

Awake!

NOVEMBER 8, 2005



What
HOPE
Is There
for the
Poor?

Awake!

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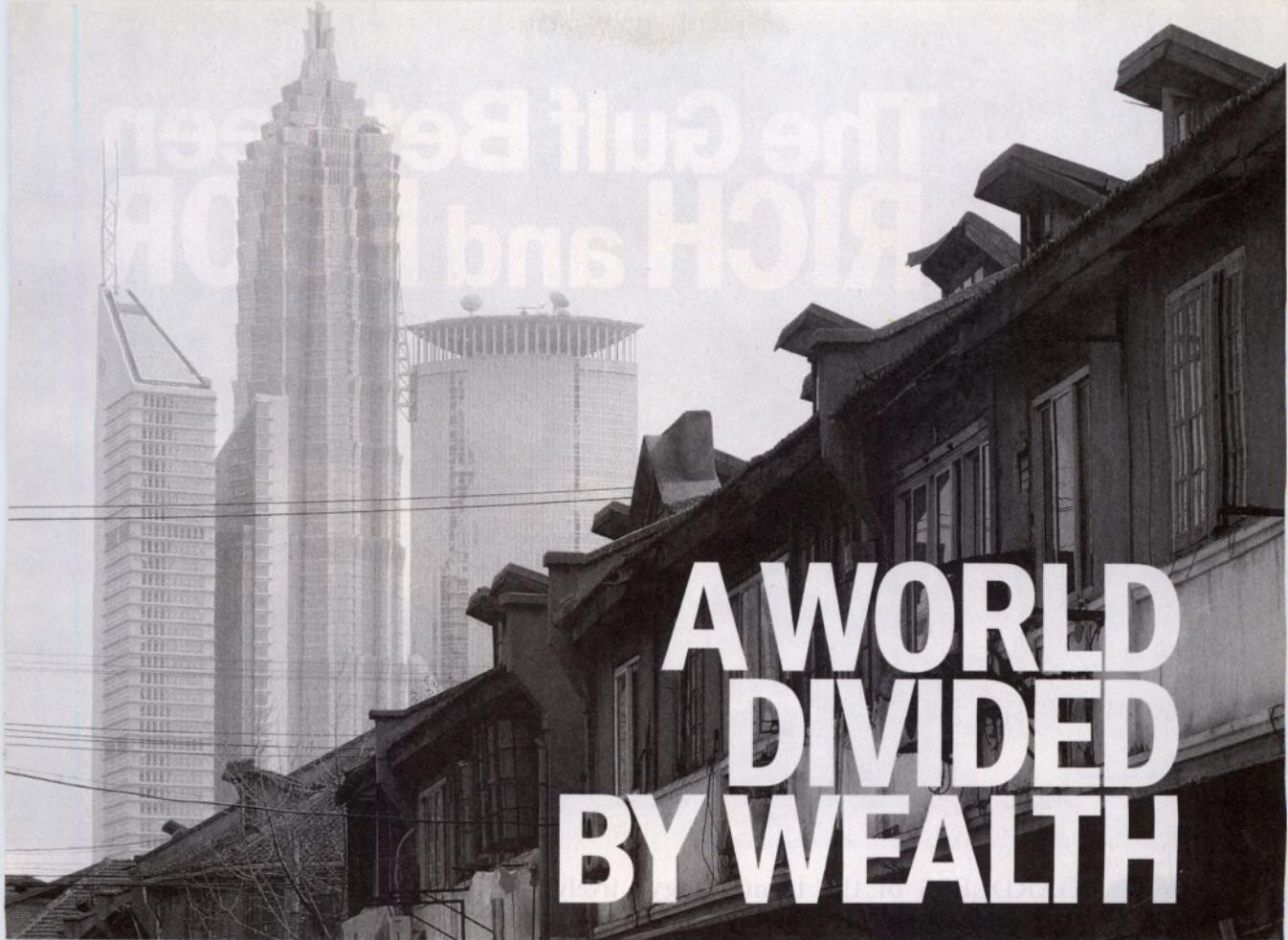


What HOPE Is There for the Poor? 3-10



It is said that the world is split into two camps—the wealthy and the poor. As the numbers of the poor grow, what hope is there for them?





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DURING the second half of the 20th century, the world was embroiled in a Cold War and divided politically into three parts. The world of Communism, chiefly embodied in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the world of non-Communist nations, led by the United States, stared at one another across an invisible Iron Curtain. Nations not aligned with either side formed the so-called Third World.

The term "Third World" later came to be viewed as a derogatory description, however, and was replaced with "underdeveloped nations." With time, this too took on negative connotations, for which reason economists began using the term "developing nations." Thus the terminology moved away from em-

A WORLD DIVIDED BY WEALTH

phasizing political differences and more toward pointing up economic ones.

Now in the 21st century, a world divided into the above-mentioned three political parts no longer exists. In an economic and industrial sense, however, the differences between *developed* and *developing* nations are still a reality. Tourists from affluent lands are rubbing shoulders with economically less fortunate individuals struggling to put food on their table.

Therefore, the question is relevant: Is the world destined to remain economically divided, or can those who have, the wealthy, and those who have not, the poor, achieve parity by enjoying a common standard of living?

The Gulf Between RICH and POOR



© Mark Henley/Panos Pictures

REGARDLESS of the terminology used to describe them, highly developed, industrial, and economically advanced nations boast high living standards, whereas those with less industry, which are thus less developed economically, make do with lower standards. It is almost as though they belong to two different worlds.

Of course, even within one nation, these two worlds may exist. Think of the compara-

tively affluent countries mentioned in the previous article. These have both their rich and their poor. In the United States, for example, about 30 percent of the nation's total income goes into the pockets of the upper 10 percent of households. At the same time, the lower 20 percent of households must make do with just 5 percent of the total income. This situation or one similar to it may exist in the country where you live, especially if the mid-

Awake!®

THIS JOURNAL IS PUBLISHED 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.

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Nine Richest Countries

Male Life Expectancy (years)

BELGIUM	75.1	100
CANADA	76.4	96.6
DENMARK	74.9	100
ICELAND	78.4	100
JAPAN	78.4	100
LUXEMBOURG	74.9	100
NORWAY	76.5	100
SWITZERLAND	77.7	100
UNITED STATES	74.4	95.5

Eighteen Poorest Countries

BENIN	50.4	37.5
BURKINA FASO	43	23
BURUNDI	42.5	48.1
CHAD	47	53.6
CONGO, REP. OF	49	80.7
ETHIOPIA	47.3	38.7
GUINEA-BISSAU	45.1	36.8
MADAGASCAR	53.8	80.2
MALAWI	37.6	60.3
MALI	44.7	40.3
MOZAMBIQUE	38.9	43.8
NIGER	42.3	15.7
NIGERIA	50.9	64.1
RWANDA	45.3	67
SIERRA LEONE	40.3	36.3
TANZANIA	43.3	75.2
YEMEN	59.2	46.4
ZAMBIA	35.3	78

middle class there is small. But even governments in countries with a comparatively large middle class have until now been unable to bridge completely the economic gap between those who have and those who have not.

Neither World Is Ideal

Neither world can rightfully lay claim to perfection. Think of the obvious disadvantages of those living in poorer countries.

Health care is seriously limited. Whereas the 9 richest countries mentioned in the box on this page boast 1 physician for every 242 to 539 inhabitants, the 18 poorest countries fall far behind, with just 1 physician for every 3,707 to 49,118 of their citizens. So, understandably, the life expectancy of the more affluent countries is 73 years or above, whereas in more than half of the poorest, life expectancy is well below 50 years.

Semimonthly Languages: Afrikaans, Albanian, Arabic, Cebuano, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Croatian, Czech,[#], Danish,[#], Dutch, English,^{#+} Estonian, Finnish,[#] French,[#] German,[#] Greek, Hungarian, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian,[#] Japanese,[#] Korean,[#] Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese,[#] Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,[#] Swahili, Swedish,[#] Tagalog, Ukrainian

[#]Audiocassettes also available.

⁺ CD also available.

⁺ MP3 CD-ROM also available.

Monthly Languages: Amharic, Bulgarian, Chichewa, Georgian, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Igbo, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Myanmar, Nepali, Sesotho, Sinhala, Tamil, Thai, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

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“Obesity may soon surpass both hunger and infectious disease as the world’s most pressing public-health problem.” —*The Atlantic Monthly*

In poor countries the possibilities for education also lag far behind, often dooming children to a life of poverty. This lack is reflected in literacy rates. Whereas 7 of the 9 richest countries have literacy rates of 100 percent (the other 2 have rates of 96 and 97 percent), the 18 poorest countries have literacy rates ranging between a high of 81 percent and a low of 16 percent, with 10 of them under 50 percent.

But the inhabitants of wealthy nations also have certain disadvantages. Whereas those in poor countries may suffer from a lack of food, those living in abundance are increasingly eating themselves to death. The book *Food Fight* claims that “overconsumption has replaced malnutrition as the world’s top food problem.” And the magazine *The Atlantic Monthly* states: “Some nine million Americans are now ‘morbidly obese,’ meaning roughly a hundred pounds or more overweight, and weight-related conditions cause about 300,000 premature deaths a year in this country.” The same article suggests that “obesity may soon surpass both hunger and infectious disease as the world’s most pressing public-health problem.”*

* See *Awake!* of November 8, 2004, pages 3-12.

In Our Next Issue

- Who Will Feed the Cities?
- Science and the Bible Helped Me Find the Meaning of Life
- Must We Have a Formal Wedding?

True, citizens of wealthy countries have a higher standard of living, but at the same time, they may attach more meaning to possessions than to relationships, thus placing too much emphasis on *having* and too little on *being*. They then tend to measure a person’s importance and worth according to his job, salary, or possessions, rather than his knowledge, wisdom, abilities, or positive characteristics.

Stressing that a simple life is what makes for happiness, the title of an article in the German weekly newsmagazine *Focus* asked: “What About a Little Less?” The article said: “Most citizens of the Western world are no happier now than they were decades ago, despite the dramatic upsurge in prosperity. . . . Anyone who sets his whole heart on objects is more likely to end up unhappy.”

Achieving Perfect Balance

Yes, facts prove that both worlds, rich and poor, although having certain positive aspects, also have their downsides. Whereas the world of the poor may be overly simple, the world of the rich can be overly complex. How beneficial it would be if these two worlds could learn from each other! But is it realistic to think that such a perfect balance can ever be achieved?

From a human standpoint, you may feel that this goal, although desirable, is simply beyond human ability to accomplish. And history backs you up in thinking so. Still, the situation is far from hopeless. You may have overlooked the most logical solution to the problem. What could that be?

