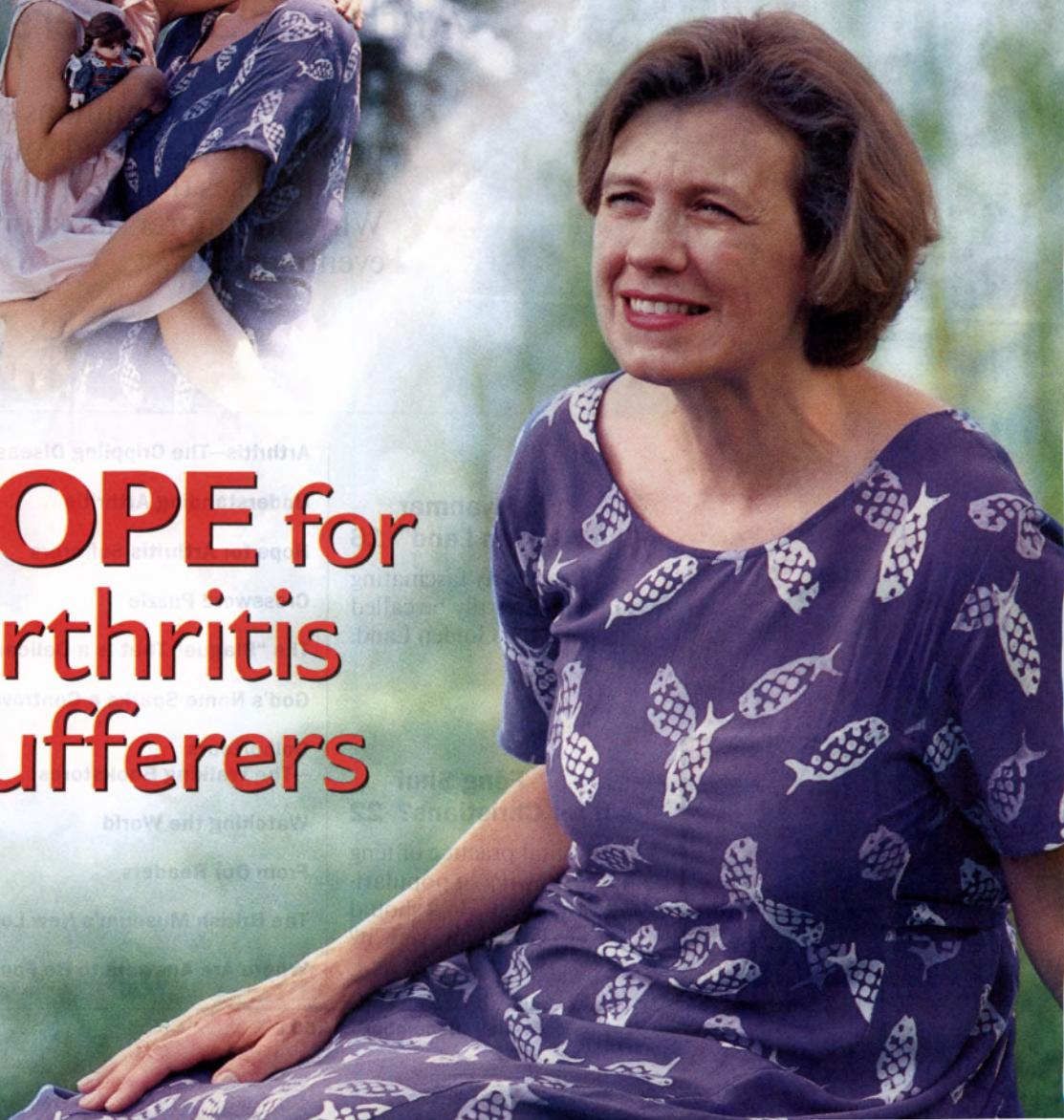


# Awake!

December 8, 2001



## HOPE for Arthritis Sufferers



## **HOPE for Arthritis Sufferers 3-12**

Arthritis afflicts millions of people—both old and young. What causes this crippling disease? Why can sufferers look forward to eventual relief?



### **Myanmar —The “Golden Land” 16**

Learn why fascinating Myanmar can truly be called the Golden Land.



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The Oriental practice of fêng shui is growing in popularity in the West. How should Christians view it?

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# ARTHRITIS

## The Crippling Disease



**"YOU CAN'T IMAGINE THE PAIN UNTIL  
YOU'VE EXPERIENCED IT. THE ONLY WAY TO  
GET RELIEF, I THOUGHT, WOULD BE TO DIE."**

—SETSKUO, JAPAN.



**"HAVING HAD IT SINCE I WAS 16,  
I FEEL THIS DISEASE STOLE MY YOUTH."**

—DARREN, GREAT BRITAIN.



**"I LOST TWO YEARS OF MY LIFE  
BECAUSE OF BEING BEDRIDDEN."**

—KATIA, ITALY.



**"ONCE THE PAIN STARTED IN ALL MY  
JOINTS, MY WHOLE LIFE WAS JUST  
PAIN."**—JOYCE, SOUTH AFRICA.

**T**HESE are the plaintive expressions of victims of the disease known as arthritis. Arthritis drives millions of sufferers to their physicians each year seeking relief from the pain, immobility, and deformity it can cause.

In the United States alone, arthritis affects more than 42 million people, disabling 1 out of every 6 sufferers. In fact, arthritis is the leading cause of disability in that country. The economic impact of this disease is "roughly equivalent to a moderate recession," states the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as it costs Americans over 64 billion dollars each year in medical expenses and lost productivity. According to the World Health Organization, surveys involving developing countries, such as Brazil, Chile, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand, showed that the burden of arthritis and other rheumatic diseases in such lands is almost "equal to that in the industrialized world."

X-ray: Used by kind permission of the Arthritis Research Campaign, United Kingdom ([www.arc.org.uk](http://www.arc.org.uk))

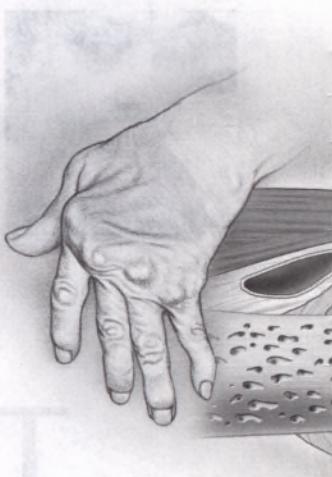
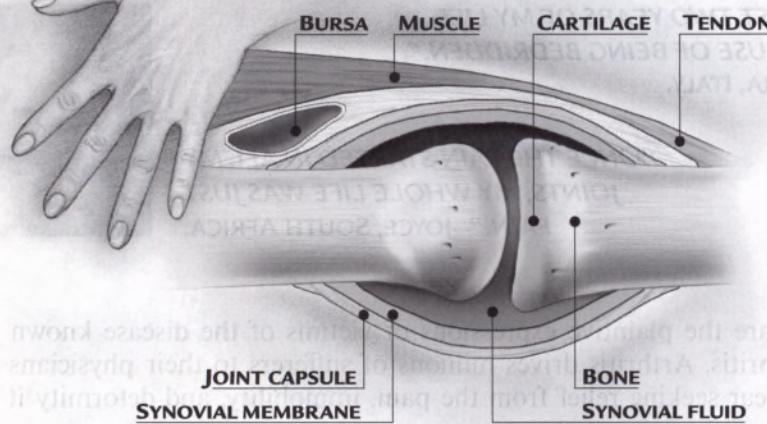
It is a myth that arthritis is only a disease of the elderly. True, people are more seriously affected by it as they grow older. But one of the most common forms, rheumatoid arthritis, commonly affects those between the ages of 25 and 50. In the United States, nearly 3 out of every 5 people with arthritis are younger than 65 years of age. Similarly, in Great Britain, out of 8 million sufferers, 1.2 million are under age 45. More than 14,500 are children.

Each year, the number of arthritis sufferers increases rapidly. In Canada, within the next decade, the number of people with arthritis will increase by one million. While the prevalence of arthritis is greater in Europe

than in Africa and Asia, the incidence of this disease is on the rise in those latter continents too. The rising tide of arthritic disease has thus prompted the World Health Organization to declare 2000-2010 the Bone and Joint Decade. During this time doctors and health-care professionals around the world will collaborate in an effort to improve the quality of life for those who suffer from musculoskeletal diseases like arthritis.

What is known about this painful disorder? Who are at risk for developing it? How can those who suffer from arthritis cope with its crippling effects? Will the future bring a cure? Our following articles will discuss these issues.

## HEALTHY JOINT



Source: Arthritis Foundation

**Why Awake! Is Published** Awake! is for the enlightenment of the entire family. It shows how to cope with today's problems. It reports the news, tells about people in many lands, examines religion and science. But it does more. It probes beneath the surface and points to the real meaning behind current events, yet it always stays politically neutral and does not exalt one race above another. Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things.

