

Awake!

Is the
"GREEN REVOLUTION"
the Answer?

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

I was
A CATHOLIC
NUN

JULY 22, 1972

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Awake!

"It is already the hour for you to awake."
—Romans 13:11

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Number 14

JUST a few years ago, starvation was reported to be affecting hundreds of millions of persons in various lands. Every day thousands of deaths were said to be taking place due to food shortages.

This was especially so of India. There, two consecutive years of poor rains, in 1965 and 1966, produced a drought that severely affected crops. Loss of life from hunger was great. Only massive shipments of food from other countries prevented a complete catastrophe.

As a result, dire predictions of world famine came from many sources. Some authorities estimated that the mid-1970's would certainly see that famine. There were those who even said that the world famine had already begun.

Yet, today there is not as much said about people actually starving to death around the world as there was then. Indeed, we now hear of food 'surpluses' in some places where there used to be great shortages only a few years ago.

What is the reason for this? It is because a 'revolution' has been taking place in the production of food grains. So highly regarded is this phenomenon that it is



given the name "green revolution."

However, it has also raised questions, such as the following: How did this "green revolution" come about? Are there dangers associated with it? Is it really helping the poor and hungry of the world? Is it the answer to man's food problems? Let us examine each of these questions.

How It Began

The "green revolution" more specifically has to do with the successful development of very high-yielding types of wheat and rice. It is so important because these two grains, especially rice, are the staple foods for most of earth's population.

This "green revolution" began about the year 1965. It had its start earlier in a joint program of wheat improvement conducted in Mexico between that country's Ministry of Agriculture and the Rockefeller Foundation.

The first breakthrough came as the result of efforts by a team of agriculture experts headed by Dr. Norman E. Borlaug. This was after about twenty years of experimenting. They developed varieties of wheat that produced up to four bushels

where only one bushel had grown before!

The new wheat was short, and its stalk very stiff. This was important, as it enabled the plant to avoid falling down under the weight of the extra-large heads of grain. Also, it was not sensitive to the length of the daytime period. This meant that it could be planted even in those parts of the earth where the daylight hours differed from where the seed was developed. Also, it had a very high response to fertilization and irrigation.

At about the same time, a new high-yield rice plant was developed in the Philippines. The agency responsible for this was the International Rice Research Institute. This discovery did for rice what the Mexican experiments did for wheat.

In 1965 these new grains were planted on a larger experimental scale in Asia. Several hundred acres were sown. Today, only seven years later, tens of millions of acres are planted in the new varieties in various parts of the earth! This is particularly true of the wheat-growing areas of India and Pakistan. In the Philippines and other Southeast Asia rice-growing areas, plantings of the new rice varieties have also increased rapidly.

How Effective Has It Been?

The production of grain has undergone a marked change because of the new varieties. In several countries there have been large increases in grain production. The magazine *BioScience* of November 1, 1971, noted particularly India and Paki-

stan, "where, it is said, they are dispelling the specter of widespread famine or at least postponing it for perhaps a generation."

Previously, the best harvest for India was during the 1964-65 crop year. Then, about 89 million tons of grain were produced. But for 1970-71 about 107 million tons were reported. The most spectacular increase was registered by the wheat crop. It more than doubled in six years, from about 11 million tons to 23 million tons. Rice production has not expanded as spectacularly. Yet, some Indian officials predicted that 1972 could see "self-sufficiency" in that basic food.

As a result of the large increases in crop yields, some famine-prone areas of the world that formerly had to import huge amounts of grain were reported to have enough now, or were even exporting it. This success with the new grains has in-

duced more and more farmers to plant them each year.

From this, one could conclude that science has at last found the answer to man's food problems. It would seem that the hungry peoples of the world have only to plant the new varieties of wheat and rice and starvation can be avoided.

A Warning

Yet, many agriculture experts warn against such a conclusion. They say that the "green revolution" is not solving mankind's hunger problems now, and will not do so in the future!



A new high-yield rice plant developed in the Philippines did for rice what Mexican experiments did for wheat, but is this solving the problem?

For instance, in the book *The Survival Equation*, an article by agricultural economist Wolf Ladejinsky states the following:

"For nearly five years the 'green revolution' has been under way in a number of agriculturally underdeveloped countries of Asia. Its advent into tradition-bound rural societies was heralded as the rebuttal to the dire predictions of hunger stalking large parts of the world.

"But more than that, those carried away with euphoria at the impending changes saw in them a remedy for the poverty of the vast majority of the cultivators. . . .

"However, the propitious circumstances in which the new technology thrives are not easily obtainable and hence there are inevitably constraints on its scope and progress. Apart from this, where it has suc-

ceeded, the revolution has given rise to a host of political and social problems. In short, the green revolution can be, as Dr. Wharton correctly pointed out in 'Foreign Affairs' in April 1969, both a cornucopia and a Pandora's box."

Why are many authorities issuing warnings against undue optimism, right in the midst of the "green revolution"? What are some of the problems being encountered? How do they affect the possibility of the "green revolution" being able to overcome hunger and poverty?

One problem holds great potential danger. It has to do with the genetic background of the new grain varieties.



THE magazine *BioScience* warned recently: "Another specter, that of a widespread disease epidemic, haunts the 'green revolution.'" Why is this so?

When large areas of one family of grains are grown, the entire crop is exposed to a serious hazard. Should a new type of insect or plant disease strike, all of the acreage planted in that kind of grain can be affected. But when there is a variety of grain types, that is not usually the case.

Experts agree that this is a distinct possibility with the new, high-yield grains. These new types come from a very narrow genetic base. The Rockefeller Foundation reports that from one particular strain has come the entire family of

wheats that today occupies more acreage in Asia than any other type.

Yet, because the new types produce so well, they are given preference. Farmers want to make money. They will plant whatever makes money quickly. So they plant more and more of the high-producing kind and replace the local, lesser-yielding grains. Yet, the new varieties, not having been developed in the local area, have an unknown tolerance for certain diseases.

Because of this an article in London's *New Scientist* sounds the alarm: If the few new types were to succumb to a disease, the results would be catastrophic. There would be little to replace them with for a while, as it takes time to develop new strains resistant to a new disease. The

article concluded that the possibility of disaster may have been multiplied instead of being decreased by man's tampering with the natural creation.

Has It Happened Before?

However, is that fear just a theoretical one? Not at all. It has happened before to crops that had too narrow a genetic base.

One example of this was the epidemic that struck potatoes during the last century. It was known as the late blight disease. In 1845 a serious outbreak of the disease was experienced in Europe. That was followed in 1846 by more losses in Europe, and by a disaster in Ireland.

The Irish had turned the bulk of their land to potato production, growing one variety predominantly. The blight devastated this potato crop. *The World Book Encyclopedia* tells what happened as a result: "The potato famine of the 1840's caused the worst disaster in Irish history. . . . about 750,000 persons died of starvation and disease. During those years, hundreds of thousands of persons left Ireland."

A more recent example occurred in this century, about twenty years ago. Oat breeders in the United States began to produce a new high-yielding variety of oats. It involved crosses in an oat family called Victory. These varieties were widely accepted and planted. But then there occurred an increase in a particular fungus that took a high toll of the oat crop. Within two years, this fungus became so widespread that the Victory-type oats could no longer be safely grown.

In the 1930's a wheat variety was developed called the Hope gene. It promised to solve the problem of losses from stem rust. In a few years whole areas of the western United States, from Texas to North Dakota, were planted in it. But by the late 1940's a new and highly virulent fungus arose. All the bread and durum wheat grown in the United States, and Canada, was susceptible to it. The new fungus spread rapidly in the major wheat-growing areas and took its toll. For several years it resulted in the near halting of durum wheat production in the Northern Great Plains.



The contrast between blighted hybrid corn (right) and unaffected, open-pollinated corn (left)

Most Recent Setbacks

In 1971 the *New York Times* carried this headline: "A Triumph of Genetics Threatens Disaster." The accompanying article told about the improved types of hybrid corn introduced in the United States since 1950. These had more than doubled the corn yield per acre.

But then, in 1970, there came an unexpected attack by a new virulent disease called the southern corn leaf blight. It exposed the vulnerability of the specialized corn planted by most farmers. Between July and harvesttime in 1970 about 700 million bushels of corn were destroyed! That was 15 percent of the entire corn crop, worth about one billion dollars!

Of this corn disaster, the *New York Times* commented:

"The basic vulnerability arises from the fact that all farmers want to plant the best varieties of each crop at the same time. The resulting uniformity threatens disaster when some new mutant enemy—like the latest

variety of southern corn leaf blight—appears.

"As in so many other areas of the modern world, that which makes short-run good sense economically poses serious long-run problems, both ecologically and economically."

However, have any of the newest grain varieties suffered this way? Yes. Already the new rice has been affected. In the book *The Environmental Crisis* it was noted: "Already IR-8 rices have had a lot of trouble from this problem, but even bigger monocultures are being created."

A "monoculture" is the growing of a single crop and generally not using the land in any other way. So although trouble is being experienced, even larger monocultures of the new grains appear to be the rule because farmers want to make money quickly.

In February of 1972, new figures were released from the National Food and Ag-

riculture Council about the situation in the Philippines. They showed that a deadly plant virus called *tungro* had blighted some 140,000 acres of riceland in Luzon and in Mindanao. President Ferdinand Marcos told the Philippine Congress: "It was a disastrous year [1971] for Philippine agriculture."

Because of the new high-yield rices planted after 1966 the Philippines had experienced self-sufficiency and a small surplus up to 1970. But last year, 1971, huge imports became necessary—460,000 metric tons of rice. And the government predicts that the country faces a vast shortage of nearly 640,000 metric tons in 1972 and about the same in 1973.