Bridging the Gap THE REAL SOLUTION

HUNDREDS of millions of people worldwide try to survive each day in spite of abject poverty. It is evident that mankind needs a righteous and incorruptible government that sincerely desires to change this injustice. Such a government must also be powerful enough to follow through on its good intentions. Can we realistically expect humans to produce such a government?

History verifies the truthfulness of the Bible warning: "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs." (Psalm 146:3) Have you found that trusting human governments or leaders often leads to disappointment? Yet, to whom else can we turn?

Actually, millions of people have prayed for a righteous government to change the unjust situation. Perhaps you too have prayed the model prayer that Jesus taught: "Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth. Give us today our bread for this day; and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the wicked one." —Matthew 6:9-13.

Is this Kingdom the one we need? Is it righteous and incorruptible? Is it powerful enough to follow through on its good intentions? Without a doubt, it is! The God who set up this government, "our Father



A volunteer caring for two refugee orphans

in the heavens," is "a righteous God and a Savior," who is "righteous in all his works." (Isaiah 45:21; Daniel 9:14) Of him it is said: "You are too pure in eyes to see what is bad," so we can be sure that his government will never become corrupt. (Habakkuk 1:13) And since "God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him," we know that he is impartially interested in the welfare of every single individual on earth.—Acts 10:34, 35; Romans 2:11.

Already Established and in Action!

Although God's Kingdom is a heavenly government, it will actively direct affairs on earth to accomplish the outworking of God's purposes. This includes replacing imperfect

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All Brothers, Whether Rich or Poor

United States



Switzerland

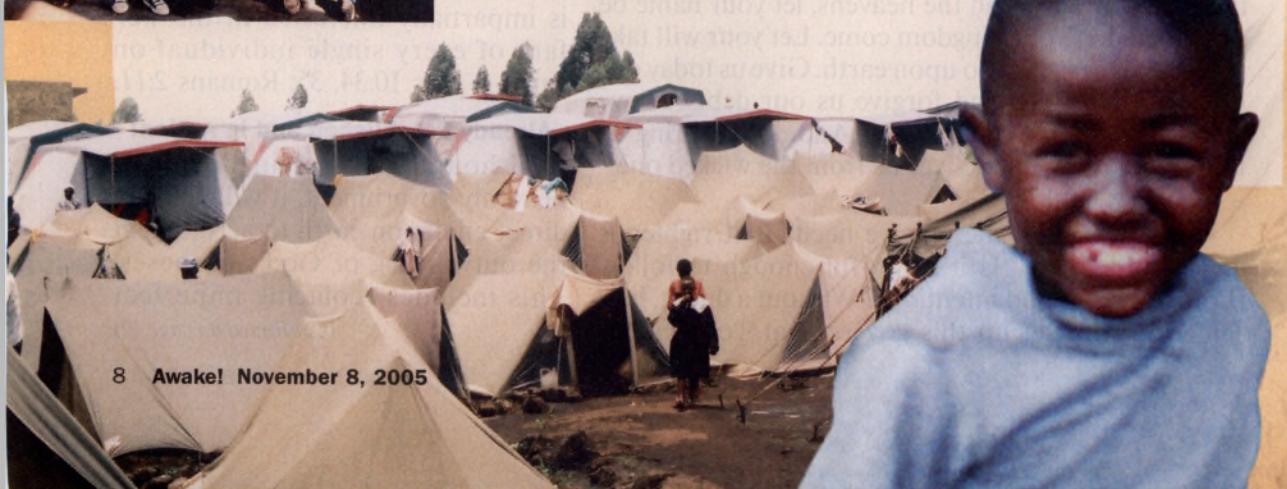


Germany



■ At the end of World War II, many of Jehovah's Witnesses in Europe and the Orient were in need of food, clothing, and housing. Witnesses from other countries shipped tons of clothing and food to their spiritual brothers in Europe, the Philippines, and Japan. Witnesses in the United States and Canada contributed for aid packages to be sent to Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia (now Czech Republic and Slovakia), England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Romania.

■ More recently, in the summer of 1994, a team of Witness volunteers from Europe rushed help to their Christian brothers and sisters in Africa. Well-organized camps and field hospitals were set up for Rwandan refugees. Huge quantities of clothing, blankets, food, and Bible literature were sent to assist over 7,000 afflicted individuals—nearly three times the number of Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda at the time.





■ Two years later, in 1996, warfare erupted in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Crops were ruined, food reserves were looted, and supply lines were cut. Most people could afford to eat only one meal a day, resulting in malnutrition and disease. Jehovah's Witnesses in Europe responded swiftly. A relief team of Witnesses, including medical doctors, flew in with medicine and money. By June 1997, Witnesses in Belgium, France, and Switzerland had donated 1,100 pounds of medicine, 10 tons of high-protein biscuits, 20 tons of other food, 90 tons of clothing, 18,500 pairs of shoes, and 1,000 blankets—at a cost of nearly \$1,000,000.

■ Besides filling material needs, Jehovah's Witnesses are even more interested in helping people spiritually. This accounts for their desire to build Kingdom Halls for use as centers of spiritual training. In 1997 it was reported: "With help from brothers in other lands, the [Watch Tower] Society has been able to help build 413 new Kingdom Halls and remodel 727 others in just a four-month period in 75 different countries." By 2003, the report was made: "Among the European countries benefiting from an arrangement to help build Kingdom Halls in lands with limited resources is Romania, where 124 Kingdom Halls have been built since July 2000. Using a standard pattern for almost all their Kingdom Halls, Ukraine built 61 in the year 2001 and 76 more in 2002. With the aid of moneys contributed to the Kingdom Hall Fund, hundreds of Kingdom Halls have been built in Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Russia, and Serbia and Montenegro."



(Continued from page 7)

human government with perfect divine government. At Daniel 2:44 the promise is given: "In the days of those kings [governments] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite."

Under the direction of this Kingdom, God's will can finally be done both in heaven and on earth. How encouraging to know that this will be a government capable of wiping out all traces of the inequality that has in the past contributed to the development of the extremes of wealth and poverty! No longer will there be a few who have and many who have not.

How gratifying to know that God's heavenly government has already moved into position to solve these problems forever! Bible chronology and world events clearly mark the year 1914 as the time when God's government was established in heaven.* Thus, for almost



**Jehovah's Witnesses
are spreading a
message of hope**

a century, it has been actively preparing the foundation for a new world of righteousness.

Those who have come to recognize the Kingdom's establishment and who are now obediently following its direction are impartial. Jehovah's Witnesses carry on their preaching work in almost every country. The citizens of these countries, regardless of wealth or lack of the same, are given opportunity to learn how to gain eternal life.

(John 17:3) The Witnesses do not allow economic differences to determine position or status

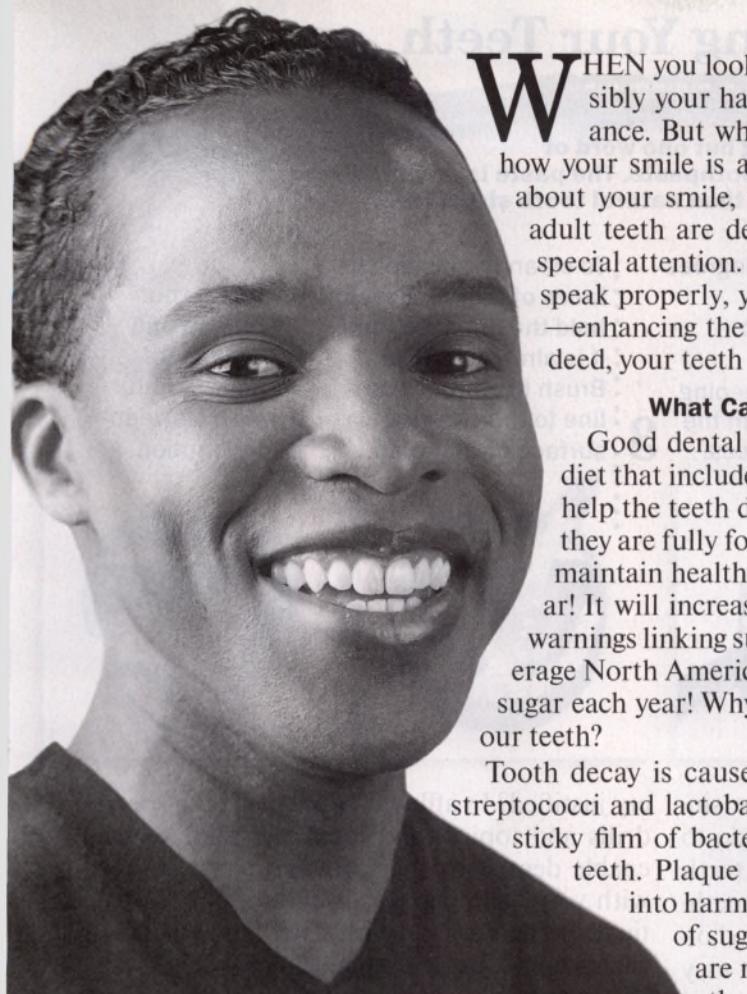
within their congregations. People are not judged on the basis of what they have. Rather, they are respected because of what they are. Greater emphasis is put on spiritual values than on material ones.

Would you like to know how you can live under this righteous government? Then start your investigation today. Learn how you can look forward to experiencing the joy of living when the world will not be divided by wealth.

* See pages 95-107 of the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

God's Kingdom will eliminate poverty





How You Can Protect Your Smile

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN CANADA

WHEN you look in the mirror, what do you check? Possibly your hair or some other aspect of your appearance. But what about your smile? Have you noticed how your smile is affected by your teeth? Yes, if you care about your smile, you will take care of your teeth. Your adult teeth are designed to last a lifetime. They deserve special attention. Besides chewing food and helping you to speak properly, your teeth support your lips and cheeks—enhancing the beauty and brilliance of your smile. Indeed, your teeth are precious!

What Can You Do to Protect Your Teeth?

Good dental health starts on the inside. A balanced diet that includes calcium and vitamins A, C, and D will help the teeth develop, from the womb to the time that they are fully formed.* Good eating habits will help you maintain healthy teeth, but beware of a diet rich in sugar! It will increase the risk of cavities. Despite repeated warnings linking sugar consumption to tooth decay, the average North American reportedly eats 100 to 130 pounds of sugar each year! Why does sugar have the potential to harm our teeth?

Tooth decay is caused by two kinds of bacteria—"mutans streptococci and lactobacilli"—that become a part of plaque, a sticky film of bacteria and food debris that forms on the teeth. Plaque bacteria feed on sugar and convert it into harmful acids that begin decay. Certain types of sugar are more easily turned into acids or are more likely to adhere to the teeth, giving the plaque more time to begin tooth decay.* Plaque that is not removed can harden into calculus, or tartar, around the gum line.

