

Awake!

March 8, 2001



**WHAT SHOULD
WE LEARN FROM
*HISTORY?***

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Is history really worth studying?
What can we learn from it?
Is Bible history of any value today?

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History

SHOULD WE TRUST IT?

"A knowledge of history brings . . . a feeling that we are part of a fellowship that runs through the ages from long before our birth to long after our death."

A COMPANION TO THE STUDY OF HISTORY,
BY MICHAEL STANFORD.

Queen Nefertiti

TO LIVE without history is to live without a form of memory. Without history you, your family, your tribe, or even your nation would seem to be without roots, without a past. The present would seem to have no foundation and little if any meaning.

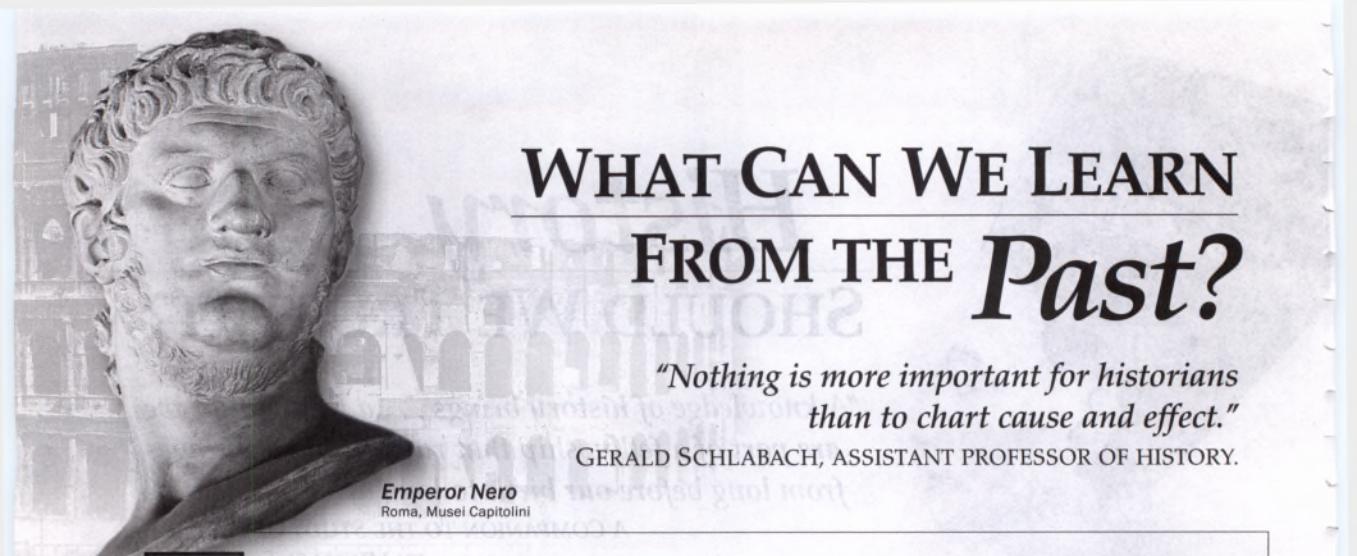
History can be a vast reservoir of lessons for life. It can help us avoid falling into the same old pitfalls time and again. As one philosopher asserted, people who forget about the past are condemned to repeat it. Being familiar with history can open our minds to past civilizations, amazing discoveries, fascinating people, and different ways of looking at things.

But since history deals with people and events of long ago, how do we know if it can be trusted? If we are going to learn valuable lessons from history, then obviously these must be based on truth. And when we discover truth, we ought to accept it, even though that may not always be palatable. The past can be like a cactus garden—it has its beauty and its barbs; it can inspire, and it can prick.

In the following articles, we will consider some aspects of history that can help us assess the accuracy of what we read. We will also consider how authentic history can benefit the discerning reader.

What lessons can be learned from history?





WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE *Past*?

"Nothing is more important for historians than to chart cause and effect."

GERALD SCHLABACH, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF HISTORY.

Emperor Nero
Roma, Musei Capitolini

HISTORIANS often ask, How and why did certain events happen? For example, history tells us that the Roman Empire fell. But why did it fall? Was it because of corruption or pleasure-seeking? Had the empire become too unwieldy and its armies too costly? Were Rome's enemies simply becoming too many and too powerful?

More recently, Eastern European Communism, once seen as a threat to the West, collapsed seemingly overnight in one country after another. But why? And what lessons are there to be learned? These are the kinds of questions historians try to answer. But in providing answers, to what extent does personal bias affect their judgment?

Can History Be Trusted?

Historians are more like detectives than scientists. They investigate, question, and challenge records from the past. They aim

for truth, but their target is often indistinct. Part of the reason is that their work is largely about people, and historians cannot read minds—especially the minds of the dead. Historians may also have preconceived ideas and prejudices. Hence, sometimes the best work is really an interpretation—from the writer's own perspective.

Of course, a historian's having his own point of view does not necessarily mean his work is inaccurate. The Biblical narratives of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles include parallel accounts that were written by five different individuals, yet it can be shown that they contain no significant contradictions or inaccuracies. The same is true of the four Gospels. Many Bible writers even recorded their own faults and foolish mistakes—something rarely seen in secular works.—Numbers 20:9-12; Deuteronomy 32:48-52.

Besides possible prejudices, another im-

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

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portant factor to consider when reading history is the motive of the writer. "Any history told by the wielders of power, or by seekers after power or by their friends, must be regarded with the utmost suspicion," says Michael Stanford in *A Companion to the Study of History*. Questionable motive is also evident when works of history betray a subtle or even a bold plea to nationalism and patriotism. Sadly, this is sometimes found in school textbooks. A government decree in one country stated quite openly that the purpose of teaching history is "to strengthen the nationalist and patriotic sentiments in the hearts of the people . . . because the knowledge of the nation's past is one of the most important incentives to patriotic behaviour."

Doctored History

Sometimes history is not just biased but doctored. The former Soviet Union, for instance, "expunged the name Trotsky from the record, so that the fact of the commissar's existence disappeared," says the book *Truth in History*. Who was Trotsky? He was a leader in the Russian Bolshevik Revolution and was second only to Lenin. After Lenin's death, Trotsky clashed with Stalin, was expelled from the Communist Party, and was later murdered. His name was even purged from Soviet encyclopedias. Similar distortions of history, even to the point of burning non-

conforming books, have been a regular practice of many dictatorial regimes.

Doctoring history, however, is an ancient practice, dating back at least as far as Egypt and Assyria. Proud and vain, pharaohs, kings, and emperors ensured that their historical legacy was flattering. So achievements were routinely exaggerated, while anything embarrassing or dishonorable, such as defeat in warfare, was played down, erased, or sometimes not even reported. In sharp contrast, the history of Israel recorded

**"Any history told by the
wielders of power . . .
must be regarded with
the utmost suspicion."**

MICHAEL STANFORD, HISTORIAN



in the Bible includes both the failures and the glories of kings and subjects alike.

How do historians check the accuracy of older writings? They compare these with such things as old tax records, law codes, advertisements for slave auctions, business and private letters and records, inscriptions on pottery shards, ships' logs, and items found in tombs and graves. This miscellany often sheds additional or different light on official

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writings. Where gaps or uncertainties remain, good historians will usually say so, even though they might offer their own theories to fill the gaps. In any case, wise readers consult more than one reference if they seek a balanced interpretation.

In spite of all the challenges that the historian faces, his work can have much to offer. One history book explains: "Hard as it is to write, . . . world history is important, even essential, to us." Besides providing a window on the past, history can broaden our understanding of the present human condition. We soon discover, for instance, that the ancients displayed the same human traits that people display today. These recurring traits have had a major impact on history, perhaps leading to the saying that history repeats itself. But is that a sound generalization?

Does History Repeat Itself?

Can we accurately predict the future on the basis of the past? Certain types of events do recur. For example, former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said: "Every civilization that has ever existed has ultimately collapsed." He added: "History is a tale of efforts that failed, of aspirations that weren't realized. . . . So, as a historian, one has to live with a sense of the inevitability of tragedy."

No two empires fell the same way. Babylon fell overnight before the Medes and the Persians in 539 B.C.E. Greece broke up into a number of kingdoms after the death of Alexander the Great, eventually giving way to Rome. Rome's demise, however, remains controversial. Historian Gerald Schlabach asks: "When did Rome fall? Did it ever really fall? Something changed in Western Europe between 400 CE and 600 CE. But much continued."^{*} Clearly,

some aspects of history recur, while others do not.

One consistently recurring lesson of history is the failure of human rulership. In all ages good government has constantly been foiled by self-interest, shortsightedness, greed, corruption, nepotism, and especially the lust to obtain and retain power. Hence, the past is littered with arms races, failed treaties, wars, social unrest and violence, the unfair distribution of wealth, and collapsed economies.

For example, note what *The Columbia History of the World* says of the influence of Western civilization on the rest of the world: "After Columbus and Cortes had awakened the people of Western Europe to the possibilities, their appetite for converts, profits, and fame was thoroughly aroused and Western civilization was introduced, mainly by force, over nearly all the globe. Equipped with an unappeasable urge to expand and with superior weapons, conquerors made the rest of the world into an unwilling appendage of the great European powers . . . The peoples of these continents [Africa, Asia, and the Americas] were, in short, the victims of a ruthless, unrelenting exploitation." How true are the words found in the Bible at Ecclesiastes 8:9: "Man has dominanted man to his injury!"

Perhaps this lamentable record is what moved one German philosopher to comment that the only thing to be learned from history is that men learn nothing from history. Jeremiah 10:23 states: "The course of man is not in his control, nor is it in man's power as he goes his way to guide his steps." (*The Jerusalem Bible*) This inability to guide our steps should especially concern us today. Why? Because we are afflicted by problems that in both number and scale are without precedent. So how will we cope?

* Schlabach's observations harmonize with the prophet Daniel's prediction that the Roman Empire would be succeeded by an outgrowth from within itself. See chapters 4 and 9 of *Pay Attention to Daniel's Prophecy!*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.



In all ages "man has dominated man to his injury"

"The Conquerors," by Pierre Fritel. Includes (left to right): Ramses II, Attila, Hannibal, Tamerlane, Julius Caesar (center), Napoléon I, Alexander the Great, Nebuchadnezzar, and Charlemagne. From the book *The Library of Historic Characters and Famous Events*, Vol. III, 1895; planes: USAF photo

Problems Without Precedent

In the entire history of mankind, never before has the whole earth been threatened by the combined forces of deforestation, soil erosion, desertification, massive extinction of plant and animal species, atmospheric ozone depletion, pollution, global warming, dying oceans, and an exploding human population.