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

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# Understanding ARTHRITIS

**"AT NIGHT, I LOOK AT MY DEFORMED FEET AND HANDS  
AND I CRY."—MIDORI, JAPAN.**

**A**RTHRITIS has plagued humans for centuries. Egyptian mummies give evidence that the disease existed centuries ago. Explorer Christopher Columbus evidently suffered from it. And millions to-

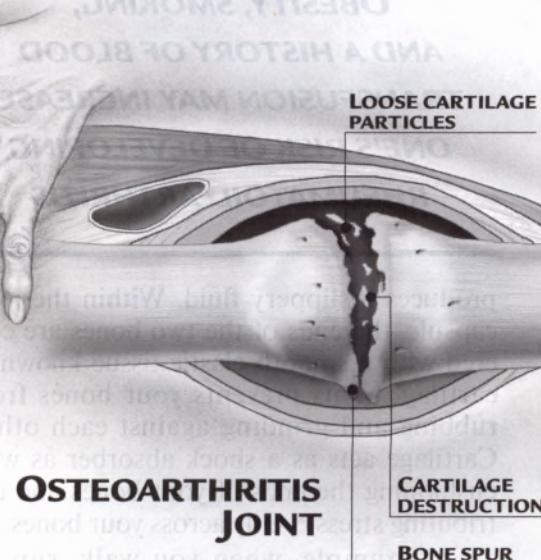
day are afflicted. Just what is this crippling disease?

The word "arthritis" is taken from Greek words meaning "inflamed joints" and is associated with a group of well over 100 rheumatic

## RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS JOINT

**LOSS OF  
SPACE**  
**BONE AND  
CARTILAGE  
DESTRUCTION**

**INFLAMED  
SYNOVIAL  
MEMBRANE**



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diseases and conditions.\* These diseases may affect not only the joints but also the muscles, bones, tendons, and ligaments that support them. Some forms of arthritis can damage your skin, internal organs, and even your eyes. Let us focus on two diseases commonly associated with arthritis—rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and osteoarthritis (OA).

### **Joint Architecture**

A joint is where two bones meet. A synovial joint is surrounded by a tough capsule that protects and supports it. (See illustration on page 4.) The joint capsule is lined with a synovial membrane. This membrane

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### **OBESITY, SMOKING, AND A HISTORY OF BLOOD TRANSFUSION MAY INCREASE ONE'S RISK OF DEVELOPING RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS**

---

produces a slippery fluid. Within the joint capsule, the ends of the two bones are covered with a smooth elastic tissue known as cartilage. This prevents your bones from rubbing and grinding against each other. Cartilage acts as a shock absorber as well, cushioning the ends of your bones and distributing stress evenly across your bones.

For example, when you walk, run, or jump, the pressure exerted on your hips and knees can be four to eight times your body weight! While most of the impact is absorbed by the surrounding muscles and tendons, the cartilage helps your bones to tolerate this load by compressing like a sponge.

\* Among these are osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, gout, bursitis, rheumatic fever, Lyme disease, carpal tunnel syndrome, fibromyalgia, Reiter's syndrome, and ankylosing spondylitis.

### **Rheumatoid Arthritis**

In the case of rheumatoid arthritis (RA), the body's immune system launches an all-out attack on its joints. For some unknown reason, a large volume of blood cells—including T cells, which are key players in the body's immune system—rushes into joint cavities. This triggers a cascade of chemical events that result in the joint becoming inflamed. The synovial cells may begin to proliferate uncontrollably, forming a tumorlike mass of tissue called a pannus. The pannus, in turn, produces destructive enzymes that destroy the cartilage. Bone surfaces may now stick together, causing restricted motion—and excruciating pain. This destructive process also weakens the ligaments, the tendons, and the muscles, causing the joint to become unstable and partially dislocated, oftentimes leaving a deformed appearance. Usually RA affects joints in a symmetrical pattern, afflicting the wrists, knees, and feet. Upwards of 50 percent of individuals diagnosed with RA also develop nodules or bumps under the skin. Some develop anemia and dry, painful eyes and throat. Fatigue and flulike symptoms, including fever and aching muscles, accompany RA.

RA is highly variable in effect, onset, and duration. In one person the pain and stiffness may come on slowly over a period of weeks and even years. For another, the onset may be quite sudden. For some people, RA lasts for a few months and then leaves without noticeable damage. Others may experience periods of worsening symptoms called flares, followed by periods of remission during which they feel better. And in some patients the disease continues active for many years, relentlessly disabling them.

Who are at risk for RA? "It's most common in women in their middle years," notes Dr. Michael Schiff. However, Schiff further states that "it can affect anyone at any age including children, as well as men." For

## **Arthritis can afflict people of any age**



those with relatives who have rheumatoid arthritis, the risk increases. Several studies further suggest that smoking, obesity, and a history of blood transfusion are all significant risk factors.

### **Osteoarthritis**

"Osteoarthritis," states the *Western Journal of Medicine*, "is in many ways like the weather—ubiquitous, often unnoticed, sometimes dramatic in its effects." Unlike RA, osteoarthritis (OA) rarely spreads to other body parts but concentrates its erosive influence in one or just a few joints. As cartilage is slowly eroded, bone begins grinding against bone. This is accompanied by bony outgrowths called osteophytes. Cysts may form, and the underlying bone thickens and becomes deformed. Other symptoms include knobby knuckles, grating and grinding sounds that emanate from arthritic joints, and muscle spasms, along with pain, stiffness, and loss of mobility.

In times past, OA was thought to be just another consequence of old age. However, experts have abandoned that long-held belief. *The American Journal of Medicine* states: "There is no evidence that a normal joint, subject to common stresses, will break down over the life of a person." Then what causes osteoarthritis? Efforts to understand its exact cause are "plagued by controversy," according to the British magazine *The Lancet*. Some investigators propose that damage to a bone, such as microfractures, may occur

first. This, in turn, may trigger bony outgrowths and cartilage deterioration. Others think that OA starts in the cartilage itself. As it degenerates and frays, they reason, stress increases on the underlying bone. Pathological changes occur as the body attempts to repair the damaged cartilage.

Who are at risk for OA? While age alone does not cause OA, the loss of joint cartilage is experienced more frequently with increasing age. Others at risk may include those who have some abnormality in the way their joint surfaces fit together or who have weak leg and thigh muscles, legs of unequal length, or a misalignment of the spine. Trauma to a joint caused either by an accident or by an occupation in which repetitive motions overuse a joint can also set the stage for osteoarthritis. Once deterioration begins, being overweight can exacerbate OA.

Dr. Tim Spector states: "Osteoarthritis is a complex disease that has definite environmental risk factors but there is also a strong genetic component." Particularly susceptible to OA are middle-aged and older women with a family history of the disease. Unlike the disease osteoporosis, high rather than low bone density precedes the occurrence of OA. Some researchers also cite damage from free oxygen radicals and a deficiency of vitamins C and D as factors.

### **Treatment**

Treatment for arthritis usually involves a combination of medication, exercise, and

## ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES

Some therapeutic agents are thought to be safer, with fewer side effects, than traditional treatments. Among these are oral type II collagen, which some researchers claim has had success in reducing swollen joints and pain in rheumatoid arthritis

(RA). How? By inhibiting proinflammatory and destructive cytokines, namely interleukin-1 and tumor necrosis factor  $\alpha$ . A few natural nutrients have also reportedly shown some ability to inhibit these same destructive elements. They include vitamin E,

vitamin C, niacinamide, fish oils that are high in eicosapentaenoic acid and gammalinolenic acid, borage seed oil, and oil of evening primrose. In China, *Tripterygium wilfordii* Hook F, an herbal remedy, has been used for years. Reportedly, it has had a measure of success in reducing the effects of RA.

life-style modification. A physical therapist may initiate a therapeutic exercise program. It may incorporate range-of-motion, isometric, aerobic, and isotonic or weight-bearing exercises. These have been shown to improve a multitude of symptoms including joint pain and swelling, fatigue, malaise, and depression. The benefits of exercise are seen even in the very elderly. Exercise can also limit bone-density loss. Some claim that a measure of pain relief has also been achieved through various forms of heat and cold therapy and acupuncture.\*

Because weight loss can significantly reduce joint pain, diet can be a major com-

ponent of arthritis management. Some have also claimed that a diet that includes calcium-rich foods such as dark, leafy green vegetables, fresh fruits, and cold-water fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids—and that cuts down on processed foods and saturated fats—can not only help achieve weight loss but also reduce pain. How? Some say that such a diet inhibits the inflammatory process. There are also claims that diets that eliminate meat, milk products, wheat, and vegetables belonging to the nightshade family, such as tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, and eggplant, have also been effective for some.

In some cases a surgical procedure called arthroscopy is recommended. This involves inserting an instrument right into a joint, allowing a surgeon to remove the synovial tissue producing the destructive enzymes. This procedure has limited effectiveness, however, as inflammation often recurs. Even more drastic a procedure is joint arthroplasty, in which the entire joint (usually a hip or a knee) is replaced with an artificial one. This

\*Awake! does not endorse any therapy, drug, or surgical procedure. Each sufferer has the responsibility of searching out and carefully weighing any treatment in the light of known facts.

A program of exercise and proper diet can bring some relief



surgery has a longevity of 10 to 15 years and is often highly effective in eliminating pain.

More recently, doctors have tried less invasive treatments, such as viscosupplementation, where hyaluronic fluid is injected directly into a joint. This is most commonly performed on the knees. Injecting substances that stimulate cartilage repair (chondroprotective agents) has also had a measure of success, according to some European studies.

While no drug has been found to cure arthritis, many drugs reduce pain and inflammation, and some have shown promise in slowing the progression of the disease. Analgesics, or painkillers, as well as corticosteroid

therapy, nonsteroid anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (DMARDs), immunosuppressants, biologic response modifiers, and drugs genetically engineered to interfere with the immune response are all part of the arsenal being used to provide relief from the debilitating symptoms of arthritis. However, relief may come at a high price, as all of these types of drugs can cause serious side effects. Weighing the potential benefits and risks presents a challenge for both the patient and the doctor.

