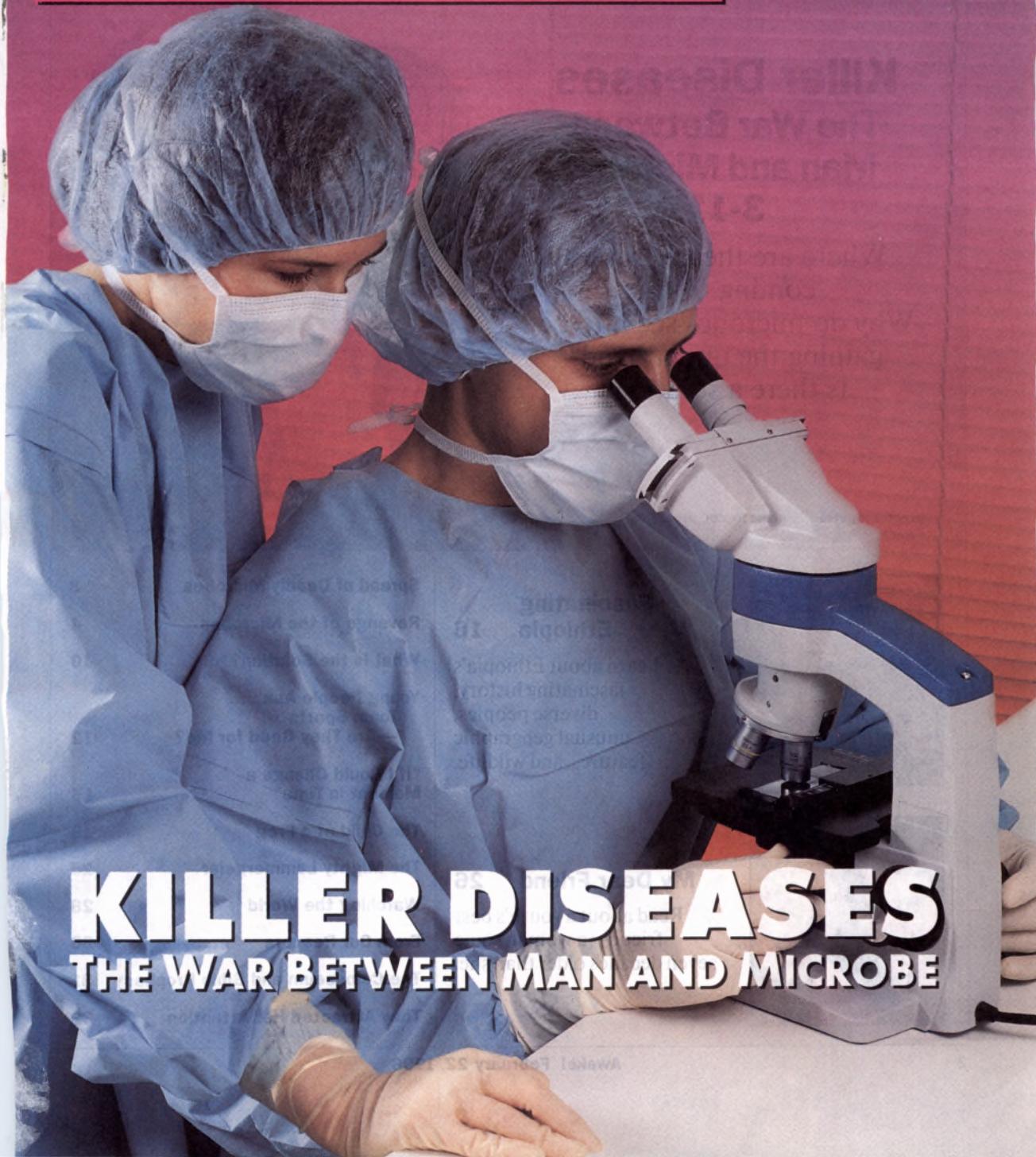


Awake!