So planting larger and larger areas of a crop with too narrow a genetic base is a very dangerous procedure, and short-sighted. But that is not the only problem connected with the new grains.

WHAT might the average person conclude when he reads how the "green revolution" has increased yields so spectacularly? He is apt to think that more and more hungry people are being fed so that their numbers are decreasing.

Is that the case? Unfortunately, it is not. It is not the most needy who are benefiting the most. We can see why when agriculture experts explain what must be done to produce the new high-yield crops.

For one thing, explains Professor of Virology Dean Fraser of Indiana University, the new seeds produce abundantly "only with the application of large amounts of fertilizer." So fertilizer must also be available. But fertilizer supplies are not always plentiful in underdeveloped lands.

Even when such supplies are available, the farmer must be able to afford the fertilizer. Most farmers in poorer lands are



themselves poor. Hence, the farmer who is already better off and can afford the fertilizer usually reaps the greater benefits, not the one who suffers the most hunger or poverty.

A More Urgent Requirement

There is something else required that is even more critical than fertilizer. In *India's Green Revolution* author F. R. Frankel states: "The successful cultivation of the dwarf wheats depends even more heavily on assured supplies of water. In fact, irrigation at fixed times in the growth cycle of the plant is essential to the realization of its high-yield potential." And rice needs even more water than wheat.

Irrigation is not the same as rainfall. The new varieties cannot depend upon uncertain rainfall. They require regular irrigation. So an assured supply of water is a necessity.

This irrigation water could come from river systems by means of canals. But in poorer lands, these often have not been built. In most cases pumps are required to bring groundwater to the surface.

All of this takes technology; machines are needed to dig canals, and factories to make pumps. Also, Frankel says: "In addition, the new wheats also require more sophisticated farm equipment to produce optimum yields: improved ploughs, discs, and harrows for proper land leveling [otherwise irrigation would not be practical]; seed and fertilizer drills for shallow planting and exact spacing of seedlings; and plant protection equipment to ward off rusts and other diseases."

Who is in a position to afford all of this? Again, it is the farmer who is already more prosperous.

Note that protection equipment is needed. This includes the heavy use of pesticides to protect the new grains. Not only

does this take money to obtain, but it is a pollutant. However, wide use is excused as the lesser of two evils. It is felt that a hungry man is not as concerned about long-range harm from pesticides. He wants to get food into his stomach. Yet, there is the inevitable price to pay later.



The book "*India's Green Revolution*" states that only a minority are benefiting and that most of the poor are getting poorer

Summarizing these requirements, *U.S. News & World Report* stated: "The new seeds alone, however, cannot revolutionize agriculture. Their full genetic potential cannot be realized without irrigation and plenty of fertilizer and pesticides." All of that takes money. The poor and hungry are not the ones who have it.

Unevenly Distributed

Because of such reasons as the foregoing, the book *India's Green Revolution* declares: "The gains of the new technology have been very unevenly distributed."

This conclusion is backed up in the book *The Survival Equation*, which says this:

"One must say that the revolution is highly 'selective,' . . . It is enough to recall that three-fourths of India's cultivated acreage is not irrigated, and 'dry' farming predominates. If for no other reason, vast parts of the country have not been touched by the transformation at all and equally vast parts can boast only of 'small islands within.' . . .

"The green revolution affects the few rather than the many not only because of environmental conditions but because the majority of the farmers lack resources . . . Waiting to be part of it and yet not getting there create potentially disturbing social, economic and political issues. And this is the other side of the coin in any assessment of the course of the green revolution."

Hence, while total harvests and income

may go up, they are not evenly distributed. For example, in two of India's major wheat-growing areas, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, an estimated 80 percent of all farms are less than eight acres in size. This means that they usually do not have the resources to take advantage of the new technology. So a relatively small percentage of the really needy are benefited. In fact, in all India, it is said that 185 million people live on farms which are less than five acres in size.

Also, in many poorer lands there are farmers who do not own their farms but who rent from landlords. And in recent years, land values have risen. Near areas where the "green revolution" has been in evidence, values have sometimes risen three-, four- or fivefold. As a consequence, rents have skyrocketed, making it more difficult for the tenant farmer. And some landowners, seeing the profits that can be made from the newer crops, decide to farm the land themselves. So they push the tenant farmers off the land, reducing them to landless workers.

The number of landless workers in rural areas is staggering. In India alone those who own no land are said to be over 100 million persons. That is in addition to the millions of poor people crowded into the cities.

These landless workers in India, together with the 185 million others operating less than five acres, represent nearly 300 million people! That is the majority of India's rural population. And most of them live in abject poverty. Their average income is said to be only 200 rupees (about \$21) per person *per year*.

The results? *India's Green Revolution* states that this has "actually led to an absolute deterioration in the economic condition" of the poorer people. And an economist writes in *The Survival Equa-*

tion that 'the rich get richer, but the poor poorer.'

Thus, the very people that the "green revolution" was to help are the very ones it is helping the least. And in the underdeveloped nations of the world, that is a problem of huge proportions.

"Green Revolution" Could Turn "Red"

The scope of the problem can be seen by noting the words of India's Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. Addressing the Chief Ministers of all the states in India, she said: "The warning of the times is that unless the green revolution is accompanied by a revolution based on social justice the green revolution may not remain green."

The implication is that it could turn "red," that is, Communistic, as a reaction against continued poverty, hunger and injustice. That has happened before where the poor have seen their situation deteriorating while others, especially the wealthier, benefited from new technology.

Nor should you conclude that this is just an isolated situation in one country. It is the rule rather than the exception. An agricultural official from Colombia told guests at a food conference in that country: "The 'Green Revolution' is bypassing the people, the people who need it the most. It is deepening the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots.'"

Also, *The Bulletin*, an Australian weekly magazine, said: "The failure of food to get ahead of numbers is not primarily an agricultural problem but an economic one. The fact is, the mass of people are too poor to buy the better foods they need, even when they are available." And that is true to an extent even in the United States, where the government pays farmers to keep land out of production while at the same time millions of Americans are undernourished, not able to afford

an adequate diet for good health.

Summarizing this situation, a late report issued by A. H. Boerma, Director-General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, declares: "The

distribution of the added income in agriculture has, if anything, become more unequal, with the result that the absolute numbers of hungry and malnourished have increased over the years."

Will the "GREEN REVOLUTION" be ENOUGH?

THE problem of hunger is bad enough today. But experts agree that it soon will get much worse.

Why? Because there is something else to consider. And that something is regarded as the greatest problem of all.

Georg Borgstrom, a professor of food science at Michigan State University, points out what it is: "Anyone who thinks that the current world protein crisis is going to blow over and take care of itself should remember: the hungry of the world are multiplying twice as fast as the well fed."

In fact, a late United Nations report shows that the hungry peoples of the world are actually increasing two and a half times as fast as those who are well fed. Thus, while it is true that more people are eating better because the population in 'prosperous' countries increases, it is also true that the number of people in poor countries who are not eating enough grows much faster. That is what concerns authorities most when they talk about a

"population explosion."

So in spite of the "green revolution," the hunger problem is not being solved. *U.S. News & World Report* of March 6, 1972, states: "The world's population boom shows no sign of slowing, and may even speed up in years ahead. . . . Population is now rising by 75 million a year—enough to create the equivalent of a new Bangladesh in 12

months. . . . So explosive is the growth that population authorities fear hunger will be widespread in many countries of the developing world."

India's present population of some 570 million increases by about 14 million each year. Concerning this the *New York Times* says: "Unless the rate is reduced significantly India will have a billion people by the year 2000, far outstripping any increase in food output."

However, another source warns that even if India gradually achieved the "extraordinary feat of cutting its birth rate in half" in the years ahead, this would still not be enough. Its population would exceed one billion about the year 2000 anyhow!

It is not that the earth cannot support $3\frac{1}{2}$ or 4 billion people, or more. It can. But the world's economic, social and political structure is so arranged that it locks into grinding poverty and hunger more people each year.

No More 'Miracles'

What also disturbs some authorities is the realization that future large increases in food production will be harder to come by. Much of the best land in poorer countries has already been planted in the new seeds.

That is why an acknowledged authority on the "green revolution," Lester R. Brown of the Overseas Development Council, says: "Even though we have some short-term breathing space made possible by the 'green revolution,' we cannot continue expanding food production forever. There are certain finite limits on how far we can raise yields." And Professor Fraser says in *The People Problem*:

"I am afraid that many will consider the temporary amelioration of the food crisis as evidence that science will always rescue us. . . .

"There will be further improvement, but no more quantum [large] jumps of production. The geneticists . . . are firm in their statements that future 'miracles' are not to be anticipated, whereas the present ones were thoroughly predictable."

Even during the recent years of greatest success with the "green revolution," world population grew so fast that it about canceled out the increase in harvests. And when the time comes in the poorer countries when yields per acre cannot be increased any longer while population continues to "explode," what then?

Chemical engineer Norbert Olsen said in early 1972: "I could work 24 hours a day creating fertilizers and new ways to help produce food, and it still wouldn't meet the need." And *Chemical Week* of March 15, 1972, reports: "A four-man team from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology [concluded that] . . . only by stabilizing population and industrial output can man survive beyond that next 100 years."

In some areas, the increasing population has already resulted in the steady denud-

ing of natural vegetation. It is said that deforestation and overgrazing of grasslands in western India have created dust-bowl conditions. And many plots of land have been divided and subdivided over generations within family groups so often that they cannot be divided any further and be farmed economically.

