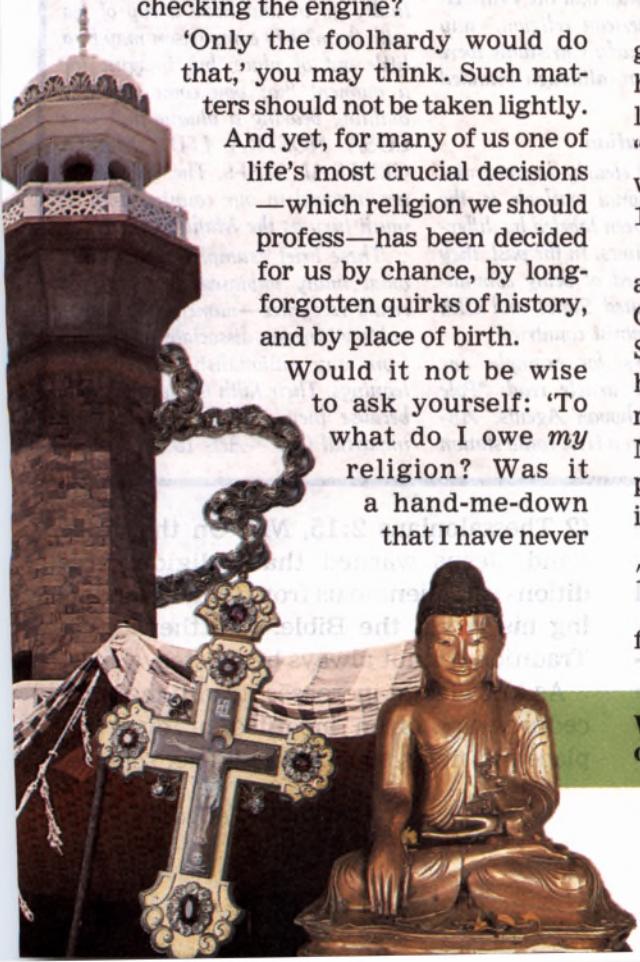


temple ceremonies genuinely puzzled me.

"I was told that we belonged to Buddhism's most enlightened sect. And yet, all my questions were still left unanswered. I was convinced that there must be something, somewhere. My hope was to examine freely a religion that would provide me with all the answers." Hiroko wandered from one oriental religion to another without finding satisfaction. Finally, with the help of Jehovah's Witnesses, she learned from the Bible about the almighty God, the One who created heaven and earth, and she also discovered the answers to her childhood questions.

In her case, the words of the prophet Jeremiah were literally fulfilled: "When you seek me, you shall find me; if you search with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the LORD."—Jeremiah 29: 13, 14, *The New English Bible*.

Hiroko felt that it was worthwhile to make her own choice, even though it differed from that of her parents. "I am overjoyed at finding enlightenment, and now I do not have the nagging questions and anxieties that plagued me for so many years," she explains. But whether you are happy



with your present religion or not, it still behooves you to make a choice.

Why a Choice Should Be Made

Most of us, if we stopped to think about it, would agree that religion is something that is too important to be left to chance. Why, even in everyday matters, we try to control our own lives as much as possible. Who wants to be just a victim of circumstances?

If you had a bad headache, would you quickly swallow a couple of pills found among a pile of assorted medicines without first looking carefully at the label?

If you were choosing new clothing, would you grab the first suit that came to hand in the store, blithely assuming that it would no doubt fit you exactly?

If you were purchasing a secondhand car, would you drive it away without even checking the engine?

'Only the foolhardy would do that,' you may think. Such matters should not be taken lightly.

And yet, for many of us one of life's most crucial decisions—which religion we should profess—has been decided for us by chance, by long-forgotten quirks of history, and by place of birth.

Would it not be wise to ask yourself: 'To what do I owe *my* religion? Was it a hand-me-down that I have never

questioned? Or did I make a deliberate, rational choice?' Asking such questions is the very thing that the Bible urges us to do. The apostle Paul admonished the Corinthians to 'keep testing whether they were in the faith, to keep proving what they themselves were.'—2 Corinthians 13:5.

On the other hand, some were moved to reconsider their religious upbringing. The Bible mentions a young man named Timothy whose mother and grandmother brought him up as a Jew in harmony with the Scriptures. At some point they adjusted their thinking to become Christians. Years later Paul reminded him of what he had 'learned and been persuaded to believe.' (2 Timothy 3:14) Thus Timothy was encouraged to remain in the Christian faith that he had accepted, after he himself had made a thorough examination.

Sergius Paulus was a Roman provincial governor in Cyprus who doubtless paid homage to some of the Roman gods. After listening to the preaching of Paul, however, "he became a believer, deeply impressed by what he learned about the Lord."—Acts 13:12, NE.

In both cases a deliberate choice was made after a thorough examination based on God's Word. Why not imitate the course of Sergius Paulus and Timothy? One changed his religion, the other did not; but both were rewarded by personally finding the truth. Nevertheless, because of tradition, fear, or prejudice, some may feel reticent about taking such a step.

The Challenge of Making a Choice

Religious traditions die hard, and many find comfort in age-old customs and creeds.

**Were you born into your religion,
or did you choose it?**

Jehovah's Witnesses An "American Religion"?

MANY nationalistic people have a suspicion or fear of anything considered foreign or alien. This even colors their view of other religions.

Jehovah's Witnesses are often victims of this mentality, accused of being an American religion, "Made in U.S.A.," and thus worthy of rejection on that basis. Is that a reasonable reaction?

What Are the Facts?

1. There are proportionately more Witnesses in Canada, Costa Rica, Finland, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and Zambia, as well as in other lands, than there are in the United States.

2. Jehovah's Witnesses are more than international. They are supranational, that is, transcending narrow national boundaries or racial interests. Noteworthy is the great success Jehovah's Witnesses have had in overcoming racial, tribal, and national prejudice. Such is the case in South Africa, Israel, Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and other countries troubled by religious unrest. Blacks and whites, Jews and Arabs, former Catholics and Protestants, all now Jehovah's Witnesses, work and worship together at their conventions and Kingdom Halls.

3. They print their Bible literature in some 200 languages. For example, "The Watchtower" is

published in 103 languages and "Awake!" in 54, with a total combined monthly printing of over 48 million copies.

4. Although Jehovah's Witnesses have their world headquarters in New York, only 23 percent of their number are in the United States.

5. Just as Jerusalem was a convenient springboard for early Christianity, so in this age of world wars and conflicts, the United States has been the most convenient springboard for preaching the good news in all the world. Experience has shown that anywhere else the work would have been stifled by prejudice, prohibitions, or shortages of raw materials. But having their headquarters in New York does not mean that the Witnesses are an "American religion," any more than the early Christians were a Jewish religion, although branded as such.

Unjust Persecution

One fact that clearly demonstrates their supranational outlook is the way they have been labeled by different political regimes. In the past, they have been accused of being communists in the United States and CIA agents in communist countries!

In the 1950's, for example, one U.S. newspaper article read: "Pole Reds Finance 'Jehovah' Agents." Another report from a U.S. radio station

said: "The Soviet satellite [Polish] government encourages and financially aids the Witnesses." In Ireland, Witnesses faced taunts by violent mobs: "Communists!" "Get out of here!"

Meanwhile, the Witnesses were outlawed in Poland and other communist countries, and many were imprisoned for their beliefs. Some were even accused of belonging to a spy ring sponsored by the CIA. Their situation in the Soviet Union is described as follows by Vladimir Bukovsky, who immigrated to the West in 1976: "One evening in London, I happened to notice a plaque on a building that read: JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES. . . . I was stupefied, almost to the point of panic. How could that be? I said to myself. In the U.S.S.R., you meet flesh-and-blood 'Witnesses' only in prisons and concentration camps. Could anyone actually go in and have a cup of tea with them? My comparison may be a little out of place, but imagine for a moment that you come across a building bearing a plaque that says COSA NOSTRA LTD., MAFIA GENERAL STAFF. The 'Witnesses' are pursued in our country with as much fury as the Mafia in theirs."