February 22, 1996



KILLER DISEASES THE WAR BETWEEN MAN AND MICROBE

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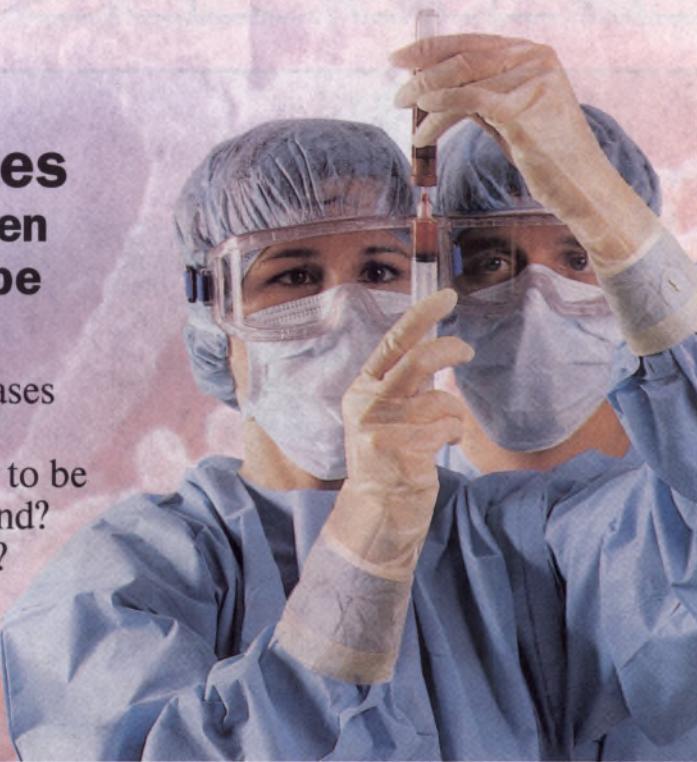
Killer Diseases

The War Between Man and Microbe

3-11

Where are these diseases coming from?

Why do microbes seem to be gaining the upper hand?
Is there a solution?



Virus at top of pages 2, 3, 4, and 10: CDC, Atlanta, Ga.



Fascinating Ethiopia 16

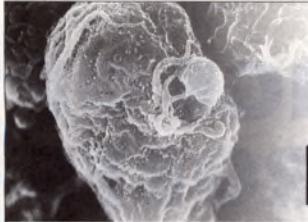
Learn about Ethiopia's fascinating history, diverse peoples, unusual geographic features, and wildlife.



My Dear Friend 26

Read about a youth's best friend—a woman some seven decades older than she.

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SPREAD OF DEADLY MICROBES

Eloise and her fellow passengers were handed a Health Alert Notice card after boarding a flight from London to New York. It was May 1995. The front side of the card read:

"TO The Traveler: Keep this card in your wallet or purse 6 weeks. If you become ill during this time, give this card to your physician and tell him/her about your recent travel outside the United States.

"You could have been exposed to a communicable disease before arriving in the United States, and knowing about this may be helpful to your physician in making a diagnosis."

Flight attendants also handed out newspapers that described an outbreak of Ebola, a viral disease that was killing scores of people in Zaire.

Eloise read about Ebola—a savage and lethal disease. Infected patients first experienced fever, sore throat, and headache, quickly followed by vomiting, abdominal pain, and diarrhea. Next was massive, uncontrolled bleeding, both internally and externally. In 9 out of 10 cases, death came quickly.

Months earlier, there had been reports of other strange and deadly diseases: plague in India, for example. Elsewhere people had died within hours from what the media called a "flesh-eating bug."

Eloise turned the card over in her hand. The other side read:

"To The Physician: The patient presenting this card has recently been abroad, and could have been exposed to a communicable disease not commonly seen in the United States. If you suspect an unusual infectious disease in this instance (cholera, hemorrhagic fever,

malaria, yellow fever, etc.), please report it immediately to your city, county, or State Health Officer and also (by telephone—collect) to the Division of Quarantine, Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia . . . "

The card reflected growing international concern about the spread of deadly microbes—parasites, bacteria, and viruses—which, after igniting an epidemic in one place on earth, may rapidly spread like a brushfire to others. Unlike Eloise and her fellow passengers, microbes neither carry passports nor respect national boundaries. Inside an infected person, they travel undetected with incredible ease.

As she carefully tucked the Health Alert Notice card into her purse, Eloise wondered, "Where are these killer diseases coming from? Why is modern medical science seemingly unable to defeat them?" Perhaps you have wondered about this too.

Health Alert Notice

For International Travelers Arriving in the United States

To The Traveler

Keep this card in your wallet or purse 6 weeks. If you become ill during this time, give this card to your physician and tell him/her about your recent travel outside the United States.