Australia's *Bulletin* claims: "In less than a century, the extent of the world's wastelands has doubled from 'dustbowl farming' (and the destruction is continuing), while on every single continent farmers (and industry) are mining the vital capital stores of underground water to feed their crops, sometimes at a dangerous rate."

Was Malthus Right?

The Bulletin concludes: "That gloomy, old 18th-century pessimist Thomas Malthus is proving right after all. Since he wrote, vast tracts of land have been opened up and science has increased yields spectacularly; yet the net result is more hungry and starving people than ever before."

The book *The Environmental Crisis* also states: "There are now more hungry and weakened people on this planet than there were human beings in 1850." In 1850 there were one billion people on earth!

How many people, right now, are actually dying from the results of hunger? Stanford's Paul Ehrlich says: "If we take the only intelligent definition of starvation—that a person is starved to death if an adequate diet would have assured survival—then the level of deaths due to starvation in the world today is truly colossal, somewhere between 5 million and 20 million people a year." That is nearly 55,000 persons a day dying from hunger!

Of course, some officials would object to such an interpretation of the situation. But it must be remembered that few government authorities like to admit that the

people in their countries are dying from hunger. Yet, ever so many persons in poor countries who are listed as dying from some disease are actually dying as an indirect result of hunger. If they could have had an adequate diet, they would not be dying prematurely.

But what about the "green revolution"? Are concerned observers such as Ehrlich ignoring the advances made so far? He answers:

"We have produced a generation of agriculturists who can farm Iowa beautifully; they can get out press releases beautifully, but they cannot count and do not realize what the world situation is. . . .

"They stand up in meetings and say, 'But, you know we can do high-yield this and high-yield that.' I reply, 'When you can feed the 3.5 billion people living today, come around again, and we will talk about going on to 7 billion. Until then, sit down and shut up, because you are not doing any good.'"

This calls to mind the prediction made several years ago by two agronomists, William and Paul Paddock. In their book *Famine—1975!* they declared that world famine was inevitable during the mid-1970's. But then the "green revolution" began with its initial optimism, and many belittled such famine predictions.

Now, however, authorities are not as prone to ridicule. An official of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization gives this realistic appraisal: "We still don't know for sure. . . . We may yet discover that the Paddocks weren't wrong—they were simply premature in their dates."

Many feel as does Ehrlich who says: "I think the actual date is a quibble. . . . I frankly tend toward tremendous pessimism. People say to me, 'What do you think our chances are [for avoiding world famine]?' I answer that our chances for success may be 2 percent now, and that if we work really hard, we might move them up to 3 percent."

What is significant is the fact that such dire predictions are being voiced now, in the midst of the "green revolution." Too, the last few years have seen relatively favorable crop conditions, with good rainfall. But the natural pattern does not continue favorable. There are periodic droughts, such as India experienced in 1965 and 1966. With world population, especially the poor, having grown so much since then, similar droughts would bring on immense catastrophes in the future.

What Is the Answer?

No, the "green revolution" is not the answer to this world's hunger problems. And it is not just agriculture experts who acknowledge this. A far higher source, man's Creator, Jehovah God, says that it is not the answer.

God's own Word, the Holy Scriptures, contains many prophecies that tell us what the future holds. Bible prophecy calls our time "the last days." (2 Tim. 3:1) It gives the many evidences that mark this significant time in human history. One evidence foretold was that "there will be food shortages . . . in one place after another." —Matt. 24:7.

Hence, whatever success new types of grains may have will be short-lived. The present system of rule among the nations cannot stop food shortages for very long.

But food shortages will be stopped, and soon! Jehovah God guarantees in his Word that he will permanently solve mankind's problems, including that of hunger.

First of all, what is needed is a new administration for governing this earth and its peoples. Divisive nationalism, selfish commercialism and wasteful wars must be eliminated so that earth's resources can be properly used.

How will God accomplish that? By taking a direct hand in human affairs. His Word promises that he will forcibly re-

move all the governmental and economic arrangements of this present system of things. That will pave the way for an entirely new order here on earth. That new order will be ruled by the heavenly government that Jesus Christ taught his followers to pray for, God's kingdom. In fact, that heavenly kingdom is what God will use to "crush and put an end to all these kingdoms" existing today.—Dan. 2:44; Matt. 6:9, 10.

Under God's Kingdom rule, the peoples then living on earth are promised "a banquet of well-oiled dishes" in an era when "nation will not lift up sword against na-

tion, neither will they learn war anymore." This heavenly government of God guarantees a proper distribution of the earth's wealth.—Isa. 25:6; 2:4.

Therefore, do not be fooled by suggestions that humans will solve today's gigantic food problem. They will not. It is not scientists and their "green revolution," but "the Maker of heaven and earth" who will be the One to satisfy the needs of all mankind. (Ps. 146:6, 7) When? His Word promises: *soon!* Indeed, within this very generation God's kingdom will rule without a rival, to the eternal blessing of all who worship the true God.—Matt. 24:34.

Thinking about **A MOVE TO SOUTH AMERICA?**

IF YOU enjoy a challenge, then you will like South America. New places to see, interesting people to meet and exotic food to delight you. It is all here. More and more people are discovering this challenge by moving to South America.

Among the various reasons for people relocating here are employment transfer, retirement and health. Others come with a Christian missionary spirit. Motive aside, there are certain aspects of such a move that you should consider.

The Challenge of Language

Perhaps the most immediate challenge that one faces is that of language. You may come face-to-face with this problem as you pass through the port of entry and find that you can barely make out what the customs official is saying. This can be

By "Awake!" correspondent in Ecuador

frustrating. There is something rather humbling about an articulate adult's being reduced to the vocabulary level of a three-year-old. But here the adult can learn a vital lesson from the three-year-old. The child, his mind uncluttered with the fear of what others may be thinking, mimics others and masters a language very quickly. In point—forget yourself.

You are going to make mistakes—all learners do. These mistakes have a way of impressing on one the need of a sense of humor, as was the case with the man who went to the hardware store and asked for 'a pound of fingernails.' Although the Spanish words for nail and fingernail are entirely dissimilar, the learner simply got them mixed up. So expect to make some

mistakes. Do not take yourself too seriously. Although you may think others will laugh at you, they rarely do. People want to help.

Be prepared too for disappointments, and perhaps even some tears of frustration. They are part of the experience of learning. Expect to have to work hard to master the language. Few people have a so-called knack for language. The majority are just like ourselves—ordinary. Shun the use of the mental crutch, “I can’t learn,” or, “It’s too hard for me.” Some people are still saying this after twenty years.

Such persons have resorted to language segregation. Resist this temptation. Instead of always seeking conversation with those who speak your native tongue, go more than halfway in initiating conversations in the local language. Others are encouraged by your willingness to try.

The need to meet the challenge of language head-on bears emphasis. All the other challenges associated with a move to South America are directly connected to learning to communicate in the local language. Getting off to a good start with the language will better equip you to weather the other changes. If at all possible, plan to devote the first month or more to concentrated language study. Experience has shown that for new language students such intensive initial study, in some cases as much as eleven hours a day, gives immediate and gratifying results. At the end of four weeks one can manage limited conversation on various topics.

So when making your move, apply yourself to learning the language. Remember that this is a challenge. Will you accept it?

The Challenge of Homesickness

The problem of language-induced isolation is often complicated by the pangs of homesickness. There are those who claim not to suffer from homesickness, but it

would appear that most persons are susceptible to it.

Many times the presence or absence of homesickness depends on one’s attitude. A Christian minister once offered this interesting viewpoint: ‘God gave the entire earth to man as his home, without any modern-day injunction to confine himself to one particular area.’ From this enlarged point of view, the minister had come to appreciate the entire earth as his abode, resulting in his feeling very much at home anywhere.

One’s acquaintances and associations play major roles in making one feel at home in a certain geographical location. So do you want to overcome homesickness? Then, as soon as possible, make yourself at home in the new environment. Make acquaintances. Let them help you.

Nonetheless, there may be those days when you feel homesick. It may only be a spoken word, the sight of a small child playing with his toys or even a sunny afternoon that activates the floodgates of memory and there may be a whirlpool of melancholy. What to do? Well, does a particular hobby engross you? Do you enjoy good reading? Have you visited the local parks and museums? What do you *really* know about your new surroundings? Follow a busy schedule, and this will help to combat homesickness.

The Challenge of Environment

Closely related to the problem of homesickness is your new environment, which includes climate changes, local customs and living standards. Strange as it may seem, the first reaction of many new arrivals is, “But it’s so different. It’s not like back home.” Why, of course it is not! The new home would not be new if it were an exact duplicate of the former.

In view of this, expect a period of adjustment. In reality you are undergoing

a transplanting. The effects of such are not to be minimized. Transplants are frequently accompanied by a series of crises that vary as to seriousness. Be adaptable, like the youngster who within one hour of having arrived from winterbound Europe had stripped to the waist and was happily playing with some toys and was trying a few words of Spanish. Here again the encouragement of friends is a great help. If you have made the necessary effort to make such friends, the adjustment will be much easier.

Come prepared to face life as it truly is. Every country has its own customs and social standards. Quite possibly these will not be your natural customs and standards. However, reflect on your purpose in coming to this country. Are you coming as a social reformer? In most cases this would not be wise or even appreciated. These people's daily pattern of life is distinctly their own. If you have decided to locate yourself within that pattern, then be prepared to make some adjustments.