These brief examples demonstrate what many unbiased observers already recognize—namely, that Jehovah's Witnesses dissociate themselves from any nationalistic or political leanings. Their faith is supranational because they wish to imitate their impartial God.—Acts 10:34.

"Once a Catholic, always a Catholic," some may say. Perhaps you feel the same way about your faith, preferring the traditional to the unknown. Certainly, it would be unwise to discard any tradition outright before analyzing its worth. Paul told the Thessalonian Christians to 'hold fast to the traditions which they had learned.'

(2 Thessalonians 2:15, NE) On the other hand, Jesus warned that religious traditions can alienate us from God, invalidating his Word, the Bible. (Matthew 15:6) Tradition cannot always be trusted.

As knowledge increases, traditional procedures are often modified or even replaced in fields such as medicine, science,

and technology. In these areas most people have an open mind, which is conducive to betterment. Even though we may think that our religious tradition is of divine origin, the Bible warns us "not [to] believe every inspired expression" but, rather, to "test the inspired expressions to see whether they originate with God." (1 John 4:1) It recommends that we "make sure of all things; hold fast to what is fine." (1 Thessalonians 5:21) Worthwhile traditions will always hold up under such scrutiny.

Another obstacle to making a choice in matters of religion is fear. "I never discuss religion or politics!" is a common remark. Fear of discovering that we have been misled or fear of what others may think are powerful excuses for doing nothing. In Jesus' day there were many who recognized the worth of his teaching but held back from acknowledging him as the Messiah "for fear of being banned from the synagogue. For they valued their reputation with men rather than the honour which comes from God."—John 12:42, 43, NE.

Those people in Jesus' day lost the unique opportunity of being disciples of Christ because they yielded to the pressures of that narrow-minded religious community. True, it takes courage to swim against the current. To be different is never easy. But if you defer making a choice, inevitably others will choose for you.

Prejudice against anything "foreign" can also hinder those who wish to make an impartial examination. In Jesus' day the Messiah was looked down upon for being a Nazarene and scorned for being a Galilean. Twentieth-century prejudice is similar.—John 1:46; 7:52.

"That is just one of those newfangled American religions!" This was Ricardo's first reaction when he was invited by one of Jehovah's Witnesses to examine his beliefs.

His Latin American background made him wary of anything that smacked of the United States. Nevertheless, his prejudice was broken down by the evidence presented to him. Above all, he was convinced by the practical demonstration of Christianity that he observed among the Witnesses. Their genuine love and faith appealed to him.—See box on page 10.

After putting aside his early prejudice, Ricardo agreed with another observer, who wrote that Jehovah's Witnesses "in their organization and witnessing work . . . come as close as any group to approximating the primitive Christian community." He now feels that an open mind is essential in making the best possible choice.

What Will You Choose?

Pedro, referred to at the beginning of this article, overcame tradition, fear, and prejudice in order to study the Scriptures for himself. At first he had misgivings because of his disillusionment with religion in general. He explains: "Neither my belief in *Maleiwa* nor my belief in the god of the Catholics, whose name I didn't even know, had brought me much happiness." But finally he chose to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses and was baptized as such at the age of 36. "The love and patience of those who helped me and the satisfying answers I received from the Bible were the deciding factors," he said.

Will you have the courage to imitate Pedro's example? Whatever your religion may be, do not leave it to chance. Prove to yourself, using God's Word, what is the truth, the unique and precious truth that Jesus taught. Jehovah's Witnesses will be happy to offer their assistance. They sincerely invite you to heed Joshua's words: '*Choose for yourself whom you will serve.*' —Joshua 24:15.

A Musician Chooses Real Harmony

Hans, why did you become a musician?

It fascinated me to hear music even as a child. At the end of the 1950's, I was thrilled by the guitar music of instrumental groups like *The Shadows* and *The Ventures*. I started taking guitar lessons at the age of 11.

Later I became interested in classical guitar music and began to study it when I was 18 years old. In 1971, I sat for my final examinations, which qualified me as a music teacher. For three years I taught juveniles and gave lessons at a conservatory. Only then did I start playing "easy listening" music professionally.

It was more by accident that "Verde," an instrumental that I played on the guitar, became an overnight hit.

What role does music play in your life today?

I still love playing and listening to music—and I earn my living with it. But something quite different now occupies first place in my life, as you well know.

"Awake!" interviews a well-known musician in the Federal Republic of Germany.

How did that come about?

In January 1977 a new drummer, Val, joined our group. As soon as we learned that he was one of Jehovah's Witnesses, we agreed not to get involved with his faith, as religion is a personal matter.

We went on a tour and soon realized that his views on morals, tobacco use, and religious festivals differed from ours completely. This led to lively discussions almost every day. Val used the Bible for his answers, and this made my interest grow.

What did you think about religion formerly?

Somehow, I always believed in God, but I never went to church voluntarily. I felt that you could only understand the Bible if you studied theology. My church, however, was never able to give me a stable foundation for faith, and its clergymen disappointed me.

On the other hand, Val really was able to answer my questions. For example, earlier discussions about where Cain got his wife never ended successfully. The explanation

that Cain married one of his sisters satisfied me.—Genesis 4:17; 5:4.

Val presented me with a Bible, and I immediately started to read it. I also read Bible publications that he got for me, and then I started pestering him with questions. I told my wife, Birgit, the marvelous things I was learning, and to my delight, she took part in our regular Bible study. That was at the end of 1977.

The Bible study was very rewarding, then?

Yes, indeed. It opened my eyes to the answer to an important question that I had often discussed with friends. We had never reached a satisfying answer. Each of us worked out his own philosophy of life.

Uppermost in my own mind was the fact that you are born, you work, you attain something, and then you die. But is that all? What purpose is there to life? Some young people, for instance, fall sick early in life before ever having lived to the full. Of course, many people sustain themselves with the vague hope of something continuing after death. But that is cold comfort. Besides this, I observed that humans had no way of settling the hostilities existing between the superpowers as well as among individuals.

I was deeply stirred by discovering how much a person could learn from God's Word, which was written for our benefit. It offered, not a vague hope, but a firm and well-founded one. Studying the Bible helped me not to be-

come desperate over world problems. In fact, it showed me how to cope with them.

Since Val lived far away, he later arranged for us to be visited by a couple, Gerhard and Barbara, who lived nearby. He was a musician like me. I had occasionally met Gerhard while I worked in a studio, but now I was amazed to see how he had changed.

What changes do you mean?

I remembered Gerhard as a pop musician with long hair, who had a haggard look on his face, took drugs from time to time, and otherwise led a loose life. He had now changed completely, almost beyond recognition. He seemed calm, balanced, and his appearance was clean and orderly. This impressed me very much.

Right away we studied the Bible for three or four hours a week, using the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*. Since I did not smoke, did not use drugs, did not lead an immoral life, I thought that I would not need to change my life much. However, as I got to know God, I understood that Christians are no part of the world alienated from him, and this sharpened my conscience.

What was it that made Jehovah's Witnesses so appealing to you?

I still recall our first visit to a Kingdom Hall. The people there were so different from what I was used to. They welcomed one another and radiated love and friendliness—and harmony.

I became even more aware of this at the "Victorious



My life as a musician began to change in 1977

Faith" International Convention held in Munich in 1978. Here too those in attendance were considerate and listened carefully to the program. Right after the convention, I had to make an appearance professionally before a quite "normal" Bavarian audience. During the evening some of those present, while under the influence of alcohol, ended up having a fight with knives.

Something else was different about Jehovah's Witnesses. The world makes a lot of fuss over celebrities. Wherever I had appeared formerly, the word spread quickly: "That's Ricky King!" But that was not the case here. Incidentally, it means a lot to me to be addressed by my real name. I use my stage name, which is registered in my passport and with which I can transact business, only in connection with my profession.

In time I recognized that further changes were necessary. Music had been my life. Everything revolved around it, and my wife adjusted herself to this life-style. But now I learned not to be so completely absorbed in music, that it was not the most important thing in life. We made further progress and were baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses in 1979.