You could have been exposed to a communicable disease before arriving in the United States, and knowing about this may be helpful to your physician in making a diagnosis.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service
Division of Quarantine
National Center for Prevention Services
Division of Quarantine
Atlanta, Georgia 30333

CDC 75.8 REV. 8-93





REVENGE OF THE MICROBES

THE 20th century has seen marvelous advances in medical science. For thousands of years, humans have been virtually helpless against the scourge of deadly microbes. But things began to change in the mid-1930's when scientists discovered sulfa drugs, the first substance that could defeat bacteria without seriously harming the infected person.*

In the years that followed, scientists developed powerful new drugs to fight infectious diseases—chloroquine to attack malaria and antibiotics to subdue pneumonia, scarlet fever, and tuberculosis. By 1965 more than 25,000 different antibiotic products had been developed. Many scientists concluded that bacterial diseases were no longer of great concern or research interest. After all, why study diseases that would soon no longer exist?

In the world's developed countries, new vaccines dramatically decreased the toll of measles, mumps, and German measles. A mass polio vaccination campaign, launched

in 1955, was so successful that cases of the disease in Western Europe and North America plummeted from 76,000 in that year to fewer than 1,000 in 1967. Smallpox, a major killer disease, was eradicated worldwide.

This century has also seen the invention of the electron microscope, a device so powerful that it enables scientists to see viruses that are a million times smaller than a man's fingernail. Such microscopes, along with other technological advances, have made it possible to understand and fight infectious diseases as never before.

Victory Seemed Assured

In the wake of these discoveries, the medical community was full of confidence. The microbes of infectious disease were falling to the weapons of modern medicine. Surely the victory of science over microbe would be swift, decisive, complete! If a cure for a specific disease was not already available, it soon would be.

As early as 1948, U.S. secretary of state George C. Marshall boasted that the conquest of all infectious diseases was immin-

* Sulfa drugs are a crystalline compound from which sulfa drugs are made in the laboratory. Sulfa drugs can inhibit bacterial growth, allowing the body's own defense mechanisms to kill the bacteria.

Awake!

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

Would you welcome more information? Write Watch Tower at the appropriate address on page 5. Publication of *Awake!* is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.

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nent. Three years later, the World Health Organization (WHO) asserted that Asian malaria could soon be a disease "no longer of major importance." By the mid-1960's, the belief that the era of plague and pestilence had passed was so widespread that U.S. surgeon general William H. Stewart told health officers it was time to close the book on infectious diseases.

Old Diseases Return

However, the book on infectious diseases was in no way ready to be closed. Microbes did not vanish from the planet just because science had invented drugs and vaccines. Far from being defeated, well-known killer microbes returned with a vengeance! In addition, other deadly microbes surfaced—microbes previously unknown to doctors. Thus, microbes both old and new are on the rampage, threatening, afflicting, or killing countless millions of people worldwide.

Killer diseases once thought to be under control have surfaced again, more deadly than ever and more difficult to treat with drugs. One example is tuberculosis (TB). WHO stated recently: "Since 1944, TB drugs have been put to extensive use in Japan, North America and Europe to dramatically reduce TB cases and deaths. However, TB control efforts in less developed countries have been neglected, . . . enabling the disease to return to wealthy countries in more dangerous, multidrug-resistant forms." Today TB, usually caused

by airborne bacteria that lodge in the lungs, kills about three million people every year—over 7,000 per day. By the year 2005, the death toll could soar to four million each year.

Other old-time killers are also on the rise. Cholera is now endemic in many parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America; it afflicts and kills increasing numbers of people. An entirely new strain has emerged in Asia.

Dengue, spread by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, is also rapidly on the rise; it now threatens 2.5 billion people in over 100 countries worldwide. Since the 1950's, a deadly new hemorrhagic form of the disease has emerged and spread throughout the Tropics. It is estimated that it kills about 20,000 people each year. As with most viral diseases, there is no vaccine to protect against the disease and no drug to cure it.

Malaria, which science had once hoped to eradicate, now kills about two million people each year. Both the malaria parasites and the mosquitoes that carry them have become increasingly difficult to kill.

Devastating New Diseases

Perhaps the best known of the new diseases that have recently arisen to plague humankind is deadly AIDS. This incurable disease is caused by a virus unknown only a dozen or so years ago. Yet, by late 1994 the number of people worldwide who were infected with the virus was between 13 and 15 million.