Controlling the plaque and especially the mutans streptococci bacteria is essential for preventing the spread of tooth decay. So if you want to preserve your smile, daily oral hygiene is a must. The Columbia University School of Dental and Oral Surgery states: "Combined

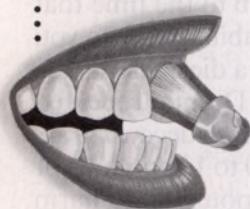
* A fully developed tooth is a permanent record of the nutritional habits of the mother during pregnancy and during the infancy of the child as the teeth form beneath the surface of the gums. The growth ends when the child reaches its late teens or early twenties.

* Dental professionals have discovered that xylitol, a naturally occurring sugar, has proved helpful in controlling the harmful plaque bacteria that cause decay. Xylitol is included in some chewing gum.

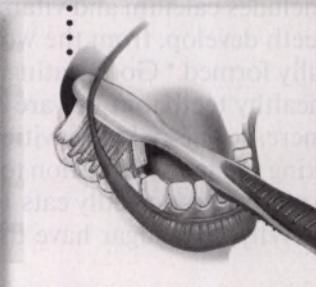
Brushing Your Teeth

There are several methods of brushing but one word of caution—use only a small amount of toothpaste. The paste is an abrasive material and can be “hundreds of times harder than natural tooth structures.”

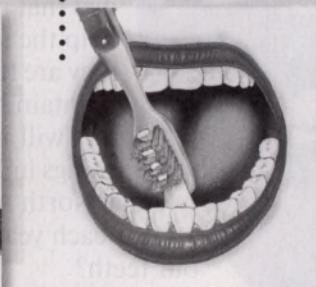
- 1 • Angle the bristles at approximately 45 degrees at the gum line. Gently brush from the gum line to the chewing surface in short strokes. Be sure to clean all inside and outside tooth surfaces.



- 2 • Use short, sweeping strokes to clean the chewing surfaces.



- 3 • To clean the inside surfaces of the front teeth, hold the brush so that it is almost vertical. Brush from your gum line to the chewing surface of the teeth.



- 4 • Brush your tongue and the roof of your mouth with a sweeping motion.



with flossing, [brushing the teeth] is the single most important thing that you can do to maintain the health and vitality of your teeth and their supporting tissues.” Effective methods of brushing and flossing are illustrated on this and the following page. Your dentist may recommend other tools and techniques that will help you to clean your teeth effectively and thus protect your smile.

Repeated acid attacks cause demineralization, or softening of the tooth’s enamel surface. However, such lesions are being remineralized every day. How? It has been shown that fluorides continue to help prevent decay by helping the remineralization process. Thus, while decay is an infectious process, it is also reversible if certain factors, such as fluorides, are present. Yes, teeth can heal themselves!

How to Face the Dentist

In a survey in which people were asked to list their fears, visiting the dentist was outranked only by public speaking. Is such anxiety justified?

In affluent countries, high-speed drills and topical and local anesthetics now enable dentists to perform most procedures with very little pain or discomfort to the patient. Being familiar with what is involved in each step of your treatment might allay some of your fears.

A visit to the dental office may involve a professional cleaning, or scaling, of your teeth, usually performed by a hygienist. During this process, calculus and plaque are removed from places inaccessible to the toothbrush and dental floss. Teeth are then polished to hinder the accumulation of plaque and remove stains that detract from your smile.

Since the mineral fluoride has been shown to reduce the risk of tooth decay, it is often applied to the teeth of children as a gel, solution, or varnish at the dental office. Fluoride is also found in the public water supply of many lands, and toothpaste frequently contains fluoride as additional protection against decay.

What Can the Dentist Do?

Dentists are being trained more and more to implement preventive measures in order to reduce the damage from demineralization. By treating lesions when they are small, many times the decay process can be reversed. Thus, by focusing on early detection and treatment, your visit to a dental health care professional need not be an unpleasant experience.

However, if the acid created by plaque remains on the teeth, caries, or decay, will result. If the decay is not stopped, a cavity may develop. The tooth then needs attention. When decay has not yet reached the pulp, the tooth's nerve supply, the tooth is usually restored with a filling.

The dentist uses a drill to clean the cavity and to shape the opening for a filling. Then the filling material is inserted into the opening. Amalgam fillings harden quickly and are carved to shape, while composite resins are cured using a blue fiber-optic light. If cavities are left untreated and decay spreads to the pulp of the tooth, root-canal therapy or even tooth removal may become necessary. Root-canal therapy can elim-

inate the need for an extraction, since the process involves filling and sealing the core of the diseased tooth. Crowns are used to cap seriously damaged teeth, and bridges or dentures are used to replace teeth.*

Why It Is Worth the Effort

Perhaps you still feel apprehensive about visiting the dentist. If so, speak to your dentist about your concerns. Before treatment begins, decide what signal you will give (such as a raised hand) if you become uncomfortable. Ask him to explain what is involved in each step of your treatment. You can also contribute to your child's oral health by speaking positively about dental care and not using a visit to the dentist as a threat for misbehavior.

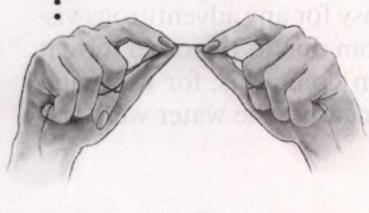
Dr. Daniel Kandelman, professor at the University of Montreal's Department of Oral Health, states: "Today it is possible to reach this worthwhile goal in dental health: save your healthy, natural teeth, with a beautiful, brilliant smile for a lifetime." It's worth the effort!

* For more information about false teeth, see the article "Do You Need Dentures?" in the February 22, 1993, issue of *Awake!* pages 18-20.

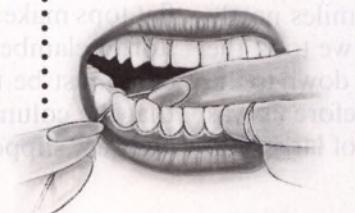
Flossing Your Teeth

Dentists recommend flossing daily and always brushing your teeth after eating.

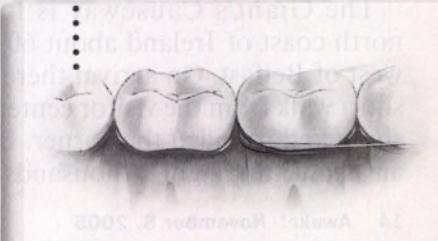
- 1 Wrap a piece of floss around your middle finger on each hand, leaving a small section between them.



- 2 With the thumb of one hand and the index finger of the other, hold the floss taut. Use a back-and-forth motion to insert the floss between the teeth.



- 3 Curve the floss into a C shape, and scrape the floss up and down the sides of each tooth. Gently guide the floss below the gum line, but do not force the floss against the gums or use a back-and-forth motion below the gum line.



The Giant's

ACCORDING to Irish legend, a giant by the name of Finn MacCool from Ireland wanted to fight a giant named Benandonner from Scotland. However, there was a difficulty. There was not a boat big enough to carry either one across the sea to the other! Finn MacCool, says the legend, solved this problem by building a connecting causeway using huge columns of stone.

Benandonner accepted the challenge to fight and traveled over the causeway to Ireland. He was bigger and stronger than Finn MacCool. As soon as Finn MacCool's wife saw that, she craftily decided to dress her giant husband as a baby. When Benandonner arrived at their house and saw the "baby," he became afraid, thinking that if this was the baby, he did not wish to meet the father! He fled back to Scotland! To make sure that Finn MacCool could not possibly follow, he ripped up the road behind him as he ran. In Ireland all that remained were the stones that now make up the Giant's Causeway.

For over three hundred years, millions of visitors have been told this humorous tale as an explanation of how the Giant's Causeway came to be. What is the real explanation, and what makes it such a special attraction? We decided to see for ourselves.

A Causeway for Giants!

The Giant's Causeway is found on the north coast of Ireland about 60 miles northwest of Belfast. On arrival there we took the short walk from the visitor center down to the shore and rounded the corner. Before us was an astonishing sight—thousands of large, ver-

tical stone columns up to 20 feet in height. Some people have estimated that there are about 40,000. But it was not the number of them that caught our attention. It was their symmetry. They are each between 15 and 20 inches across, their tops seem to be flat, and every one appeared to have six sides. They are so uniform that when viewed from above, their tops mesh together like a honeycomb. We later discovered that about a quarter of the columns have five sides and that there are also a few with four, seven, eight, and even nine sides.

The Giant's Causeway is in three sections. The largest one, the Grand Causeway, begins on the shore at the foot of the cliffs. Initially, it appears to be more like a haphazard series of gigantic stepping-stones, some as high as 20 feet. As it extends toward the sea, the notion of a highway for giants is readily seen because the honeycomblike tops soon level off. There the causeway resembles a cobbled road that varies in width from 60 to 100 feet. At low tide we were able to walk out a few hundred yards on this roadway of stones before they gently sloped away beneath the waves, seemingly heading toward Scotland.

The other two parts, the Middle Causeway and the Little Causeway, are grouped alongside the Grand Causeway. These are both shaped like mounds rather than roads. Their flat tops make it easy for any adventurous visitor to clamber from one to the other. Great care must be taken doing this, for we found that the columns nearest the water were wet and very slippery!

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN IRELAND

Causeway

Other Giant Formations

We continued to walk along the four-mile stretch of coastline generally known as the Causeway Headlands, and we saw thousands more of these columns exposed in the cliff faces. Down through the years, people have given names to some of the formations. Two of them are named after musical instruments. One of these, the Organ, is so named because its long regular-shaped columns resemble the pipes of a giant organ. The other, the Giant's Harp, has huge curved columns that sweep down to the shoreline.

The theme of giants is promoted in other names. For example, there are the Giant's Loom, the Giant's Coffin, and the Giant's Cannons, as well as the Giant's Eyes.