"Another challenge facing modern societies is the sheer speed of change," says the book *A Green History of the World*. Ed Ayres, editor of *World Watch* magazine, writes: "We are being confronted by something so completely outside our collective experience that we don't really see it, even when the evidence is overwhelming. For us, that 'something' is a blitz of enormous biological and physical alterations in the world that has been sustaining us."

In view of these and related problems, historian Pardon E. Tillinghast states: "The directions in which society is moving have become infinitely more complex, and for many of us the dilemmas are terrifying. What guidance can professional historians offer to confused people today? Not very much, it seems."

Professional historians may be at a loss as to what to do or what to advise, but surely that would not be true of our Creator. In fact, he foretold in the Bible that in the last days, the world would experience "critical times hard to deal with." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) But God has gone even further and done something historians are powerless to do—he has shown the way out, as we will see in the following article.



The Bible

AUTHENTIC HISTORY?

THEY censured rulers. They castigated priests. They reproved the common people for their wickedness. They even put their own failings and sins on public record. They were hounded and persecuted, and some were even murdered for speaking and writing the truth. Who were they? The prophets of the Bible, many of whom contributed to the Holy Scriptures.—Matthew 23:35-37.

In his book *The Historian and History*, Page Smith writes: “[The Hebrews] were as pitiless to their heroes as to their villains, to themselves as to their adversaries, because they were writing under the eye of God and had nothing to gain and much to lose by dissembling.” Smith also wrote that “alongside the tedious chronologies of the warrior kings of Syria or Egypt, the account of the tribulations and the triumphs of a people chosen by God . . . make[s] an enthralling story. The Hebrew chroniclers had discovered one of the most essential elements of history—that it is enacted by real people, with all their faults and blemishes.”

The Bible writers were also meticulously accurate. After analyzing the Bible in the light of history and archaeology, writer Werner Keller said in the introduction of his book *The Bible as History*: “In view of the overwhelming mass of authentic and well-attested evidence now available, . . . there

kept hammering on my brain this one sentence: ‘The Bible is right after all!’”

Dynamic History With Powerful Lessons

For the most part, the Bible writers were men of the earth—farmers, shepherds, fishermen. Yet, what they wrote over a period of some 1,600 years has influenced more people than any other writings, ancient or modern. Furthermore, their writings have been attacked from all quarters, but in vain. (Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:25) Today the Bible can be read in whole or in part in some 2,200 languages—far more than any other book! Why does the Bible enjoy such a distinction? The following references help answer that question.

“All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, that the man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work.”—2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

“All the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction, that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope.”—Romans 15:4.

“These things went on befalling them [the Israelites] as examples, and they were written for a warning to us [Christians] upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived.”—1 Corinthians 10:11.

Yes, as a divinely inspired and preserved

record of real people—some who pleased God and some who did not—the Bible is elevated above all other books. It is far from a clinical listing of dos and don'ts or a collection of cute little stories to entertain children. True, God used human penmen, but this has only enhanced the Bible, giving it a warm appeal that has touched the hearts of readers generation after generation. Archaeologist William Albright stated: "The profound moral and spiritual intuitions of the Bible, which form a unique revelation of God to man through the channels of human experience, are just as true today as they were two or three thousand years ago."

To illustrate the Bible's timeless relevance, let us go back to the very beginning of hu-

Moabite Stone: Contains King Mesha's version of the conflict between Moab and Israel (2 Kings 3:4-27), the names of various Bible places, and God's name in ancient Hebrew letters. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Silver denarius coin: Replica bears image and inscription of Tiberius Caesar (Mark 12:15-17).

Nabonidus Chronicle: A cuneiform tablet that confirms the sudden fall of Babylon to Cyrus. (Daniel, chapter 5) Photograph taken by courtesy of the British Museum.

Stone slab: Bears name of Pontius Pilate in Latin. Photograph © Israel Museum, Jerusalem; courtesy of Israel Antiquities Authority.

Background of Dead Sea Scroll: A study of the Isaiah text proved that this book had remained practically unchanged over a period of 1,000 years of hand copying. Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

man history—where the Bible alone can take us—and consider some key lessons from the book of Genesis.

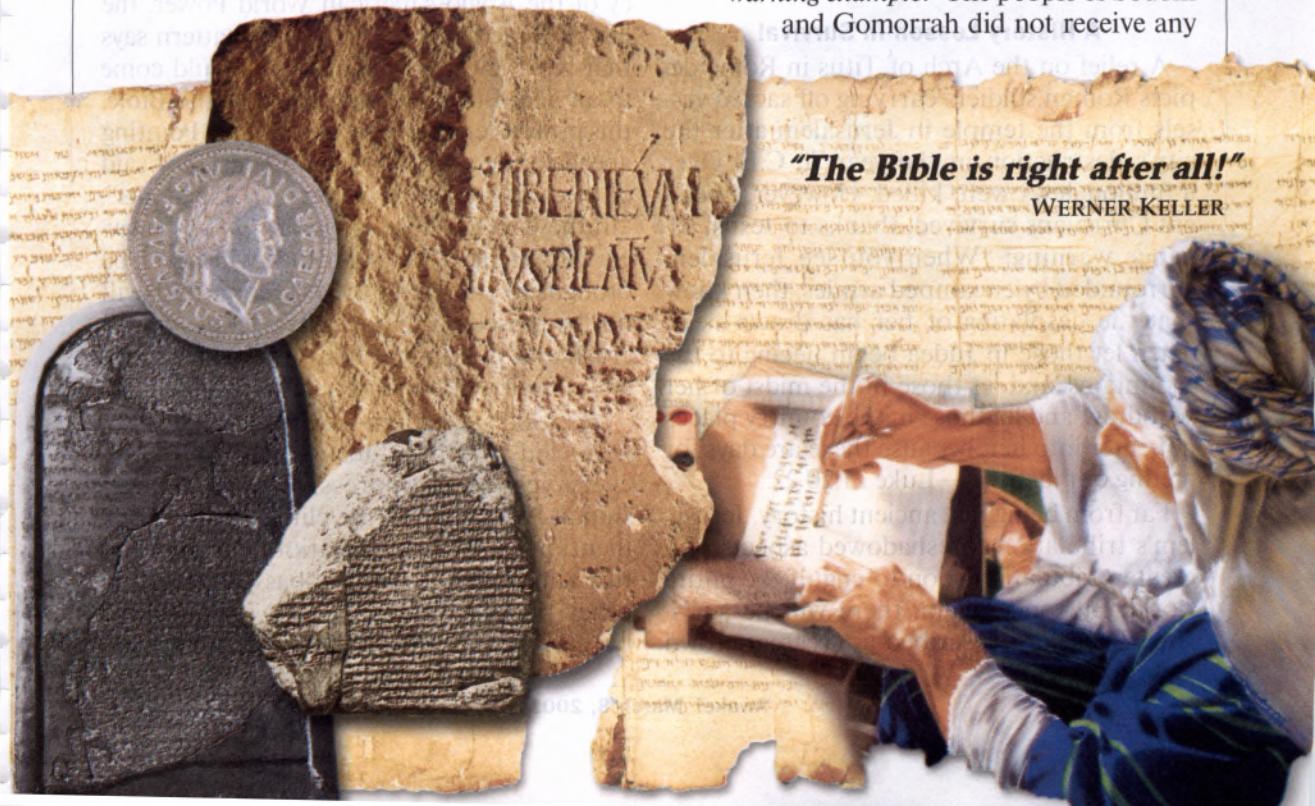
Timely Lessons From an Ancient Narrative

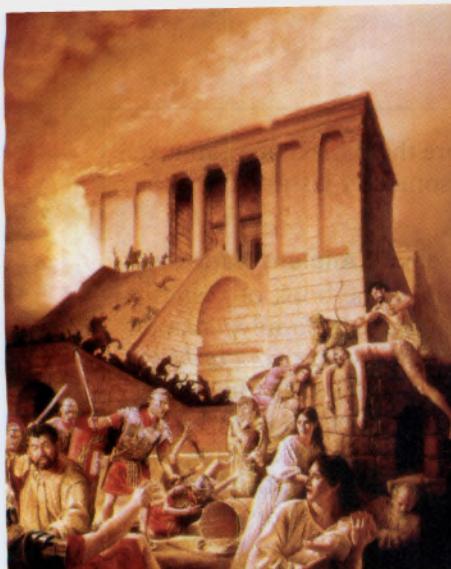
Among other things, the book of Genesis reveals the start of the human family—names and all. On this subject *no other work of history is so specific*. 'But what is the value today of knowing our original ancestry?' you may ask. It has immense value, for in revealing that all humans—regardless of color, tribe, or nation—stem from the same parents, Genesis removes any basis for racism.—Acts 17:26.

Genesis also offers guidance on morality. It contains the account about Sodom, Gomorrah, and their neighboring cities, which God destroyed because of the gross sexual perversion of their inhabitants. (Genesis 18:20-19:29) Verse 7 of the Bible book of Jude says: "Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them, after they . . . had committed fornication excessively and gone out after flesh for unnatural use, *are placed before us as a warning example.*" The people of Sodom and Gomorrah did not receive any

"The Bible is right after all!"

WERNER KELLER





Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma

A relief on the Arch of Titus confirms Jerusalem's destruction in 70 C.E.

humans receive moral laws from God; however, like all humans, they had the God-given faculty of conscience. Hence, God could justly hold those people accountable for their deeds. (Romans 1:26, 27; 2:14, 15) Likewise today, God will hold all humans accountable for their deeds, whether they accept his Word, the Holy Bible, or not.—2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9.

A History Lesson in Survival

A relief on the Arch of Titus in Rome depicts Roman soldiers carrying off sacred vessels from the temple in Jerusalem after the city's destruction in the year 70 C.E. Over a million Jews were killed. However, obedient Christians survived, thanks to Jesus' advance warning: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by encamped armies, then know that the desolating of her has drawn near. Then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains, and let those in the midst of her withdraw, and let those in the country places not enter into her; because these are days for meting out justice."—Luke 21:20-22.

Far from being just ancient history, Jerusalem's tribulation foreshadowed aspects of a greater tribulation soon to engulf the entire world. But once again, there will be survivors. These are described as "a great crowd

...out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." They "come out of the great tribulation" because of their faith in Jesus' shed blood—a faith firmly based on Biblical history and prophecy.—Revelation 7:9, 14.

History That Will Never Be Repeated

Today we live in the time of the ascendancy of the Anglo-American World Power, the last of Bible prophecy. History's pattern says that like the others before it, it should come to an end. But how? According to the Bible, this power's end will truly be unique. Pointing ahead to the year 1914 C.E., Daniel 2:44 said of the ruling political powers, or "kingdoms": "In the days of those kings 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."