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"In hospitals alone, an estimated one million bacterial infections are occurring worldwide every day, and most of these are drug-resistant."

World Health Organization

Other previously unrecognized infectious diseases include hantavirus pulmonary syndrome. Transmitted by field mice, it appeared in the southwestern United States and proved fatal in more than half the reported cases. Two types of hemorrhagic fevers—both new, both fatal—have developed in South America. Other dreadful diseases have also arisen—viruses bearing strange, exotic names—Lassa, Rift Valley, Oropouche, Rocio, Q. Guanarito, VEE, monkeypox, Chikungunya, Mokola, Duvenhage, LeDantec, the Kyasanur Forest brain virus, the Semliki Forest agent, Crimean-Congo, O'nyongnyong, Sindbis, Marburg, Ebola.

Why Are New Diseases Emerging?

With all the knowledge and assets possessed by modern medical science, why are killer microbes proving so difficult to defeat? One reason is the increased mobility of today's society. Modern transportation can quickly make a local epidemic global.

Jet travel makes it easy for a deadly disease to move, harbored inside an infected person, from one part of the world to any other part of the world within hours.

A second reason, which favors the microbe, is the explosive growth of the world's population—especially in cities. Of course, garbage is produced in cities. Garbage contains plastic containers and tires filled with fresh rainwater. In the Tropics, that results in the multiplication of mosquitoes that are carriers of killer diseases such as malaria, yellow fever, and dengue. In addition, just as a thick forest can fuel a fire, so high-density population provides ideal conditions for the rapid spread of tuberculosis, influenza, and other airborne diseases.

A third reason for the return of the microbe has to do with changes in human behavior. Microbes that are transmitted sexually have flourished and spread as a result of the unprecedented scale of multiple partner sex relations, which have characterized the latter part of the 20th century. The spread of AIDS is just one example.*

A fourth reason why killer microbes are proving so difficult to defeat is that man has invaded the jungles and rain forests. Author Richard Preston states in his book *The Hot Zone*: "The emergence of AIDS, Ebola, and any number of other rain-forest

* Other examples of sexually transmitted diseases: Worldwide there are some 236 million people infected with trichomoniasis and about 162 million people with chlamydial infections. Each year there are approximately 32 million new cases of genital warts, 78 million of gonorrhea, 21 million of genital herpes, 19 million of syphilis, and 9 million of chancroid.

agents appears to be a natural consequence of the ruin of the tropical biosphere. The emerging viruses are surfacing from ecologically damaged parts of the earth. Many of them come from the tattered edges of tropical rain forest . . . The tropical rain forests are the deep reservoirs of life on the planet, containing most of the world's plant and animal species. The rain forests are also its largest reservoirs of viruses, since all living things carry viruses."

Humans have thus come into closer contact with insects and warm-blooded animals in which viruses harmlessly reside, reproduce, and die. But when a virus "jumps" from animal to human, the virus may become deadly.

The Limitations of Medical Science

Other reasons why infectious diseases are making a comeback relate to medical science itself. Many bacteria now defy antibiotics that once killed them. Ironically, antibiotics themselves

When Microbes Fight Back

A small microbe known as a bacterium "weighs as little as 0.0000000001 gram. A blue whale weighs about 100,000,000 grams. Yet a bacterium can kill a whale." —Bernard Dixon, 1994.

Among the most feared bacteria found in hospitals are drug-resistant strains of *Staphylococcus aureus*. These strains afflict the sick and the weak, causing deadly blood infections, pneumonia, and toxic shock. According to one count, staph kills about 60,000 people in the United States each year—more than those who die in car accidents. Over the years, these strains of bacteria have become so resistant to antibiotics that by 1988 there was only one antibiotic effective against them, the drug vancomycin. Soon, however, reports of vancomycin-resistant strains began to surface from around the world.

Yet, even when antibiotics do the job they're supposed to do, other problems may arise. In mid-1993, Joan Ray went to a hospital in the United States for a routine operation. She expected to be home in just a few days. Instead, she had to remain in the hospital for 322 days, primarily because of infections she developed after surgery. Doctors fought the infections with heavy doses of antibiotics, including vancomycin, but the microbes fought back. Joan says: "I couldn't use my hands. I couldn't use my feet. . . . I couldn't even pick up a book to read it."