How have some who have suffered the ravages of arthritis been able to cope with this painful disease?

## HOPE for Arthritis Sufferers

**A**RTHRITIS is not a major cause of mortality like heart disease or cancer," says Dr. Fatima Mili, "but it has a great impact on the quality of life." Arthritis can affect all aspects of a person's life. Just what are some of the problems confronting those suffering with arthritis? Is it possible to cope?

Katia,\* aged 28, from Italy, says: "Since being diagnosed with arthritis at the age of 20, my whole life has changed. I've had to quit my job and give up my career in the full-time ministry because of the pain." Pain is a universal problem among arthritis sufferers. Alan, aged 63, from England, says: "You always have pain somewhere in your body, though it may be moderate." Fatigue is another challenge. "Even if you could put up with the pain and swelling," says Sarah, aged 21, "the tiredness is unbearable."

\* Some of the names have been changed.



### **Emotional Pain**

According to 61-year-old Setsuko, of Japan, struggling each day with chronic pain can also "wear you out emotionally and mentally." Why, simply trying to grip a pencil or the telephone can be a challenge! Kazumi, aged 47, laments: "Even ordinary things that a child can do have become impossible for me." Sixty-year-old Janice, who can no longer spend much time on her feet, says: "It's discouraging because I can't do what I used to."

Such limitations can cause frustration and negative feelings about oneself. Gaku, aged 27, is one of Jehovah's Witnesses and says: "Not being able to share fully in the evangelizing work or fulfill congregation assignments makes me feel that as a person I have no value whatsoever." Francesca, who has battled with arthritis since the age of two, speaks of "being sucked deeper and deeper into a whirlpool of despair." Such despair can have adverse spiritual effects. Joyce, a Witness from South Africa, admits that she

began isolating herself from Christian meetings. "I just could not face seeing anybody," she explains.

A sufferer may also have much anxiety regarding the future—fear of becoming immobile and dependent on others, fear of being left without a care giver, fear of falling and breaking bones, fear of not being able to provide for one's family. Yoko, aged 52, admits: "When I'd see deformities occurring, I'd become fearful that they would increase."

Family members too may suffer emotional pain, being confronted every day with the suffering of their loved one. Some couples may even experience severe marital strain. A woman in England, named Denise, says: "After 15 years of marriage, my

***There are many devices that help sufferers lead productive lives***



husband announced, 'I can't put up with your arthritis anymore!' He left me and our 5-year-old daughter."

Arthritis thus presents huge challenges both to sufferers and their families. Nevertheless, many are successfully coping! Let us take a look at how some are doing so.

### Respecting Your Limitations

Getting proper rest is essential if you are an arthritis sufferer; it can minimize fatigue. This does not mean, though, that you should drop out of life. Timothy explains: "You need to keep active so as not to let arthritis take you over mentally because if it does, you'll just sit there and feel the pain." Rheumatologist William Ginsburg of the Mayo Clinic observes: "There's a fine line between doing too much and too little. Sometimes people have to be reminded to slow down and listen to their disease."

This may entail changing the way you view your limitations. Daphne, from South Africa, relates: "I've had to be realistic and know that my ability to do certain things has not gone away; I just had to do them in a much slower manner. Rather than become anxious or frustrated, I simply do a little at a time."

It is also a good idea to become acquainted with various assistive devices that might be available, perhaps discussing these with your doctor or physical therapist. Keiko relates: "We've installed a stair lift. Turning knobs hurt my wrists, so we changed them. Now I can open all the doors by pushing with my head. We installed lever-type handles on all the water taps in the house so that I could at least do some housework." Another arthritis sufferer named Gail says: "My car and house keys are attached to a long handle, making it easier for me to turn them. My comb and brush are on long extensions and can be adjusted to different angles for combing and brushing."

### Family Support—"A Tower of Strength"

Carla, from Brazil, says: "My husband's support has been crucial. The fact that he went with me on my visits to the doctor gave me courage. We discovered together how the disease affects my body, what its symptoms are, and what treatment would be necessary. I felt better because he could understand what I was going through." Yes, husbands or wives who accept the limitations of their mates and who are willing to become educated regarding their condition can be an enormous source of strength and support.

Bette, for example, took on cleaning jobs when her husband's arthritis curtailed his construction work. Kazumi's husband not only nursed her but also did the housework that she could not do. Further, he trained their children to do what they could to help out. Says Kazumi: "My husband has been a tower of strength. Without his help I would be in a far worse state."

A woman named Carol, from Australia, offers this caution: "Be careful not to crowd a schedule with too much activity. Feelings of inadequacy easily creep in on me if I cannot keep up with the family." Rendered with true understanding and consideration, family support can be a tower of strength for sufferers.

### Spiritual Aid

Katia says: "When a person suffers from an illness like this, she is convinced that no one knows what she is going through. This

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

#### Is Your Food Safe?

#### Young Dating—What's the Harm?

#### How Work Wins Praise in Moscow

makes it important to turn to Jehovah God, knowing that he really understands our physical and emotional condition. (Psalm 31:7) Having a good relationship with him has given me the peace of mind to live almost serenely with my illness." The Bible appropriately calls Jehovah "the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation."—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

Prayer can thus be a powerful source of comfort to someone suffering chronic pain. Kazumi relates: "During the long nights when I cannot sleep because of the pain, I have tearfully poured out my heart to Jehovah, asking him for strength to endure the pain and for wisdom to face all my difficulties. Jehovah has definitely answered me." Francesca has likewise experienced God's loving support. She says: "I've seen the fulfillment of the words at Philippians 4:13: 'For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me.'"

Oftentimes, Jehovah God provides support through the Christian congregation. Gail, for example, tells of the help she received from her spiritual brothers and sisters in the local congregation of Jehovah's Wit-

nesses. "Their love helped me not to become depressed," says Gail. In a similar vein, when Keiko was asked, "Is there anything you can think of that has been good in your life?", she replied: "Yes, all the love and sympathy I get from everyone in the congregation!"

In congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses, overseers take the lead in rendering such support. Setsuko says: "I can't describe how great the effect is on a person fighting illness when the elders listen and give comfort." However, as an arthritis sufferer named Daniel reminds us, "our spiritual brothers and sisters can only help if we let them." It is therefore important that sufferers stay in contact with fellow Christians, doing their very best to attend congregation meetings. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) There they can receive the spiritual encouragement needed to endure.

### Suffering Will End

Arthritis sufferers are grateful to the medical profession for the advances that have been made thus far. However, even the best treatments fall far short of being a real cure. In the long run, sufferers can find their greatest comfort in embracing God's promises of a new world.\* (Isaiah 33:24; Revelation 21:3, 4) In that world 'the lame one will leap up as a stag does.' (Isaiah 35:6) Arthritis and all the other diseases afflicting mankind will be gone forever! Peter, a victim of spinal arthritis, thus says: "I can see a light at the end of this dark tunnel I'm traveling through." A Christian woman named Giuliana likewise says: "I think of each day that passes as a battle won, one day less to endure before the end comes!" Yes, the time when there will be not only the end of arthritis but also the end of all suffering has drawn near!

**Loving support  
can be found at  
Christian meetings**

\* If you would like one of Jehovah's Witnesses to visit you to explain the Bible's promises, contact the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses or write to the publishers of this magazine.



## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

### Clues Across

1. Peter said that these "carry on a conflict against the soul" [2 words] (1 Peter 2:11)
6. His sanity restored, King Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that only Jehovah's would last "to time indefinite" (Daniel 4:34)
8. Eighteenth letter of the Greek alphabet
9. Ninth letter of the Greek alphabet
11. One of the seven sons of Elioenai, a postexilic descendant of King David (1 Chronicles 3:24)
12. Jesus stopped anyone who carried one from going through the temple (Mark 11:16)
15. Hezekiah was challenged to accept 2,000 horses from Sennacherib and see if he could put these upon them (2 Kings 18:23)
18. In counseling against frivolous oath taking, Jesus said that when you said this, you should mean it (Matthew 5:37)
20. To entice by charm or attraction (Deuteronomy 13:6)
22. To lay down by way of hypothesis (Genesis 18:32)
25. Saul's description of the pain preceding his death (2 Samuel 1:9)
26. A son of Sheikh Dishan, and a descendant of Seir the Horite (Genesis 36:28)
27. The name of the threshing floor where Uzzah died for grabbing hold of the ark of the covenant (2 Samuel 6:6, 7)
28. Paul passed through this Macedonian city, named after the Greek sun-god, on his way to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1)
29. Expression used to indicate an easterly direction [4 words] (Revelation 16:12)