Yes, God's Kingdom—his heavenly government led by Christ Jesus—will obliterate every vestige of oppressive human rulership at Armageddon, the climax of the aforementioned "great tribulation." Thereafter, this Kingdom will "not be passed on to any other people," meaning that it will never be overthrown or voted out of office. Its

dominion will be “to the ends of the earth.” —Psalm 72:8.

At last, the cruel cycle of domination by false religion, oppressive politics, and greedy commerce will cease. Psalm 72:7 promises: “The righteous one will sprout, and the abundance of peace until the moon is no more.” Not selfishness and pride but God’s preeminent quality of love will permeate the planet. (1 John 4:8) Jesus said: “Love one another.” Concerning this, historian Will Durant said: “My final lesson of history is the same as that of Jesus. . . . Love is the most practical thing in the world.”

God’s love for humans moved him to inspire the writing of the Bible. It alone truly illuminates the past, the present, and the

future. Please embrace its life-giving message by investing a modest amount of time in Bible study. To that end and in obedience to Jesus’ command, Jehovah’s Witnesses share

“The profound moral and spiritual intuitions of the Bible . . . are just as true today as they were two or three thousand years ago.”

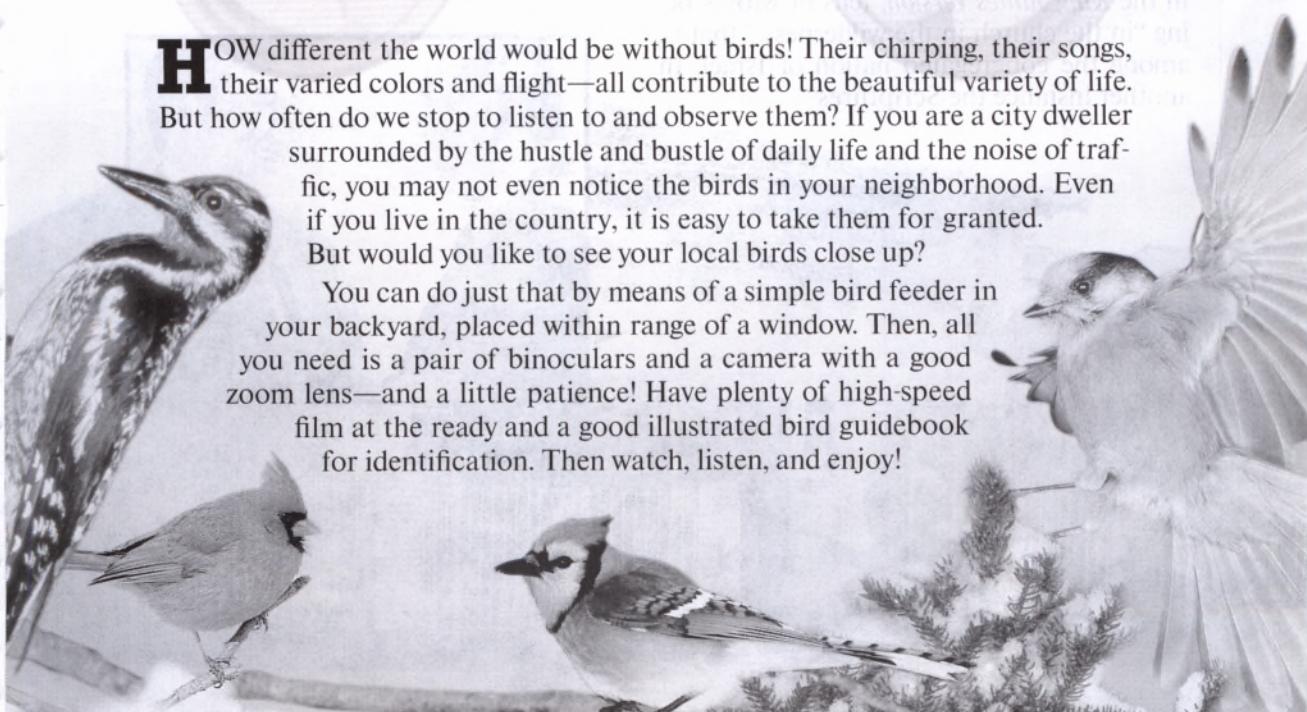
WILLIAM ALBRIGHT, ARCHAEOLOGIST

the “good news of the kingdom” with their neighbors. This good news will soon be more than prophecy. It will become living history. —Matthew 24:14.

THE JOYS OF WATCHING BIRDS

HOW different the world would be without birds! Their chirping, their songs, their varied colors and flight—all contribute to the beautiful variety of life. But how often do we stop to listen to and observe them? If you are a city dweller surrounded by the hustle and bustle of daily life and the noise of traffic, you may not even notice the birds in your neighborhood. Even if you live in the country, it is easy to take them for granted. But would you like to see your local birds close up?

You can do just that by means of a simple bird feeder in your backyard, placed within range of a window. Then, all you need is a pair of binoculars and a camera with a good zoom lens—and a little patience! Have plenty of high-speed film at the ready and a good illustrated bird guidebook for identification. Then watch, listen, and enjoy!



Should We Go to Christian Meetings?

I USED to go to church, but not anymore." "I think you can worship God anywhere, not just in a church." "I believe in God and the Bible, but I don't believe in going to church." Have you heard similar expressions? More and more, people today say such things, especially in Western lands. People who used to go to church no longer think that it is necessary. What does the Bible say about going to church?

The words "church" and "churches" occur over 110 times in the *King James Version*. Other translations also use these terms. The Greek word translated "church" literally means "a calling forth," or, in other words, a gathering of people. For example, Acts 7:38, in the *King James Version*, tells of Moses being "in the church in the wilderness," that is, among the congregated nation of Israel. In another instance the Scriptures

state that "a bitter persecution started against the church," referring to the community of Christians in Jerusalem. (Acts 8:1, *The Jerusalem Bible*) In one of his letters, Paul greets "the church in [Philemon's] house," the local congregation that met there.—*Philemon 2, Revised Standard Version*.

Clearly, the term "church" as used in the Bible designates, not a place of worship, but rather a group of worshipers. Acknowledging this, Clement of Alexandria, a second-century religious teacher, wrote: "Not the place, but the congregation of the elect, I call the Church." Still, must Christians be present at a specific location or building in order for their worship to be acceptable to God?



Worship in the Nation of Israel

The Law of Moses required that all Jewish men be present at a specific location for three annual festivals. Many women and young ones also attended. (Deuteronomy 16:16; Luke 2:41-44) On certain occasions the priests and the Levites taught the congregated throngs, reading from God's Law. They 'expounded it, put meaning into it, and gave understanding in the reading.' (Nehemiah 8:8) For Sabbath years, God's direction stated: "Congregate the people, the men and the women and the little ones and your alien resident who is within your gates, in order that they may listen and in order that they may learn, as they must fear Jehovah your God and take care to carry out all the words of this law."—Deuteronomy 31:12.

Only at the temple in Jerusalem could a person offer sacrifices to God and receive instruction from the priests. (Deuteronomy 12:5-7; 2 Chronicles 7:12) In time, other houses of worship were established in Israel—the synagogues. These were locations for the reading of the Scriptures and for praying. Still, the temple in Jerusalem was the principal place of worship. This is illustrated by what the Bible writer Luke reports. He mentions an elderly woman named Anna, who was "never missing from the temple, rendering sacred service night and day with fastings and supplications." (Luke 2:36, 37) True worship with other devoted ones was the focal point of Anna's life. Other God-fearing Jews followed a similar course.

True Worship After Christ's Death

After Jesus' death his followers were no longer under the Mosaic Law, nor were they required to worship at the temple. (Galatians 3:23-25) Still, they continued to meet together for prayer and study of God's Word. They had no elaborate buildings, using instead private homes and public places. (Acts 2:1, 2; 12:12; 19:9; Romans 16:4, 5) Free of rit-

ualism and pomp, those first-century Christian meetings had a beautiful simplicity.

Amid the moral gloom of the Roman Empire, the Bible principles taught at those meetings sparkled like diamonds. Some unbelievers attending for the first time could only exclaim: "God is really among you." (1 Corinthians 14:24, 25) Yes, God was really among them. "Therefore, indeed, the congregations [“churches,” RS, JB] continued to be made firm in the faith and to increase in number from day to day."—Acts 16:5.

Could a Christian at that time have God's approval by worshiping in pagan temples or on his own? The Bible gives clear direction on this matter: Approved worshipers had to become part of the only true church, or congregation, the “one body” of genuine worshipers. These were the disciples of Jesus, known as Christians.—Ephesians 4:4, 5; Acts 11:26.

What About Today?

Instead of encouraging us to worship in a church, the Bible encourages us to worship *with the church*, “the congregation of the living God,” the people who “worship with spirit and truth.” (1 Timothy 3:15; John 4:24) Religious meetings approved by God should instruct people “in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion.” (2 Peter 3:11) They should help those present to become mature Christians, who can “distinguish both right and wrong.”—Hebrews 5:14.

Jehovah's Witnesses strive to follow the model of the first-century Christians. Over 91,400 congregations worldwide meet regularly to study the Bible and encourage one another, doing so in Kingdom Halls, private homes, and other locations. This is in harmony with the apostle Paul's words: “Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together.”—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