Doctors struggled to find out why Joan was still sick after months of antibiotic treatment. Laboratory work showed that in addition to staph infection, Joan had another kind of bacteria in her system—vancomycin-resistant *enterococcus*. As the name suggests, this bacteria was unharmed by vancomycin; it also seemed to be immune to every other antibiotic.

Then doctors learned something that flabbergasted them. The bacteria not only resisted the drugs that should have killed it but, contrary to what they expected, it actually used vancomycin to survive! Joan's doctor, an infectious-disease specialist, said: "[The bacteria] need that vancomycin in order to multiply, and if they don't have that they won't grow. So, in a sense, they're using the vancomycin as food."

When the doctors stopped giving Joan vancomycin, the bacteria died, and Joan got better.



Microbes flourish when patients use antibiotics improperly

er, or impossible, to cure with drugs. When these drug-resistant strains of microbes invade other people, a serious public-health problem results.

Experts at WHO stated recently: "Resistance [to antibiotics and other antimicrobial agents] is epidemic in many countries and multi-drug resistance leaves doctors with virtually no room for manoeuvre in the treatment of an increasing number of diseases. In hospitals alone, an estimated one million bacterial infections are occurring worldwide every day, and most of these are drug-resistant."

Blood transfusions, used increasingly since the second world war, have also helped to spread infectious diseases. Despite the efforts of science to keep blood free of deadly microbes, blood transfusions have contributed significantly to the spread of hepatitis, cytomegalovirus, antibiotic-resistant bacteria, malaria, yellow fever, Chagas' disease, AIDS, and many other dreadful diseases.

State of Things Today

While medical science has witnessed an explosion of knowledge during this century, there remain many mysteries. C. J. Peters studies dangerous microbes at the



have helped to create this situation. For example, if an antibiotic kills only 99 percent of the harmful bacteria in an infected person, the surviving one percent that resisted the antibiotic can now grow and multiply like a superstrain of weeds in a newly plowed field.

Patients aggravate the problem when they do not finish a course of antibiotics prescribed by their doctor. Patients may stop taking tablets as soon as they begin to feel better. While the weakest microbes may have been killed, the strongest survive and quietly multiply. Within a few weeks, the disease reoccurs, but this time it is hard-

Blood transfusions spread deadly microbes

Centers for Disease Control, America's foremost public-health laboratory. In an interview in May 1995, he said concerning Ebola: "We don't know why it's so virulent for man, and we don't know what it's doing [or] where it is, when it's not causing these epidemics. We can't find it. There's no other virus family . . . that we have such a profound ignorance about."

Even when effective medical knowledge, drugs, and vaccines exist to fight disease, applying them to those in need requires money. Millions live in poverty. WHO's *World Health Report 1995*

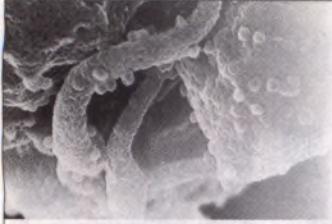
states: "Poverty is the main reason why babies are not vaccinated, why clean water and sanitation are not provided, why curative drugs and other treatments are unavailable . . . Every year in the developing world 12.2 million children under 5 years die, most of them from causes which could be prevented for just a few US cents per child. They die largely because of world indifference, but most of all they die because they are poor."

By 1995, infectious diseases and parasites were the world's biggest killers, snuffing out the lives of 16.4 million people each year. Sadly, countless millions of people live in



conditions that are ideal for the emergence and spread of deadly microbes. Consider the lamentable situation today. Over a billion people exist in extreme poverty. Half the world's population lack regular access to medical treatment and essential drugs. On the streets of polluted megacities wander millions of abandoned children, many of whom inject drugs and practice prostitution. Millions of refugees languish in unhygienic camps amid cholera, dysentery, and other diseases.

In the war between man and microbe, conditions have increasingly favored the microbe.



WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

"**T**HREE is a growing belief that mankind's well-being, and perhaps even our survival as a species, will depend on our ability to detect emerging diseases. . . . Where would we be today if HIV were to become an airborne pathogen? And what is there to say that a comparable infection might not do so in the future?" said D. A. Henderson—who played a leading role in the

eradication of smallpox—to a group of scientists in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1993.