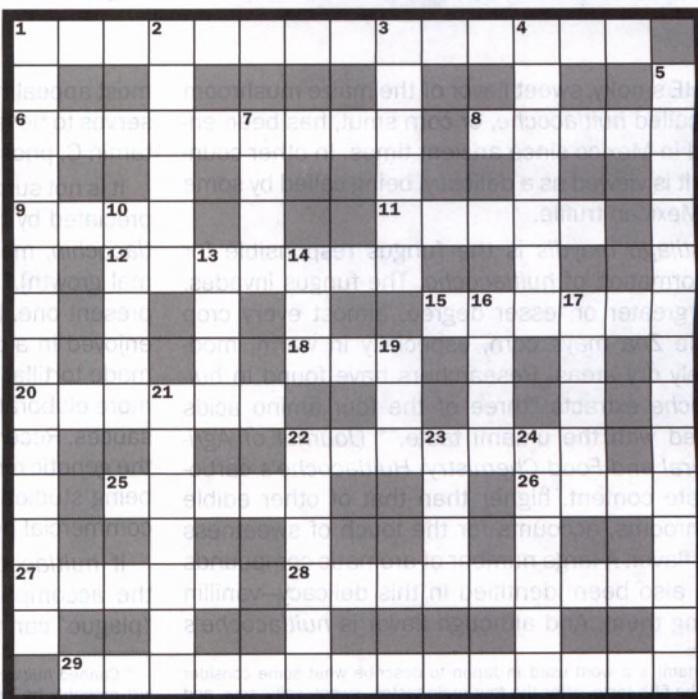
### Clues Down

1. Used to protect cities (Numbers 32:17)

2. This 11th month of the Jewish sacred calendar was not marked by any festival seasons (Zechariah 1:7)
3. The cities of Lod and Ono were built by this Benjamite or his sons (1 Chronicles 8:12)
4. Sat on the throne (1 Kings 2:11)
5. The well where Jesus rested and conversed with the Samaritan woman [2 words] (John 4:6)
7. The proper reaction to "empty speeches that violate what is holy" (2 Timothy 2:16)
10. A son of Noah's son Japheth (Genesis 10:2)
13. The chief one of the 11 valiant Gadites who "separated themselves to David's side" in the wilderness (1 Chronicles 12:8, 9)
14. To watch secretly for a hostile purpose (Galatians 2:4)
16. The compiler of Chronicles consulted the writings of this visionary for information concerning a number of kings (2 Chronicles 9:29)
17. Jesus said that the spirit is this, "but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38)
19. The fluid part of a plant (Job 8:16)
21. Pulls out (Matthew 13:29)\*
22. Came out of (Romans 1:3)
23. Extract (Luke 14:5)
24. One of the women who came to Jesus' tomb to treat his body with spices (Mark 16:1)

\* The scripture cited has a form of the word needed.

**Crossword Solutions Page 20**



# The “Plague” That Is a Delicacy

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN MEXICO

**The corn harvest will be good.** It is therefore with a smile of satisfaction that the farmer walks through his fields, examining the ears of corn. He picks one at random, and immediately a black spot attracts his attention. A closer look shows that the ear of corn has some extremely enlarged and distorted soft kernels with a blackish color. When opened, the dark black substance gives off a mushroomlike smell. A parasitic fungus has invaded that ear of corn! Is the crop ruined? No. The farmer smiles, delighted. He contemplates the possibility of harvesting more of it!

**T**HE smoky, sweet flavor of the maize mushroom called *huítacoche*, or corn smut, has been enjoyed in Mexico since ancient times. In other countries it is viewed as a delicacy, being called by some the Mexican truffle.

*Ustilago maydis* is the fungus responsible for the formation of *huítacoche*. The fungus invades, to a greater or lesser degree, almost every crop of the *Zea mays* corn, especially in warm, moderately dry areas. Researchers have found in *huítacoche* extracts “three of the four amino acids related with the umami taste.”\* (*Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*) *Huitlacoche*’s carbohydrate content, higher than that of other edible mushrooms, accounts for the touch of sweetness in its flavor. A large number of aromatic compounds have also been identified in this delicacy—vanillin among them. And although flavor is *huítacoche*’s

most appealing quality, its nutritional value also deserves to be taken into account, since it contains vitamin C, phosphorus, calcium, and other nutrients.

It is not surprising, then, that *huítacoche* was appreciated by the Aztecs, who gave it the name *cuitlacochein*, meaning “sleeping excrescence [abnormal growth].” Later, its name was changed to the present one. In Mexico *huítacoche* is traditionally enjoyed in a quesadilla, that is, in a folded, handmade tortilla. Nevertheless, it is also often used in more elaborate dishes, such as crepes, soups, and sauces. Recently, this mushroom has even entered the genetic researcher’s laboratory, where ways are being studied to make crops render more of it for commercial purposes.

If *huítacoche* is available locally, why not try the accompanying recipe.\* You’ll wonder how a “plague” can taste so good!

\* Umami is a word used in Japan to describe what some consider to be the fifth taste, after the four main tastes—sweet, salty, sour, and bitter.

\* Canned *huítacoche* can sometimes be purchased. In this case, it will probably be processed and ready to use. If refrigerated, *huítacoche* can stay fresh for from 8 to 15 days.





## Preparing *Huitlacoche*

18 ounces (or two 8-ounce cans)  
fresh finely chopped *huitlacoche*

1 finely chopped medium-size onion  
(about one cup)

2-4 finely chopped garlic cloves

2 tablespoons of epazote  
(*chenopodium ambrosioides*)  
or cilantro leaves

3 tablespoons oil

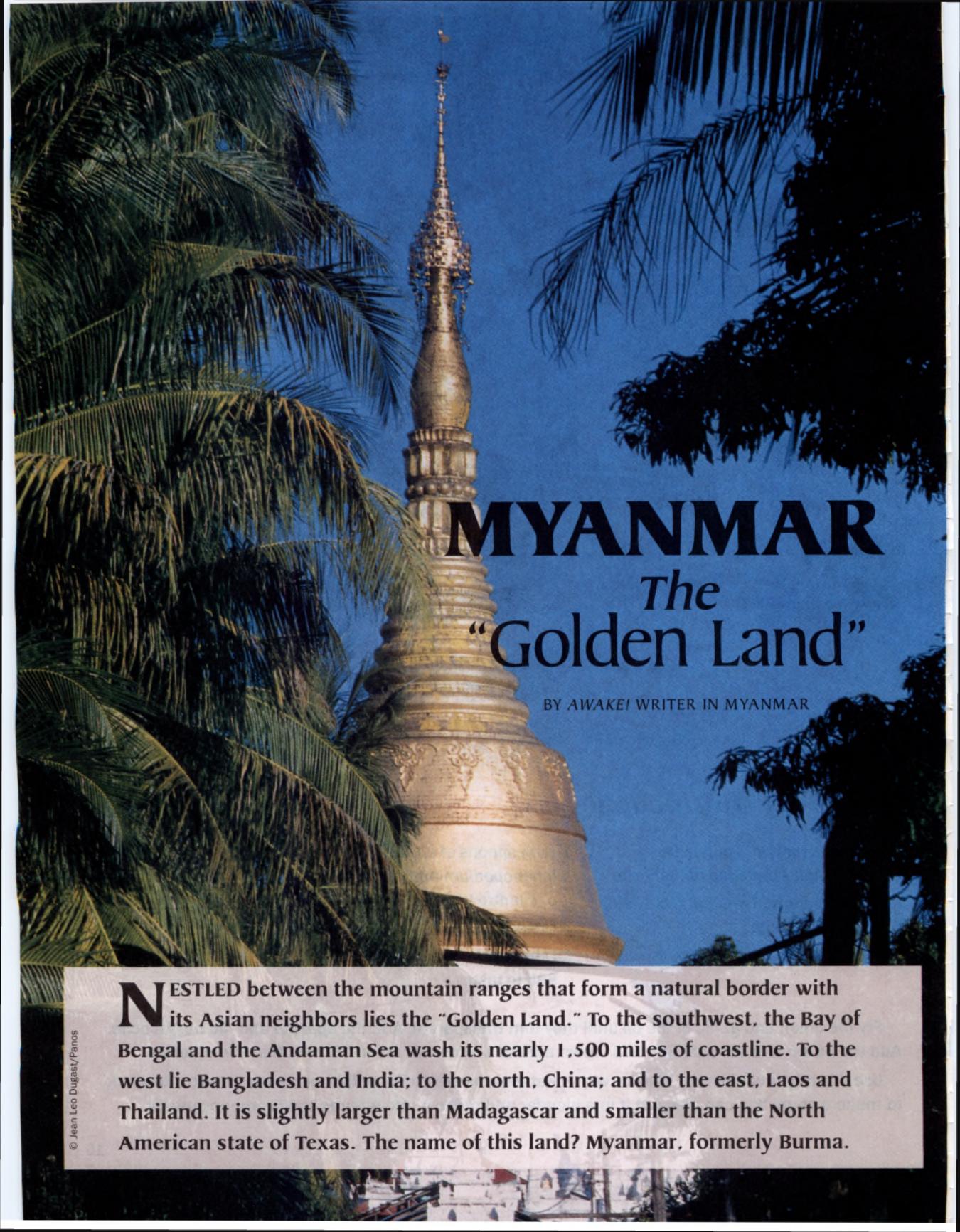
1 tablespoon butter

Salt to taste

Fry the onion and garlic in the oil until they turn transparent. Add the epazote and the *huitlacoche*. Add the butter and the salt. Stir well. Cover and let simmer for about 15 minutes, stirring often.

Use this mixture, either by itself or with meat and cheese, to fill tortillas or crepes, or add it to stock to make a soup. You can also put it in a blender and make it into a puree to accompany meats.





# MYANMAR

## *The* “Golden Land”

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN MYANMAR

**N**ESTLED between the mountain ranges that form a natural border with its Asian neighbors lies the “Golden Land.” To the southwest, the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea wash its nearly 1,500 miles of coastline. To the west lie Bangladesh and India; to the north, China; and to the east, Laos and Thailand. It is slightly larger than Madagascar and smaller than the North American state of Texas. The name of this land? Myanmar, formerly Burma.



**From top:** Men and women wear lungis; a young Buddhist monk; women wearing "thanaka"

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Digital Wisdom, Inc.