From your own experience, can you tell us something about the influence that music has on people?

Yes. Music appeals to emotions and inclinations and can intensify them. Some kinds of music have a refreshing, relaxing effect on people and put them in an amicable mood. This kind of music emphasizes melody and harmony, not the beat or the rhythm.

But I have also seen hard rock create an aggressive and violent mood in listeners,

who ended up in a brawl in front of the stage. The pounding rhythm of such music moves people to give vent to their feelings.

What do you think should be taken into consideration when choosing music to listen to?

I have thrown records in the garbage upon learning that they promoted spiritism and devil worship. You can normally recognize such records by their covers or their lyrics.

It is a mistake to underestimate the influence of the song's lyrics. Writers seem to have something to suit every kind of taste. Young music groups often compose songs based on their own personal problems. These appeal strongly to youths, who often know the words by heart. The lyrics may encourage them to taste the "freedom" of drug abuse, alcohol excess, or immorality. This permissive trend has lost some of its force today, since the enjoyment of "liberty" to the full has obviously brought problems of its own.

Music for entertainment and for dancing can arouse wrong desires too. The performer sings about happiness and tenderness that many listeners may feel is missing in their partner. The artist often comes to be identified with what he is singing about. Some professionals I know are for this reason real favorites with women.

Once someone is submerged in this world of fantasy, it can lead to his idolizing the performer. It may begin quite harmlessly by a person's asking for an autograph as a souvenir. But some come to view the artist as their ideal, and by putting him on a pedestal, they make him into an idol. They may hang the star's picture on the wall and begin to dress and groom themselves as he



Hans (guitar player at center left)—next to his wife, enjoying Christian fellowship

does, thus relinquishing their own personality. And Christians need to keep in mind that adoration belongs only to God.

How do you manage to combine professional and Christian obligations?

If I still had to earn a living by touring with a group, I did not want to continue as a professional musician. When I formerly had to travel for weeks on end, I noticed that the pressure from the world was becoming stronger, and I was becoming weaker. I realized how urgently I needed the weekly Christian meetings and association with my fellow Christians! Now that my situation has changed, I am able to handle the additional responsibilities as an elder in the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses.

I now compose and write at home. The recording follows later in a studio. Sometimes I make stage appearances at gala performances, which means that I am away from home for a short time. Naturally, at Christmas and New Year, as well as at Carnival time, I do not appear on stage, although musicians have their greatest income at those times. To be constantly on

the go, playing almost every evening, would damage my priceless faith.

I am very glad to have found the Biblical hope of a righteous new system, and I desire to pass it on to as many people as possible. I go regularly from house to house within the neighborhood, carrying the Kingdom message.

Since I can organize my own time, I often conduct Bible studies with interested persons at midday. My wife and I were delighted to be able to help a family of four to find the Bible truth.

How do you view the future?

Whenever I used to think about the arms race, hunger, environmental pollution, and other problems in the world—and thought that there was no true hope for a change—I asked myself whether life had any purpose at all. I now have a different outlook on things, knowing that God has everything under control. As Psalm 37:37, 38 shows, the future of those on God's side "will be peaceful," but "the future of wicked people will indeed be cut off."

The words at Revelation 21:4 still thrill me: "And he [God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away." This will mean the end of sickness and death, yes, of all evil "former things." Then, earth will become a peaceful paradise.

As the study of the Bible brought true harmony to my life, so God will bring all creation into a universal harmony of peace.
—*A conversation with Hans Lingenfelder.*

Wonderfully Made to Stay Alive

THERE are wonderful, amazing, automatic mechanisms in your body that help keep you alive and healthy. Let us briefly examine a few.

One example is that of your lungs. First, there is the *epiglottis*, a small trapdoor that blocks entry to the lungs when you swallow food. *Coughing* is a second line of lung defense. Third, there is a *sticky escalator* lining the route to your lungs whereby small invaders are trapped by mucus and removed by the upward movement of tiny bristles.

The last line of lung defense is *scavenger white blood cells*. These sanitary agents engulf harmful microscopic particles. Thanks

to such mechanisms, our lungs keep working in safety.

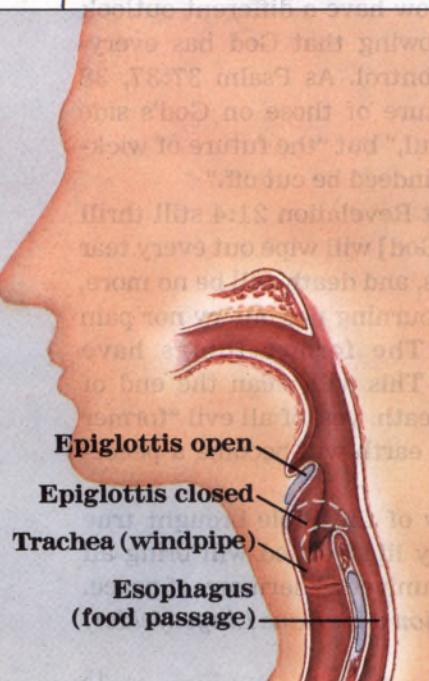
As you read this, your diaphragm is contracting and relaxing. Each contraction sucks air into your lungs, and as the muscles relax, air is pushed out. The diaphragm receives a command to do this about 15 times a minute from a faithful command center in your brain.

Interestingly, the first book of the Bible, written 3,500 years ago, uses the Hebrew word *ne'phesh* to describe both man and animals. This word literally means "a breather."* In a medically accurate manner, the Bible shows that breathing sustains life and that without "the breath of the force of life . . . active in its nostrils," both man and animals quickly die.—Genesis 1: 20, 21, 24, 30; 2:7; 7:22.

Other ancient writings contain unfounded speculation about the purpose of breathing. Greek and Roman philosophers, for example, had a strange theory that breathing kept a fire burning within the heart and that this internal flame provided the body with needed warmth.

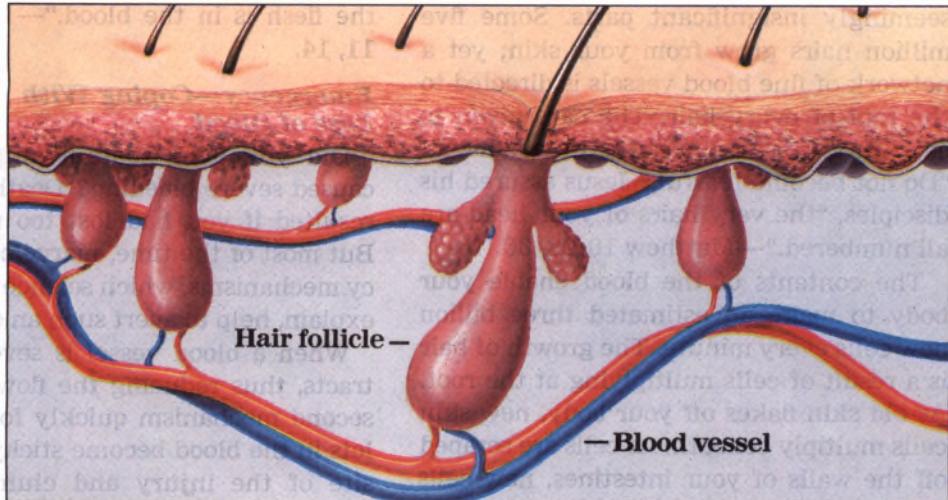
This theory remained popular until the 16th century, and it was only in our 20th century that the true purpose of breathing became clear. Oxygen from the air is absorbed by the blood and transported to the trillions of cells that make up the body.

* In Bible translations the Hebrew word *ne'phesh* is rendered in different ways, sometimes as "soul," sometimes as "living creature," sometimes as "life," or by the use of some other word. The *New World Translation* consistently renders it "soul."



The epiglottis is one of many mechanisms that protect your lungs

A network of blood vessels is directed to the root of each body hair



Each living cell, in turn, uses oxygen to produce energy. Wherever we go on earth, precious oxygen is available to serve this vital purpose. As an ancient teacher said to a group of Greek philosophers: "The God that made the world and all the things in it . . . gives to all persons life and breath and all things."—Acts 17:24, 25.