How might emerging diseases be detected? An early warning system for tropical disease epidemics is a global network of 35 laboratories that report to the World Health Organization (WHO). Yet, a survey of these laboratories showed that fewer than half of them were equipped to identify Japanese

The Bible promises a time when no one will say, "I am sick"



encephalitis, hantaviruses, and Rift Valley fever—all deadly diseases. Only 56 percent could spot yellow fever, a mosquito-borne virus that causes vomiting, liver failure, and internal bleeding. In 1992 at least 28 people died in Kenya of yellow fever before doctors discovered the cause. For six months they thought they were fighting malaria.

Another weakness of surveillance programs is that they cannot recognize the emergence of slow-acting viral diseases. HIV, for example, can hide inside a person, spread to others, and then manifest itself as AIDS up to ten years later. The present AIDS pandemic emerged almost simultaneously on three continents and quickly invaded 20 different nations. Clearly, there was no early warning for that!

Despite the problems, many scientists still look to the future with confidence, speaking optimistically of major discoveries and breakthroughs that will surely come in the years ahead. The *International Herald Tribune* reports: "The best hope for true breakthroughs, many scientists say, is biotechnology, the manipulation of hereditary material in living cells. Scientists at biotech firms hope to create cells that produce germ-killing substances, that is, a new generation of genetically engineered antibiotics."

There is, however, a dark side to this. Genetic engineering has made it possible to insert genes into a harmless virus so that the virus can deliver the genes to people. This technology can be used beneficially, perhaps actually making possible the production of so-called genetically engineered antibiotics. But this technology may also be used for sinister purposes.

For example, possibly genes from Ebola could be inserted by accident or design into a virus, such as influenza or measles. Then that deadly virus might be spread by a cough or a sneeze. Dr. Karl Johnson, who has spent a lifetime investigating viruses such as Machupo and Ebola, said that the time may soon come when "any crackpot with a few

thousand dollars' worth of equipment and a college biology education under his belt could manufacture bugs that would make Ebola look like a walk around the park." Other biologists share his concern.

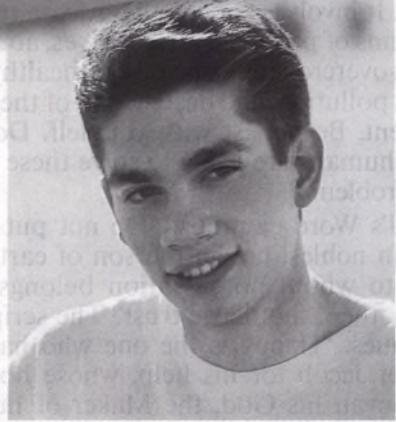
The Solution

Solving the problems of infectious disease is not simply a matter of developing new drugs. It involves solving the disease-related problems of poverty, war, refugees, abuse of drugs, overcrowding of cities, unhealthy lifestyles, pollution, and destruction of the environment. Be honest with yourself. Do you think humans are likely to solve these complex problems?

God's Word cautions: "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs." In whom, then, should we trust? The scripture continues: "Happy is the one who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in Jehovah his God, the Maker of heaven and earth." Only Jehovah, mankind's Creator, can solve the dilemmas that face humankind.—Psalm 146:3-6.

Jehovah's inspired Word, the Bible, in recording Jesus' great prophecy concerning "the sign . . . of the conclusion of the system of things," foretold the medical miseries that afflict our generation. Jesus said: "There will be . . . in one place after another *pestilences*." —Matthew 24:3-8; Luke 21:10, 11.

However, the Bible also points to a future time on earth under the rule of God's Kingdom when "no resident will say: 'I am sick.'" (Isaiah 33:24; Matthew 6:9, 10) Those who trust in Jehovah thus have strong reason to believe that obedient mankind will soon receive a permanent release from not only the deadly diseases that plague humans but also the problems that contribute to disease. True Christians appreciate the efforts of the medical community in the difficult battle against deadly microbes. Yet, they know the lasting solution to disease and death rests with God, the one "who is healing all your maladies." —Psalm 103:1-3; Revelation 21:1-5; 22:1, 2.



**Young
People
Ask...**

Team Sports Are They Good for Me?

"I love sports. I get a really good feeling. And I enjoy being with my friends."

—14-year-old Sandy.