There is even a Giant's Boot! On the beach farther along from the Giant's Causeway, we saw that boot-shaped stone. It stands about seven feet high. Some folk have calculated that the

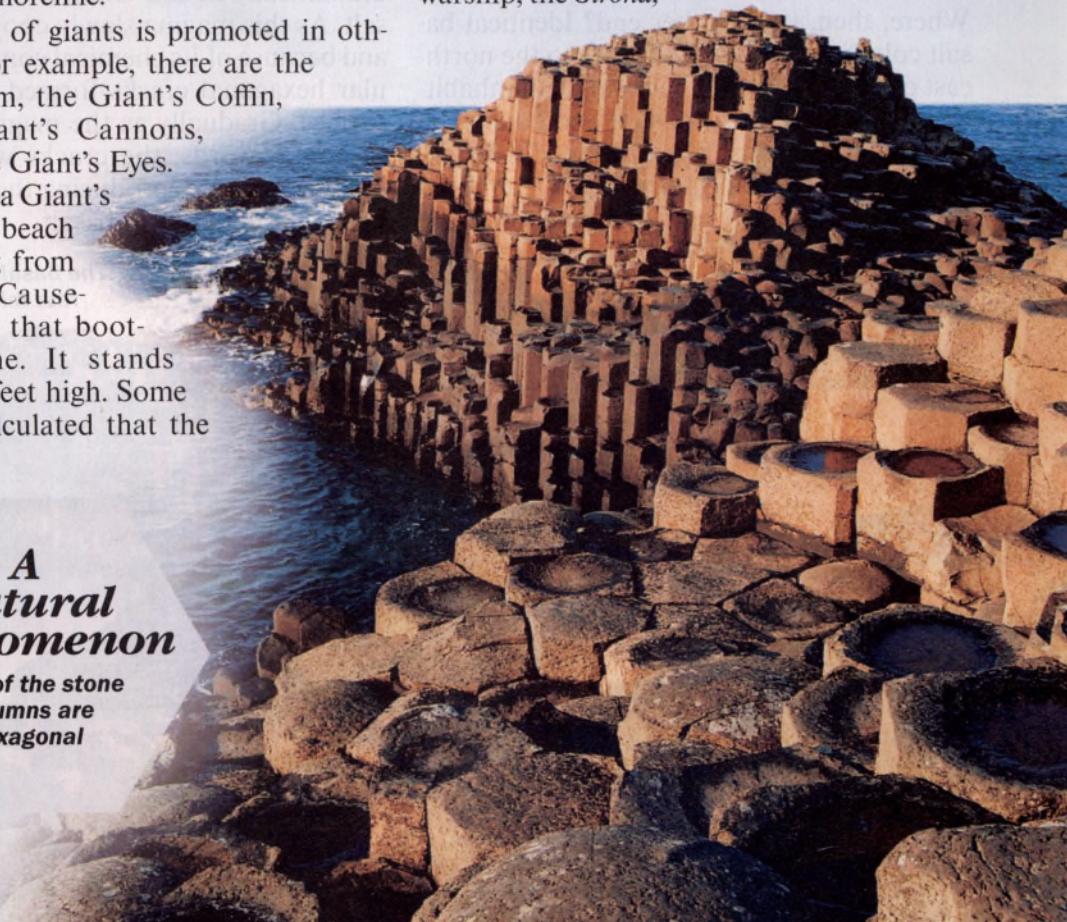
mythical giant who supposedly wore the "boot" would have been at least 53 feet tall.

Another formation, the Chimney Tops, recalls the association of the Giant's Causeway with the famous Spanish Armada. Isolated from the main cliff face by erosion and weathering, the Chimney Tops are a few columns that stand exposed on a promontory overlooking the Causeway coast. It is easy to imagine how sailors looking at them from out at sea could mistake them for the chimney tops of a large castle. Apparently one Spanish warship, the *Girona*,

Courtesy NITB

A Natural Phenomenon

Most of the stone columns are hexagonal





in fleeing from the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, fired a broadside at these pillars, thinking them to be an enemy castle.

The Other End of the Causeway

The Giant's Causeway was supposedly built to join Ireland and Scotland together. Where, then, is the other end? Identical basalt columns are found 81 miles to the northeast on Staffa Island, a very small, uninhabited island off the west coast of Scotland. (The name Staffa means "Pillar Island.") Benandonner, the Scottish giant who fled from Finn MacCool, was also named Fingal, and the main feature of Staffa Island—the large sea cave formed inside these basalt columns and extending about 88 yards into the rock—was named Fingal's Cave, after him. The breaking of the waves at the cave inspired the German

composer Felix Mendelssohn to compose his "Hebrides" overture, also known as "Fingal's Cave," in 1832.

How Formed?

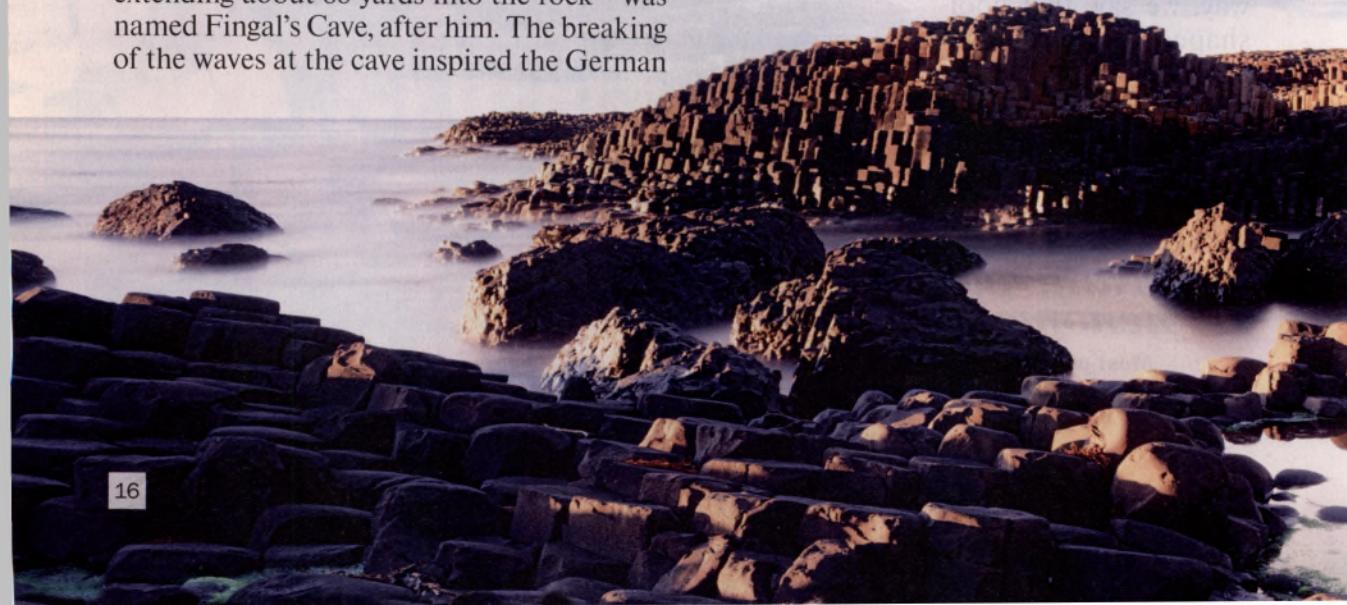
Since these uniformly shaped columns were not made by the hands of feuding giants, how did they come to exist? We found that the real answer lay in understanding how some rocks are formed.

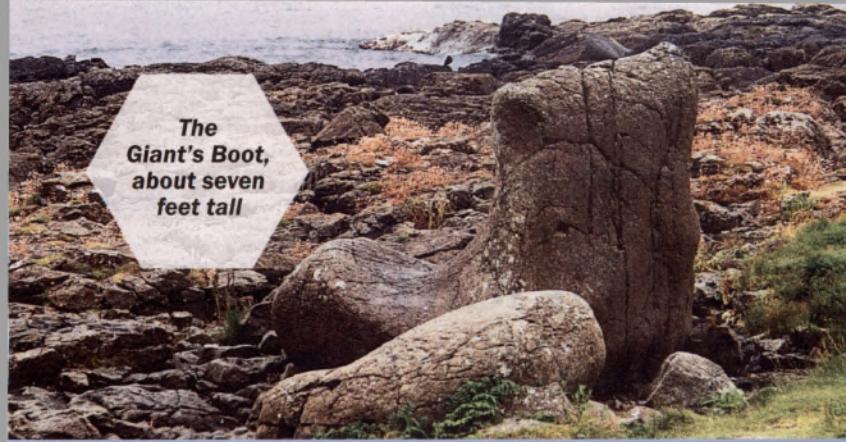
Northern Ireland is situated on an area of compact limestone. Long ago, volcanic activity deep within the earth's crust forced molten rock, which was in excess of 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit, upwards through fissures in the limestone. Once in contact with air, it cooled and solidified. But why did it not simply harden into a gigantic, irregular-shaped mass?

Molten rock, or magma, is composed of many chemical elements and can thus create a variety of rock types. The type formed so dramatically at the Giant's Causeway is basalt. As this magma slowly cooled, it shrank, and because of its chemical composition, regular hexagonal cracks formed on the outer surface. Gradually as the magma continued to cool inwards, the cracks went progressively downward, producing the profusion of pencil-like columns of basalt.