Breathing also plays a vital role in keeping the body clean. As the blood passes through the lungs, it unloads carbon dioxide before absorbing a fresh supply of oxygen. When we are active, the level of carbon dioxide in our body rises. A marvelous mechanism prevents the cells from suffocating in this waste. As blood flows through the brain, any rise in the level of carbon dioxide is quickly detected. The command center responds by increasing the rate and depth of breathing.

Breathing regulation takes place automatically. Yet, like a motor vehicle having an automatic transmission with a gear selector, breathing can be operated manually, as it were. We can be thankful that this mechanism enables us to hold our breath while we are under water or hurrying out of

a smoke-filled room. But we cannot hold our breath indefinitely because the automatic mechanism overrides manual operation when we lose consciousness. Thus, even while we are sleeping, the body is supplied with life-sustaining oxygen.

Your Internal River of Life

The number of cells in the body is beyond human comprehension. A conservative estimate is 75 trillion—a figure 15 thousand times higher than the population of our earth. For oxygen to reach each of these cells, a transport system more complex and efficient than that of any modern city is required.

The body's transport system consists of blood flowing through the heart, the arteries, the veins, and a network of smaller blood vessels. It is "a closed system of about 100,000 miles . . . of tubing," states the book *The Human Body*. According to that estimate, your blood vessels, if laid end to end, would reach four times around the earth.

This vast network also transports tiny particles of food absorbed from the walls of your intestines. Thus the whole body is provided with food and oxygen, even the

seemingly insignificant parts. Some five million hairs grow from your skin; yet a network of fine blood vessels is directed to the root of every hair. The care given to each tiny hair is something to wonder at. "Do not become fearful," Jesus assured his disciples, "the very hairs of your head are all numbered."—Matthew 10:28, 30.

The contents of the blood enable your body to make an estimated three billion new cells every minute. The growth of hair is a result of cells multiplying at the root. As old skin flakes off your body, new skin cells multiply beneath. As cells are scraped off the walls of your intestines, new cells are made to replace them. Every second, millions of red blood cells are made in your bone marrow!

Naturally, all this activity produces a lot of waste. Again the bloodstream comes to the rescue by carrying away carbon dioxide and small waste particles. Large waste particles, such as dead cells, are consumed by white blood cells, which enter the tissues from the blood. Large numbers of these sanitary agents gather at the site of an infection to perform their task. Before medical science discovered these facts, the Bible expressed it simply: "The soul [or life] of

the flesh is in the blood."—Leviticus 17:11, 14.

Emergency—Coping With Loss of Blood

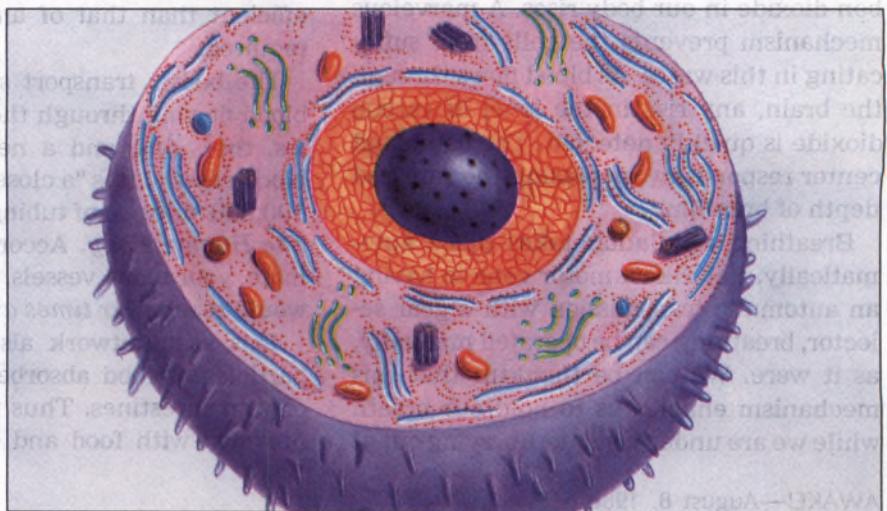
Did you ever sustain an injury that caused severe bleeding? Death could have resulted if you had lost too much blood. But most of the time, marvelous emergency mechanisms, which science cannot fully explain, help to avert such an outcome.

When a blood vessel is severed, it contracts, thus reducing the flow of blood. A second mechanism quickly follows. Platelets in the blood become sticky around the site of the injury and clump together. Then threads of fibrin start forming in the wound. These bind the platelets into a clot that seals off the last trickle of blood.

What happens, though, when the above mechanisms fail to cope? Massive bleeding triggers other mechanisms. Tiny receptors in the arteries quickly register any lowering of blood pressure. Messages are sent to the brain, which responds by causing blood vessels to constrict. At the same time, the brain commands the heart to beat harder. If the bleeding continues, the brain itself suffers from the effects and responds by intensifying these nerve reflexes. The heart rate

**The body
renews itself by
manufacturing
an estimated
three billion
cells per
minute**

**Cross section
of a cell**



may increase from the normal of about 72 beats per minute up to about 200. How effective are such mechanisms?

The constricted blood vessels reduce the flow of blood to most parts of the body. This, together with the increased heart rate, maintains the blood pressure. "Yet by a beautiful device," observes Dr. A. Rendle Short in his book *Wonderfully Made*, "the arteries of the brain are exempt from the generalized constriction." The same is true of the arteries supplying the heart muscles. Thus, blood flows essentially normally through these vital organs. According to Professor Arthur Guyton's *Textbook of Medical Physiology*, the above reflexes "extend the amount of blood loss that can occur without causing death to about two times that which is possible in their absence."

Meanwhile, other mechanisms operate to increase the volume of blood. As Dr. Miller explains in his book *The Body in Question*: "The most important priority is the restoration of fluid bulk. If the loss is sufficiently slow, the body can do this on its own behalf by diluting the blood. Fluids are withdrawn from the tissues; there is an automatic reduction in the output of urine and an increased intake of water by the mouth."

Although he favors blood transfusion in the case of hemorrhage, Dr. Miller admits: "The most immediate threat to life is not shortage of blood, as such, but an inadequate volume of fluid. . . . The administration of . . . plasma substitute, is an acceptable stop-gap in the early stages, since it imitates the natural tendency of the body to restore the bulk of the blood at the expense of diluting it." Professor Guyton states: "Various plasma substitutes have been developed that perform almost exactly the same [circulatory] functions as plasma [the fluid part of blood]."



We are born with an immune system
that fights disease

The body also has a mechanism to make up for the shortage of oxygen-carrying red cells. As a television documentary "Accident" from *The Living Body* series explained: "Normally our bone marrow produces red cells at about 20 percent of its total capacity. This means that if there's a sudden demand for red blood cells, we can step up the production rate about five times."

In the event of an accident, how grateful we should be that our bodies have these built-in mechanisms. Other mechanisms rescue us from the threat of deadly microbes.

Your Immune System

Sometimes dangerous bacteria or viruses get into the body and manage to reproduce inside us. Thankfully, we have a large body of counterinsurgents—the white blood cells—that attack and destroy foreign invaders. Yet, by a marvelous mechanism that science still cannot fathom, white blood cells normally do not harm healthy cells of the body.

With the aid of television, you may have seen these talented warriors at work. It is wonderful to watch a white cell engulf

waste matter but even more awesome to watch one inspect a fellow body-member that has been infected with a virus and then kill the invader with the aid of a colleague. Thus the infection is halted.

If a deadly virus or other foreign invader has invaded for the first time, it may take your immune system a few days to destroy it. First, the right lymphocyte (a special type of white blood cell) must be found. The body has millions of lymphocytes to choose from; each one is capable of making a single kind of weapon that will match a particular virus.