Called the Golden Land by its earliest settlers, Myanmar has many rich resources: oil and gas, copper, tin, silver, tungsten, and other minerals, as well as precious stones, such as sapphires, emeralds, rubies, and jade. Other treasures include tropical rain forests with such rare timbers as teak, rosewood, and padauk. The forests are also home to many wild animals—monkeys, tigers, bears, water buffalo, and elephants, to name a few. But the real treasures of the Golden Land are its people.

### The People of Myanmar

Traditionally mild and serene, the people of Myanmar are well-mannered and hospitable.



They treat visitors with respect and dignity. Children commonly address older men as uncle and older women as auntie.

Visitors to Myanmar often comment on the smooth complexions of the older people. One reason for this youthful skin, say the women, is a popular, pale-gold facial cosmetic—*thanaka*—derived from the *thanaka* tree. By grinding a piece of branch against a hard, flat stone and adding a little water, the women make a fine paste, which they spread on their faces in artistic designs. Besides having an astringent and cooling effect, *thanaka* shields the skin from the harsh, tropical sun.



▲ Preaching in a peanut field

◀ Wood carvings are sold in local markets  
[chaang.com](http://chaang.com)

▼ Cutting a design into the surface of a lacquerware tabletop



A beautifully adorned ►  
lacquerware bowl

[chaang.com](http://chaang.com)



The standard dress for both men and women in Myanmar is the lungi, easily made by sewing a piece of material, about two meters long, at its ends to form a circle. After stepping into it, a woman wraps the lungi around her midriff, like a skirt, and tucks the loose end in at her waist. A man, on the other hand, takes both ends and loosely ties them in front at the waist. Modest and free-flowing, the lungi is perfect for the tropics.

A visit to the markets demonstrates that the people of Myanmar are very talented—adept at weaving silk, handcrafting jewelry, and carving wood. Teak, padauk, and other timbers have been transformed into eye-catching figures of humans, tigers, horses, water buffalo, and elephants. Even such everyday things as tabletops, room dividers, and chairs are intricately embellished with carvings. But if you are serious about buying, prepare to bargain!

The people of Myanmar also excel in making beautifully adorned lacquerware—bowls, platters, and lidded boxes. But what make their wares unique are their free-form designs and incised patterns. The basic form begins with a woven mesh of fine bamboo slivers. (Higher-quality articles start with a weave of bamboo and horsehair together.) On this skeleton the craftsman adds up to seven layers of lacquer, made by mixing oil of the *thisei*, or lacquer tree, with finely ground and burned animal bone.

When the lacquer is dry, the craftsman engraves a design onto the surface of the article with a steel stylus. Then, after a little paint and polish, the result is not only a fine work of art but also something that is useful in the home.

#### Religion's Influence Abounds

About 85 percent of the people of Myanmar are Buddhist; the remainder mainly profess to be Mus-

lim and Christian. As in much of Southeast Asia, religion plays a major role in the lives of most people in Myanmar. However, certain religious customs would be unfamiliar to many visitors.

Buddhist monks, for example, vow not to touch a female. So out of respect, women take care not to come too close to the monks. Religious customs even impinge on bus travel. A Westerner might be puzzled by a sign in a bus saying: "Please do not ask the driver what time we are expected to arrive." Are the drivers weary of impatient commuters? No. Buddhists there believe that the nats (spirits) will be upset by such a question and may delay the bus!

### **Myanmar's History**

The earliest history of Myanmar is vague, but it seems that several tribal groups migrated there from neighboring lands. The Mon apparently gave the land the name Suvannabhumi—meaning "Golden Land." The Tibeto-Burmans came from the eastern Himalayas, and the Tai moved in from what is now southwestern China. Myanmar's rugged terrain kept tribes separated—thus the numerous tribal and language groups.

Early in the 19th century, the British began to arrive from newly colonized India. They settled in the southern region first and eventually occupied the whole country. By 1886, Burma, as Myanmar was then called, had been annexed to British India.

During World War II, this land became the center of bitter fighting, and in a few short months in 1942, Japanese armies drove the British out. Subsequently, the infamous "Death Railroad" was built. This 250-mile line ran through inhospitable jungle and mountain terrain to link Thanbyuzayat, in Burma, with Nong Pladuk, in Thailand. Because of a metal shortage, most of the line came from tracks pulled up in central Malaya (now Malaysia). A small part of

the project—building a bridge over the River Kwai—later formed the basis for a popular movie.

With the help of 400 elephants, over 300,000 men—prisoners of war and Indian and Burmese civilians—built the railway. Tens of thousands died on the job. Frequently pounded by Allied bombers, the line saw little use and was eventually abandoned. Later, most of the tracks were pulled up and used elsewhere.

Eventually, the British fought their way back, successfully retaking the country from Japan in 1945. But British rule was short-lived, for Burma gained its independence from Britain on January 4, 1948. On June 22, 1989, the United Nations adopted the country's new name, Myanmar.

### **A Land of Golden Capitals**

Myanmar has had many capital cities over the centuries. For example, in the heart of Myanmar lies Mandalay, popularly called the Golden City. Dotted with hundreds of pagodas of every vintage, this city of 500,000 people was the last capital before British occupation. King Mindon bequeathed royal honors on Mandalay in 1857, when he built a large palace there for himself and his queens. The 1.5 square miles of the old city rest within 25-foot-high walls, 10 feet thick at the base. A 200-foot-wide moat complements the walls.

In 1855 the British exiled Mindon's successor, King Thibaw, to India, but they left the palace untouched. World War II did not, however; and it was leveled by fire. Undaunted, the people of Myanmar built an excellent replica of the palace as well as its majestic red-and-gold wooden buildings on its original site. It is open for visitors to see.

One hundred miles downstream from Mandalay sits Pagan. Another former capital, it was founded during the first millennium of the Common Era and rose to



**Myanmar branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses**

the heights of splendor in the 11th century; but it was abandoned only 200 years later. Nonetheless, strewn among and around a few small villages are hundreds of dilapidated temples and pagodas—echoes of a former glory.

Today's capital, Yangon (officially known as Rangoon until 1989), is a lively city of over three million, bustling with tooting cars, buses, and open-sided taxis. Though many old buildings reminiscent of British colonial days line Yangon's wide, tree-lined avenues, the city skyline now includes modern high-rise hotels and office buildings.

Also set in this skyline, the 320-foot gilded spire of the 2,500-year-old Shwedagon Pagoda advertises the wealth and architectural genius of earlier times. Allegedly, some 7,000 diamonds and other precious stones encircle the spire. Its apex is crowned by a single 76-carat diamond. Like many ancient buildings in Myanmar, the Shwedagon has been wrenched and pounded by earthquakes and wars, and much of it has been rebuilt.

However, some claim that the golden Sule Pagoda is the real centerpiece of Yangon. One hundred fifty feet high, the 2,000-year-old Sule Pagoda forms a large, golden traffic island at the junction of four main city streets. The pagoda is surrounded by a necklace of shops.

## Spiritual Gold

In 1914, two International Bible Students (as Jehovah's Witnesses were known in those days) arrived in Rangoon from India, searching for people who valued a superior gold—spiritual gold. In 1928 and 1930, more missionaries arrived, and by 1939, three congregations totaling 28 Witnesses had been established. The India branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Bombay supervised the work there until 1938. From then until 1940, the Australia branch took care of the work. After World War II, in 1947, Myanmar's first branch office was opened in Rangoon.

In January 1978, the branch office was moved to Inya Road. The three-story headquarters building is called the Myanmar Bethel Home. The Bethel family of 52 works hard caring for the needs of some 3,000 Witnesses active in the country. Myanmar's many tribal languages make translation a major part of the work done at the branch. The hard work of Jehovah's Witnesses adds one more 'nugget of gold' to the many riches of the Golden Land.

### CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

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# GOD'S NAME SPARKS A CONTROVERSY

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN THE NETHERLANDS

**T**HE translators of a new Dutch Bible have sparked a controversy among Bible scholars and laypersons alike. The cause? Their decision to render God's name with the word *Heer*, or Lord.

In December 1998, just weeks after the translators had released a sample of their work, a group of women belonging to *Kerk en Wereld* (Church and World), a Protestant organization, launched a protest campaign by mail. The reason? They viewed the word "Lord" as "too masculine." Soon, other groups—Catholic and Protestant—joined the protest campaign. In February 1999, three scholars added their voices by saying that they advocated simply transliterating the four Hebrew letters of God's name as YHWH. Before long, Bible scholars, translators, and theologians were meeting in Amsterdam to discuss the issue. At the end of the discussion, all participants were invited to vote on which rendering they preferred.

Under the heading "For God's Sake, No Fighting About God's Name," the newspaper *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* reported on the outcome: "The LORD gets merely seven votes. But most of the alternatives do not score much better: the Name (1), the One (3), the Merciful (6), the

Unnameable (7), the Living One (10), and the Eternal One (15). And the winner is . . . YHWH!" On March 15, 2001, the Supervision Committee of the new Bible translation decided to use **HEER** (LORD) in small capital letters to represent the divine name.

This controversy highlights that despite the disagreements about the preferred rendering of God's name in Dutch, scholars agree that God has a personal name. In Hebrew the name consists of four Hebrew letters, namely, יְהֹוָה, or YHWH. How have other Bible translations in Dutch, past and present, rendered YHWH?

A Dutch man named Nicolaas Goetzee published a folio edition of the *Staten* translation of the Bible in 1762. It stated on the title page: "For weighty and well-known reasons, we have also left God's Memorial Name JEHOVAH

untranslated." Other well-known Dutch scholars—such as Professor Nicolaas Beets and Petrus Augustus de Genestet—have also used the name Jehovah.