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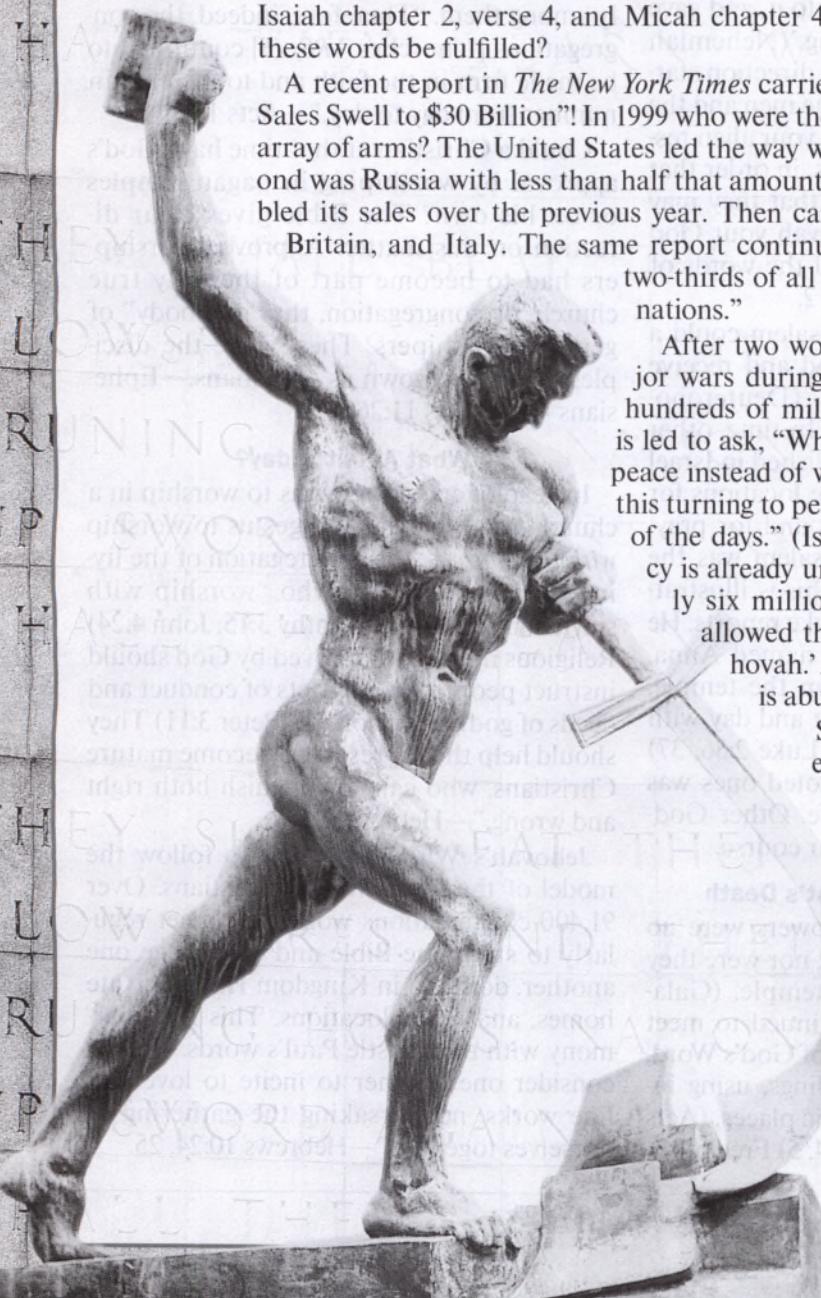
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'They Will Beat Their Swords Into Plowshares'—When?

A FAMOUS statue at the United Nations in New York City depicts a man beating a sword into a plowshare. It is based on the Bible prophecies of Isaiah chapter 2, verse 4, and Micah chapter 4, verse 3. How and when will these words be fulfilled?

A recent report in *The New York Times* carried the headline "Global Arms Sales Swell to \$30 Billion"! In 1999 who were the leading suppliers of this vast array of arms? The United States led the way with sales of \$11.8 billion. Second was Russia with less than half that amount. However, Russia nearly doubled its sales over the previous year. Then came Germany, China, France, Britain, and Italy. The same report continued: "As in the past, roughly two-thirds of all arms were sold to developing nations."



After two world wars and many other major wars during the 20th century, which left hundreds of millions dead and wounded, one is led to ask, "When will the nations ever learn peace instead of war?" The Bible indicates that this turning to peace would be "in the final part of the days." (Isaiah 2:2) In fact, this prophecy is already undergoing fulfillment, as nearly six million Jehovah's Witnesses have allowed themselves 'to be taught by Jehovah.' As a consequence, their 'peace is abundant.'—Isaiah 54:13.

Soon Jehovah will bring an end to all weapons and wars and those who promote them, for he will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth." If you would like to know more about this wonderful change, please feel free to contact Jehovah's Witnesses in your area or write to the appropriate address listed on page 5.—Revelation 11:18.

Mediterranean Monk Seals

WILL THEY SURVIVE?

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN GREECE



An Uphill Battle

The monk seal is perhaps called such because the distinctive color of its coat is similar to

the habit of some religious orders. It lives mainly among the hard-to-reach cliffs and sea caves of the Northern Sporades islands in the Aegean Sea. Smaller groups can be found along the shores of northwest Africa and Portugal's Desertas islands. Reaching up to ten feet in length and weighing close to 600 pounds, the monk seal is one of the world's largest species of seal.

Peter Dejong/HSSPA

HOMER, in his epic work the *Odyssey*, depicted them as basking on the sunny beaches of Greece. A city of ancient Asia Minor once minted coins bearing their image. The waters of the Mediterranean and Black seas used to teem with them. Today, however, it is unlikely that you will see one of these timid creatures—the Mediterranean monk seal.

As were most other fur-bearing sea mammals, the Mediterranean monk seal was hunted extensively throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Thousands were slaughtered for their fur, oil, and meat.

Now the damage inflicted is all too obvious. It is estimated that only between 379 and 530 Mediterranean monk seals remain. They may be just one step away from extinction. However, it must be said that population estimates are “an extraordinarily inexact science,” as the newsletter *Monachus Guardian* reports.

Is it really too late to help? What efforts are being made to protect the monk seals?

Its distinctive features include a bulb-shaped head covered with silvery fur, jet-black eyes, a snout with large nostrils, tiny slits for ears, thick droopy whiskers, and many pudgy chins. The body has short black or chocolate-brown hair with lighter colors on the underside. Newborn seal pups, on the other hand, have long dark hair on their back and a splash of white on their belly.

The monk seal's struggle for survival is hampered by its low reproductive rate. Females give birth to no more than one pup a year. To make matters worse, not all mature females produce offspring every year.

But low birth rates do not tell the whole story. Dr. Dennis Thoney, general curator of the New York Aquarium for Wildlife Conservation, says: “Even though Mediterranean monk seals have a slow reproductive rate, the harbor seal is doing very well with the same



Monk seals have many unique features, such as a bulb-shaped head and large nostrils

◀ Panos Dendrinos/HSSPMS ▶

Agencies have been created to protect the seals



reproductive rate. So there are certainly other factors that are causing their demise."

Under Siege

Imagine the devastation that would result if a fire swept through your home. All your possessions—furniture, clothing, personal treasures, and other mementos—would be lost. Your life would be drastically changed. That is essentially what has happened to the Mediterranean monk seal's home. Pollution, tourism, industry, and other human activities have led to the destruction of much of the seal's natural habitat.

Moreover, the monk seal's food supply has been greatly diminished by overfishing. Zoologist Dr. Suzanne Kennedy-Stoskopf says: "When prey items for seals are down, that means they have to expend more energy to feed themselves." So not only have monk seals suffered a serious loss to their habitat—their home—but they have also had to struggle just to feed themselves!

Another consequence of overfishing is that seals occasionally become entangled in fishing nets and drown. More often, though, seals are killed outright by fishermen. Why? Because seals have learned how to rob food from fishing nets, damaging them in the process. Thus, man is pitted against beast in competition for a dwindling supply of fish.

This lopsided battle has driven monk seals close to extinction.

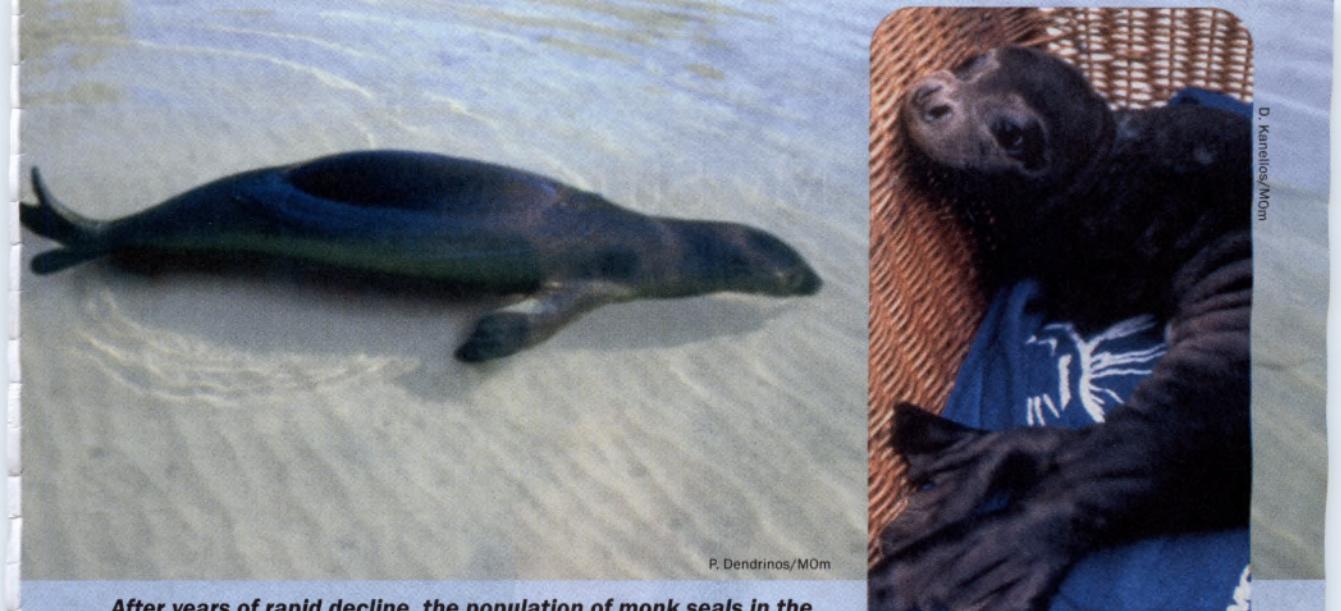
Since monk seals are near the top of the food chain, some scientists suggest that this sea mammal is an "indicator species." This means that if they aren't doing well, it's a good indicator that the rest of the food chain isn't doing well either. If this proves to be so, the situation does not bode well for the preservation of the Mediterranean's ecosystem, for the monk seal is Europe's most endangered species.

Will They Survive?

Ironically, humans are the Mediterranean monk seal's greatest threat, and at the same time, they are their greatest supporters. Private and governmental agencies have been created to protect the seals. Refuge areas have been set aside for them. Numerous field studies have been conducted to learn how to help these magnificent animals.

In 1988 the Hellenic Society for the Study and Protection of the Mediterranean Monk Seal (MOM) was formed. Researchers for MOM regularly visit monk seal habitats in order to monitor their numbers and collect other information to be used to protect them.

Using speedboats, a guarding team patrols protected areas. The team also provides



P. Dendrinos/MOM

After years of rapid decline, the population of monk seals in the Northern Sporades is showing the first signs of recovery



information and instruction for visitors and fishermen traveling to Greece's National Marine Park on Alónnisos, in the Northern Sporades islands. When sick or injured seals are found, the team provides any needed veterinary care as well as transportation to the M^OM rehabilitation unit.

The Seal Treatment and Rehabilitation Center can accommodate orphaned, sick, or injured pups. These are treated and cared for until they are able to survive on their own. So far, the results are promising. After years of rapid decline, the population of monk seals in the Northern Sporades is showing the first signs of recovery.