Once the right lymphocyte has been found, it reproduces wildly. In a few days the bloodstream is full of these warriors that either latch onto the enemy and destroy it or produce antibodies that inactivate the enemy and mark it for destruction. "The antibody," states the book *The Body Machine*, "attaches itself to the molecules on the virus surface rather like a key fitting a lock."

Your immune system has another remarkable ability. Once the right weapon has been found, it remembers it. This means that antibodies can quickly be made

in the event of a future invasion by the same type of microbe. "A person who has recovered from a childhood disease, such as measles, mumps, or chickenpox, is usually not susceptible to a second attack of this disease," explains the science textbook *Elements of Microbiology*.

By working along with this memory mechanism, medical science has accomplished much good. Vaccinations cause the immune system to produce antibodies against diseases a person has never had before. By this means, children acquire immunity from some diseases. But certain diseases defy man's efforts to bring them under control.

"A greater understanding of antibodies may lead to better control of some illnesses such as cancer and hay fever," states the book *Elements of Microbiology*. "Future research," it adds, "should produce greater insights into how the vigor of immune function might be extended into old age to improve the health and lengthen the life-span of all people." Yet, in 1981, the year this science textbook was published, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was identified. As the name indicates, the AIDS virus attacks part of the body's immune system, leaving victims without defense against certain diseases.

Do you sense a contradiction? The human body is indeed made to stay alive. In a wonderful way it defends, repairs, and renews itself. Yet, something is lacking. True, prevention of some diseases, such as AIDS, is possible by following principles in the Bible. (Acts 15:28, 29; 2 Corinthians 7:1) But other diseases, such as cancer, strike even some people who take careful precautions. Why is this? *Was man made to live or to die?* This question will be answered in a future issue of *Awake!*

In Our Next Issue

- **The Nuclear Dilemma
—What's the Answer?**
- **Are They Spreading Death?**
- **Can the Culture Gap Be Bridged?**

crossword puzzle

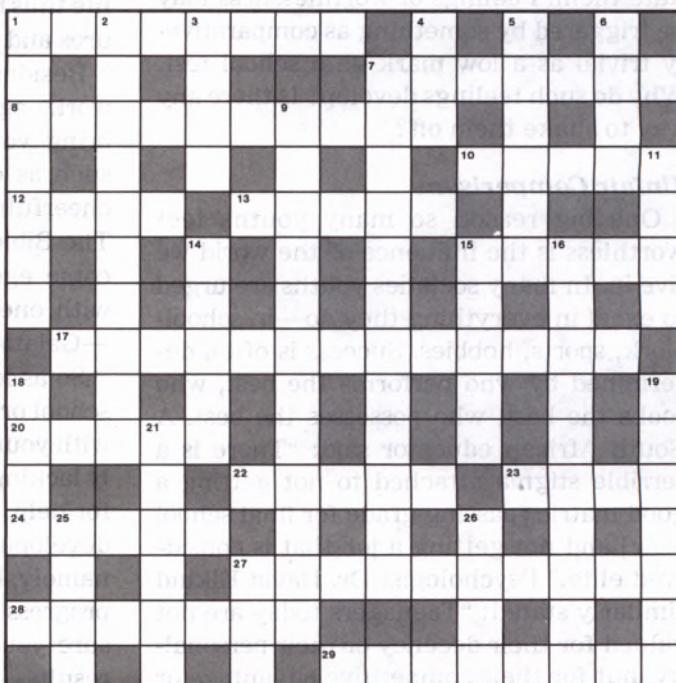
Clues Across

1. This designation sets the traitor apart from the faithful apostle of the same name (Luke 6:16)
7. A quality that the Christian woman's manner of dress should reflect (1 Timothy 2:9)
8. Description of the first seven ears of grain in Pharaoh's dream [3 words] (Genesis 41:5)
10. "A man skillful in his work" will be stationed before them (Proverbs 22:29)
12. A fastener, such as used to impale Jesus (See John 20:25.)
13. While it is important, one should not become a lover of it (Proverbs 20:13)
15. The first, or the beginning (Revelation 22:13)
17. Meaning of Boanerges, the surname given by Jesus to James and John [3 words] (Mark 3:17)
20. Not qualified (1 Corinthians 6:2)
22. A son of Gad (Genesis 46:16)
23. The "wicked slave" hid his (Luke 19:11-26)
24. This Merarite Levite was father of the musician Ethan (1 Chronicles 6:44)
27. Viewed as a reproach and punishment in ancient times (See Genesis 25:21.)
28. In her, "Isaac found comfort after the loss of his mother" (Genesis 24:67)
29. The Mediterranean [2 words] (Joshua 1:4)

Clues Down

1. Jesus said that "the kingdom of God belongs to suchlike ones" (Luke 18:15-17)
2. The everlasting destiny of the symbolic goats [2 words] (Matthew 25:46)
3. Each one of his family and friends gave Job one at his restoration (Job 42:11)
4. He is not partial (Acts 10:34)
5. Another name for Satan (2 Corinthians 6:15)
6. Under Kingdom blessings, lame ones will climb like this animal (Isaiah 35:6)
7. One of those whom Jesus threw out of the temple [2 words] (See Mark 11:15.)
9. Northeastern arm of the Red Sea [3 words]
11. A valiant man of the tribe of Asher in Israel's army (1 Chronicles 7:36, 40)
14. Call upon (Acts 15:36)
15. The first one to whom Jesus was taken when arrested (John 18:13)
16. Pulchritude (Proverbs 6:25)
18. Chance (Isaiah 65:11)
19. Where the Jordan River empties [2 words]
21. One to whom Agur spoke the words of Proverbs chapter 30 (Proverbs 30:1)
25. Concept (Job 42:2)
26. Prophetess who was among the first to recognize Jesus to be the Messiah (Luke 2:36-38)
27. Decree of prohibition (Ezra 10:8)

CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS PAGE 24



Young People Ask. . .



Why Do I Feel So Worthless?

"I WAS only eight when Mom divorced Dad," recalls a girl we'll call Ann. "I can remember cuddling up to Dad and looking to him for strength. Then, when I was 15, Dad divorced my stepmother. It was shattering. I wondered if there was something wrong with me. Was I perhaps the cause? I began to feel worthless."

Such feelings plague many young ones. And it does not always take a major heartbreak, such as a parental divorce, to precipitate them. Feelings of worthlessness may be triggered by something as comparatively trivial as a low mark on a school test. Why do such feelings develop? Is there any way to shake them off?

Unfair Comparisons

One big reason so many youths feel worthless is the influence of the world we live in. In many societies youths are urged to excel in everything they do—in school-work, sports, hobbies. Success is often determined by who performs the best, who looks the best, who possesses the best. A South African educator said: "There is a terrible stigma attached to not getting a good matric [passing grade for final school year] and not getting a job that is considered elite." Psychologist Dr. David Elkind similarly stated: "Teenagers today are not valued for their decency or their personality, but for their competitive advantage or

what grades they get." This competitive spirit robs many youths of self-worth.

The Bible urges us to do our best at whatever our "hand finds to do" but "not in comparison with the other person." (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Galatians 6:4) Why not? For one thing, all of us have different abilities and cannot excel at everything. (Matthew 25:14, 15) Indeed, all of us are handicapped in one way or another because of imperfection. (Romans 3:23) Success in life thus requires learning to cope with failures and disappointments.

Besides, the desire to surpass others works against the very qualities that can bring you lasting feelings of self-worth, such as cooperativeness, considerateness, cheerfulness, peacefulness, and patience. The Bible wisely counsels: "Let us not become egotistical, stirring up competition with one another, envying one another." —Galatians 5:22, 23, 26.

So as long as you are doing your best at school or in Christian activities, be content with your achievements. If you are seriously lacking in some respect, by all means ask for help. That would be a sign that you are developing another truly valuable quality, namely, humility. (Proverbs 18:12) If your progress is slow, don't be discouraged. Measure your success according to your past results—not according to someone else's.

More Than Just the Blues?