People's viewpoints differ as to public hygiene. Although very strange to you, others have found that walls and vacant lots can be used as public latrines. Working mothers may breast-feed their children on public streets. You may choose not to adopt such practices, but these are realities of daily life in many parts of the world. Your moving from a location where this is not the custom will not alter these established patterns, nor should you expect it to. Rather than stand back as a critical observer, come prepared to get in stride with the pace of life as you find it here and you will come to understand why things are as they are.

How long will this adjustment take? The answer depends to a great extent on the individual. But it takes time. One handbook makes this comment: "It has been learned from experience that a per-

son does not really appreciate the people or the language nor does he get accustomed to his foreign assignment before two years have passed, and by the end of three years he learns to know the people and the customs of the country and to like them."

Avoid, therefore, rash decisions and the tendency to let first impressions become lasting ones. Some people have gone to great expense moving their entire families to a new location, only to stay a few days or weeks and then return home. There have been cases of those who decided as they walked from the airport that they were not going to like their new home, and they did not. This is indeed sad. It is like the man who goes to buy a new suit but stoutly refuses to try any on. He goes away unhappy without ever knowing how fine he would have looked in one.

Simulating the Change

Sometime before actually making the move, one might find it beneficial to simulate, to some extent, life as it will probably be in one's new home. Arrange for the entire family to participate in the experiment, since they will all be involved in the change of living conditions.

If possible, visit a Spanish-speaking neighborhood. Listen to the voices! Do they sound louder than what you have been used to? Immerse yourself in the seeming incoherency of their conversation. They talk so fast, do they not? The myriad of words may cause a sensation of mental confusion.

Take a ride through the lower-income neighborhoods of your city, preferably through those of one of the large metropolises. Conditions as you see them there may well predominate in your new surroundings. A number of South American cities offer a near-ideal, relatively smog-free climate year round, but poverty is still

very present. You will have to live with it. Can you see your family there? It is a challenge.

Try preparing a whole week's menu without using any canned, packaged or frozen goods. They are either unavailable or prohibitively priced in many countries to the south. This includes the preparation of such staples as salad dressings and mayonnaise. You will find recipes for them in your cookbook. It takes a few minutes longer to bake a pie from the basic ingredients than to reach into the freezer-case in your supermarket. A can opener is much faster than a paring knife in the preparation of vegetables, but during the trial week do not use the can opener.

Your trip to the supermarket will prove interesting too. Do the week's shopping without asking a clerk for anything. You may be amazed at how much you would like to tell the butcher just how to chop, slice or grind the cut of meat, but, remember, you will not be able to communicate until you learn the language. Also, remember that all the labels will be unintelligible and many of the brand names you are used to just are not to be found. A good practice is to look up the many items on your shopping list in a foreign-language dictionary.

As to getting home from the market, or anywhere else for that matter, forget about the car for the week. Try going everywhere on the public transportation system, or by taxis. Although cars are available in South America, they are very expensive and it may be some time till you have one. Remember that all this restricted activity must be undertaken during the same week. Do not try each step individually, but all at once.

Now, of course, this experiment may sound quite amusing. Please be assured that it is a very real happening once you make the move, and all of these situations,

plus homesickness and the challenge of the environment, rush in upon you. Try it out.

Deciding to Come

The decision to come to South America is yours alone to make. There may be persons who try to discourage you. You may be surprised to find that even friends from whom you expected encouragement may try hard to dissuade you. Among the reasons they may advance for not coming may be the lack of material comforts, danger to your health and that you are needed more where you are now.

On the other hand, there is much to encourage one. How stimulating it is, for example, to see those who have accepted the challenge and met it. There are families who have lived in South America for five, ten or twenty years. Their children are robust and healthy. They have gone to school, visited the doctor when they were sick and survived very well. They have a rich field of personal experience on which to draw. They are bilingual. They have the inner satisfaction, not to be depreciated, of having met the challenge and won.

You will want to sit down first and calculate the expense of your move both materially and emotionally. Do this as a family. Remember that all members will be involved. Some families have sent one or two senior members on a reconnaissance trip to the prospective country. The firsthand knowledge gained from such a trip can more than offset the added expense.

Above all, do not try to deceive yourself. You will have difficulties. Such a move is a real challenge. But those who have already come, and who have already met the challenge and stayed, will be with you all through the ups and downs. Count on them to help you stay, if after weighing the cost, you accept the challenge to move to South America.

I was **A CATHOLIC NUN**

As told to "Awake!" correspondent in Belgium

"I WILL become a nun so as to belong to Jesus forever. Only he will count in my life." That decision was made by a little seven-year-old girl one day in 1916 after having taken Communion.

I was that little girl. Born of devout Catholic parents at Neufchâteau, Belgium, on August 28, 1909, I cherished that desire from early childhood.

Having in mind that ideal, I found delight in prayer, in small sacrifices and in serving others. So many hours passed in prayer in the church at Neufchâteau! Every evening upon hearing the church bells I joined a few parishioners in the recitation of the rosary, led by the priest.

In fact, at that time I would recite as many as eleven rosaries a day! Mass and Communion were daily ceremonies for me. However, at vacation time, I would attend several Masses a day, these

being followed by a long period of thanksgiving.

During summer vacation, after my second year of teacher-training studies, I went to the woods at Neufchâteau one

afternoon in order to meditate. I can still see myself lying there on the grass, rereading the book *Life of Young Theresa of Lisieux*. I wanted to be like her because I believed she expressed a deep love for Jesus. I was determined to become a devoted nun, a beloved wife of Jesus, whatever the cost.

So one day in August 1926, after spending many hours in prayer, kneeling with arms outstretched as on a cross, I waited for my parents to come home. Upon their arrival, I made known my decision. "Father," I said, "I'm sorry if I make you unhappy but God has called me to the convent." "My child," said father,



From a photograph
taken in March 1928

"you are still so young. Think carefully about what you want to do." I replied: "Father, I've been thinking about it for over ten years." After a long talk, he concluded: "My child, if it's God's will, I won't put any obstacle in your way. You have my consent."

I Leave Home

The priest made inquiries by letter to the Dames Louise Institute, and I was invited to go to Louvain for an interview. Mother went with me, on September 5, 1926. There we were received by the founder, Dame Louise, who, although ill in bed, was lucid, agreeable and kind.

When mother mentioned that I still had two more years of school to go, and wondered if it would be better if I finished school first, the founder replied: "No, she must enter immediately and we will see to it that she finishes her schooling with

us." That promise, I am sorry to say, was not respected.

The entry date was fixed for September 16, 1926. But since this was the date we had already fixed for a trip to Lourdes, my mother asked: "Wouldn't it be possible for the entry date to be postponed in view of the pilgrimage to Lourdes?" "No," was the reply, "your daughter can choose; either enter the convent or go to Lourdes." I said: "I'll enter the convent."

So the day came when I tearfully left my family. My father accompanied me to the Château of Ezeringen, where the postulants (candidates seeking to become nuns) had to pass a six-month testing period. After saying 'Good-bye' to my father, I was clothed with the postulant's cape and headdress, at the same time as twenty other young girls. So I became a postulant of the Canoness Missionaries of St. Augustine. I felt very happy indeed.

Preparing to Be a Nun

As postulants, the strictest silence was imposed upon us. If we were ill or had problems, we either had simply to endure them or else speak only to the Mistress. This enforced silence did not help to stimulate love between us.

The interview with the Mistress who asked me to get rid of all my personal belongings covered me with shame. Expecting to be understood, I freely confided in her, without restriction, just as I had the custom of doing when still a child. I was deeply disappointed when all she said was: "As penance, you will extend your arms out as on a cross at the beginning of the noonday meal." From then on, I no longer felt at ease.

One Sunday, mother came to visit me. In the parlor, I became my natural self,

spontaneous, joyful. This surprised my Mistress, who said to mother: "Madam, your daughter is completely different in the parlor. Here she is so happy, so cheerful, whereas in the community she is so serious, so silent." What a contrast, to be sure. But why? Because it was not the kind of life that I had expected.

However, I consoled myself with the idea that for Jesus nothing could be too difficult and that I was there to become his wife. So I suffered in silence. I believed that as a future nun, I had to suffer, and that having made the forward step, there was no question of looking back.

When the six-month period of postulancy ended, the postulants had to go to Louvain for one year of novitiate (probation period before taking the vows). The

ceremony of taking the veil was preceded by a week-long retreat. Clothed in the nun's habit and with a white veil, we went in procession to the chapel.

Difficulties Increase

The difficulties met during the postulancy were to reappear and even get worse at Louvain. My Mistress here did not inspire in me any more confidence than the former one. I was afraid of her and I became more and more an introvert. Moral suffering was to be a daily occurrence with me. How many tears I was to shed!

On Wednesdays and Fridays, there was a five-minute period of self-discipline. For this, we received a whip made of small knotted cords with which I actually whipped myself in order to cause myself real pain. On these same days, at noon, we drank our soup in a kneeling position.

Every Friday, each one in turn, while kneeling at the entrance to the refectory, had to kiss the feet of all the nuns in the convent. Each Saturday, we would gather together for the recitation of our shortcomings. Each nun in turn would kneel and, aloud, had to own up to external faults committed.

Each day, we had to repeat five "Our Fathers" and five "Ave Marias," with arms outstretched as on a cross. We were counseled to accomplish at least one mortification at each meal. And each month, during the monthly contemplation, we had to make a report to the Mistress and ask permission to use small things such as pins, buttons, images, and so forth. All of our actions were strictly controlled, even when leaving the refectory, the workroom or the chapel, regardless of the reason. With hands joined, we would ask: "Will you allow me to go out?" When in the chapel, a simple gesture was sufficient.