Will these efforts continue to succeed? Time will tell. It is clear, however, that much

more work needs to be done if this threatened species is to survive. Dr. David Wildt of the Smithsonian Institution told *Awake!*: "Marine life, in general, is not in great shape. The problem is that we really don't know enough about what's out there, and we certainly don't know how to protect it yet."

Cousins in Peril

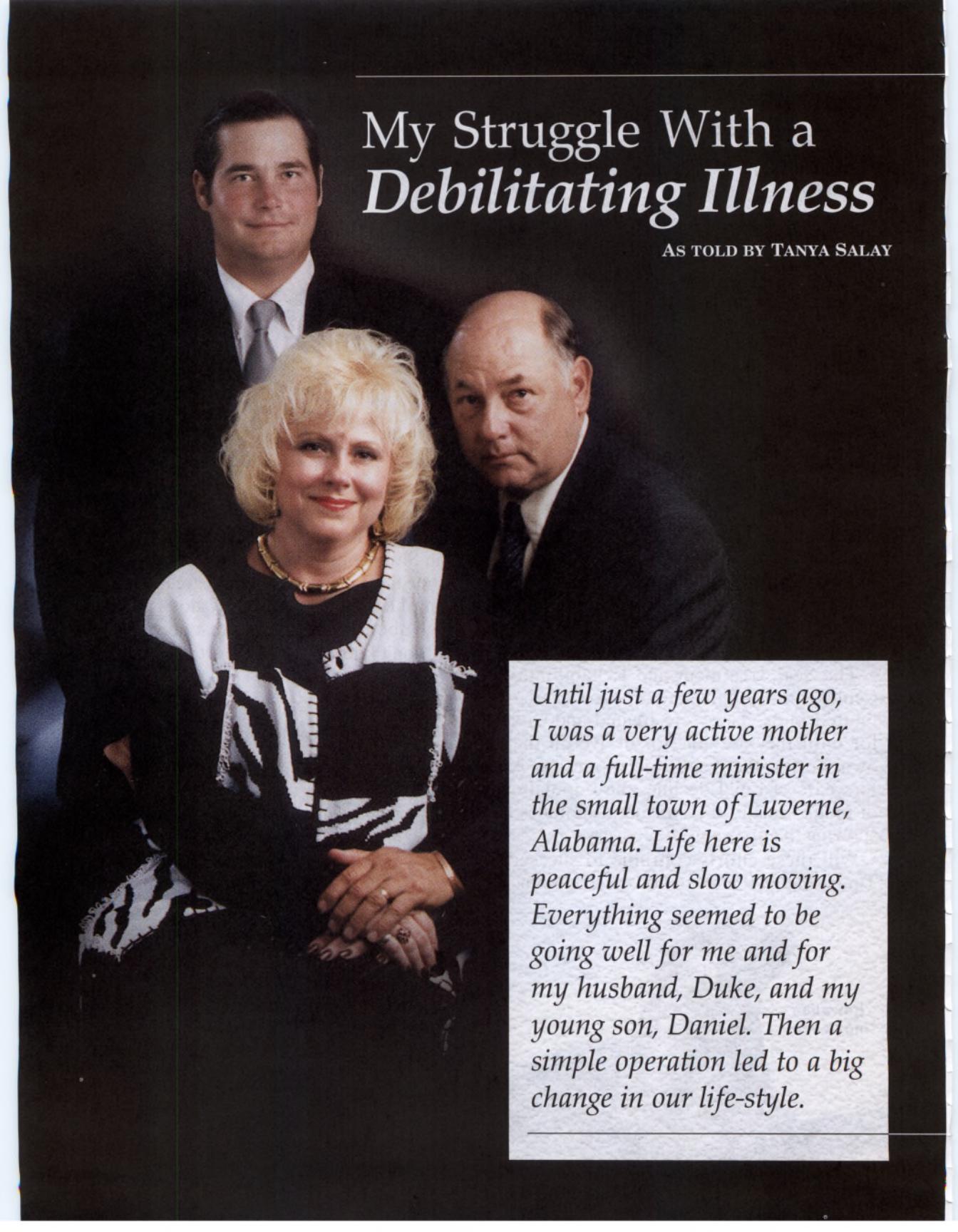
Monk seals can also be found in other oceans around the world, but these seals too are endangered. *National Geographic* magazine says that the Caribbean, or West Indian, monk seal was "the first seal spotted by Columbus in the New World. Shore loving and exploitable, monk seals soon were slaughtered in droves. . . . The last recorded Caribbean monk seal was seen in 1952."

The French Frigate Shoals, in the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, may be the last haven for the Hawaiian, or Laysan, monk seals. However, the approximately 1,300 surviving seals are "vexed by problems," despite diligent efforts to protect them.

Since the spring of 1997, about three quarters of the 270 Mediterranean monk seals living on West Africa's Mauritanian coast have been wiped out by an epidemic. According to a report in *Science News*, most of the seals examined were carrying "a dolphin morbillivirus, a virus similar to the one that causes distemper in dogs."



Hawaiian monk seal



My Struggle With a *Debilitating Illness*

AS TOLD BY TANYA SALAY

Until just a few years ago, I was a very active mother and a full-time minister in the small town of Luverne, Alabama. Life here is peaceful and slow moving. Everything seemed to be going well for me and for my husband, Duke, and my young son, Daniel. Then a simple operation led to a big change in our life-style.

OUR problems began in 1992 when I had a hysterectomy. Shortly afterward, I started experiencing constant excruciating pain and frequent urination (50 to 60 times a day). My gynecologist finally made an appointment for me with a urologist in an effort to pinpoint the cause of the problem.

I went to a hospital for some tests. On my first visit, the urologist diagnosed my problem—interstitial cystitis (IC), or debilitating bladder inflammation. It was not easy to diagnose because the symptoms of IC are similar to those of other disorders of the urinary system. Furthermore, there is no definitive test to identify IC. Therefore, doctors must rule out other conditions before accepting a diagnosis of IC.

Our doctor bluntly said that since treatment was of little avail, the end result would be removal of the bladder! He said that there were other treatments but that they were all unsuccessful. Needless to say, that was quite a blow to us. I had been fairly healthy up until this time. As Jehovah's Witnesses, Duke and I had been in the full-time ministry for a number of years, and now I was told that my bladder needed to be removed. I'm glad that I had good support from my husband.

We decided to look for another urologist. We tried several doctors. Unfortunately, at that time many doctors knew very little about IC. Also, many urologists have their own theories about IC, so the recommended treatment differs from one to the next. One medical source states: "The disease tends to be chronic." Another says: "Scientists have not yet found a cure for IC, nor can they predict who will respond best to which treatment.... Because doctors do not know what causes IC, treatments are aimed at relieving symptoms."

I was in so much pain with the cramping and the frequency of urination that I was

willing to try just about anything the doctors suggested. I've tried well over 40 different medications as well as herbs, acupuncture, nerve blocks, epidural and spinal injections, and transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), in which mild electrical pulses enter the body for minutes or hours. I did as much research as I could, which at least helped me to understand a little about what was happening.

Presently, I am on methadone, which is a pain reliever, along with six other medications. I also go to a pain clinic regularly, where I receive epidural injections along with steroids to help manage the pain. For the urination frequency, I go to the hospital about every three or four months for a procedure called hydrodistension, in which liquid is used to expand the bladder like a balloon. I have had this done quite a few times. It typically gives me relief for some months. I have been in and out of the hospital over 30 times during the past few years.

What about the ultimate remedy, the removal of the bladder? One authority says: "Most doctors are reluctant to operate because the outcome is unpredictable in individual patients—some people have surgery and still have symptoms." So for the present I am holding off on that option.

At times the pain is so severe and constant that it would be easy to give up. The thought of ending it all even passed through my mind. But I couldn't bear to think of the reproach such a course would bring on Jehovah's name. I can see the importance of prayer and personal study as well as developing a close relationship with Jehovah, for you never know what may happen that will change your life. This relationship has literally saved my life during my illness, since I know I would otherwise have killed myself.

As I look back over these nine years, I see how fast life can change. I appreciate the

words of Ecclesiastes 12:1, which says: “Remember, now, your Grand Creator in the days of your young manhood, before the calamitous days proceed to come, or the years have arrived when you will say: ‘I have no delight in them.’” I am so thankful that I started in the full-time ministry when I was 15 years old and was able to continue for almost 20 years. During that time I developed a close relationship with Jehovah.

I am thankful to Jehovah for my husband

and my son, Daniel, who have been so supportive. Also, it’s very encouraging when those in the congregation call on the phone or stop by to visit me. It is hard for me to get out in the winter because the cold makes the spasms worse. Then I do telephone witnessing, which keeps the hope of Paradise constant and real to me. I look forward to the time when sickness and suffering will be things of the past and will not be called to mind.—Isaiah 33:24.

What Is *Interstitial Cystitis?*

SIMPLY stated, cystitis is inflammation of the urinary bladder. It is more common in women than in men. However, there are many forms of cystitis, with a variety of causes.

What are some common symptoms? The need to urinate very frequently along with dysuria, discomfort when voiding, such as an intense burning sensation. But what about chronic interstitial cystitis (IC)? How is that different?*

Dr. Susan Keay, an expert in the field, admits: “IC is very difficult to diagnose, and even more difficult to treat.” She adds that this disease “can mean years of suffering. IC is an extremely painful, long-term, life-style altering problem that can continue for decades.” Unfortunately, for a long time, many doctors failed to acknowledge this disease and implied that it was all in the patient’s

mind. Yet, as one doctor states, “justifying a patient’s symptoms by making a diagnosis of IC is often therapeutic.”

One report states that the number of people in the United States who have IC is over 700,000, “which is 50 percent greater than previously reported.” It is now understood that some men may be diagnosed as having a prostate problem when, in fact, it is IC. The disease, of course, indirectly affects many people—especially the close relatives and others who live with these patients who are in almost constant pain. Obviously, the illness reduces the sufferers’ effectiveness both in the home and in the workplace. In fact, many have to give up work. Sexual relations can also be very painful for the patient.

Since there is as yet no cure, doctors’ efforts are all aimed at reducing the painful symptoms. What are some of the treatments?

* Another form of IC is ulcerative IC, also known as Hunner’s. It is identified by patches or ulcers that affect all the layers of the bladder wall.

Relief, Not a Cure

A primary treatment recommended by Dr. Grannum R. Sant, of Tufts University School of Medicine and New England Medical Center, is the use of antihistamines, tricyclic antidepressants, or pentosan polysulfate, which are taken orally.*

Some doctors recommend hydrodistension, described in the preceding article. Each treatment can give relief for a few months and possibly up to a year. Then there is intravesical (within the bladder) dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) therapy. DMSO, which is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, can reduce symptoms for up to two years. However, Dr. Kenneth Peters, a urologist, has reservations about this treatment, since it can cause severe blood clots and other problems.