The basalt columns span four miles of coastline

Top left: Courtesy NITB; bottom: © Peter Adams/Index Stock Imagery





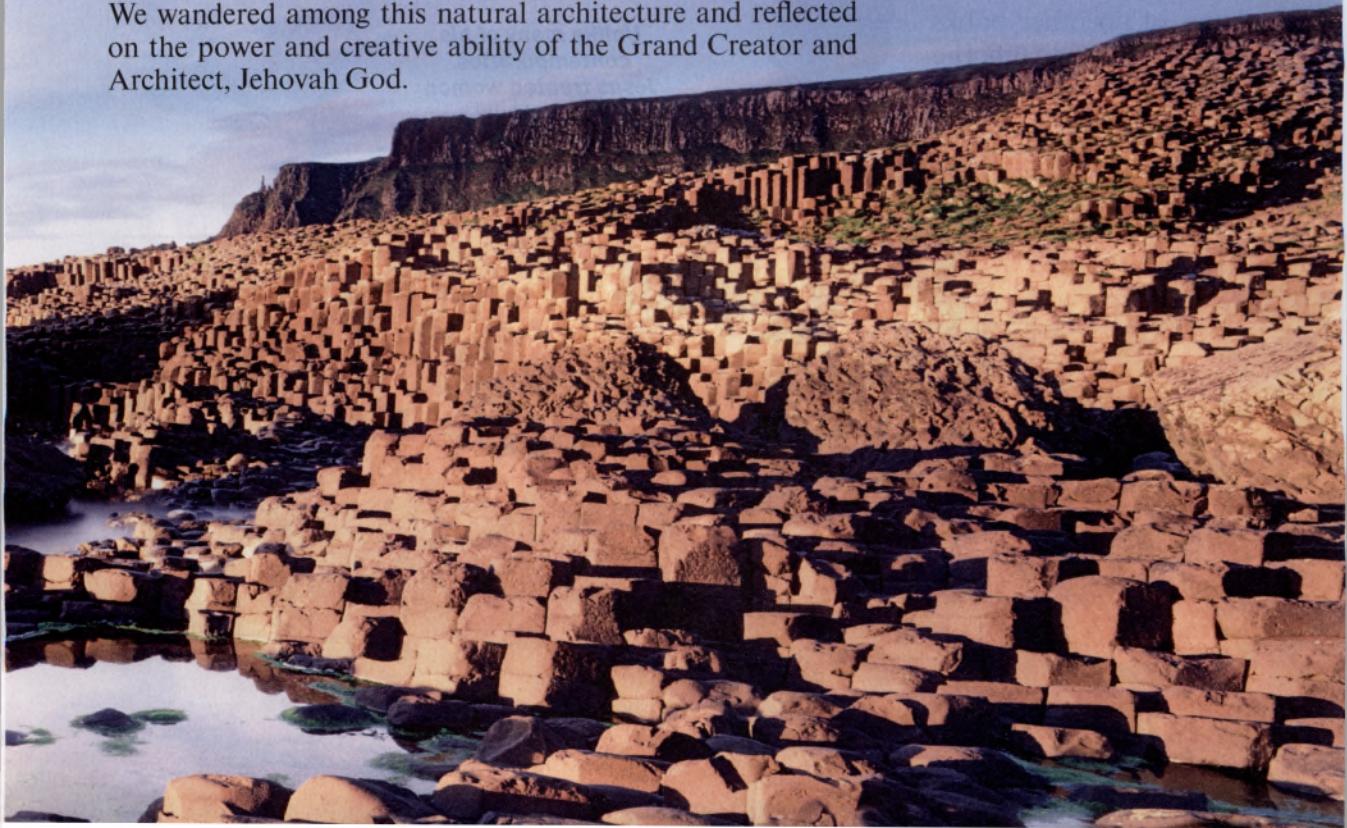
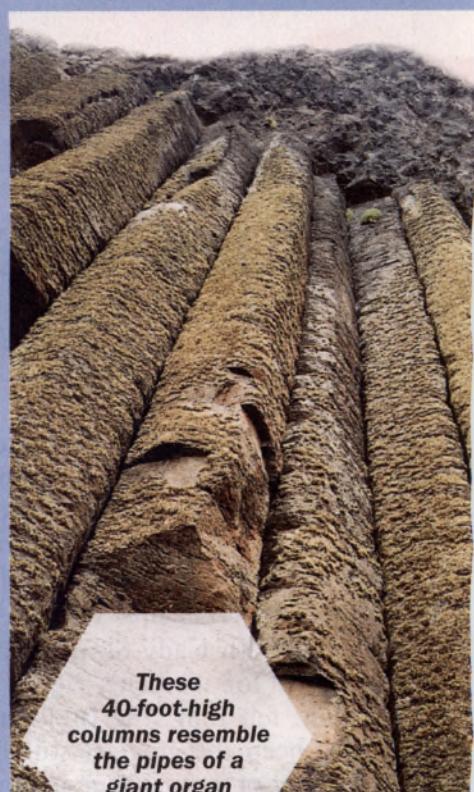
The
Giant's Boot,
about seven
feet tall

'Where Is the Boast of the Architect?'

Columns such as these are not unique to Ireland or Scotland. In most other parts of the world, however, considerable effort is often needed to get close to them. It is rare to find so many well-preserved hexagonal columns in a setting that makes them accessible to everyone.

At the end of the 18th century, Sir Joseph Banks was so moved by the striking beauty of the relatively few columns he discovered on Staffa Island that he remarked: "Compared to this, what are the cathedrals or palaces built by men! . . . Where is now the boast of the architect?"

Our visit to the Giant's Causeway, one of Ireland's natural wonders, inspired similar feelings of admiration in us. We wandered among this natural architecture and reflected on the power and creative ability of the Grand Creator and Architect, Jehovah God.



DOES THE BIBLE DISCRIMINATE AGAINST WOMEN?

TERTULLIAN, a third-century theologian, once described women as "the devil's gateway." Others have used the Bible to portray women as less important than men. As a result, many people feel that the Bible discriminates against women.

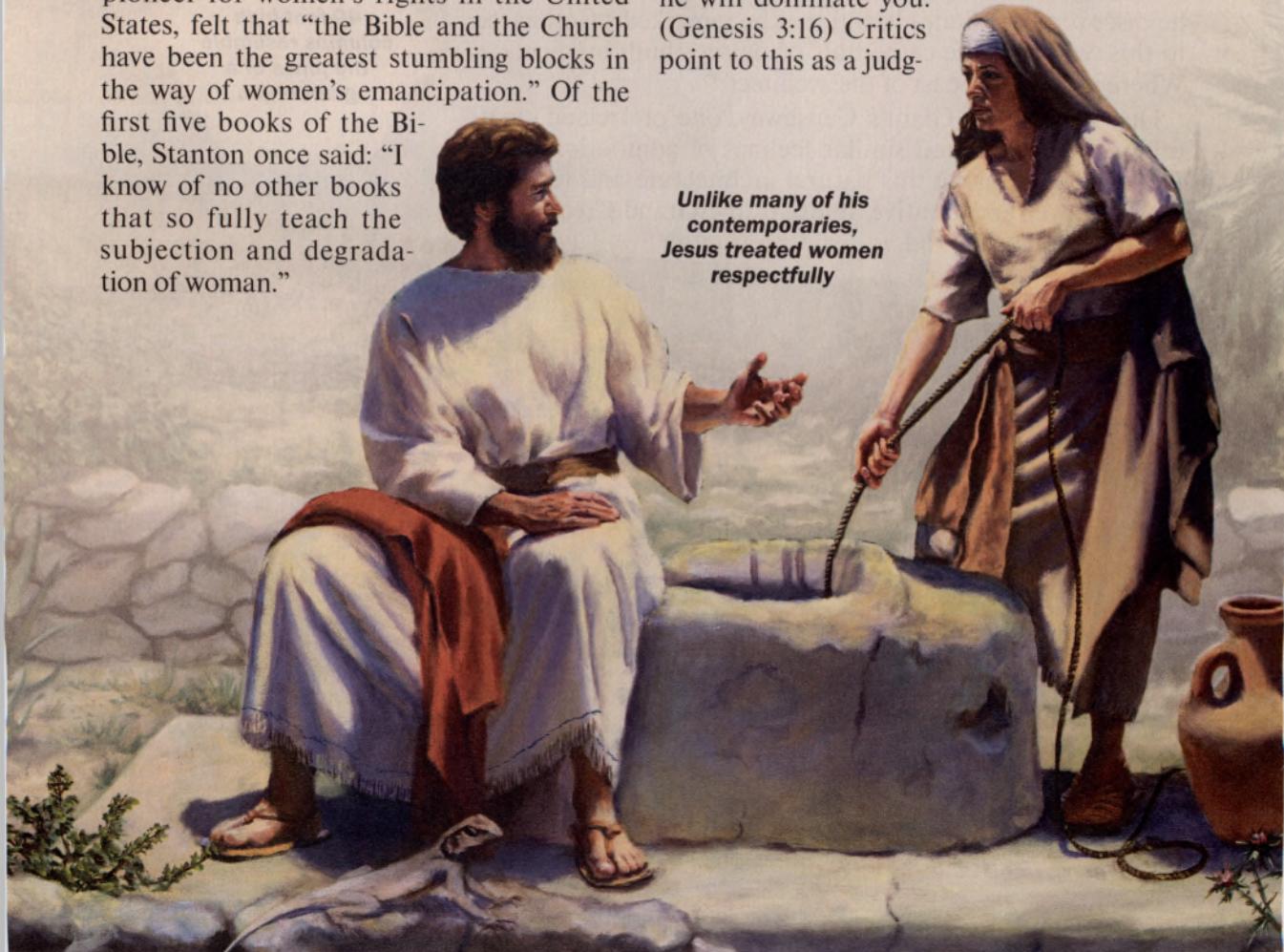
Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a 19th-century pioneer for women's rights in the United States, felt that "the Bible and the Church have been the greatest stumbling blocks in the way of women's emancipation." Of the first five books of the Bible, Stanton once said: "I know of no other books that so fully teach the subjection and degradation of woman."

While some today might hold such extreme viewpoints, many still feel that some parts of the Bible support discrimination against women. Is such a conclusion justified?

How Women Are Viewed in the Hebrew Scriptures

"Your craving will be for your husband, and he will dominate you."
(Genesis 3:16) Critics point to this as a judge-

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Jesus treated women respectfully



ment of Eve by God and as divine approval of woman's subjection by man. However, rather than a declaration of God's purpose, this is an accurate statement of the sad consequences of sin and rejection of God's sovereignty. Abuse of women is the direct result of mankind's fallen nature, not God's will. Wives in many cultures have indeed been dominated by their husbands, often in very harsh ways. But this was not God's purpose.

Both Adam and Eve were made in God's image. Moreover, they received the same mandate from God to become fruitful, fill the earth, and subdue it. They were to work together as a team. (Genesis 1:27, 28) Clearly, at that point neither was cruelly dominating the other. Genesis 1:31 says: "God saw everything he had made and, look! it was very good."

In some cases Bible accounts do not indicate God's view on a matter. They may just be historical narrative. The account of Lot offering his daughters to the Sodomites is related without moral commentary or judgment by God.*—Genesis 19:6-8.

The fact is, God hates all forms of exploitation and abuse. (Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 27:19; Isaiah 10:1, 2) The Mosaic Law condemned rape and prostitution. (Leviticus 19:29; Deuteronomy 22:23-29) Adultery was prohibited, and the penalty was death for both parties. (Leviticus 20:10) Rather than discriminate against women, the Law elevated and protected them from the rampant exploitation common in the surrounding nations. A capable Jewish wife was a highly respected and esteemed individual. (Proverbs 31:10, 28-30) The Israelites' failure to follow God's laws on showing respect for women was their fault, not God's will. (Deuteronomy 32:5) Ultimately, God judged and punished the nation as a whole for their flagrant disobedience.

Is Subjection Discrimination?

Any society can function well only when there is order. This requires the administration of authority. The alternative is chaos. "God is a God, not of disorder, but of peace." —1 Corinthians 14:33.

The apostle Paul describes the family headship arrangement: "The head of every man is the Christ; in turn the head of a woman is the man; in turn the head of the Christ is God." (1 Corinthians 11:3) Every individual except God submits to a higher authority. Does the fact that Jesus has a head mean that he is being discriminated against? Of course not! The fact that men Scripturally have been assigned to take the lead in the congregation and the family does not mean that women are being discriminated against. To prosper, both the family and the congregation need women and men to play their respective roles with love and respect.—Ephesians 5:21-25, 28, 29, 33.

Jesus consistently treated women with respect. He refused to follow the discriminatory traditions and regulations taught by the Pharisees. He talked to non-Jewish women. (Matthew 15:22-28; John 4:7-9) He taught women. (Luke 10:38-42) He protected women from being abandoned. (Mark 10:11, 12) Perhaps the most revolutionary step for his time was that Jesus accepted women into his inner circle of friends. (Luke 8:1-3) As the perfect embodiment of all of God's qualities, Jesus showed that individuals of both sexes have equal value in God's eyes. In fact, among the early Christians, both men *and women* received the gift of the holy spirit. (Acts 2:1-4, 17, 18) For those anointed, who have the prospect of serving as kings and priests with Christ, there will be no distinction of gender at all once resurrected to heavenly life. (Galatians 3:28) The Author of the Bible, Jehovah, does not discriminate against women.