Whenever we were late, we had to excuse ourselves before the Superior, on our

knees and with hands joined. After evening prayers and before leaving the chapel, each one in turn would kneel down before the Superior, who would make a small sign of the cross on the forehead and say: "May Jesus, Mary and Joseph bless you."

The Day Arrives

Finally, the long-awaited day arrived, March 29, 1928. That was the day when my novitiate ended and I was to become a nun, the wife of Jesus!

After replying affirmatively to some questions, such as: "Are you acting of your own free will to become the wife of Christ?" I was invited, in front of the altar, to pronounce my vows. I had to vow that I promised "before Almighty God, the blessed Virgin Mary, and our Father St. Augustine, to live in poverty, chastity and obedience, according to the rules of St. Augustine and the Constitutions of our Order, and that for three years."

After that, I went to the epistle side of the altar and there signed a register confirming my declarations. So, before I was nineteen years old, I became a member of the Congregation of the Canoness Missionaries of St. Augustine. Then the priest said: "These vows will be your only consolation; they will accompany you to the grave." A gold ring, symbol of our union with Jesus, was then slipped on to the annular finger of the right hand.

Together with the other nuns who had taken part in the same ceremony, I was considered as being dead to the world. To symbolize this death, we went to a place indicated and knelt down, then laid face down, under a pall, as if buried. The choir sang and upon our hearing the words "rise up," in Latin, the pall was removed. We stood up and returned to our places. Then the choir sang a resurrection hymn, followed by another: "Come, wife of Christ, receive the crown which has been

prepared for you." We then went to the communion rail where the Superior pinned on us a crown of roses made of white tulle.

Convinced of really being the wife of Jesus, my happiness was complete. I kept on repeating: "Jesus, I am yours forever. Make me a wife according to your heart; my only wish is to please you."

Where, now, would I serve as a nun? Well, during my novitiate my Superiors, having noted my artistic talents, gave me

an assignment that would take me to the Philippine Islands. I was to give painting lessons there at the Ste. Theresa's College in Manila. Thus, toward the end of September 1929 I left for the Philippines after passing a few days with my family and also to make collections in order to cover travel expenses. It was the custom for each one to make an effort to have the necessary funds to cover her own expenses for the journey to her assignment.

What Forty-three Years as a Nun Produced

Toward the end of 1929 I arrived at Manila and was welcomed by the community of Ste. Theresa. This began seventeen years as a missionary in the Philippines.

While I felt at home there, one of my activities soon became a torture for me. That was the confessional. The more I went to confess, the more the priest scolded me. Although I became even more scrupulous in my work, that did not seem to be good enough. Fortunately, in time the confessor was replaced.

I knew only a little English. So I was surprised when my Superior told me that I would be teaching first grade, both boys and girls. On Thursday, there being no school, I gave private painting lessons. But halfway through the school term, I was asked to go to Tubao in order to help with the church singing there, since I could read music and play the piano.

In 1931 I was sent to Tagudin, where I began with the fifth grade and continued to the seventh grade. But in the middle of the year I was assigned as a substitute to teach in a high school.

Disappointments Grow

During the school vacation I was sent to Baguio, where I was given a university

diploma for a course I had never taken! This was done to make believe that I had the necessary qualifications to teach. This dishonest action was very distasteful to me. In addition, it compelled me to put forth superhuman efforts during the following term, since I really did not have the qualifications.

However, by working hard I managed to equip myself with good material. My Superior promised that I would not be transferred again, but that promise was not to be respected. In fact, throughout the whole of my life as a nun, many promises made by those whom I believed to be God's representatives were a source of bitter disappointment to me.

During my many years as a missionary nun, I taught different courses: mathematics, painting, science, physics, gymnastics, piano, and others. But each morning I also discussed religion with my students, based on the catechism that they had received. This course in religion should have given me much satisfaction in view of my missionary vocation as a nun. On the contrary, the religious instruction was a burden to me, a very heavy task that I dreaded. Why was it so distressing and painful to me? Because

I had the feeling that I had nothing really worth while to communicate to others.

One year, after the yearly retreat, I went to my Superior to confide in her my resolution made during the retreat. How stupefied I was when the Superior said to me: "That's not what you should keep an eye on; instead you should watch your jealousy." I was bowled over! Jealousy was far from my thoughts! I could not understand how it was possible for my Superior, whom I implicitly considered to be God's mouthpiece, to have acted as she did. It had been instilled in us that our Superiors substituted for God.

A few months later, I fell ill. How happy I was! "Happy to be ill," you say? Yes, that's right, because during the novitiate it had been constantly repeated to us that 'God tests those whom he loves,' so that being ill would be a sign of having God's favor. Because of wanting to be found among God's privileged people, I didn't want to get well! I suffered from a stomach ulcer and had to undergo an operation. After that I went to Baguio for convalescence, where I was not inactive, as I would go begging in the marketplace.

Return to Belgium

The years passed. World War II came and we endured hardships and dangers. Then, after the war, I had a relapse in my health. The surgeon would not agree to a second operation and instead ordered my return to Belgium. So after seventeen years as a missionary in the Philippines, I returned to Belgium in March 1947.

My activity was limited while I more or less rested up, waiting for the time I would return to the Philippines as had been promised. However, this was another promise that was not kept. Instead, I was sent to the community of Auvillar, France. There I gave lessons to scholastically retarded adolescents. What a contrast with

my pupils and the classes in the Philippines! How often, when class was over, I would weep! I believed myself to be morally and physically incapable of overcoming that atmosphere.

Since the State required a diploma for teaching handicapped children, I was asked to take a correspondence course. Also, I went to Toulouse for six weeks of instruction, which was closed with a written and oral examination. I obtained my diploma, and it turned out to be quite a revelation to me. Why? Because I was commended! I had never been encouraged before, so I got to believing myself unworthy of being shown the least appreciation. I said to myself: "Well, there seem to be two persons in me. One 'appreciated' by those outside the convent, and another 'kept in the dark' inside the convent."

I Obtain a Bible

We were forbidden to read the Bible. However, at that time, in the 1960's, no other reading matter interested me. What I wanted was a Bible, but the Superior General refused to let me have one.

Nevertheless, I was able to get a copy. This is how I did it. I needed a French dictionary for my class and I could have it only if my family sent me a thousand francs. Once again they came to my help! However, the Superior used hardly a third of that sum and kept the rest! Considering that the balance belonged to me, I risked asking that a *Jerusalem Bible* be purchased for me. This time the request was not refused.

In possession of the Bible, I decided to read its entire contents in order to find out why it was prohibited. What seemed strange was the fact that my Bible reading helped me to pray and to meditate more than ever before. I learned many Psalms by heart and recited them at every opportunity. Sometimes I tried to in-

troduce the Bible into my conversations with other nuns, but to no avail. Often I told the others that our conversations were too commonplace. Yet, when I brought up spiritual matters I was ridiculed.

Since my health did not improve, I was sent back to Roulers, Belgium, where I underwent an operation. Then I was sent to Héverlé, a home for seriously ill nuns where I was operated on once again. After that my health gradually improved. At this time I had with me a small radio, a family gift. It enabled me to follow six Bible courses by correspondence, and to listen to eleven different religious programs. As a result, I found a way of deepening my study of the Bible. However, I suffered in that I was unable to communicate my happiness to others.

I began to appreciate that Protestants learned more of the Bible. Yet, one day, by letter, I asked the Protestant pastor who corrected my correspondence courses, and in whom I had the most confidence, what he thought about evolution. He said that it could be accepted! Thus, my confidence diminished, as this theory was clearly not in agreement with the Bible, and I was looking for the truth, not falsehood.

A Lack of Love

Then the Vatican Council was held. This resulted in the Church asking nuns to undertake renovation of their religious life. As part of this I was given a questionnaire to fill out, enabling me to give my viewpoint.

In January 1968 I filled out the questionnaire. Two of the questions were: "Have you found among your fellow nuns (Superiors or others) a sufficient help for your spiritual life?" and "Have you found a true friendship in the congregation?" To these questions I had to reply "No." I had simply never met with a true, un-

selfish affection among fellow nuns or the congregation. There had only been a pretense of love.

A portion of the questionnaire had to do with the "attitude of the Superiors." This is what I wrote to the General Secretary's office in Héverlé, Belgium: "Many times my fellow nuns have asked me this question: 'Why is it easier for us to get along together than for us to get along with our Superiors?' This is my reply: Because our Superiors do not sufficiently make themselves accessible to the sisters and do not possess that mother's gentleness that the sisters expect from them."

I continued: "Generally, our Superiors are too preoccupied by outside matters. They are busy with so many things, except the most important of their tasks—mother love for all the sisters. Yet, without exception, Jesus loved. Jesus is love. This is the ideal conception of a mother. In all respects, the Superiors lead a totally different life from that of an ordinary nun, whereas they should be 'servants.' The ordinary nun should be able to enjoy, on an equal footing, the same things as their Superiors. It is not only the 'name and the dress' that have to change, but also the mental outlook and the way of life. If our Superiors wish to have our affection and our confidence, let them love us sincerely and have confidence in us."

"Something Wrong"

One day, disgusted, I said to my Superior General: "What I don't understand is that our vow of poverty always allows us to receive, and the more the better. Yet it never allows us to give, not even a pin!" And Jesus said there was more happiness in giving!

She was honest enough to say that my reasoning was correct. So later, to a Superior General of Scheut, I said: "In my opinion, the greatest sin against poverty

is the vow of poverty." I added: "What is required is the abolition of such vows." He did not agree, saying the vows could never be abolished.