A recent treatment used in pilot studies by Dr. Peters involves the use of intravesical Bacillus Calmette-Guerin (BCG). "BCG is a weakened strain of the tuberculosis bacteria," he writes. It appears to work by boosting the immune system. A controlled trial demonstrated a 60-percent clinical response to this treatment. The patients' progress was followed for over two years. The result? Dr. Peters says that 90 percent of those who responded to the treatment "continued to have marked clinical improvement in both pain and frequency symptoms."

Some patients get relief from the drug Elmiron. According to Dr. Raymond Hurm, the drug "actually helps replenish the lining of the bladder." It takes time, but as one patient said, "with Elmiron, it's easier to live with my bladder disease."

Another treatment in experimental use is Cystistat, or hyaluronic acid. "This medica-

* *Awake!* does not endorse any of the treatments discussed. In all cases we recommend that you consult your own physician regarding any course of treatment or medication. *Awake!* tries to inform the reader of the medical options that are available according to doctors and other professionals.

tion is instilled directly into the bladder and is thought to work by replacing the defective GAG [glucosaminoglycan] lining of the bladder. . . . Clinical trials are now [1998] beginning in the U.S. Efficacy is not known at this time." It has been approved for use in Europe but has not yet been approved in the United States.

Beth Getz, who is a registered nurse and a support-group leader for patients with IC, wrote: "Sometimes patients are reluctant to ask physicians about alternative therapies . . . , thinking that it might suggest that the traditional care they are receiving is inadequate. Today, most urologists who treat patients with IC believe in multimodality approaches, including alternative therapies, as long as these treatments do not put the patient at risk."

A different line of approach for those with chronic pelvic pain is enrollment in a pain clinic. Treatments can include transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation, described in the preceding article; nerve blocks; acupuncture; psychological counseling; and functional restoration programs.

Awake! spoke to Dr. Peters, quoted earlier, about the problems of patients who need to urinate 40 or 50 times a day. He recommended the use of a sacral nerve stimulator, which can reduce the visits to the toilet to

Emotional Support

Experts say that the emotional support of family, friends, and other IC sufferers helps the patient with IC a great deal in coping with the ailment. And patients who study their disorder and take an interest in their own care tend to make better progress.

Foods to Be Avoided

Although there is no clinical scientific evidence linking diet to IC, many doctors and patients have noted some relationship. Dr. Kenneth Peters, a urologist, says that some patients are sensitive to certain foods and that each one should assess which foods worsen the symptoms. He suggests that caffeine and alcohol be eliminated. Tomatoes and citrus fruits also seem to be harmful for the IC

patient. However, it is important that the patient maintain a varied and well-balanced diet. Some IC patients report that they have the least trouble with rice, potatoes, pasta, vegetables, meat, and chicken. Also, by drinking plenty of water, the patient dilutes the acid content of the urine and thus reduces irritation to the bladder wall.

The following is a partial list of foods to avoid.

Aged cheese	Citric acid
Anchovies	Corned beef
Apples	Cranberries/juice
Apricots	Fava beans
Aspartame	Grapes
Avocados	Junk food
Bananas	Lima beans
Cantaloupes	Liver
Carbonated drinks	Mayonnaise
Caviar	Nectarines
Chocolate	Nitrates/nitrites

Nuts	Salad dressing
Onions	Sour cream
Peaches	Sourdough bread
Pineapples	Soy sauce
Plums	Spicy foods
Pomegranates	Strawberries
Processed meats/fish	Tea
Rhubarb	Tobacco
Rye bread	Tofu
Saccharine	Vinegar
	Yogurt

Urologic Nursing, April 2000, Volume 20, Number 2

about six a day. For a patient to use what is called in the United States the InterStim Therapy system, a little apparatus is implanted in the abdomen. It sends mild electrical pulses to the sacral nerve, which controls the bladder.

Surgery, considered the final solution, is no guarantee of success. "The results of bladder surgery for IC are variable," says Dr. Sant. "Many patients who undergo cystectomy continue to report persistent suprapubic and pelvic pain, even after surgery." Therefore, the advice that experts give is, Do not rush into surgery to remove the bladder except as a last resort and after very careful consideration.

Hopes for the Future

The Interstitial Cystitis Association, of Rockville, Maryland, U.S.A., states: "While it is unlikely that researchers will find one

single cure to help all IC patients, it is very likely that more and more patients will be helped through the development of new diagnostic techniques, new treatment options and new treatment combinations. Once the cause (or causes) of IC are clearly understood, we will be much nearer to a cure (or cures)." Millions of IC patients worldwide will be happy to hear that!

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Tools of Death —A Global Problem

The Exceptional Nature of Our Sun

They Can Steal Your Identity!



The Challenges of a United Germany

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN GERMANY

WHEN my parents and I drove across the border from East Germany into West Berlin, crowds were standing on the bridges above the autobahn waving and cheering," recalls Ronny. "We walked around the Ku'damm shopping center in West Berlin, and once people realized that we were from East Germany, they bought us drinks. Everyone was in a party mood." That was November 10, 1989, one day after the Berlin Wall was opened.

The party mood extended beyond Berlin and embraced all of East Germany and West Germany, which then existed as separate countries. The *Wende*—which refers to the turning point or the peaceful revolution that led to the collapse of the totalitarian State of East Germany—took almost everyone by surprise. Years later, many still regard the *Wende* as the happiest time within the past 50 years. Of course, the euphoria has given way to reality, allowing us to ask, How has life changed since the *Wende*? Can we learn anything from what has happened?

Good-Bye Cold War

To most Germans the opening of the Berlin Wall came as a huge relief. According to some sources, nearly a thousand people died on the murderous frontier be-



tween East and West. In October 1990, the two Germanys were reunited into one State, the Federal Republic of Germany, with a population of about 80 million. The German Democratic Republic (GDR)—known as East Germany—ceased to exist, just 41 years after its birth. The area formerly occupied by the GDR is now divided into six states, known as the new federal states.

The world stood amazed as the *Wende* hastened the breakup of the Communist bloc, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact defense alliance, and the end of the Cold War. The troops of opposing superpowers—who had stared at one another across the inner-German border for some 40 years—drew from German soil. These events occurred without a shot being fired.

After reunification, dramatic change swept across Germany, chiefly affecting life in the new federal states. For many individuals the change was more dramatic than expected.

Freedom at Last!

What the GDR populace wanted most from the *Wende* was freedom. Small wonder, since the totalitarian State had kept its citizens in a straitjacket. In pre-*Wende* days,



The dismantling of the Berlin Wall and the removing of the border was greeted with widespread relief

getting a visa to cross the inner-German border was difficult or impossible. Suddenly that changed. One woman exclaimed: "Just imagine, we can go to America!" For many, to be reunited with relatives and friends on the other side of the border continues to give them reason to be thankful.

Freedom allows not only East Germans to go west but also Westerners to go east. Thus, tourist attractions in the new federal states are now back on the map, as it were. For instance, tourists can visit Wittenberg, where Martin Luther started the Reformation, which gave birth to Protestant religion. Then there are Meissen, a city renowned for its handmade porcelain, and Weimar, at one time home to two of Germany's most famous writers, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich von Schiller. In 1999, Weimar was made Cultural City of Europe, the first city in the former Communist bloc to receive such an honor.

What about freedom of speech? People in the new federal states can talk openly without fear of being overheard by the *Stasi*, or state security. And the man in the street rejoices at being able to choose television programs and reading material freely. Matthias

recalls: "When I was at school, any publications from the West that we got hold of were confiscated."

Freedom of worship? In the GDR, religion was discouraged, and 2 citizens out of 3 had no religious affiliation. All of reunified Germany has now enjoyed freedom of worship for over ten years, the longest period since Hitler began to clamp down on religion in 1933. But freedom of religion does not mean that religion is popular. The mainstream churches have been lamenting a loss of influence for quite some time, and the *Wende* accelerated this trend. Jehovah's Witnesses, on the other hand, who were banned and persecuted by the totalitarian regime, have expanded their activities. During the past ten years, 123 Kingdom Halls and 2 Assembly Halls have been built by the Witnesses in the new federal states.

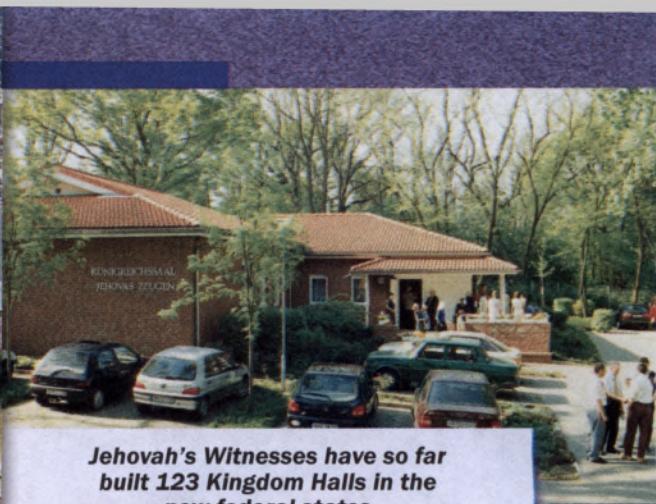
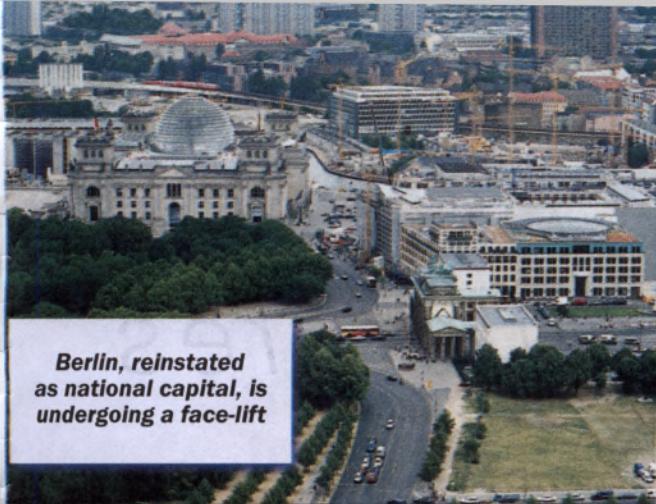
Construction of all types has taken on huge proportions in the new states. Berlin has been reinstated as national capital and is being given a gigantic face-lift. All across the new federal states, the infrastructure is being upgraded, involving huge expenditures on roads and railways. A great deal has been done to clean up the environment and to bring health care and social welfare up to Western standards. Most residents of the new federal states would agree that they now have a higher standard of living.