Imagine suffering a bad case of the blues that persists week after week without relief—for no apparent reason. "It's critical," states the magazine *'Teen*, "that you not suffer in silence." Pour out your feelings to someone who really cares, like one of your parents. As the Bible puts it: "Two are better than one, . . . for if one of them should fall, the other one can raise his partner up. But how will it be with just the one who falls when there is not another to raise him up?" (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10) In many cases, a sympathetic listener can help you get your thinking straightened out.*

Consider Ann, who was mentioned at the outset. Her friends helped her realize that her feelings of worthlessness were based on faulty reasoning, not reality. How could she, a mere child, have been responsible for her parents' marital failure? Realizing this, the feelings of worthlessness began to subside.

What if such feelings persist, despite efforts to readjust your thinking? "It's also a great idea," adds *'Teen*, "to visit a physician for a checkup to rule out any physical ailments that may be at the root of your depression." Why? Because lingering feel-

* See *Awake!* October 22, 1987, pages 12 and 13, under the headings "Fighting Low Self-Esteem" and "Distorted Thinking Patterns."



Do you let this world's competitive spirit contribute to feelings of worthlessness?

ings of worthlessness may point to a medical disorder: major depression.

In many cases of major depression, chemical malfunctions in the brain appear to be involved. For example, sometimes the brain's key neurons, or brain cells, fail to receive or transmit messages properly. Fortunately, treatments are available that appear to regulate neuron activity and help victims of depression cope. A visit to a physician may therefore be in order when there is reason to suspect that more than just the blues is ailing you.

When Your Conscience Troubles You

Another factor that can cause feelings of worthlessness is the working of one's conscience. (Romans 2:14, 15) Respond to it properly, and your conscience can help you turn from a destructive

path. Ignore it, and it can prove a source of torment.

Once King David's conscience troubled him so deeply that he wrote: "There is no peace in my bones on account of my sin. For my own errors have passed over my head; like a heavy load they are too heavy for me. . . . All day long I have walked about sad. . . . I have grown numb and become crushed to an extreme degree." (Psalm 38:3-8) David most likely wrote these words after he had taken another man's wife. He

gained relief only when he openly confessed his grave sin in the hearing of God's prophet Nathan. With what result? "My sin I finally confessed to you, and my error I did not cover . . . And you yourself pardoned the error of my sins."—Psalm 32:5; compare James 5:16.

Many youths have likewise been burdened with guilt because of committing sins—some minor, some grave. But like David, they can gain relief by openly confessing their sins and seeking help from true Christians. Consider Stephanus, whose father deserted his mother before he was born. "The fact that he did not want me and denied me his fathership hurt badly. As I grew up, it made me feel worthless." Stephanus fell into the gross sin of homosexuality. (Genesis 13:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9) Says Stephanus: "Besides all the other disadvantages I already had, I had now added to the list loss of self-respect and a good conscience. I felt even more worthless."

Conscience-stricken, Stephanus sought

CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

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help from true Christians. Most important, he confessed his sins to God and with God's help was able to overcome his weaknesses. "I learned that by accepting the ransom sacrifice of Jesus and putting faith in its value, I can be worth something to Jehovah," he says. (Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9-2:2) For the past four years, young Stephanus has been serving as a full-time minister, helping others understand God's merciful provisions.

Having a Sense of Self-Worth

Undoubtedly, Stephanus' satisfying career as a Christian minister has helped him keep his newfound feeling of self-worth. As Dr. Edna Irwin acknowledges in her book *Growing Pains—A Study of Teenage Distress*: "The teenager who knows the career he would like to follow has a goal at which to aim . . . Should it be attainable, it contributes immensely to the teenager's security and self-esteem." Thousands of youths, like Stephanus, have found that the work of sharing the Bible's message with others is just such an 'attainable career,' one that rewards them with a feeling of "security and self-esteem."

Such a career may be years away for some youths, however. So in the meantime, do not let feelings of worthlessness weigh you down. Remember: You do not have to cope on your own. Feel free to confide in others, especially your parents. You also have the support of fellow Christians, who are urged to "speak consolingly to the depressed souls." (1 Thessalonians 5:14) Most of all, you have the comfort of knowing that you are loved and cherished by Jehovah God. Why, as Jesus said, God has even 'numbered the hairs of your head'! (Luke 12:7) Knowing the great value God places on those who love him, you need never feel worthless.

MIKE received a summons to present himself in the local Brooklyn court for a parking violation. The only thing was, although the summons bore his license-plate number, Mike knew that he was at work at the Watchtower headquarters at the hour cited for the offense. Furthermore, he did not even know the location of the street where his car was supposedly parked. So he decided to appeal the fine.

When he presented himself neatly dressed in court, he gave the summons to the clerk of the court, an older man with white hair. Then Mike was called before the judge and told to take a seat. At that point the clerk spoke up and asked the judge: "Your honor, just by looking at him, do you know what religion this man is?" The judge replied: "I don't know . . . He's a Catholic."

Probably he was misled by Mike's Portuguese last name. The clerk responded: "No. Just by looking at him, you can tell he's one of Jehovah's Witnesses. In fact, as soon as he walked in the door, I knew he was a Witness, and his address confirmed it!"

The friendly judge then started to question Mike about the facts on the summons. The description matched Mike's car except for one detail—the

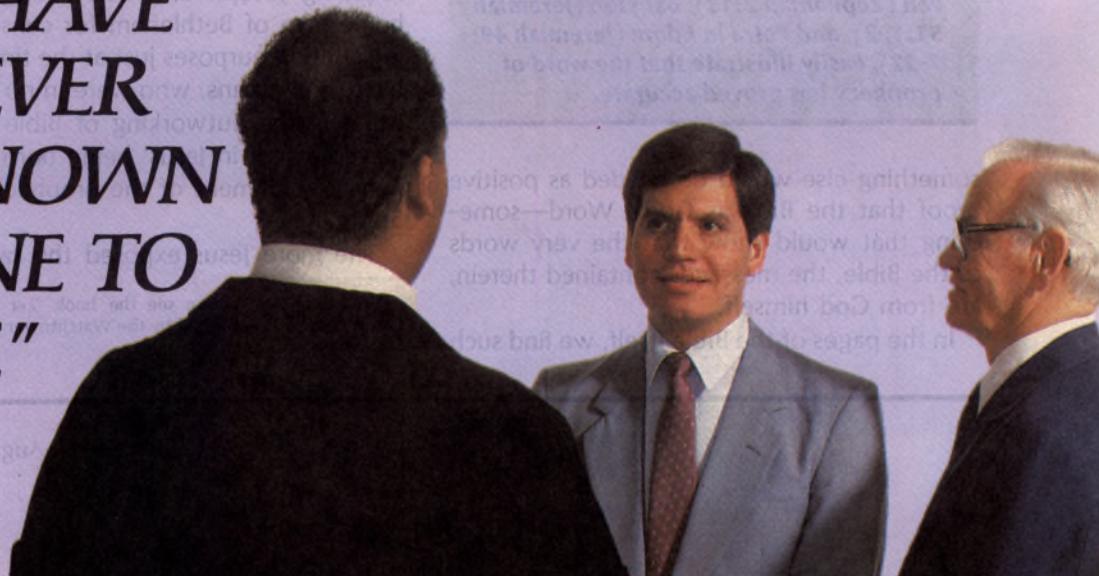
car model was missing. The clerk said to the judge: "Ask him what kind of car he has." With his registration receipt in hand, Mike politely answered the question. When the ticket was dismissed for incomplete evidence, the clerk of the court insisted on speaking up again.

He said: "Your Honor, I would like to say before you and everyone else here—I have known Jehovah's Witnesses for 30 years, and I have never known one to lie. When he said that it wasn't his ticket, I believed him, and this proves that it wasn't his car. I really respect these people. They are good people, and I like people who tell the truth."

Then he continued: "There's only one thing I don't agree with—not that I'm right." And turning to Mike, he added: "You're probably right and I'm wrong. It's your belief on blood transfusion."

Mike answered: "If you want me to, I will bring you some information on our stand on blood transfusions." The clerk declined in a kind manner. But a woman in the audience spoke up: "It's not worth taking blood transfusions. You can get AIDS from them these days." Everyone in the court nodded or spoke in agreement—and Mike walked out happy and relieved.