Yet, since then, the vows have definitely been replaced by just simple promises! Surely something is wrong with a system that sees so much contradiction! Thus, I kept repeating that very soon convents would no longer exist. Indeed, I had the ever-increasing feeling that convents were devilish institutions. And I was more and more convinced of this because of the abuses I saw. For instance, abuses in comfort. I saw with my own eyes that totally unnecessary and unjustified expenditures were made on an ever-increasing scale. So as time went on, my eyes became opened. I could see that life in the convent was becoming just simply impossible.

I also began to appreciate how empty were the religious ceremonies I had always been fond of. In spite of all the decorations, flowers, beautiful altar ornaments, the priests' apparel and music, once a ceremony was finished I was aware that I had derived no spiritual benefit whatsoever. I would particularly watch the priest on these occasions. So very often I was dis-

appointed with him, and said to myself: "What carelessness! It's as if he doesn't bother at all and doesn't even believe himself what he's doing." The sign of the cross was made automatically and the genuflections with so little respect.

One day, having heard that during the Vatican Council the bishops discussed changes in the Eucharist, I said to myself: "There's something wrong here. Truth is unquestionable and never changes."

On another occasion, I was told that the holy blood of Bruges was not real! The Holy Blood Basilica in the Belgian town of Bruges contains the Holy Blood shrine in solid gold. Here, it is claimed, are to be found a few drops of Christ's blood. Every year a procession wends its way through the old part of town, the shrine being carried with traditional pomp. But now I thought: "Is it possible that the Church has made us indulge in so much idolatry during all those Holy Blood processions? It's time I found the TRUTH!"

I mentioned all this to another nun, and added: "You know, I'm looking for the truth and when I find it, nothing will ever stop me!" I became even more eager in my pursuit of truth.

Finding the Truth That Leads to Life!

About August 1969 I received from another nun a book. It was entitled "The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life." She had received it from her nephew, who was one of Jehovah's witnesses.

When she brought it to me she said: "I received it from my nephew. You can't imagine how zealous he is. He has promised me a Bible, and can you believe it? —he preaches from house to house and even gives Bible talks!"

I listened very attentively. I took the book and said: "That interests me, because now I am looking for the truth." Right away, I started reading the first chapter. I noticed that it was very different from my religious teachings.

However, a short while afterward I had to enter the clinic, as the doctor considered my condition to be serious. So I put all my things in order before leaving, returning the book to my fellow nun. But

the diagnosis was inexact, and very soon I was back again. I looked for the book—but disappointment! The nun handed back to me only its cover. She had thrown away the inside pages! I went to see her and expressed regret at what she had done, repeating that I had so much wished to read the book.

A Not-to-Be-Forgotten Ride

One day the Superior announced that they wanted volunteers to learn hairdressing. I volunteered and followed a course issued by the “Oréal” school in Brussels. On October 26, 1970, I was instructed to present myself before an Examiners Board in Brussels in order to pass my hairdressing exams.

I went at the appointed time. However, when the names were called out, mine was not included. They even seemed surprised to see me there. The secretary dismissed me, informing me that I would be called again the following month.

Not wishing to profit from this unexpected liberty, I went to the convent where I was supposed to pass the night. When I told the nuns that I would return to Héverlé by the first train, they advised me to return by bus; it was cheaper. Wishing to respect my vow of poverty, I agreed.

To get to the bus stop, I had to take a tram ride. Not knowing the locality, I asked directions of two men who were on the same tram. They promised to tell me when we arrived at the bus stop. But they told me to get off at least two stops too early! So I had to walk the rest of the way, carrying two heavy suitcases.

Finally I put down my cases and looked around for the bus stop. At that precise moment, a car stopped by me. The driver said: “Madam, are you going to Louvain? Can I give you a lift?”

I was embarrassed, thinking it was not fitting to travel with a man. But then he

continued speaking, saying: “As long as you don’t mind traveling with one of Jehovah’s witnesses.” While I did not know Jehovah’s witnesses very well, this did inspire confidence and I accepted the offer. Afterward, I learned that this was the first time he had ever taken the initiative to stop and offer someone a ride. Usually, he waited for a sign from the hitchhiker. It was also the first time he had gone this way in the afternoon. Until then, he had always left in the morning. But what blessings these coincidences brought!

He took care of my suitcases and helped me into the car. As soon as I was seated he said: “You know, Madam, Jehovah’s witnesses talk much about the Bible.” I replied that at the moment it was about the only thing that really interested me, and that I followed a Bible correspondence course and heard religious radio programs.

He began talking to me about various doctrines, such as the Trinity, and this amazed me. I mentioned that what he was telling me was contrary to my Church’s teachings, but still it seemed in harmony with the Bible. The more I listened, the more I was dumbfounded. I recognized that all he was saying was indeed in harmony with the Bible. While listening, I prayed for the holy spirit to help me and not let me be misled into error.

When we arrived at Louvain, the Witness said good-bye and at the same time offered me a book. Yes, it was *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life!* I thanked him warmly for it, and all the way to the convent I meditated on what we had discussed. I was also very happy to have another copy of the book that I had seen a few months earlier. I could now continue my search for the truth.

Increasing in Accurate Knowledge

Once inside my room, I started to pray. This time, I prayed to *Jehovah*, explaining

my situation and asking him to help me. On another morning, I asked Jehovah to send me someone who would show me the right direction to take.

That day, instead of starting hairdressing at 11 a.m. as was usually the case, I had an appointment at 2 p.m.

to do a nun's hair. You can imagine my surprise, on going down the stairs, to see the man who had given me the lift from Brussels! Because of the appointment at 2 p.m. he proposed coming back an hour later. I was free then and able to receive him in a small parlor.

He suggested that in order to take in more accurate knowledge of God's Word, I should have a Bible study, which would be conducted by two women of the local congregation of Jehovah's witnesses. Joyfully I accepted his offer. The first study was held in my room, right inside the convent!

When I learned that after six months of study I would have to make a decision, I said to myself: "Do they think I'm going to change? If so, they're mistaken. All I want is a detailed study of the Bible." I took this study very seriously.

The Truth at Last!

Then one morning the Witness invited me to a three-day assembly of Bible instruction held every six months and organized by Jehovah's witnesses. The Superior authorized me to leave, without knowing where I was going, and everyone wished me a happy weekend.

During the trip I said to myself: "I'm not going to let myself be hoodwinked. I'll listen and take note of everything. If

I hear one word contrary to the Bible, that will be the finish once and for all."

At the assembly I found everything to

be upbuilding. I had the distinct impression of having passed from darkness into light. I was deeply touched by the brotherly love dis-

played by the Witnesses. Indeed, I had found the true Christian love which I had been seeking for forty-five years! I concluded that I had found the truth at last!

Returning to the convent, I more and more sensed the truthfulness of the words I had so often repeated in recent months: "We are in a diabolical system. I can no longer continue living here like a hypocrite." I prayed to Jehovah, imploring him for guidance.

Making the Break

That very same evening after returning from the assembly, I sat down and addressed a letter to the Pope. I asked him to grant me dispensation from my vows. I wrote another letter to my Superior General.

However, I then recalled that since the Vatican Council our rules as well as our Constitutions had been burned. Consequently, we were no longer the Canoness Missionaries of St. Augustine, according to whose rules I had taken my vows. I concluded that there was no need to be dispensed from my vows.

Further, I no longer accepted the Roman Catholic Church as being the Church of Christ. It was in opposition to God's Word. Hence, I no longer saw the necessity of consulting the chief of an apostate church to ask permission for anything. So

● ***The Power Crisis.***

● ***What You Can Do About Your Headache.***

● ***Mine Was an Arranged Marriage.***

—In the next issue.

those letters that I had written were never mailed.

Having compared Bible truths with the religious teachings that I had received, I realized more and more that the Church's major teachings were not in agreement with the Bible. For instance, Jesus is not the Almighty God. Also, the Trinity does not exist. The Mass and Communion are not Scriptural. And what about the souls in hellfire, going there because they had received the Holy Communion without having fasted, or for having bitten or touched the host, or for not having attended Sunday Mass, or for having eaten meat on Friday? Now all those things are permitted! These facts helped to convince me that I had found the truth.

On January 23, 1971, I telephoned to thank the Witness who had so kindly taken care of me during the assembly. When she asked me what I was going to do, I replied: "I am ready to leave."

I decided to leave the next day, in spite of the fact that my health was not good, and then there was my age, and other factors. However, after deep reflection, I said to Jehovah that because of his love, I would give myself to him without reserve. He could use me as he wished. I asked only that his will be done and not my own. I relied entirely upon him and repeatedly prayed throughout the whole night. I no longer worried about food, clothing and lodging. I had eyes for only one thing: Preach the good news of God's kingdom, and bring as many sheeplike persons as possible into contact with the truth.

The next day, two of Jehovah's witnesses came for me. My departure went off smoothly. There were about thirty nuns in the convent and they all looked on, surprised, but not saying a word. When the sacristan wanted to know what was

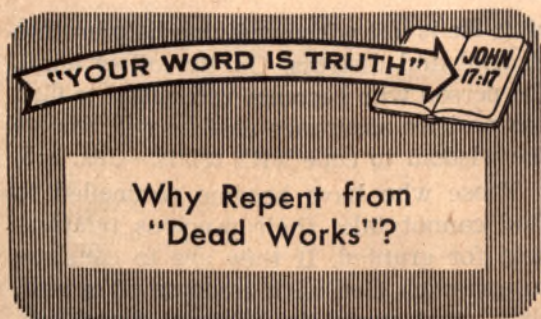
happening, I said: "You remember I told you that when I found the truth, nothing would stop me. I've found it with Jehovah's witnesses and that is why I'm going with them." She went away without saying another word.