* See *The Watchtower*, February 1, 2005, pages 25-6.

Drinking Tea the Chinese Way



HOW do you like *your* tea? Where I grew up, in Britain, it was served with milk and sometimes sugar and was a strong, fragrant brew. In fact, we used to joke with mother, saying that she made it so strong that the spoon would float in it! The black tea she used was called Indian tea, as it came from India or Sri Lanka. In our house there was also a caddy, a small container, of China tea, also black but with a different flavor and aroma. Personally, I did not like tea at all, even though mother always served me a dash of tea in my milk.

Later in life I was introduced to a very different tea. A Japanese friend invited me for tea. He served a pale-green tea in small handleless cups, but it did not taste like the tea I knew. This tea I liked! However, a friend with me alarmed the host by asking for milk and sugar to add to the tea! Our host explained that Japanese tea was not taken that way. Later, when I lived in Japan, I was delighted that Japanese tea in great quantity was always served to friends and visitors.

After that, I moved to Taiwan. I wondered if the tea my mother served would be the beverage of choice of most Chinese. How glad I was that green tea is also drunk in Taiwan, although the flavor is slightly different from that enjoyed in Japan. And then there is oolong tea, different again, and also very popular. You may be wondering how these three completely distinct teas are produced and why they taste so different.

Where Tea Comes From

Tea, known as *Camellia sinensis*, grows wild in China and Japan, the trees being up to 30 feet in height. As you may have already guessed from the Latin name, the beautiful ornamental camellia shrub (*Camellia japonicus*) with dark-green, glossy leaves and exquisite pink, white, or red flowers is a very close relative of tea. In fact, the Chinese name for the camellia is *cha hua*, meaning "tea flower."

But where does tea as we know it come from? According to *The Encyclopedia Americana*, the first authentic mention of tea appears in the biography of a Chinese official who died in 273 C.E., although a plant mentioned in a work edited by Confucius, who lived from about 551 to 479 B.C.E., is presumed to be tea. The first English-language reference to tea was made by R. Wickham, an agent of the English East India Company, in 1615. In the mid-18th century, a considerable quantity of tea was purchased by Thomas Garway, proprietor of a London coffeehouse later known as Garraway's.

Tea in its cultivated form grows in many different parts of the world. The Dutch took tea to Java in 1826, and the British, famous as lovers of tea, took tea to India in about 1836. Then, in the 1870's, when a fungus killed Sri Lanka's coffee trees, tea bushes were used as replacements.

Tea-Growing in Taiwan

The island of Taiwan, although not large, has now become an important producer of tea. The mountainous area around Nant'ou is particularly famous, as higher altitudes produce the better-quality teas. Why don't you come along and visit one of the tea-growing areas in these beautiful, green mountains?

We visit the Farmer's Cooperative in LuGu (Deer Valley), where there is a tea museum. It comes as quite a surprise to us that oolong tea and green tea are rolled before the drying process. In the past this was done by tying the tea in a bag and rolling it with the feet. These days, of course, there is a machine to do the job. Now we can see why a small amount of Chinese tea in a pot unrolls and fills the pot when hot water is added. How surprised we are to learn that good tea is quite expensive! We are served a delicious oolong that is sold for about \$45 a pound. A more expensive tea may cost \$57, or a prizewinning tea at a competition may be sold for up to about \$1,400 a pound.

Varieties of Tea

To most Westerners, the most popular kind of tea is still black tea. Oriental tea drinkers call it red tea because of the color of the beverage. This tea is produced by allowing the leaves to ferment fully after the processes of withering and rolling have taken place and then drying the leaves.

For the extremely popular oolong tea, fermentation is permitted to occur naturally after the tea is picked and placed in large, almost-flat baskets. When the desired degree of fermentation has been reached, the leaves are stirred in pans at approximately 250 degrees Fahrenheit. This stops the fermentation process. The resulting delicious tea is taken without sugar, milk, or lemon.

The tea with the least fermentation is green tea. In Japan, India, and Sri Lanka, the leaves are sterilized over steam to keep fermentation to the absolute minimum, while the Chinese use dry heat for the same purpose. Green tea is taken just as it comes out of the pot!

Oolong tea



Women picking tea



How the Chinese Drink Tea

We have been invited to drink tea with the Tsai family. The large table is, in reality, a thick slice of a beautiful tree stump that has been polished to a very high gloss. In front of our host, Tsai Sheng Hsien, is a tray with an electric hot plate and a kettle. ‘How strange,’ we think, ‘the teapot is no more than three inches high, and there are two kinds of tiny cups ready for use.’ We wonder why and soon find out. Boiling water is poured over the pot and tiny cups and runs through the holes in the inner tray they are standing on. Then the correct amount of tea, enough to cover the bottom of the pot, is put in, and hot water is poured onto the leaves. This is then poured off and discarded. The purpose of this step, our host tells us, is to wash the tea leaves and to “open” the flavor!

Now more hot water is poured into the pot, and after our host has allowed the tea to brew for almost a minute, he fills a small jug with the entire contents of the teapot. From this jug he fills the taller, cylindrical one-inch diameter “fragrance” cups with the piping hot tea. He pours this into the drinking cups by placing the drinking cups over the fragrance cups and up-ending the cups. Then he invites us to pick up the now empty fragrance cups and savor the aroma! “Delightfully fragrant” is our comment.

Carefully picking up the drinking cup by its very top—the cups are handleless and hot—we take a sip. “Truly delicious!” we exclaim. We now understand that to the Chinese both the aroma and the flavor are to be savored. No sooner have we drunk the small amount of tea in our cups than they are filled again and again and again. The flavor becomes a little weak after the sixth or seventh time, and our host throws out the tea leaves. “Would you care to try another kind of tea?” he asks. It is too close to bedtime, so we respectfully decline more tea. Since tea contains caffeine, it can be quite stimulating and we

may find it difficult to fall asleep after drinking several cups of this high-grade oolong tea.

Tea at a Tearoom

We have never been to a tearoom, or a teashop, and decide to add this experience to our tea adventure. Some tearooms have an attractive garden for their patrons to enjoy as they drink tea. Other tearooms are situated in a natural mountain setting, and the lovely scenery adds to the pleasure of drinking tea.

We choose to drive up one of the mountains surrounding Taipei and take our tea at a delightful tearoom that has a very Chinese atmosphere. The second floor has goldfish-filled channels of water winding across the floor with stepping stones we must cross to enter the small pavilionlike room where we will drink our tea. We can select sweet bean cakes (red or white beans mashed with sugar), melon seeds, dried tofu (bean-curd), rice cakes, or pickled or dried fruits to accompany our tea. We decide on watermelon seeds, dried mango, and plums pickled with tea leaves. The sweetness of the snacks complements the flavor of the tea. As our tea is poured, we can almost imagine that we are back in ancient China!

Benefits of Drinking Tea

According to many Chinese, the drinking of tea with or after a meal is an aid to faster digestion of food. This, it is claimed, will to a certain degree act as a deterrent to weight gain. If true, it is a fine benefit indeed! Recently, researchers have also claimed that green tea can actually be an anticarcinogen. Another benefit we derive from drinking oolong and green teas is that they leave a clean aftertaste that is sweet and pleasant.

So once again the question comes up, “How do you like *your* tea?” Now that you have learned more about it, the answer may not be quite so easy. Why not try something different and discover for yourself how the Chinese drink tea!—Contributed.

Little bee-eater,
East Africa



Rainbow bee-eater,
Australia



By Awake! writer in Spain

Bee-eaters

multicolored acrobats of the skies

IMAGINE a family of birds whose feathers reflect practically every color of the rainbow. In flight, they can outmaneuver some of the fastest insects.

And some of them are among the few species of birds that form family clans in which relatives help one another to rear the young. These are just three of the many fascinating traits of bee-eaters.

It is the colorful appearance of these birds, however, that first attracts the attention of bird-watchers. Many insect-eating birds have drab colors and pass unnoticed. But bee-eaters provide an unrivaled display of color and aerial artistry that few bird-watchers will ever forget. Their plumage comes in bright greens, blues, reds, and yellows. Some species, such as the European bee-eater, have all these colors and more! And an Australian species has been aptly named the rainbow bee-eater or the rainbow bird.

Bee-eaters perform their show in many parts of Africa, Asia, Australia, and southern Europe. Since they are rarely seen in captivity, this is a spectacle that must be enjoyed in the wild. "Watching these bold and energetic birds is hugely entertaining," notes the online publication *Wildwatch*. "Because many species are quite relaxed in the presence of man, photographic opportunities come readily."

Extraordinary Flying Feats

Bee-eaters specialize in catching insects on the wing. And since they prefer large, fast-flying insects, such as bees, wasps, and hornets, they have to be both quick and agile. Keen eyesight also helps. The European bee-eater can spot a bee or a wasp a hundred yards away.*

To catch their prey, some bee-eaters use a dive-bombing

Somali
bee-eater,
Kenya

White-fronted
bee-eater, Africa



* When catching stinging insects such as bees or wasps, bee-eaters are careful not to swallow them until they have removed their venom. Usually, they settle on a convenient perch and carefully rub the insect's abdomen against it to expel the venom. They even close their eyes momentarily, which prevents their getting a squirt of poison in their eyes.

technique, swooping down on the insect from above. Or more commonly, they perch on a prominent branch and dart out to snatch a passing insect. Other species employ an even more demanding technique. First they fly down behind and below the insect on its blind side—often almost touching the ground. Then they accelerate slightly, raise their head, and pluck the insect out of the air with their long beak.

Certain African bee-eaters enlist the help of others in their search for food. They may fly alongside large animals, other birds, or even vehicles

that help stir up insects they can catch. The bold carmine bee-eater will even hitch a ride on the back of an ostrich, a goat, or a zebra. These hosts not only offer convenient perches for the bee-eater but also disturb locusts or grasshoppers on which it can feed. Bushfires also attract large flocks of carmine bee-eaters, which gorge on the grasshoppers as they try to escape the flames.*

Sunbathing, Preening, and Washing

Fast flight requires feathers in optimum condition, and the bee-eater has a whole range of techniques designed to remove parasites and keep its plumage clean. This is no trivial matter. A typical bee-eater will dedicate 10 percent of its day to this "comfort behavior."

Sunbathing may warm the bird up in the morning, and it often accompanies preening. The heat of the sun apparently makes the parasites more active and easier to remove. Some species of bee-eaters like to sunbathe collectively, whereby several birds adopt a similar posture. With their backs facing the sun and their wings outspread, they seem to mimic a group of tourists lounging on a beach.