"Times Were Good"

Nevertheless, some look back on pre-*Wende* days with nostalgia. "Times were good," explains one woman. What could have been good about living under a dicta-



**Checkpoint Charlie,
Berlin's symbol of the Cold War,
before and after**



Jehovah's Witnesses have so far built 123 Kingdom Halls in the new federal states

torship? Some say that life was predictable and secure. Many cherished the close bonds among friends and neighbors, the feeling that help and support were always at hand. According to the Allensbach Opinion Research Institute, "dictatorships give their citizens a feeling of moral superiority and security." Once the GDR dictatorship disappeared, the close feeling vanished.

Another example: In the 1980's, the prices of basic goods and services were kept low, and everyone had a job. "A bread roll used to cost five pfennig, but now it costs at least ten times that," bemoans Brigitte. Once free-market competition was introduced, thousands of state-owned enterprises went out of business, causing unemployment. The former East Germany has twice the unemployment of the western side.

So far, reunification has cost an estimated \$800 billion. And there is still much to do. Who is paying the bill? The cost is partly being met by a special tax. Hence, the *Wende* has touched not only German hearts but also German pockets! Has the effort been worthwhile, the money well spent? The majority see reunification as positive and worthwhile, an achievement to be proud of.

What Can We Learn?

The *Wende* has shown that changing from one form of government to another does not satisfy everyone. Many people—even

those who feel that the *Wende* was worthwhile—have found that life in a competitive capitalist society can be just as frustrating as life in a totalitarian regime. Freedom and prosperity are, of course, desirable. But when the price paid for these advantages is a cold and uncaring way of life, happiness can be short-lived.

A recent report from Dessau, in the former East Germany, states: "A decade has gone by since unification; billions of dollars have been spent to usher the area from a troubled past." Yet, many do not seem happy with the results so far.

The Allensbach Institute reports that many people hope that "between the alternatives of a free competitive economy and a planned economy, there could be a third way" of managing mankind's affairs. That hope is shared by Jehovah's Witnesses.

They believe that no political or economic system designed by humans will ever satisfy all mankind's needs. The Witnesses believe that these needs will be met only by the Creator's Messianic Kingdom. Shortly, this heavenly government will, according to the Bible, establish a loving and righteous rulership over all the earth. The Kingdom will unite all the nations of the earth and enable not only Germany but all mankind to be at peace with one another. What a blessing that Kingdom will be!—Daniel 2:44.

NAMIBIA'S Mobile Sculptures

BY AWAKE! WRITER
IN SOUTH AFRICA



THE artist's style is ever changing, and yet, the effect is pleasing. The medium is sand. The artist? The wind, which molds the mobile sand dunes into distinctive shapes. Perhaps the best known is the crescent shape. The side of the "sculpture" facing the wind has a gradual slope. The slope on the leeward side is steeper and shorter. The top ridge of the dune looks razor sharp, though it is easily blunted by a kick from a clumsy boot.

The Namib Desert in southwestern Africa is a good place to view these mobile sculptures. It has some of the tallest dunes in the world, reaching heights of over 1,300 feet. In area, though, the

Elephant shrew



Des and Jen Bartlett



Namib is smaller than the world's great deserts. It extends from the Atlantic Ocean to a maximum of about 100 miles inland and is 1,200 miles long.

Other Artists at Work

The wind is not the only artist featured in this remote 'art gallery.' A closer examination of the dunes shows evidence of the distinctive designs of other artists. For example, you may see what looks like a long, fine chain casually thrown across the sand. If you wait long enough, you may even see the artists at work. The "chain" is made of footprints left by beetles as they cross the sand at night. Not far from the "chain" is a symmetrical row of what appear to be tiny holes in the sand. These are also footprints, left by an elephant shrew hopping to its destination. Suddenly you realize that this remote, seemingly barren art gallery is teeming with life.

To the north, along the Skeleton Coast, you may see the work of other desert artists. They treat the sand roughly, and the finished product is rather messy. Look out! Here they come, bounding over the dune. One thing is certain, they enjoy their creative activity.

These large creatures run down the dune with surprising speed, throwing sand in all directions. Not content with running, they also slide, dragging their back legs and leaving furrows in the sand. They charge to a nearby water hole, jump in, and frolic like happy children. These artists, African elephants, weigh about six tons each!

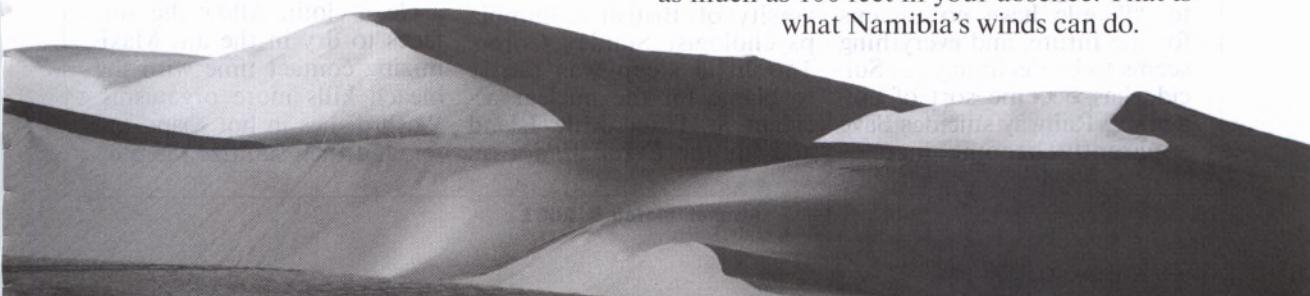
Another eccentric artist with curious ways, though not as rough, is the Péringuey's adder. Its graphic design on the sand looks like a series of crooked sticks. The snake leaves these prints behind as it propels itself in a peculiar sideways fashion. Suddenly the tracks come to an end, and there is no sign of the adder. Where did it go? If you look very carefully, you may see two slit eyes peering at you through the sand. The rest of the snake is totally immersed in the sand. Thus camouflaged, it patiently waits for a meal—usually a passing lizard.

One design on the sand is perhaps not so aesthetically pleasing. Wide tire tracks are visible, left by three-wheel motorcycles specially designed to negotiate this terrain. Man has also left his mark.

A Temperamental Artist

Many others, too numerous to mention, leave their mark on these sands. These include rhino, lions, giraffes, and jackals, which may be seen at the Skeleton Coast game park and elsewhere.

But the wind is the artist in chief. It determines the general appearance of the gallery and rearranges the shapes as it pleases. It is forever making changes. If you return to this gallery a year from now, you may notice that some of the dunes have been moved as much as 100 feet in your absence! That is what Namibia's winds can do.



WATCHING THE WORLD

Man's Best Friend?

Small children left unsupervised with a dog are at risk of being bitten, according to a report in the newspaper *El Universal* of Mexico City. "The attacks are almost always initiated by the child, and the dog just defends itself," says the report. One Mexican hospital has treated 426 children for dog bites in the last five years. Of these children, 12 percent were permanently injured or disfigured. The report urges parents to teach their children basic rules regarding all dogs: Respect their toys, house, and eating utensils; do not go near a dog when it is eating or sleeping; do not pull its tail or try to ride it.

Japan's Suicide Problem

Perhaps because of economic stagnation, "Japan seems to have lost its purpose" and "has been adrift," many Japanese say. The result is a "decade-long rash of suicides," reports *The New York Times*. "In a society where much is driven by shame, record-high levels of unemployment have turned many men into despondent, daytime wanderers who pretend to have gainful occupations by staying away from home all day." Anxious and ashamed, some think of ending their lives. "There is a lack of hope," says Dr. Yukio Saito. "People have no dreams for the future, and everything seems to be declining.... Suicide has become sort of epidemic." Railway suicides have apparently become increas-

ingly popular. In an attempt to offset them, one rail company has painted its crossings a bright green to alter the state of mind of the one contemplating suicide, and they have installed mirrors across the tracks from platforms to make a jumper pause and think. The company has also trimmed foliage to deny the sense of privacy. Experts say, though, that unless the economic situation improves, these efforts will most likely be futile.

Arguing and Marriage



A new study by Andrew Christensen of the University of California at Los Angeles found that "couples who are less critical and more accepting of their differences have the most successful marriages," states *Time* magazine. Arguing, on the other hand, often produces only more argument.

Getting Enough Sleep

"We are a dangerously sleep-deprived society," states University of British Columbia psychologist Stanley Coren. Too little sleep was partly to blame for the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island and for the *Exxon Valdez* oil

spill. Drowsiness causes more than 100,000 car accidents each year in North America, reports *Maclean's* magazine of Canada. Stanford University sleep specialist Dr. William Dement cautions: "People don't really understand how much sleep they need." For better sleep, researchers suggest: Eat your evening meal no later than three hours before bed. Go to bed and get up at the same times each day. Don't keep a TV or a computer in the bedroom. Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and tobacco. Wear socks to keep your feet warm in bed. Take a warm bath before bed. Exercise daily—but not right before bed. Finally, says *Maclean's*: "If you can't sleep, get up and do something. Go back to bed only when you feel tired, then get up at your regular hour."

Keeping the Kitchen Clean

"[Ordinary] bleach is your best defence" against disease-causing pathogens that hide in a busy kitchen, says the *Vancouver Sun* newspaper of Canada. The report offers the following suggestions: Daily prepare a solution of one ounce of bleach per gallon of warm, not hot, water. Hot water causes the bleach to vaporize. Wipe down kitchen surfaces with this solution, using a clean cloth. Allow the surfaces to dry in the air. Maximizing contact time with the bleach kills more organisms. Wash dishes in hot soapy water, and then sanitize them by

soaking them for a few minutes in the bleach solution. No chemical residue will remain on the dishes after they dry. Every day, wash and bleach kitchen sponges, dishcloths, and scrubbing brushes. And to minimize the risk of contaminating food with your hands, wash them thoroughly, especially under the nails.

Endangered Languages

Mexico has the largest population speaking indigenous languages in the Americas. In addition, after India and China, Mexico is third in the world in the number of native languages still spoken. Many of these languages are dying out, reports the Mexican English-language newspaper *The News*. Rafael Tovar y de Teresa, director of the Council for Culture and the Arts, explains that of the fewer than 100 native languages spoken in Mexico at the end of the 19th century, only 62 remain. And 16 of these languages are spoken by fewer than 1,000 individuals. One concern is that when languages die out, native terms identifying plants are lost, resulting in a loss of knowledge of their traditional uses in treating illnesses.

Don't Drink and Swim

During one recent year, most cases of drowning in Germany involved "excessive alcohol consumption," says Dr. Klaus Wilkens, president of the German Lifesaving Association. According to the health newsletter *Apotheken Umschau*, 477 drowning accidents occurred in German rivers, creeks, and lakes in 1998.

Combining alcohol and swimming is dangerous because alcohol can impair coordination and the body's muscular functions and can cause you to overestimate your own abilities. Therefore, lifeguards warn: 'Don't drink and swim!'