Interestingly, the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*\* consistently uses the name Jehovah. The appendix to the *New World Translation* in Dutch states that it "continues to use the form 'Jehovah' because of people's familiarity with it for centuries. Moreover, it preserves . . . the four letters of the divine name, YHWH." The *New World Translation* has thus helped millions to know the truth regarding God's name.

\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Voor de leider, op de Gittith.  
Van de roep van Jezus. Een prediche.  
Wie heeft de grootste taak?  
Isaïas 42:1-4.



# Fêng Shui—Is It for Christians?

**I**N ASIA, grave sites are chosen according to it. Buildings are designed and decorated according to it. Property is bought and sold based on it. In Chinese it is known as fêng shui, a form of geomancy or augury. Although fêng shui has been popular in Asia for centuries, in recent years it has spread to Western lands. Some architects are using it in designing skyscrapers, offices, and homes. Some housewives are using it in decorating their homes. Dozens of books and Internet Web sites promote and teach it.

The reason for this growing popularity? According to one advocate, fêng shui can bring “improved living, health, better marriages or partnerships, greater wealth, and personal peace of mind.” While that all sounds appealing, just what is this practice, and how should Christians view it?

### What Is It?

The Chinese words *fêng shui* literally mean “wind-water.” The roots of fêng shui go back thousands of years to the time when many Oriental philosophies were developed. Included among these was belief in the so-called balance of yin and yang (darkness and light, hot and cold, negative and positive). The concept of yin and yang was joined with the idea of *ch'i*, which literally means “air” or “breath.” Yin, yang, and *ch'i*, along with the so-called five elements of wood, earth, water, fire, and metal, form integral parts of fêng shui theory. Devotees of fêng shui believe that powerful lines of energy run through every landscape. The goal is to pinpoint loca-

tions where the energies, or *ch'i*, of the land and sky are brought into balance. This is accomplished by altering the landscape itself or by making alterations within a building on a particular site. Bringing about this balance is supposed to bring good fortune to those working or living there.

Usually, fêng shui masters consult a geomantic compass.\* This is a small magnetic compass set in the middle of what is basically an astrological chart. The compass contains concentric circles, which are divided by lines. A geomantic compass contains data on such things as constellations, seasons, and periods of the solar cycles. When analyzing a site or building, a number of compass readings are taken. The fêng shui master observes where the compass needle intersects with points on the outer lines and circles, and from this he determines what is needed to “cure” a site.

Nearby topography, watercourses, sewer drains, and even the placement of windows and doors in a building may all be taken into consideration in deciding how to bring a site into balance. For example, in Canada a shopkeeper hung a mirror over the back door of her store to “correct” the positioning of its doors. A geomancy practitioner might similarly recommend moving plants or furniture, replacing a picture, adding wind chimes, or setting up an aquarium so as to bring a building or a room into balance.

\* In Western lands practitioners have tried to give fêng shui a more scientific appearance, some even using computers to assist them in analyzing geographic sites.

### The Christian View

Significantly, most libraries catalog books on fēng shui with writings on astrology and fortune-telling. In fact, *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* describes geomancy as "divination by means of figures or lines or geographic features." (Italics ours.) Thus, it is widely accepted that fēng shui and other types of geomancy are forms of fortune-telling. They involve divination and spiritistic practices, which are nothing new to mankind.

When the Israelites left Egypt and finally entered the land of Canaan in the 15th century B.C.E., divination of all sorts was prevalent in both lands. Through Moses, God said, as recorded at Deuteronomy 18:14: "These nations whom you are dispossessing used to listen to those practicing magic and to those who divine; but as for you, Jehovah your God has not given you anything like this." The many forms of divination in Egypt and Canaan originated in ancient Babylon. When Jehovah confused the language of the people of Babylon, they spread to other places, taking with them the practices connected with Babylonish divination and spiritism.—Genesis 11:1-9.

Jehovah God sternly and repeatedly warned Israel not to take up the divination

practices of other nations, saying: "There should not be found in you anyone who . . . employs divination, a practitioner of magic or anyone who looks for omens . . . For everybody doing these things is something detestable to Jehovah, and on account of these detestable things Jehovah your God is driving them away from before you." (Deuteronomy 18:9-12; Leviticus 19:26, 31) Practitioners of divination were to be put to death without fail.—Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 20:27.

Why was divination so roundly condemned? Acts 16:16-19 tells of a woman who had "a *demon* of divination." Yes, divination is inextricably linked with demonism. Practicing any form of divination can thus put one in contact with Satan and his demons! That could result in spiritual ruin.—2 Corinthians 4:4.

Some popular styles of decorating and landscaping, Oriental or Occidental, may have originally been influenced by false religious practices like fēng shui. Oftentimes, though, such styles have entirely lost their religious significance. Still, it would be a clear violation of God's law to use fēng shui to divine the future or to bring good luck or good health. To do so would be to violate the Bible's clear-cut command to avoid touching anything "unclean."—2 Corinthians 6:14-18.



A geomantic compass

Pages 2 and 23: Hong Kong Tourism Board

# COLPORTEURS

## *The Walking Bookstores*

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN FRANCE

UNDER the dome of the Jandri Glacier, at the top of the Deux-Alpes ski station in southeastern France, a small "museum" opened up some years ago. Among the ice sculptures on display was one that paid tribute to an obsolete mountain trade—it was a sculpture of a colporteur.

For centuries colporteurs went from market to market and from house to house plying the wares that they carried (French: *porter*) around their neck (French: *col*). Most people today have never heard of them. Those who have may tend to think of them as petty salesmen of trivial items. In reality, colporteurs have left a legacy that affects the lives of millions of people to this day.

### A Closer Look at Colportage

Far from being miserable wretches, many colporteurs were highly organized merchants, distributing the latest goods by way of extensive European networks. Not all colporteurs plied their trade for material gain, however. Some did so to spread their beliefs and convictions. Some even lost their lives doing so.

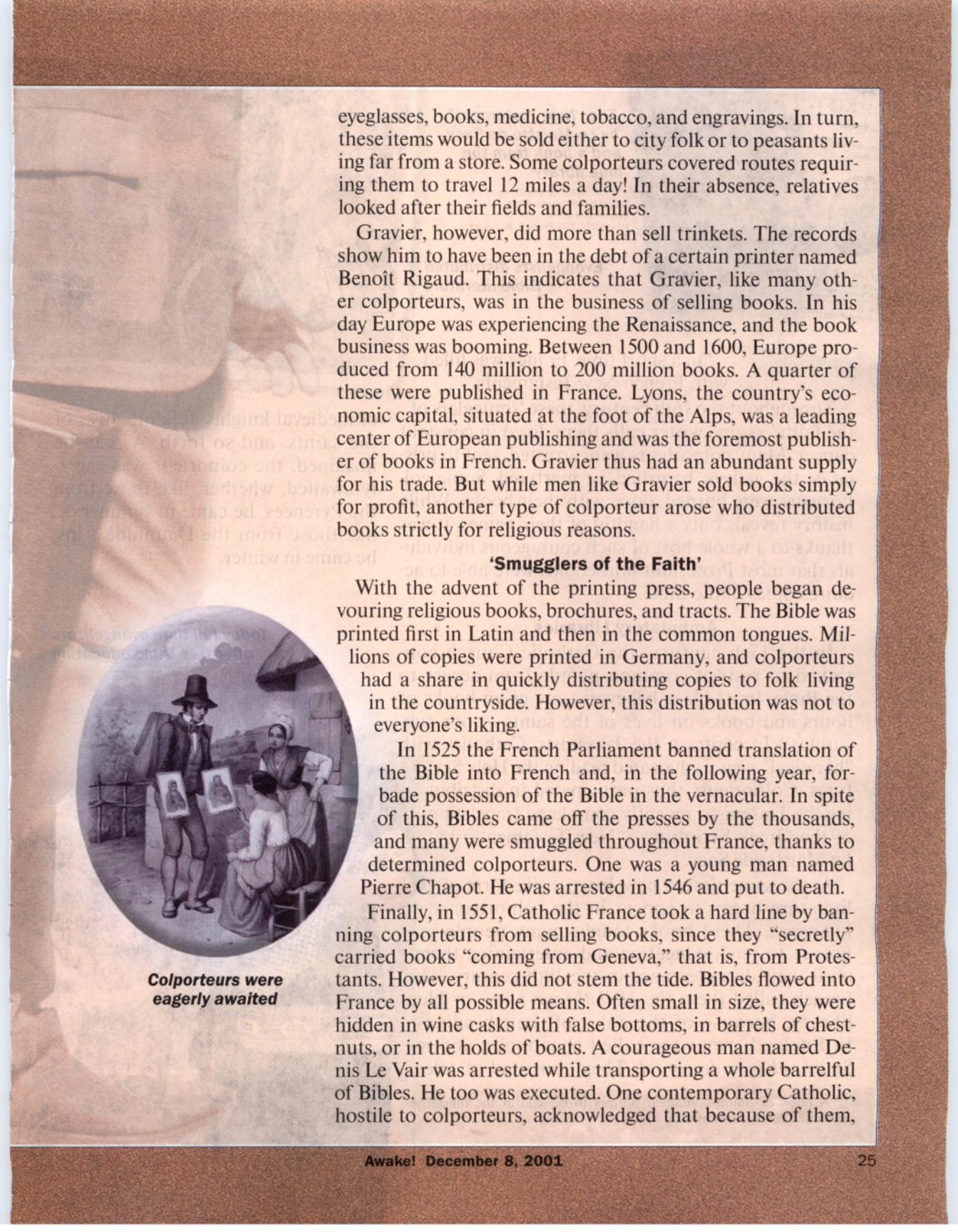
Apparently the work of colporteurs began sometime during the late Middle Ages. The first ones were mountain dwellers from the alpine crescent, the Pyrenees, and the Scottish Highlands. Many were farm workers who after the harvest was finished would take up the life of an itinerant salesman.