I stayed for two months with a Witness family in Brussels. They would take no payment for board and lodging. One could feel that all this was done out of pure love for Jehovah. I was so happy to be at last free from the influence of the world empire of false religion, which the Bible calls "Babylon the Great," and to be in the company of these dedicated Christians.

And so it came about that I truly dedicated myself to Jehovah. I wanted only to do His will, as one of his witnesses. Five months later, on June 26, 1971—after forty-three years as a missionary nun—I symbolized this dedication by water baptism.

Today, in order to take care of myself, I work part time as a housekeeper, but I have no regrets, as my happiness is complete. I feel that now I really am a missionary, leading a much more honest life than when I was a nun. Actually, I do have just one regret: that I had to wait such a long time before I could prove to Jehovah God that I love him, and this by accurate understanding of his Word.

So now has been realized the desire, expressed in 1916 by me when I was that little seven-year-old girl, to give myself entirely to God's service. From now on, I give the rest of my time to making disciples of Jesus Christ, just as he told his followers to do. I do this by preaching the good news of God's kingdom and by sharing with others the truths I have found. I hope that many more honest-hearted persons will taste the same joy I have by accepting, while there is still time, the truth that leads to eternal life in the new system of things promised by God.



NEARLY 6,000 years ago humankind became alienated from Jehovah God. This came about when the first man Adam sinned. The truth about this is found in God's Word, which tells us: "Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned."—Rom. 5:12.

As sinners, humans cannot gain an approved standing before Jehovah God on their own merit. Only by means of the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ can people who were once "alienated" from God and "enemies" of God be reconciled to him. This is because that ransom has sin-atoning value.—Col. 1:19-22.

Reconciliation with God, however, does not come about without action on the part of individuals. One of the requirements for a person to become reconciled to God involves repentance from "dead works." (Heb. 6:1) But what are these "dead works"? Have all people engaged in them, making their repentance from such "dead works" an essential thing?

Death being the opposite of life, "dead works" are evidently works that do not lead to life. They are spiritually dead, vain and fruitless works.

Manifestly the works of sinful flesh are death-dealing. According to the Bible, these works include "fornication, uncleanness, loose conduct, idolatry, practice of spiritism, enmities, strife, jealousy, fits of

anger, contentions, divisions, sects, envies, drunken bouts, revelries, and things like these. . . . those who practice such things will not inherit God's kingdom." (Gal. 5:19-21) Anyone seeking God's approval and life must repent of such "works of the flesh" and quit practicing them.

But are "dead works" limited to those works of wrongdoing and immorality? No, for there are also other works that are vain and fruitless.

Included in such "dead works" are works of self-justification. All efforts of humans to establish their own righteousness apart from Christ Jesus and his ransom sacrifice are in vain. That is why one who tries to adhere to the Mosaic law with a view to establishing his own righteousness is engaging in "dead works." This aspect is highlighted at Romans 3:20-25: "By works of law no flesh will be declared righteous before [God], for by law is the accurate knowledge of sin. . . . It is as a free gift that they are being declared righteous by his undeserved kindness through the release by the ransom paid by Christ Jesus. God set him forth as an offering for propitiation through faith in his blood."

Also works that might otherwise be good can become "dead works" if they do not stem from the right motivations. The apostle Paul pointed out: "If I give all my belongings to feed others, and if I hand over my body, that I may boast, but do not have love, I am not profited at all." —1 Cor. 13:3.

Then, too, a person may be convinced that he is serving God when in actuality he is engaging in "dead works." This is because, if not performed in harmony with accurate knowledge, his works would be vain and could even stand in opposition to God's purpose. Respecting the Jews in his day, the apostle Paul noted: "They have a zeal for God; but not according to accurate knowledge; for, because of not

knowing the righteousness of God but seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God."—Rom. 10:2, 3.

In view of the fact that "dead works" are not just debased practices, it is obvious that all persons need to repent from "dead works." No one alive today can say that he has never done anything with the wrong motive. No one can claim that every action of his has been completely unselfish, a genuine expression of his love for God and his fellowman. There is not a man or a woman anywhere who can claim that all of his or her actions have been in complete harmony with God's will. Observed the aged apostle John under inspiration: "If we make the statement: 'We have not sinned,' we are making him a liar, and his word is not in us."—1 John 1:10.

Since all persons are sinners, all have engaged in "dead works." For this reason as long as they remain unrepentant, they cannot have a clean conscience before Jehovah God. However, by repenting from "dead works" and striving to live a life in harmony with God's will, a person can, on the basis of faith in Jesus' ransom sacrifice, have his conscience cleansed from dead works.—Heb. 9:14.

His sincere repentance opens up to him the way to approach his heavenly Father with freeness of speech. He does not feel condemned at heart. He does not fear that Jehovah God may give no heed to his cries for aid. Wrote the apostle John: "If our hearts do not condemn us, we have freeness of speech toward God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we are observing his commandments and are doing the things that are pleasing in his eyes."—1 John 3:21, 22.

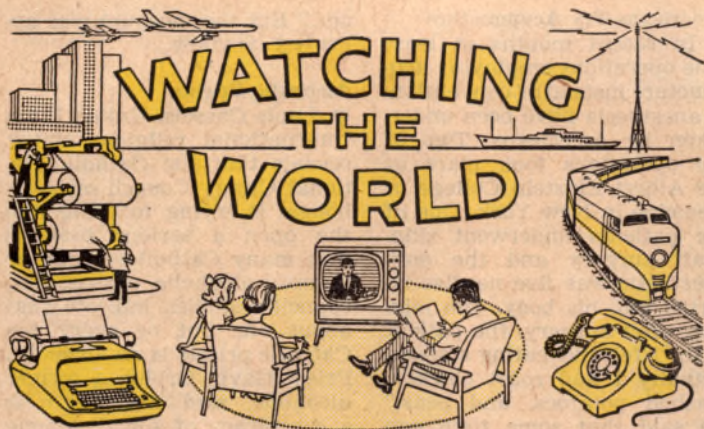
The person who fails to repent from "dead works" is therefore depriving himself of a precious relationship with his Cre-

ator. He is left without divine help in time of trial and distress. On the other hand, the person who becomes reconciled to God has positive assurance that he will receive the wisdom to cope with trials.—Jas. 1:5.

Those who have become reconciled to God cannot take their precious relationship for granted. If they are to continue to approach God with freeness of speech, they must maintain a clean conscience. This requires effort, because sin's law or the inborn inclination toward wrongdoing continually works in their fleshly members. That "law of sin," in effect, tries to control their course and make them follow a way that is out of harmony with God. Regarding his own struggle in this regard, the apostle Paul stated: "I really delight in the law of God according to the man I am within, but I behold in my members another law warring against the law of my mind and leading me captive to sin's law that is in my members. Miserable man that I am! Who will rescue me from the body undergoing this death?"—Rom. 7:22-24.

With such a struggle being waged within himself, it might appear that Paul, despite his having repented from "dead works," simply could not maintain a clean conscience before God. But this is not the case. In answer to the above question, Paul exclaims: "Thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:25) Yes, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ 'rescued' Paul, enabling him to preserve his relationship with God and keep a clean conscience.

By continuing to appeal to God in faith for forgiveness of sins on the basis of Jesus' ransom sacrifice, we, like Paul, can maintain the good conscience that resulted from our initial repentance from "dead works." We can thus continue to enjoy the loving aid of our heavenly Father and have before us the prospect of life everlasting.



Gun Control

◆ Many authorities in the United States are asking for stricter gun-control laws as a result of the shooting of prominent officials and the high murder rate in recent years. It is of interest to note that in Britain police do not carry guns, and are opposed to doing so. But British law strictly controls the sale of firearms, limiting the flow of weapons among the civilian population to a bare trickle. In all of England and Wales, with a population of about 50 million, only 29 fatal gun homicides took place in 1970. This as compared with 965 in New York city alone, which has a population of less than eight million. That is over 200 times the rate of England and Wales!

"Golden Age" for Criminals

◆ Retired deputy commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police W. H. Kelley says that today's criminal is living in a "golden age." He blames the unbalanced legal structure that is weighted heavily in favor of the criminal. He declared that Canada's system of justice is not restraining crime, deterring criminals, or rehabilitating them.

"Green Revolution" No Miracle

◆ The June-July 1972 issue of *Natural History* challenges the

idea that the "Green Revolution," the development of high-yield grains, will solve man's food problems. Anthropologist Marvin Harris of Columbia University writes: "There is a real risk that instead they will trigger natural and cultural disasters of a size unprecedented in human history. Contrary to what most people have been led to believe, the high-yield varieties of rice are not more productive under the usual conditions of peasant agriculture in Asia. In fact, if the new seeds are merely substituted for local varieties, an immediate and drastic decline in output per acre ensues." Only where there is a massive input of money, irrigation, fertilizers and pesticides is there higher yield. But, he says, "70 to 90 percent of Asian farm families have no irrigation water and no cash or credit for the purchase of chemical products." He charges that the objective of the "Green Revolution" is to "wipe out the class of small farmers and to replace them with efficient agribusinessmen who will be heavily dependent upon industrial products and world markets."

Air Pollution a Storm Factor?

◆ The cloud burst that struck Mexico City in May, taking many lives and causing great damage, was called by the Federal District Department "the

most disastrous in the last 50 years," according to the publication *El Heraldo*. Of special interest was the comment of Mario Lizaola, chief of the Forecasting Office of the Meteorological Service. As quoted in *Ultimas Noticias de Excel-sior*, he said: "Atmospheric contamination is one of the important factors that contribute to the unchaining of storms such as that of yesterday." Man's polluting of the atmosphere may indeed be such a factor.