Washing is less frequent and usually takes the form of a quick dip in the water during flight. In dry areas bee-eaters must make do with a dust bath. Afterward, the birds invariably spend time preening their feathers and scratching. This daily routine is the principal way they eliminate parasites, which are a constant problem for earth-hole nesters, such as bee-eaters.

Keeping Company

Most bee-eaters have a very gregarious nature. Several species breed in large colonies, some of which may number as many as 25,000 birds. These sites are often situated on large sandy banks, where the birds can easily excavate their holes. The colonial nesting sites give them extra protection from predators, and their close co-

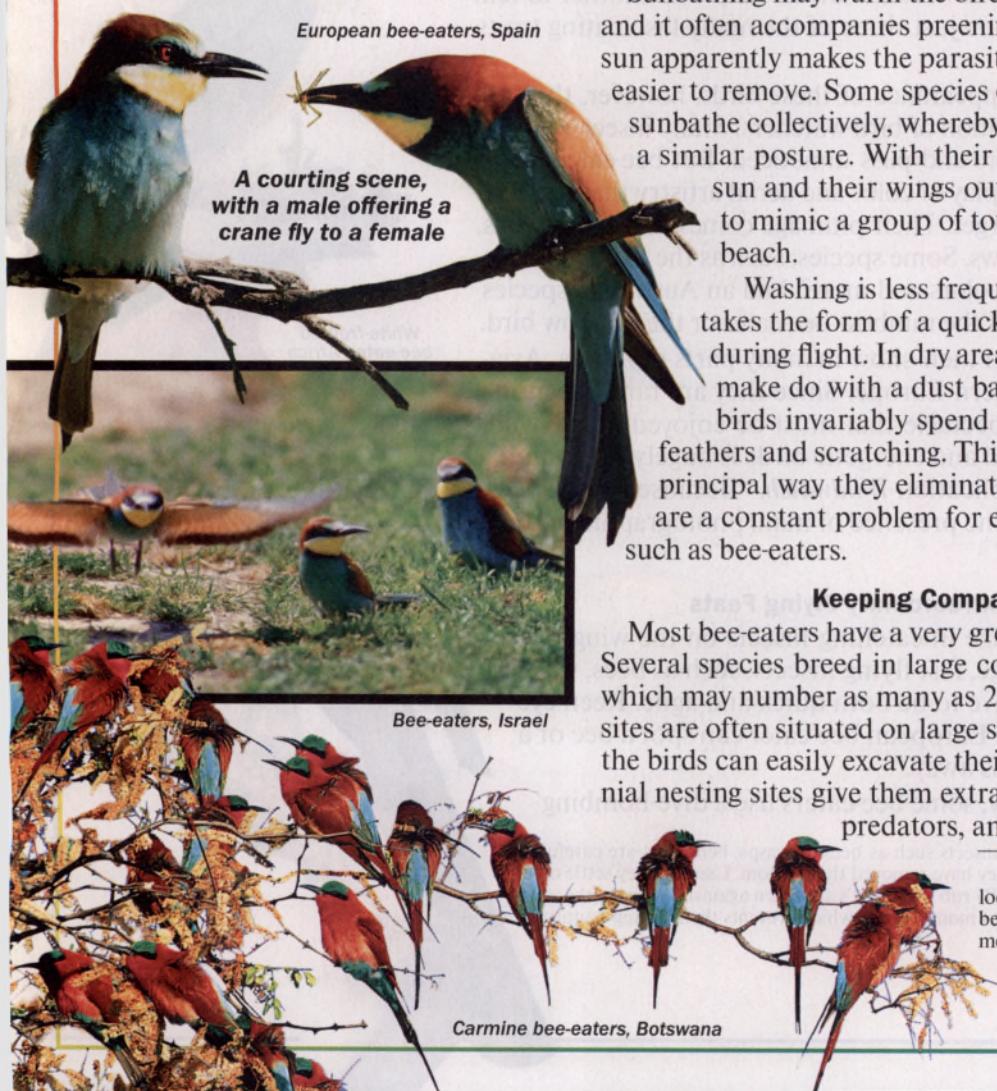
* Because of this custom, a local name for the carmine bee-eater in West Africa means "cousin to the fire."

European bee-eaters, Spain

A courting scene,
with a male offering a
crane fly to a female

Bee-eaters, Israel

Carmine bee-eaters, Botswana





Carmine bee-eaters, Botswana

©Kevinschafer.com

operation enables them to locate an area with a plentiful food supply quickly. Even when foraging, the sociable bee-eaters keep together, maintaining contact with their penetrating calls.

In some species, such as the white-fronted bee-eater, the extended family collaborates in chick rearing.* Helpers are usually the offspring of the parent birds, and their cooperation ensures that twice the number of chicks can be reared successfully. "Helpers assist in all reproductive duties: they help to dig the nest, incubate the eggs and, most importantly, to feed the young," explains the book *Kingfishers, Bee-Eaters and Rollers*.

Family groups of bee-eaters are particularly fond of perching together. Each bird roosts so close to the next that they give the impression that they are all determined to squeeze into the same photograph. Sometimes several birds will shuffle up to one another on the same twig. This custom doubtless helps them to conserve body heat during cool nights.

Attractive Birds With One Weakness

Recently, bee-eaters have begun to specialize in eating locusts, especially in West Africa, where destructive migratory locusts are abundant. The carmine bee-eater has even modified its breeding and migratory behavior to take advantage of this plentiful food. It now follows the migratory locusts as they swarm along the Niger River.

* One Kenyan colony of about 400 white-fronted bee-eaters had 60 family clans. Researchers describe their social structure as possibly one of the most complex yet studied of any bird species.



Carmine bee-eaters, Singapore

Nevertheless, as their name implies, bee-eaters do have a weakness for bees—their favorite delicacy. So they are certainly not the favorite birds of beekeepers. On the positive side, they also eat wasps and hornets that prey on bees, and in the autumn they feed on old bees that are more likely to infect the hive with disease.

"Today, bee-eaters are widely admired by birdwatchers for their diverse and beautiful plumages," notes the *Handbook of the Birds of the World*. Some breeding sites have become a memorable stop for tourists on African safaris.

So if you live in areas frequented by bee-eaters, why not take a little time to enjoy the unique spectacle offered by these multicolored acrobats of the skies?



"Meet You at the Well"

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN MOLDOVA

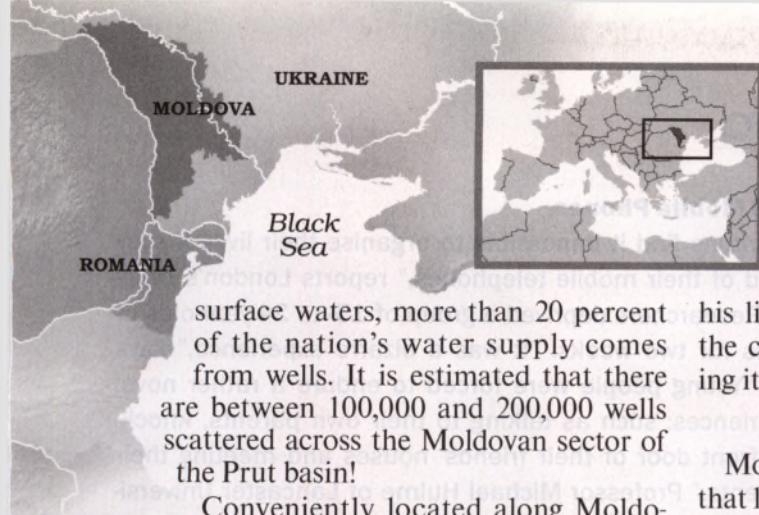
THE bride watches nervously as water is drawn from the well and poured onto the road. She laughs with delight as the groom sweeps her into his arms and carries her across the damp patch of ground. Friends and family members gather to watch and cheer the newlyweds as they perform the age-old ritual. This unusual wedding custom aptly demonstrates that in Moldova, a local

well is much more than just a watering hole.

Situated in southeastern Europe, Moldova is flanked by Ukraine to the north, east, and south and by Romania to the west. It has a total land area of some 13,000 square miles.

Although there are nearly 3,100 rivers in Moldova, droughts frequently prevent the rivers from adequately supplying the needs of its 4,300,000 inhabitants. To supplement its





surface waters, more than 20 percent of the nation's water supply comes from wells. It is estimated that there are between 100,000 and 200,000 wells scattered across the Moldovan sector of the Prut basin!

Conveniently located along Moldova's roads and byways, ornately covered wells stand ready to quench the thirst of weary travelers. In many of the country's villages, the local well is also a place to meet friends and discuss the day's events.

A Traditional Respect for Water

In Moldova respect for well water is shown in a variety of ways. For example, toilets are constructed a safe distance from the family well, and to safeguard a well's purity further, there is a prohibition against pouring excess water back into the well. If more water is drawn than is needed, the excess is to be poured out onto the ground or into a container near the well. In addition, it is considered bad manners to spit on the ground near a well. Why, tradition even forbids having an argument near a well!

Wells foster a community spirit among Moldovans. The digging of a new well is a

community event and is considered as important as the construction of a new house. This is reflected in the local saying, The person who has failed to build a home, to raise a son, to dig a well, and to plant a tree has wasted his life. When a well is completed, all from the community who participated in preparing it are invited to a large banquet.

Environmental Concerns

Most wells in Moldova tap a water table that lies between 15 and 40 feet underground. Another layer of water is found at a depth of between 500 and 800 feet. Despite traditional safeguards, much of Moldova's groundwater has been contaminated by past industrial and agricultural excesses. The 1996 United Nations publication *Republic of Moldova Human Development Report* noted that nitrates and pathogenic bacteria had contaminated "approximately 60% of the wells located in Moldova." In recent years, however, the quality of well water has improved as a result of the drop in industrial production and the decline in the quantity of chemicals and fuels seeping into the water table.

If you visit Moldova, you don't have to toss water on the road to have a friendly conversation. You might even catch up on the day's events as you quench your thirst with a cool glass of water. All you need is for a hospitable Moldovan to offer to meet you at the well.

A TRADITIONAL CRAFT

Oleg is a local sheet-metal tradesman, and he has been making ornate well covers since he left school. "I think sheet-metal working is in our blood," says Oleg. "At the beginning of the last century, my grandfather learned the metalworking craft from one of the many Jewish sheet-metal tradesmen who lived in the large Jewish community outside his village of Lipcani. After the pogroms of the second world war, the few tradesmen left were non-Jewish. That is when my father learned the trade, and he has passed his skills on to me."

While forming the intricate shapes that decorate his well covers, Oleg uses simple tools and a few templates; tradition and imagination guide his hands. His skills are highly valued by the local residents. Says Oleg: "My customers usually haggle for a better price for most other jobs, but when I make a well cover for them, they are generally glad to pay the price asked."