"I HAVE NEVER KNOWN ONE TO LIE"



Why Bible Prophecies Are Valuable to You

"**I**F WE only had positive proof that the Bible is God's Word," say many persons, "we would believe it." Oftentimes, however, such persons are unable to say what "positive proof" would be necessary to convince them. Would it be a miracle?

Jesus performed many miracles while here on earth, yet skeptics refused to accept them as proof that he was God's Spokesman. Why, some contended that it was "by means of Beelzebub the ruler of the demons" that Jesus performed certain miracles! Jesus acknowledged that some "miracles" performed by others were actually the works of Satan. (Luke 11:14-19; Matthew 7:22, 23) Therefore,

Bible prophecies foretelling the destruction of cities, such as Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:20, 21; 19:12, 13), Nineveh (Zephaniah 2:13), Babylon (Jeremiah 51:1, 2), and Petra in Edom (Jeremiah 49:7-22), easily illustrate that the word of prophecy has proved accurate.

something else would be needed as positive proof that the Bible is God's Word—something that would show that the very words of the Bible, the messages contained therein, are from God himself.

In the pages of the Bible itself, we find such

proof—prophecy. Certainly, Jehovah as the God of truth and Source of all wisdom, the One knowing from the beginning the end, should be able to predict what will take place in future times, including our own. (Psalm 31:5; Proverbs 2:6; Isaiah 46:9, 10) This he has done in his written Word, and often in great detail. Let us consider just one set of prophecies that center on Jesus Christ.

Prophecies That Prove Jesus to Be the Messiah

Hundreds of Bible prophecies found their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.* Some may argue that Jesus and his disciples maneuvered things to this end. But could that really be? Consider some of the facts.

Neither Jesus nor his parents could have prompted a Roman caesar to issue a decree requiring Joseph and Mary to go to their hometown of Bethlehem for census and tax registration purposes just at the time of Jesus' birth. So Romans, who were in no way interested in the outworking of Bible prophecy, played a part in Jesus' being born in Bethlehem in fulfillment of the prophecy at Micah 5:2.

The more Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of

* For examples, please see the book "Let Your Kingdom Come," page 67, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

the Jewish religious leaders, the more they wanted to kill him. But his death was not to come directly from the hands of his fellow countrymen. Had the Jews executed Jesus, they would likely have stoned him to death, since this was the means of inflicting the death penalty outlined in the Mosaic Law. (John 8:59; 10:31) However, according to the prophecies, the Messiah had to be hanged on a stake to take away "the curse of the Law." (Compare Deuteronomy 21:22, 23 with Galatians 3:13.) He had to be "lifted up" so that he might "draw men of all sorts." (Compare Numbers 21:4, 9 with John 3:14 and 12:32, 33.) With impalement, as used by the Romans, there could be no doubt about the fulfillment of these prophecies. So the Romans, who were not interested in helping to fulfill Bible prophecies, again played a role in causing Jehovah's Word of prophecy to be proved true.

Furthermore, while hanging on the stake, Jesus could do nothing to determine what was being done with his garments. He could not maneuver the Roman soldiers into casting lots over them. But they did, exactly as Bible prophecy foretold that they would! (Psalm 22:18; John 19:24) Again, it was the Romans, not Jesus or his disciples, who were involved in causing prophecy to ring true.

Jesus foretold that events would occur in Jerusalem in his generation that would mean the city's abrupt end. (Luke 21:5-24) Over 500 years before Jesus' time, Daniel had foretold this. (Daniel 9:26, 27) In the year 70 C.E., Jerusalem was destroyed. The words of Jesus and Daniel were fulfilled. Once again, Bible prophecy was stamped as reliable.

Will You Benefit From Prophecy?

There are many Bible prophecies yet to be fulfilled. For example, Jehovah had his Son,

Jesus Christ, prophesy that this present wicked system of things would come to an end, to be followed by a new world of righteousness under his heavenly Kingdom. (Matthew 24:3-14; Revelation 21:1-5; see also 2 Peter 3:7-13.) All of this has been written down in the Bible, Jehovah's Word of prophecy that has always proved to be true. Should we not, then, give it serious consideration? *no*

What reason would children have to distrust the promises of parents who in the past had done only good things for them and who had always kept their word? Likewise, what reason would we have to distrust Jehovah's promise of bringing about the Kingdom of his Son? What reason would we have to believe

WOULD YOU LIKE TO EXPERIENCE THE FUTURE FULFILLMENT OF THESE PROPHECIES?

"He is making wars to cease."

—*Psalm 46:9.*

"No resident will say: 'I am sick.'"

—*Isaiah 33:24.*

"And death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore."—*Revelation 21:4.*

"The hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out."—*John 5:28, 29.*

"The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."—*Psalm 37:29.*

that Jehovah, who has done so much good for his creatures in the past, would all at once lose interest in their welfare?

There are no convincing arguments to that effect. Therefore, we have every reason to trust in Jehovah and his Word and to rest our hope in him. His reliable word of prophecy gives us a purpose for living. It directs our activity toward a worthwhile goal. It is truly of the greatest value to us today.

From Our Readers

AIDS

I'm writing in response to your articles on AIDS and especially a letter commenting that "Jehovah's Witnesses seem to be the only ones free of the risk of contracting AIDS because they don't 'shoot' drugs, practice homosexuality or bisexuality, are faithful to their spouses, and don't accept blood transfusions." AIDS is a disease that threatens all, even Jehovah's Witnesses. I deeply resent the insinuation that *only* they are free of AIDS. Please stop making it sound as if it is a divine retribution, because then you'd have to admit that cancer is also, and it isn't.

R. C., United States

Our reader may have in mind an item from "Watching the World" (May 8, 1988). The statement was made by a medical expert on infectious diseases and was published in the Brazilian "ISTOÉ" magazine. Similar comments have been made by other medical sources who acknowledge the lower risk incurred by following the principles mentioned. Of course, R. C. is correct in saying that even Jehovah's Witnesses are threatened, but usually because of their behavior before becoming Witnesses, or because they live with spouses who do not follow Biblical commands. We fail to see any parallel with cancer, which usually does not result from violations of Bible principles.—ED.

Day Care

I would like to compliment you on your coverage of "The Day-Care Controversy" in the December 8, 1987, issue of *Awake!* The information was accurate and presented in a balanced way. . . . There was one important aspect of quality child care that your article did not mention—the importance of a mutually respectful relationship

between parents and child-care providers. The greater the *involvement* on the part of the parents, the better the likelihood that the quality of care will be high. Care givers need to know that they are appreciated by the parents and are not just paid servants. It's important to establish close and easy communications with the care giver . . . You are serving your readers well by guiding their thinking on this important topic.

K. M., National Education Director
Children's World, United States

Cultured Pearls

I really enjoy reading your magazines, and I find them informative and well presented. For this reason, I was somewhat shocked to see the article on cultured pearls in the *Awake!* of January 22, 1988. A pearl comes about through the introduction of foreign matter into the body of an oyster. Not only does this foreign substance encumber the oyster but it is later cut out of the living creature, which by then is fully equipped with its own nervous system. To me this amounts to cruelty to animals.

F. G., Federal Republic of Germany

The article was familiarizing our readers with an industry and was not addressing its morality. We recognize that there are personal sensitivities regarding the treatment of anything alive, and we do not criticize such personal feelings. However, we try to follow the indications of our Creator's view expressed in the Bible, which speaks favorably of pearls and also allows for using "every moving animal . . . as food" for humans. (Genesis 9:3; Matthew 13:46) In the final analysis, the pearl operation is little different from any slaughterhouse where far more complex animals are killed for food daily.—ED.

Watching the World



Using Ingenuity to Kill

U.S. scientists have developed a five-foot-long wedge-shaped nuclear missile that can penetrate the earth before delivering a blast producing underground shock waves that have ten times greater effect than if the same bomb exploded in the air. Reporting on this scientific breakthrough, *The Observer* of London, England, says: "World leaders planning to sit out a nuclear war in deep underground bunkers are in for a shock." Thus man's use of his ingenuity to kill his fellowman continues until God brings this system to its end and 'makes wars to cease to the extremity of the earth.'—Psalm 46:9.