A Frenchman named Jehan Gravier was one of these traveling merchants. In the 16th century, he and his family lived in the mountainous area called La Grave. Doubtless because the farmland was unproductive, he responded to the demand from those in the valley towns for products such as wood, leather, wool, and salt—products from the mountain regions. Colporteurs like Gravier brought these products into town and traded them for haberdashery, combs,



**Colporteurs brought the latest goods to people's homes**

▲ © Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris ►



eyeglasses, books, medicine, tobacco, and engravings. In turn, these items would be sold either to city folk or to peasants living far from a store. Some colporteurs covered routes requiring them to travel 12 miles a day! In their absence, relatives looked after their fields and families.

Gravier, however, did more than sell trinkets. The records show him to have been in the debt of a certain printer named Benoît Rigaud. This indicates that Gravier, like many other colporteurs, was in the business of selling books. In his day Europe was experiencing the Renaissance, and the book business was booming. Between 1500 and 1600, Europe produced from 140 million to 200 million books. A quarter of these were published in France. Lyons, the country's economic capital, situated at the foot of the Alps, was a leading center of European publishing and was the foremost publisher of books in French. Gravier thus had an abundant supply for his trade. But while men like Gravier sold books simply for profit, another type of colporteur arose who distributed books strictly for religious reasons.

#### **'Smugglers of the Faith'**

With the advent of the printing press, people began devouring religious books, brochures, and tracts. The Bible was printed first in Latin and then in the common tongues. Millions of copies were printed in Germany, and colporteurs had a share in quickly distributing copies to folk living in the countryside. However, this distribution was not to everyone's liking.

In 1525 the French Parliament banned translation of the Bible into French and, in the following year, forbade possession of the Bible in the vernacular. In spite of this, Bibles came off the presses by the thousands, and many were smuggled throughout France, thanks to determined colporteurs. One was a young man named Pierre Chapot. He was arrested in 1546 and put to death.

Finally, in 1551, Catholic France took a hard line by banning colporteurs from selling books, since they "secretly" carried books "coming from Geneva," that is, from Protestants. However, this did not stem the tide. Bibles flowed into France by all possible means. Often small in size, they were hidden in wine casks with false bottoms, in barrels of chestnuts, or in the holds of boats. A courageous man named Denis Le Vair was arrested while transporting a whole barrelful of Bibles. He too was executed. One contemporary Catholic, hostile to colporteurs, acknowledged that because of them,



**Colporteurs were  
eagerly awaited**



**The "New Testament" by Le Maistre de Sacy, and a book from the blue library**

Far left: © Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris  
Left: © B.M.W.R de Troyes/Bbl.390/Photo P. Jacquinot

**Evangelists distributed Bible literature**

"in a short time, France was filled with French New Testaments."

Throughout the 16th century, these 'smugglers of the faith,' as one writer calls them, lived in constant danger. Many colporteurs were arrested, sent to prison or the galleys, banished, or martyred. Some colporteurs were burned along with their books. While history reveals only a handful of their names, it was thanks to a whole host of such courageous individuals that most Protestant households were able to acquire copies of the Bible.

**Ambulatory Libraries**

In the 17th century, the Catholic Church continued to restrict common people from access to the Bible. In its place believers were given books of hours and books on lives of the saints—poor substitutes!\* In contrast, the Jansenists, Catholics with "heretical" views, advocated reading the Holy Scriptures. Colporteurs thus participated in distributing the Jansenists' recently completed translation of the Greek Scriptures ("New Testament") by Le Maistre de Sacy.

At the same time, a new, inexpensive form of literature began to appear in the colporteur's knapsack. These books taught many people in France to read, educating and entertaining them, until their disappearance in the 19th century. The French called them the *bibliothèque bleue*, or blue library, because of the color of their bindings. In England they were called chapbooks; and in Spain, *pliégos de cordel*. They consisted of tales



of medieval knights, folklore, lives of the saints, and so forth. As can be imagined, the colporteur was eagerly awaited, whether, like those from the Pyrenees, he came in summer or, like those from the Dauphiné Alps, he came in winter.

**Today full-time evangelizers offer free Bible education**



\* A book of hours contained prayers to be said at the officially appointed hours for honoring Mary.

Interestingly, colporteurs served the needs of both the educated and the uneducated. An 18th-century study of peasants from the Guienne region of southwest France makes this observation: "During the long winter evenings, [the peasants] read the lives of the saints or a chapter from the Bible for half an hour to the gathered household. . . . When there is nothing else, they read . . . the blue library and other nonsense that colporteurs bring annually to the countryside." The Bible was immensely popular, however, and copies of it could be found even at modest farms.

### Organized Networks

Networks of colporteurs developed in the French and Italian Alps, the Pyrenees, and Normandy, in northwestern France. The colporteurs from the Dauphiné Alps alone controlled a quarter of the book market of southern Europe. "The bookselling business in Spain and Portugal, as well as that in many towns in Italy, is in the hands of Frenchmen, from the same village . . . in the Dauphiné Alps," declared a contemporary bookseller in Geneva.

Apart from the fact that colporteurs were "active, hard-working, and extremely sober people," their success was also due to their attachment to members of their family, village, and religion. Many of them were Protestants who stayed in contact with those who had gone into exile during the persecutions. Relatives, compatriots, and coreligionists thus constituted efficient networks that crisscrossed Europe. The Gravier family, for example, had a bookselling network that spread over France, Spain, and

Italy. Other networks even reached Persia and the Americas.

### A Revival of Colporteur Work

In the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution dealt a deathblow to family colporteur businesses that had operated for generations. However, the creation of Bible societies rekindled distribution of the Bible as never before. The Catholic Church, however, was still opposed to the distribution of the Bible. Up until the late 1800's, Bible colporteurs continued to be harassed and prosecuted. Nonetheless, from 1804 to 1909, they distributed six million copies of the Bible in whole or in part in France alone.

The work of educating the public about the Bible was far from finished. In 1881 the magazine *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence* (published in the United States) issued a call for Christians to take up the work of evangelists. Their goal? "The spread of the truth, by getting people to read." By 1885, about 300 evangelists had responded to the call and were in the field. Some traveled far and wide, going to such lands as Barbados, Burma (now Myanmar), El Salvador, Finland, Guatemala, and Honduras. By the time World War I broke out, such evangelists had spread Bible knowledge in China, Costa Rica, England, France, Germany, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland.

Interestingly, in early years full-time evangelists among these Bible Students (now known as Jehovah's Witnesses) were called colporteurs. Later, the term was discontinued, as it did not accurately describe the prime objective of their work—Bible education. (Matthew 28:19, 20) Moreover, the term did not represent the not-for-profit nature of their activities. Hence, today full-time ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses are called pioneers.

Last year more than 800,000 pioneers freely distributed Bibles and Bible-based literature. They do so, not for monetary gain, but "out of sincerity, yes, as sent from God, under God's view, in company with Christ." (2 Corinthians 2:17) Thus, pioneer ministers today are far more than the walking bookstores. However, they owe much to those early colporteurs for the example that many of them set in zeal and conviction.

## WATCHING THE WORLD

### World's Worst Killers

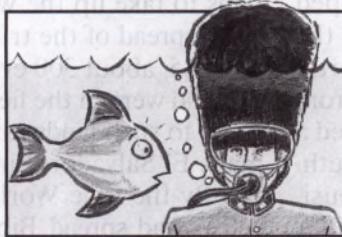
"On a global scale, diseases caused by viruses, bacteria, and parasites are still the leading cause of death," states the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*. Because of just three diseases—AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis—"several hundred million people are newly infected each year, with almost 10 million related deaths." The newspaper explains: "By the middle of the 20th century, even many experts were convinced that infectious diseases would soon no longer play a role. Nevertheless, as became only too clear since the outbreak of AIDS, mad cow disease, and recently foot-and-mouth disease, the menace of infectious germs to man and beast is [still] a bitter reality. . . . In different places worldwide, highly dangerous viruses and bacteria made a totally unexpected appearance." While the nature of the microorganisms themselves is often the cause, human life-styles and behavior also promote the emergence and spread of these disease-causing agents.

### Religious Looting

"Despite the tightening of legislation, the theft of and traffic in religious objects in Europe is not decreasing," comments the French Catholic newspaper *La Croix*. Objects stolen include crosses, furniture, gold and silver plate, sculptures, paintings, and even altars. According to the International Council of Museums, in recent years between 30,000

and 40,000 objects have been stolen in the Czech Republic, and more than 88,000 in Italy. France, with 87 cathedrals, is also a prime target for thieves. Between 1907 and 1996, some 2,000 items considered "historic monuments" were stolen from religious institutions in France, and fewer than 10 percent of them were recovered. Such looting is hard to control, especially since churches are easily accessible and often poorly protected.