Watching the World



Youths and Mobile Phones

"Young Britons find it impossible to organise their lives if they are deprived of their mobile telephones," reports London's *Daily Telegraph*. Researchers deprived a group of 15- to 24-year-olds of their phones for two weeks. "It was a bizarre experience," says the report. "Young people were forced to endure a rather novel set of experiences: such as talking to their own parents, knocking on the front door of their friends' houses and meeting their friends' parents." Professor Michael Hulme of Lancaster University, England, describes young users' normal cell-phone conversations as "a way of comforting and defining themselves." Without her phone, one teenager felt "agitated and stressed," reports the newspaper, while another felt isolated and "had to plan in advance to meet people at exact times," instead of "being able to talk to [his] friends whenever [he] wanted to."

Cesarean Sections and Allergies

"There may be long-term risks of Caesareans we've not considered before," says Sibylle Koletzko, of the Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, Germany. "I would discourage [them] for all non-medical reasons." Researchers say that such births may be a factor in the rise in cases of asthma and allergies. A study of 865 babies who were all exclusively breastfed for the first four months showed that those delivered by Cesarean section had more digestive problems and were more likely to develop food intolerances. According to *New Scientist*, "the explanation might be that babies born by Caesarean do not get a chance to swallow benefi-

cial bacteria during birth; colonisation of the gut plays a key role in the development of the immune system."

The Ultimate in Home Decor?

"Western tourists and businessmen who are illegally buying tiger skins in China are responsible for the slaughter of one of the world's most endangered species," says *The Sunday Telegraph* of London. The wild tiger population has dropped from some 100,000 a century ago to fewer than 5,000 today. Most live in India, with some in other countries of South Asia as well as the Far East. The Environmental Investigation Agency, a London charity, reports that buyers view the skins

"as the ultimate in home decor, but they are pushing the tiger into extinction. . . . These animals are so critically endangered that each individual is vital to the survival of its species." Between 1994 and 2003, there were 684 tiger skins seized, but that figure is thought to be a mere fraction of those smuggled.

Implantable Identification Chip

"The US Food and Drug Administration has approved an implantable identification microchip" as a means of accessing patients' medical records, reports the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*. The manufacturers recommend that the chip, comparable in size to a grain of rice, be inserted

under the patient's skin in the triceps area. By passing a scanner over the implantation site, medical personnel can read its identification number. This is then used to access information previously stored in a database by way of a secure Internet connection. The new technology "may help improve rapid access to vital medical information for unconscious or uncommunicative patients," says *JAMA*, and it "could also be used for security, financial, and personal identification applications."

Living Together Without Marriage

"Canadians are increasingly embracing common-law unions as a precursor to marriage," reports the Vancouver Sun newspaper. Alan Mirabelli, executive direc-

tor of the Vanier Institute of the Family in Ottawa, says: "This generation of Canadians under 35 has experienced a level of divorce and separation among their parents like no other. So they are cautious to jump into marriage." A national survey conducted among nearly 2,100 Canadians aged 18 to 34 found that "22 per cent . . . are cohabiting with a partner, while 27 per cent are married," says the report. "A previous Vanier Institute study found that in 1975, 61 per cent were married, while only one per cent were living with a partner in a common-law relationship."

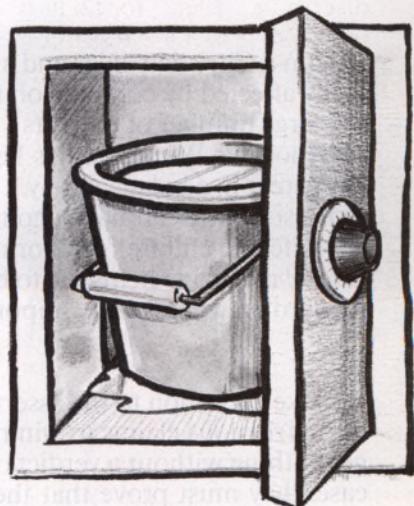
A Year of Extreme Weather

"The year 2004, punctuated by four powerful hurricanes in the Caribbean and

deadly typhoons lashing Asia, was the fourth-hottest on record, extending a trend since 1990 that has registered the 10 warmest years," says an Associated Press report. Last year was also the most expensive ever when it came to weather-related damage. In the United States and the Caribbean alone, hurricanes were estimated to have caused more than \$43 billion worth of damage. Storms and high temperatures in some areas coincided with exceptionally harsh winters elsewhere. Southern Argentina, as well as Chile and Peru, for example, suffered severe cold and snow in June and July. According to the report, "scientists say a sustained increase in temperature is likely to continue disrupting the global climate."

Germans Saving Too Much Water?

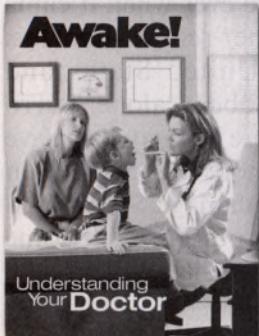
Water supply and sewage collection systems in Germany are suffering because consumers are saving too much water, reports the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*. In the past, higher consumption was forecast, and networks were built accordingly. At the same time, saving water has been promoted as an important contribution to safeguarding the environment and resources, and demand has decreased. The problem now is that "in many places, our drinking water is standing still in the pipes," says Ulrich Oemichen of the German Gas and Water Boards Association. "Longer stagnation then results in pipe corrosion, and the water absorbs metals." Also, when there is not enough water in the sewers, solid material collects and starts to rot. The only solution is to flush the freshwater- and sewage-collection systems with precious drinking water.



From Our Readers

Doctors I recently read the series “Understanding Your Doctor.” (January 22, 2005) Thank you for conveying so clearly the feelings that doctors experience. I am a nurse, and I have seen firsthand the lack of understanding between medical personnel and patients. I hope that this series will help many to understand medical personnel better and to appreciate their work.

L. K., Russia



One doctor told me that he had read the magazine with great interest. He praised the research and said that he agreed with the series completely. Thank you for these wonderful articles.

H. Z., Germany

As a patient I had only been thinking of myself. But this magazine helped me to understand the stress that doctors experience. From now on when I receive medical treatment, I will not just talk about my ailment from my own point of view, but I will follow the advice in the box “Cooperating With Your Doctor.” I want to become a more discerning patient.

J. M., Japan

I am a Christian elder and a physician. I am especially affected by compassion fatigue, resulting from the large number of patients I see in a day. Being one of Jehovah’s Witnesses has helped me to deal with my career in a balanced way. I strive to be efficient at work so that I can have enough time at home for my wife and children and for my Christian activities. *Awake!* magazine helps me to be balanced and to stay focused on what is truly important.

P. R., United States

I take exception to the assertion that “some lawyers make frivolous claims to win riches.” Lawyers usually get nothing without a verdict or a settlement. To win a case, they must prove that there has been a breach of the standard of care. Having been involved in mal-

practice actions for over 30 years, I can tell you that I have rejected hundreds of cases before accepting one.

J. M., United States

“Awake!” responds: Our statement that “some lawyers make frivolous claims” was not a comment on the prevalence of the practice. Our point was that the frequency of malpractice litigation is a source of genuine anxiety for many doctors. Surely, wrongful suits do occur. Still, the reader’s comments are valid. The legal system has boundaries that can make it impractical—if not unethical—to file a frivolous claim.

Young People Ask I am 11 years old. I just loved the article “Young People Ask . . . What Should I Do When Others Tell Me Their Problems?” (January 22, 2005) There is a girl at school who has had a traumatic life, and she has told me all about it. To make matters worse, her grandfather died this past week. I found many points in this article that will help me to comfort her. It gives me much comfort to know that Jehovah fully understands what young ones are going through.

A. H., United States

I am 14 years old, and many of my peers come to me for advice. Once in a while their problems are not appropriate for me to deal with. I kindly explain why I cannot help them, and sometimes I share Bible-based information with them. Now my peers ask me questions about my religion. This has inspired me to use “Who Really Are Jehovah’s Witnesses, and What Do They Believe?” as the subject of a speech I have been assigned.

B. D., Canada

Take a Closer Look at the NOPAL

By *Awake!* writer in Mexico

The nopal plant is an unattractive cactus that for centuries has been a part of the life of the Mexican people. It can be found in other countries in the Americas—as well as in arid areas around the world—but its usefulness may not be readily apparent because of its thorny appearance. The plant can reach up to 15 feet in height. It has flattened oval stalks that are full of thorns, and it produces prickly pears that taste sweet.

Milpa Alta, near Mexico City, is an ideal location for raising nopal plants, and local farmers have for a long time exported them to other parts of the world. Milpa Alta even hosts an annual fair, which gives people the opportunity to taste a great variety of products prepared with nopal.

In Mexico a shopper can usually find nopal stems in small marketplaces as well as in modern supermarkets. There they are sold cleaned and ready for use.

Generally, these must be fresh and tender to be used as food. Mexicans prepare them in many ways and serve them with a variety of meats. The most common dish is grilled nopal stems served with steak, while scrambled eggs with chopped nopal is a delicious breakfast dish.



In addition, a tasty salad can be prepared by chopping up small squares of boiled nopal stems, adding finely chopped raw tomatoes, onions, and coriander, and combining this mixture with olive oil, vinegar, and salt. Although nopal stems may at first seem flavorless—and unappealing because of their slimy texture—when seasoned with spicy Mexican sauces, their taste is quite delightful.

Experienced farmers can cut and clean nopal stems very quickly and skillfully. If you decide to do this yourself, you need to be careful of their many thorns. It is recommended that you wear plastic gloves.

The nopal plant has been found to have medicinal properties. Mexico's National Institute of Nutrition has described its health benefits, saying, among other things, that it can lower one's total cholesterol and LDL lipoproteins. Some have recommended its use in helping to control diabetes. As scientists continue to study the humble nopal plant, additional health benefits may be found.

In the meantime, why not try a traditional Mexican meal made with the nopal plant? You may find that there is far more to it than its appearance would suggest.

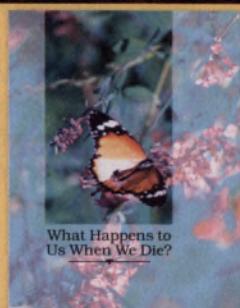


Is There Life After Death?

■ Many people would like to have reliable answers to such questions as: Is there life after death? Is the soul immortal? What does the Bible really say about resurrection on earth?

Recently, a woman in France wrote a letter to the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses there regarding such questions. She said: "I am always happy to read your brochures, which ring true on all kinds of subjects. Life becomes more bearable with the help and comfort that the Bible offers."

She explained: "I am writing to you regarding the brochure *What Happens to Us When We Die?* which brought me great comfort. It made everything so clear and simple." She added: "I would like to obtain 10 or 15 copies of that brochure to distribute to people I know, so that they may also benefit from your writings."



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