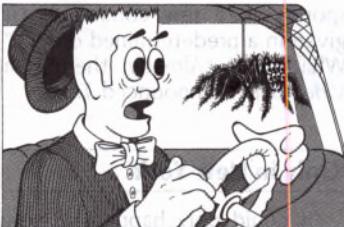
Plastic Batteries

Traditional plastics usually act as electrical insulators. But a new plastic, made from organic chemicals known as the polypyrolles, has inherent electro-chemical properties. With electrical and thermal characteristics similar to that of copper, it has the added advantage of being easily molded and can be stretched to twice its length. The West German firm BASF, in whose laboratories the material was discovered, is already planning to market a battery the size of a postcard and just three times as thick. Projected uses include camera cases that

become built-in batteries and food containers with either a self-heating system or one that can be plugged in. The report in *The Times* of London speculates that computers and electronic equipment will eventually be able to operate under circumstances impossible today, thanks to the plastic's ability to function at a wide range of temperatures.

Spider Phobia

"I am not disputing that I caused the accident," admitted a young salesman in Berkshire, England. "But if it had not been for the spider it would not have hap-



pened." According to the *Daily Mail*, he said that a large furry spider lowered itself from the roof lining of the salesman's car, heading toward the steering wheel. In a desperate attempt to knock it out of the way, the driver, who claimed to have inherited a phobia, a fear of spiders, lost control and crashed into an oncoming vehicle. The magistrates, sympathetic to a degree, nevertheless

imposed a fine of £60 (\$100, U.S.) for careless driving.

Heating and Tradition

For many Westerners there is nothing unusual about turning on a radiator in the winter. However, such is not the case in Japan. Very few Japanese have central heating in their homes. In fact, "over 60 percent of new homes are not equipped with heating systems," reports the French magazine *L'Express*. The reason? "Cultural traditions have put endurance on a pedestal." Thus, in Western lands rooms are heated, whereas in Japan, only certain parts of the body are warmed (although public facilities and offices have warm-air heating). Those who really feel the cold resort to wearing slippers with electrically heated soles, or they curl up on electric carpets.

Confidence Trick

A 61-year-old man in Cannes, France, was arrested recently and charged with swindling many of his countrymen. He made £2,000,000 through mail-order sales of palm-sized golden pyramids, claiming that "the energy radiating from them will make contact with the great cosmic force which rules the world." Those who bought his other product, the so-called Aladdin's Lamp, were told to "stand in a darkened

room, facing south, and shout out nonsense words" to gain "unparalleled riches," reports London's *Sunday Times*. According to police, the golden pyramid was actually scrap metal.

Hooked on Bach

Friendly dolphins have shown themselves to be even friendlier with the help of classical music, claims researcher Dan Wagner. Using a hydrophone lowered into the Atlantic Ocean north of the Bahamas, Wagner found that wild dolphins reacted to the music by swimming up to him and letting him tickle their bellies, reports the *New York Post*. It was also observed that while they responded to other types of music, "they seem to have a preference for Bach, and [Jean Pierre] Rampal on flute." Notes Wagner, "They'll jump out of the water for that."

"Pictures" for the Blind

"To some people, the idea of illustrating books for the blind may seem a little bit like composing music for the deaf," says a report in the *Sentinel* of Orlando, Florida. But a California publishing house is doing just that. "Sighted children expect illustrations because all children's books have them," says founder Jean Norris. "But if a blind child is reading a story in Braille about a bird, how is it possible to visualize something the child has never seen?" To overcome that problem, Norris' firm is producing books that contain "drawings—more like plastic bas-relief topographical maps—that are designed with young, curious fingers in mind." By this means, blind children are helped to note the distinguishing features of animals and objects. Once they learn to interpret

them, they are said to get as much enjoyment from the illustrations as do sighted people.

Video Pets

Own a pet without having to feed it, take it for a walk, or change the litter? That is what videotape manufacturers now have to offer. According to *Time* magazine, one company sells them for about \$20 each. These



tapes provide the "full rich experience of owning your own pet without the mess and inconvenience of the real thing." The owner does not just passively view his pet on the screen, but he can give it orders. The videotape is interactive, and the animal "'responds' to a few commands (if given in a predetermined order)." What next? "Already, there is a Video Baby," announced *Time*.

'Only in New York'

"It could only happen in New York," said the *New York Post*. "A visitor from Boston was accosted by a 'woman' who 'stuck her hand in his pocket and grabbed his money.' A scuffle ensued. 'To his surprise, his attacker's wig fell off and, despite the makeup and earrings, he realized 'she' was a 'he.'" Two policemen in a radio car pulled up, handcuffed the suspect, and put him in the back of their car. Spitting, cursing, and screaming, he locked himself in.

When the police got the door open, he proclaimed he had AIDS and threatened to bite them. So the policemen called for a tow truck and had the police car, with the suspect still inside, towed to the police station.

Vengeful Teen

Apprehension has gripped many inhabitants of the island of Guernsey in the English Channel. According to a report in the *South China Morning Post*, an 18-year-old French woman infected with AIDS confessed to sleeping with dozens of men in an apparent vengeful rampage because she had contracted the virus. The girl is said to have engaged in sexual intercourse with "unsuspecting schoolboys, local fishermen and married men" without revealing that she was an AIDS carrier. The killer disease is said to have already developed in four of the island's 51,000 inhabitants.

Water Is Best

What should you drink to quench your summer thirst? Water is best, say the experts. Sugar-sweetened drinks and fruit juices, because of their sugar content (natural or added), increase the body's need for water. Milk and other dairy-product drinks are really foods—usually too high in sugar, protein, and fat to be thirst quenching. And beverages that contain alcohol or caffeine act as diuretics and cause the body actually to lose water. How can you tell when your body needs water? You can check your urine. Unless colored by certain foods eaten or some vitamins or drugs, it should be pale yellow. Darker colors indicate concentration and the need to replenish water and relieve the kidneys of stress.

A photograph showing the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) in a dark sky. The lights appear as greenish-blue bands of light that curve and undulate across the frame. In the foreground, the dark silhouettes of evergreen trees are visible against the bright lights.

Photo by Lee Snyder, Geophysical Institute, University of Alaska—Fairbanks

Dazzling Heavenly Light Display

The awe-inspiring northern lights (aurora borealis; in the Southern Hemisphere, the aurora australis) remain one of the mysteries of the skies.

Various theories have been offered to explain their appearances.

Currently, the idea seems to be that the lights are seen "when charged particles from the sun strike the upper atmosphere near the magnetic poles." Green or yellowish-green is the color most often seen, but red, shadings of orange, and even violet have been observed.

Though the lights usually appear as undulating bands or ribbons of light, one dazzling display took the form of a giant celestial dome with arched lines radiating out from a central point directly above the observers and downward to the horizon all around them.

This dazzling light display brings to mind the words of the psalmist when he declared:

"How many your works are, O Jehovah!
All of them in wisdom you have made.
The earth is full of your productions."

—Psalm 104:24.

—Perry 104:34.

This dazzling high-drama drama of mind the best mix-up
The decader: "How much you work sit O [leaves it]
All of them in meadow you rise up
The earth is full of your bionditions."

Through the gifts usually spoken the form of a giant celestial home with a crown
one dazzling display look the form of a giant celestial home with a crown
radiating out from a central point directly above the opposite end downward
of the horizon all around them.

Curiously the idea seems to be that the gifts are seen "when granted
changes from the sun like the rubber stopper rises fast the magnetic force
seen or fellowship there is the color most often seen; but red, spreading out
changes, and even more rare pearl opaline.

Again the theories have been offered to explain their appearance
Hemisphere, the sun's rays (sun's rays) leaving one of the extremes of the sphere
The sun's incandescent light (sun's rays) in the Sun's rays (sun's rays) in the Sun's rays