Airlines Cut Accident Rate

◆ During 1971 the airline industry in the United States posted the lowest accident rate in 23 years, according to the National Transportation Safety Board. This was the third successive year in which the airlines achieved an overall accident rate reduction.

Children Need Love

◆ Australian authorities are concerned about the harm being done to children left at child-care centers while their mothers work. Dr. H. N. Merington, president of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, warned that unless something was done doctors would be treating young adults who had been irreparably damaged mentally and emotionally by the lack of maternal affection. He said: "Children should have close relationships with their mothers in their formative years. From the age of three to five years the child's whole attitude to other people is determined by its relationship to its mother. Little children should experience the warmth and love of their mother. . . . Those who do not have this grow up insecure in their personal relationships and are not able to relate easily with people."

Sex 'Education' Backfires

◆ In San Francisco, school officials thought that since sex

education, including discussion of teen-age pregnancy, drugs and other 'facts of life,' was already being provided, then why not include homosexuality? So homosexuals were invited to address the students in ninth grade social studies classes of a junior high school. The ages of the students ranged from thirteen to fifteen. According to the San Francisco *Sunday Examiner & Chronicle*, the homosexuals "became so anatomically explicit in describing their sex techniques that some students were soon in imminent need of air sickness bags. Two lesbians capped their contribution by locking in an embrace." After protests, a high school administrator "got in touch with the Gay Counseling Service and served notice that hereafter it would simply have to send a higher class of homosexuals to spread its gospel in the schools."

A Threat to Sight

◆ Philadelphia surgeon Peter Laibson of Wills Eye Hospital warns that gonorrhea is more dangerous to the adult patient than most doctors realize. He cited the case of a woman who was referred to him after oral penicillin failed to stop the venereal disease. By the time other treatment cleared up the infection, it had penetrated the cornea of her eye.

Pope Would Like to Resign

◆ According to a report issued at Vatican City by the Associated Press, Pope Paul VI wishes he could resign as head of the Roman Catholic Church but feels he cannot. This conclusion was reached after listening to remarks the Vatican taped earlier and released at the end of May. A relative of the pope said he suffers greatly "from the bitter criticism of virtually everything he has done during his nine years of papacy. The pontiff cries often and finds comfort in any sign of affection."

Americans Try Acupuncture

◆ In recent months at least nine operations employing acupuncture instead of conventional anesthesia have been undertaken by Americans. Two of the operations took place at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York. One of the patients underwent skin-graft surgery and the only anesthetic was five needles inserted into his body. Ten minutes after surgery, the patient said, "I felt like eating a steak. Actually I had roast chicken, mashed potatoes, and peas." He said that some time ago he had undergone an operation using conventional anesthesia, but that acupuncture was vastly superior. In another case, a man had a growth removed from a tonsil, using only acupuncture for anesthesia. He stated that previously he had a similar operation using conventional local anesthesia, but that it caused him "excruciating pain," whereas with acupuncture there had been none.

Unity Efforts Abandoned

◆ For over ten years, nine major Protestant churches in the United States have been trying to unite. The merger would have involved about 25 million members. However, the United Presbyterian Church, which had initiated the proposal, recently voted to abandon unity efforts. Leaders of other denominations said that the action was a "very serious blow" to unity. However, a representative of the Episcopal Church admitted that it "has been clear for some time that structural union does not fit the mood of the present day."

Church Favors Abortions

◆ Representatives of the United Presbyterian Church voted approval of 'abortion on demand' for women. One delegate protested that this would put the church in the position of "actually condoning mur-

der." But the measure was approved anyhow.

Alcoholic Priests

◆ Louis Cassels, United Press International religious editor, reveals that the Catholic National Clergy Council on Alcoholism is trying to bring into the open a serious problem that many Catholics prefer to ignore: alcoholic priests. The council's studies indicate that about one out of every ten Catholic priests is an alcoholic. Priest Gavin Griffin, a former alcoholic, said that there is a conspiracy of silence among the Catholic laity to "protect" alcoholic priests. He said that even the hierarchy does not know the extent of the problem. Cassels says that although there is a similar problem among Protestant clergymen, there is no Protestant organization comparable to the Catholic Council, which is determined to bring the subject into the open.

Cigarettes Win

◆ Does cigarette smoking or polluted air hurt lungs most? A group of researchers who studied the lungs of 1,831 persons who had died concluded: 'No contest'—cigarettes were, by far, number one in causing lung damage. Of the men who had never smoked, only 10 percent showed any signs of lung disease. But of those who had smoked from one to 19 cigarettes a day, 87 percent were affected by lung disease. And of the men who smoked 20 or more cigarettes a day, 99.7 percent were found to have lung disease. Findings in the women were similar.

Shoplifting and Drugs

◆ Industry sources say that shoplifters in the United States took in excess of \$5 thousand million from retail stores in 1971. In 1972, the loss is expected to exceed \$6 thousand million. It is estimated that, out of every ten people who enter a store now, one is a

shoplifter. In 1950 only 5 percent of the shoplifters were drug addicts. But now 40 percent are. It is obvious that drug addiction has led many to resort to stealing to support their costly habit.

Warning on 'Legal' Drugs

◆ Problems associated with illegal drug use get most of the headlines. However, Dr. Ivan Borda of the University of Western Ontario stresses that perhaps 5 percent of all hospital patients are those who are suffering from adverse reactions to prescribed and patented drugs. Some studies estimate that 10 to 30 percent of all patients already in hospitals have one or more adverse drug reactions during their stay.

Church of Scotland's Woes

◆ The Glasgow *Herald* reports that the Church of Scotland,

which has experienced declines in church membership, is now seeing the same decline in the number of young people attending Sunday school and Bible class. Also, there were 1,388 fewer Sunday-school teachers as compared to the previous year. Three children's magazines put out by the church are ceasing publication due to a lack of interest. The *Herald* noted that 40 percent of the members of the Church of Scotland never attended Communion last year.

Not Ready for Long Trips

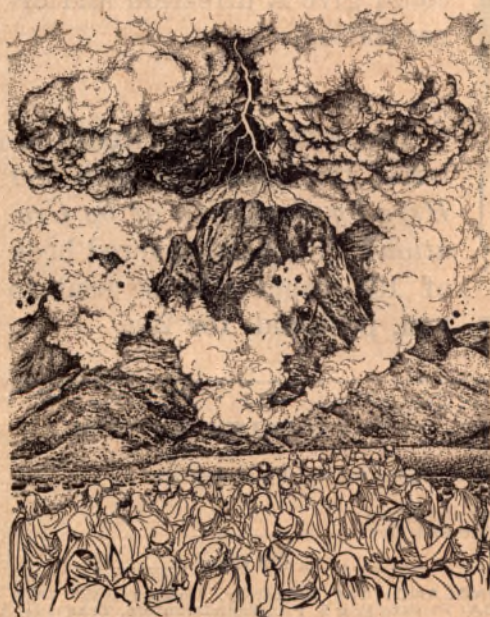
◆ Man was judged not ready for long space trips by the National Academy of Sciences—National Research Council. This study, undertaken at the request of the United States space administration, revealed that the "long-term effects on man of isolation, confinement, and sensory restriction, in con-

junction with other stresses, are too poorly understood." More study was also called for regarding another potential hazard in deep space: high-energy heavy cosmic ray particles that could cause adverse effects "particularly on non-dividing cells in the central nervous system."

State of the Arts

◆ The arts, including poetry, music and painting, are in terrible shape, and the outlook for any improvement is dismal, says a famous author, Robert Graves. Many ordinary people who see what passes for art in paintings, music and poetry would agree. In regard to music, Graves stated: "It seems to be agreed among the leading musicians of my acquaintance that never in the past century has there been so poor a crop of original composers."

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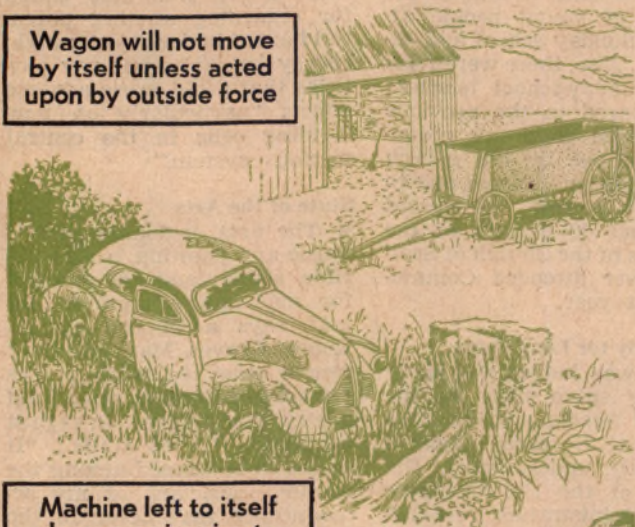
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WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF LIFE?

Wagon will not move
by itself unless acted
upon by outside force



Machine left to itself
decays, as inanimate
matter tends downward,
not upward

Time produces disinte-
gration, eroding cliffs.
It is destructive, not
constructive



Do you know any phys-
ical laws indicating that
inanimate matter can
search out a way to im-
prove itself? How, then,
could it of itself produce
life?

Appealing to immense peri-
ods of time will not help, as
time produces decay, disinte-
gration.

Inanimate matter, devoid of
energy and life to begin with,
would have stayed inanimate
forever unless acted upon by
a superior outside force that
could give it direction and or-
ganization.

You will find of intense in-
terest the book *Did Man Get
Here by Evolution or by Cre-
ation?* This hard-covered book
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