### London's Dangerous Water Level



In London, "boreholes are being sunk to pump out the water that threatens to engulf [the city] from below," reports *The Economist*. The water table has now risen to 130 feet below the ground level of Trafalgar Square. Earlier in the last century when industry extracted millions of gallons of water, the water table was estimated at 300 feet below the square. It is rising by about 10 feet a year and could prove disastrous for London's underground railway system, its miles of underground wiring, and the foundations of many of its buildings. It is estimated that about 50 boreholes will have to be sunk. "The Environment Agency estimates that a total of about [50 million litres

(10 million gallons)] of water a day is currently being pumped out from beneath London," says the magazine, but that figure will have to double within ten years if the situation is to be stabilized.

### "Not So Special After All"

"We have been humbled as never before," states *New Scientist*. "While we congratulate ourselves on the momentous achievement of sequencing the human genome, the genome itself is telling us we are not so special after all. It turns out we have only five times as many genes as a bacterium, a third more than a worm and about twice as many as a fly." Additionally, "around 40 per cent of our genes are similar to those in nematode worms, 60 per cent are similar to those in fruit flies and 90 per cent are similar to those in mice." Knowledge of the human genome also alters our view of race, says the magazine. Two individuals may look alike and be of the same race, yet genetically they may be far more different than two individuals from ethnic groups that differ greatly from each other. Says Luigi Cavalli-Sforza of Stanford University: "The differences between people of the same races are so large that it's ridiculous to think of races as different—or as even existing."

### The Business of Pornography

"Pornography is a bigger business than professional football, basketball and baseball put together. People pay more money

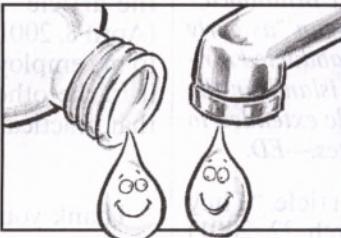
for pornography in America in a year than they do on movie tickets, more than they do on all the performing arts combined," states *The New York Times Magazine*. "The porn business is estimated to total between \$10 billion and \$14 billion annually in the United States when you toss in porn networks and pay-per-view movies on cable and satellite, Internet Web sites, in-room hotel movies, phone sex, sex toys and . . . magazines." The article adds: "At \$10 billion, porn is no longer a sideshow to the mainstream like, say, the \$600 million Broadway theater industry—it is the mainstream." For example, last year Hollywood put out 400 releases, while the pornography industry churned out 11,000 "adult" videos. Yet, few Americans will confess to watching them. "There's no business like porn business," says the *Times*. "Porn is the one show that no one watches but that, miraculously, never closes."

#### Vatican Reduces Its Radio Power

"Vatican Radio has agreed to cut down its output in response to fears over the possible health effects of its powerful radio transmitters." So reports the magazine *New Scientist*. Medium-wave transmission time would be halved, and signal power reduced. The daily broadcasts are spread across the globe in 60 languages and in a wide range of frequencies. When built 50 years ago, the station's 33 antennae were located in a relatively unpopulated area outside of Rome. Today, about 100,000 people live nearby, and there are fears that the

high-powered transmissions are the cause of local leukemia cases. The station has no overseas relay stations to boost signals. After Italy set new radiation standards in 1998, it called on the Vatican to reduce the station's power levels. While denying that there are any health hazards and that Italy has any authority over them as a foreign state, the Vatican decided to reduce the power as "an act of good faith," stated *New Scientist*.

#### Bottled Water Versus Tap Water



"Bottled water is so popular that there are more than 700 brands of water produced worldwide," reports *The New York Times*. Yet, "in many cases the only difference between expensive bottled water and tap water is the container." As pointed out by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), "bottled water may be no safer or healthier than tap water in many countries while it sells for up to 1,000 times the price." Use of tap water not only saves money but also helps the environment, as each year 1.5 million tons of plastic is used for the water bottles, and "toxic chemicals released during the manufacture and disposal of bottles can release gases that contribute to climate change." According to Dr. Biksham Gujja, head of WWF International's

Fresh Water Program, "there are more standards regulating tap water in Europe and the United States than those applied to the bottled water industry."

#### Ancient Alexandria Mapped

After five years of excavations and underwater surveys, ancient Alexandria has finally been completely mapped. The map shows where the Pharaonic palaces stood and where dockyards and temples were located. French archaeologist Franck Goddio and his team used drawings based on records given by divers as well as electronic surveys of the submerged city, and they were surprised at the results. "Soon after the first electronic surveys of the harbour, we realised that the topography of the ancient quarters of Alexandria was totally different from what had been assumed until now," said Goddio.

#### "Do You Believe in Angels?"

The above question, posed to more than 500 residents of Quebec, was responded to in the affirmative by 66 percent of those polled. As reported in Canada's *Le Journal de Montréal*, one researcher credits the widespread belief in the supernatural not only to Roman Catholicism but also to a strong Buddhist influence in the province. Nonetheless, sociologist Martin Geoffroy is surprised that only one third of those surveyed admitted to belief in the Devil. "What is disturbing," he states, "is the positivism. We believe in angels but not in the devil. We dismiss the negative."

## FROM OUR READERS

**Slavery Statistics** I am irritated by a statement made in the "Watching the World" item entitled "Crime's Fastest-Growing Business." (December 22, 2000) The item mentions that 11.5 million slaves were shipped out of Africa during 400 years of slavery. Slavery ended in the United States in 1865. Four hundred years back takes you to the year 1465—long before the Jamestown colony was even settled!

M. B., United States

*According to the "Encyclopædia Britannica," the transport of African slaves began "as early as the 1450s." Historians say that abducted Africans were taken to plantations on islands in the Atlantic long before the slave trade extended to the Caribbean and the United States.—ED.*

**Identity Theft** I read your article "They Can Steal Your Identity!" (March 22, 2001) with personal interest. Someone stole my checking account number, made counterfeit checks, and spent almost \$800! It took a lot of time for me to fix the situation—closing the account, opening a new one, and filing a police report. I've learned to be careful about giving out personal information.

D. S., United States

My husband was away on a business trip and had his briefcase stolen with all our credit cards and checkbooks. The article on identity theft told us exactly how to handle matters, including contacting the fraud departments of our local credit bureaus. This prevented the thieves from opening further lines of credit. I would never have thought of doing that on my own.

H. C., United States

**The Sun** I often thank Jehovah for the sun, the moon, and our beautiful earth, but I usually give little thought to these things. After reading the article "The Exceptional Nature

of Our Sun" (March 22, 2001), I was moved to give a heartfelt prayer, thanking God for his generous and priceless gifts.

B. P., United States

I am nine years old, and I want to thank you for writing such interesting articles—like this one about the sun. I really learn a lot of things when I read *Awake!*

A. B., United States

**Hair** I work as a hairdresser, and when I read the article "A Closer Look at Your Hair" (April 8, 2001), I was delighted. I gave a copy to my employer. She was impressed and gave it to the other girls at work. Thank you for that practical information.

D. L., Romania

Thank you for the footnote referring to a previous article, "Alopecia—Living in Silence With Hair Loss." (April 22, 1991) For 17 years I have been living with this problem. In a world where the only thing that counts is appearance and where any who are different are rejected, it is encouraging to know that I have the support of Jehovah and his organization.

M. G., Italy

**Artist's Story** I serve as a traveling overseer of Jehovah's Witnesses, and I know of a family where the father has never progressed much as a Christian. He is a fine person, but he has a hobby of making model war airplanes. He has dogfights on his computer and spends hours shooting down enemy warplanes. We've tried to help him see the need to change his attitude about war. Now we have this excellent story about Dorothy Horle called "Glorifying Peace Instead of War." (April 8, 2001) I plan to share it with him.

P. P., Dominican Republic



## The British Museum's New Look

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN BRITAIN

London's British Museum welcomes close to six million visitors every year. About a year ago, it gained 40 percent more space to accommodate these crowds. How was this possible?

The British Museum library and the British Museum were opened to the public in 1759. The present building housing them was completed in 1852. But in 1997, the library, known as the British Library, moved to new premises nearby, taking with it 12 million printed books and tens of thousands of manuscripts and seals. This move paved the way for the British Museum to expand by opening up the central courtyard—hidden from the public for almost 150 years!

The focal point of the now vacated courtyard, called the Great Court, was the domed Reading Room. Since its inception in 1857, this Reading Room has been a haven for researchers from across the world. Mohandas Gandhi, Charles Darwin, and Karl Marx are just some of the well-known people who have worked in the quiet privacy of this prestigious library. This room has been opened to the general public for the very first time. It now houses the museum's own collection of 25,000 volumes.

The dome of this historic room has been restored. The Great Court, including the Reading Room, is now covered by a magnificent ceiling that weighs 800 tons. It is a steel frame studded with 3,312 triangles of glass, the size of each piece having been carefully calibrated by computer.

In the Reading Room, the British Museum now offers computer access to thousands of its priceless treasures. *The Times* of London called the remodeled facilities a masterpiece. Visitors enthusiastically agree!



# Where Are Answers to Be Found?

That is what many today ask. A schoolteacher in Novosibirsk, Russia, noted that it is not easy to find answers to the questions that her students ask about God and religion. She explained in a letter:

"When I came home one day, I discovered a little tract left there entitled 'Why You Can Trust the Bible.' I teach history in school, and I often have to discuss with the students such subjects as the church, the Bible, and God. Sometimes it is very difficult to find answers to the children's questions.

"In the past, I thought that people approach God only when they have problems. But now I am sure that this is not entirely true. A person also asks: 'Why me? Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going when I die?' It is important to find answers to these questions. It seems that the Bible gives convincing arguments."

The teacher concluded: "I wrote this letter because I want to know more about the Bible and God."