Paid to Kill Insects



The Uttar Pradesh State forest department in India has begun an insect-killing campaign in an effort to prevent one-inch-long winged insects called *hoplo* from destroying a forest of approximately 650,000 sal trees, reports *The Times of India*. Because the insects have recently increased in number, the very existence of this species of tree is threatened. The insects burrow into the bark and the stems, causing the trees to dry up and die. The forest department is using the "trap tree" method to capture the insects. Pieces of bark from young sal trees are scattered in the area where the insects are found. Liquid oozing from these pieces attracts and intoxicates the insects, making it easier to catch them. Local boys are employed to do the job, for which they are paid 75 paisa (about two cents) per insect.

Retirement Blues

Accepting early retirement may have certain advantages,

but it can also take a heavy emotional toll. Brazil's *Diário de Pernambuco* reports that former public employees complained of problems ranging from 'dissatisfaction, irritability, insecurity, and loss of identity to depression and the feeling that their world was falling apart.' According to geriatrician Guido Schachnik, "it is not uncommon for men who retire early to seek refuge in drink or for women to become dependent on medicine." Those thinking of leaving their job should "avoid debt, recycle skills, and seek advice to escape falling into a bottomless pit," says psychologist Graça Santos.

AIDS and Agriculture in Zambia

Agricultural productivity in Zambia is being hampered by the rapid spread of AIDS there. The *Zambia Daily Mail* newspaper notes that one of the most important agricultural resources is the labor of farmers and their helpers. But much of this labor force is being lost to AIDS. "When farmers die, there is reduced labour on farms and consequently production levels dwindle drastically. This affects household food security, leading to the escalating levels of poverty," reports the *Daily Mail*. The solution, according to Daniel Mbepa, administrator of the Mansa district in Zambia, is for farmers to restrict their sexual relations to their own partners. He said: "By promoting good morals, the AIDS problem can be controlled."

FROM OUR READERS

Spots The article "Spots Before Your Eyes?" (June 8, 2000) touched my life significantly. I received the magazine just three days before I suffered a partial retinal detachment in my right eye. The symptoms described in the article alerted me to the need to seek medical attention immediately. Laser treatment was used to repair the damage, so that my eyesight was not impaired. Thank you for such well-researched, practical articles.

C. V., South Africa

Propaganda I just finished reading the June 22, 2000, issue, and I thank you for the series "Should You Believe Everything You Hear?" Where I live, it has become fashionable to ridicule the Romanies (Gypsies). People joke about how they supposedly steal. Thanks to the articles, I realize that such jokes are inappropriate, and I have decided not to join in.

K. M., Czech Republic

Living Abroad Thank you for the article "Young People Ask . . . Should I Live Abroad?" (June 22, 2000) I read this series regularly, but I have often had the feeling that some of the dangers you described were exaggerated. Last year I made a trip abroad for a cultural exchange between my school and another university. Although it was an interesting experience, it was not good from a spiritual point of view.

M. P., Italy

This article and the article "Young People Ask . . . How Can I Make a Success of My Stay Abroad?" (July 22, 2000) were "food at the proper time" for me. (Matthew 24:45) I had already decided to spend a year abroad in order to learn a foreign language. So I am

really grateful for the suggestions and practical tips.

I. Z., Switzerland

Easter Island The article "A Big Lesson From a Tiny Island" (June 22, 2000) expresses the worries of many people who are concerned about the environment. But I feel that those who take note of the dangers we face are few. When I think of how badly humans have managed this earth, I shed tears.

K. M., Japan

Daylight Saving Time With regard to the article "DST—An Idea Before Its Time?" (July 8, 2000), is DST really something laudable? Our great Creator established the seasons. Who has the right to manipulate that? So-called daylight saving time is something abnormal!

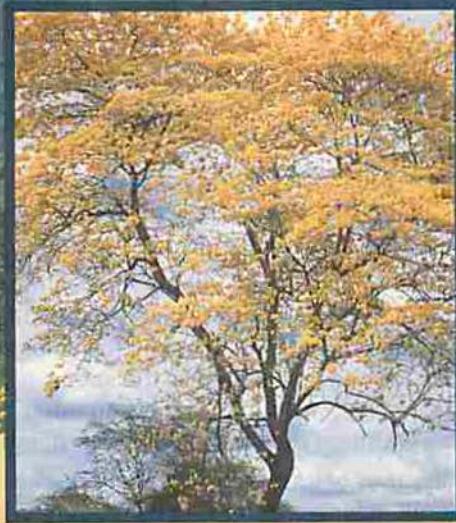
I. L., Germany

Our article neither praised nor condemned DST. We merely reported on its fascinating history. God gave no specific instructions as to how time should be marked off. Current time-keeping systems are therefore arbitrary and not God-ordained. DST does not change the seasons. In view of these facts, it does not appear to violate any divine principle if we adjust our clocks twice a year.—ED.

Smile Thank you for publishing the valuable article "Smile—It's Good for You!" (July 8, 2000) I fully agree with what it says. It reminded me to think positively at all times so that my smile will be genuine. Yes, smiling helps us to make friends with others. It also helps eliminate tensions.

P. C., China

A TREE THAT WILL STOP YOU IN YOUR TRACKS



BY AWAKE! WRITER IN ECUADOR

BY MID-DECEMBER the seasonal rains had not yet fallen on the Ecuadorian coastal plains. Dust covering the rolling hills gave the vegetation a lackluster appearance. Overhead a solid gray mass of clouds made for a rather gloomy day as a group of travelers rode along a highway, headed west to the Pacific Ocean. Suddenly, all eyes were riveted on a tree at the side of the road. The car came to a sudden halt. What tree had they seen?

A guayacan tree in full bloom! The momentary silence was broken by an exclamation: "How beautiful! Did you ever see such radiant color? I have seen many flowering trees of pink, purple, red, or orange, but this one surpasses them all in sheer brilliance!"

After admiring its golden beauty, they finally pulled away. Little did they know that this was just the beginning. A little way down the road, they came upon another guayacan tree in full bloom and then another. It seemed as if the hills were covered by bursts of golden sunshine! This was the

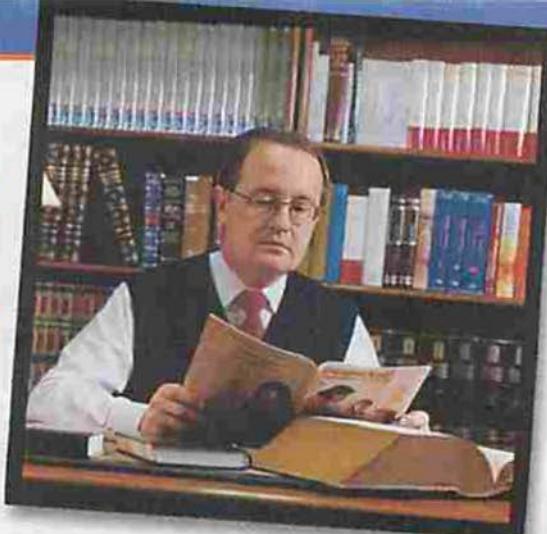
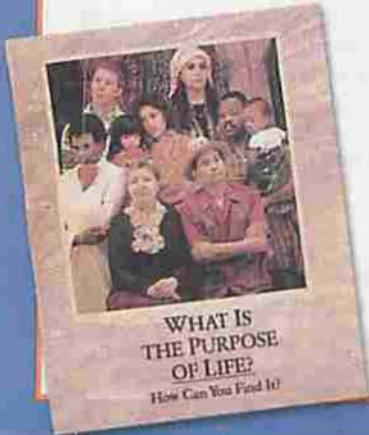
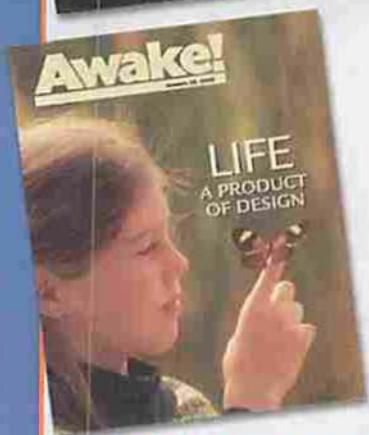
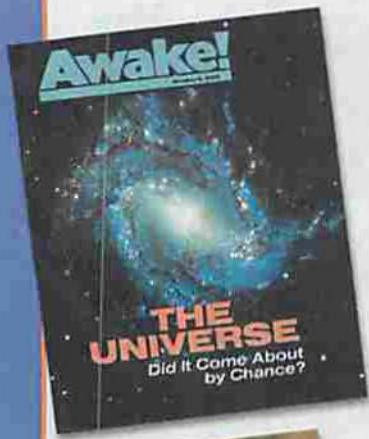
annual season of the guayacan tree--the time when the somber forests come alive with an explosion of color.

However, the beauty of this flowering tree is not confined to one country. In fact, this tree is native to many parts of South and Central America. It is also known by such names as araguayan, guayacan amarillo, golden trumpet, and the trumpet tree, referring to its golden trumpet-shaped flowers. The scientific name is *Tabebuia chrysantha*.

The guayacan also produces a fine-grained wood from which high-quality furniture has been made for years. The resulting scarcity of this tree has made it necessary for some countries to place it under protective laws. This is to ensure that both natives and visitors may continue to enjoy its singular beauty when in bloom, though it be for only a few days and just once a year.

Without a doubt the guayacan is a living tribute to the greatest artist of all--our Grand Creator, the architect of this marvelous earth on which we live.

Impressed by Their Objectivity



A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR in Spain wrote to the branch office of the Watch Tower Society in his country to express appreciation for *Awake!* He explained:

"Two copies of your journal *Awake!* recently came into my hands. I found that they contained very interesting articles on a variety of themes. I do not belong to any religious group, but I appreciated how objective the publication is. It also has a magnificent presentation, and it deals with subjects from an impartial and scientific perspective. I congratulate you for the effort you make."

In many of its articles, *Awake!* marshals an array of evidence from various sciences that helps its readers to draw informed conclusions. Such an approach is also taken in the 32-page brochure *What Is the Purpose of Life? How Can You Find It?* For example, under the sub-headings "Did Life Originate by Chance?" and "Design Requires a Designer," evidence bearing on the matter is presented by recognized authorities in the fields of astronomy, microbiology, and physics.

You can request this brochure, *What Is the Purpose of Life? How Can You Find It?*, by filling in the accompanying coupon and mailing it to the address shown on the coupon or to an appropriate address listed on page 5 of this magazine.

Send me a copy of the brochure *What Is the Purpose of Life? How Can You Find It?* Indicate which language

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Galaxy: Courtesy of Anglo-Australian Observatory; photograph by David Malin

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