FUN!" "Excitement!" "Winning!" These were some of the reasons U.S. and Canadian youths gave when they were surveyed as to why they took part in organized sports. Evidently, many youths share their enthusiasm.

Take the United States, for example. According to the book *Your Child in Sports*, by Lawrence Galton, "each year, 20 million American kids aged from six up play,

or try to play, on organized sports teams." And whereas just a few years ago organized sports teams were almost exclusively male, girls in record numbers are now pitching baseballs, shooting baskets, and even competing with one another on the football field.

Perhaps you are the athletic type and feel that joining a team would be fun. Or it may be that you are getting a lot of encouragement—perhaps even pressure—from parents, teachers, or coaches to do so. Whatever the case, getting involved with team sports requires a sizable commitment of time and energy. It only makes sense, then, to be aware of some of the pros and cons. First, let's look at some of the advantages.

Sports—The Benefits

"Bodily training is beneficial for a little," says the Bible. (1 Timothy 4:8) And young ones can certainly benefit from physical activity. In the United States, alarming numbers of youngsters suffer from obesity, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. Regular exercise can do much to bring such problems under control. According to an article in *American Health* magazine, youngsters who exercise regularly "achieve greater aerobic capacity than sedentary [inactive] kids. Frequent exercisers also perform better in sports and practice better weight control." Researchers also say that exercise can relieve stress, reduce fatigue, and even improve your sleep.

Interestingly, the book *Your Child in Sports* observes: "It has become evident that many adult health problems have their seeds in early life." Many doctors thus feel that the benefits of regular exercise may extend into adulthood. Writer Mary C. Hickey reports: "Research has found that children who play sports are likely to be more physically active as adults."

Many feel that there are other significant benefits to team sports. One father said regarding his son's playing football: 'It keeps him off the streets. It teaches

him discipline.' Others feel that playing on a team teaches a youth to work with others—a skill that could have lifelong benefits. Team sports also teach youths to follow rules, to be self-disciplined, to exercise leadership, and to deal graciously with both success and failure. "Sports are a great laboratory for young people," says Dr. George Sheehan. "They give students direct experience in the things they often hear about from teachers: courage, mastery, dedication."

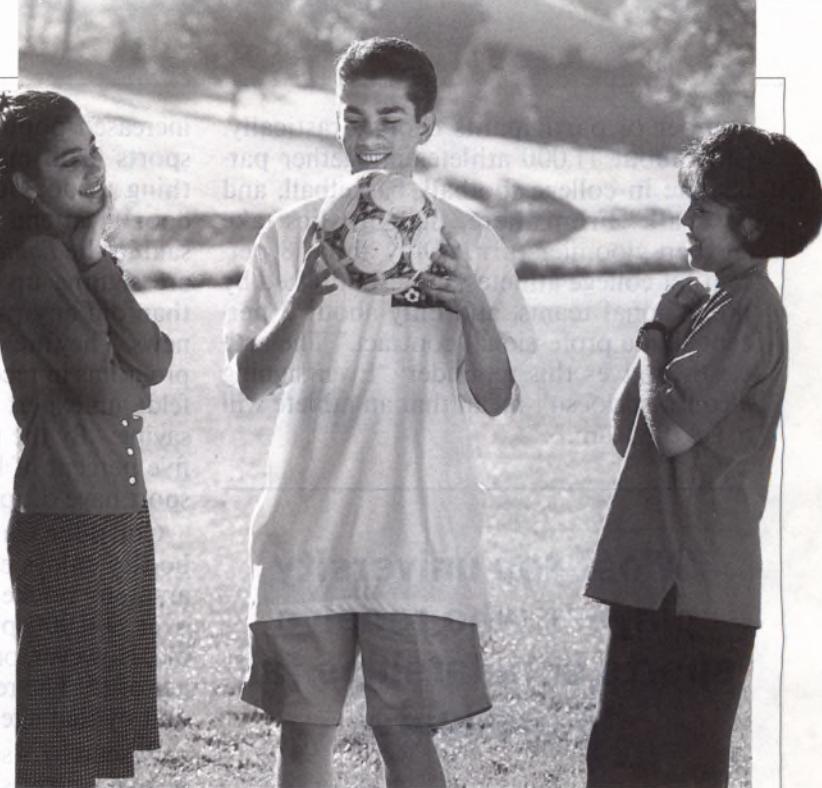
—*Current Health*, September 1985.

If nothing else, being on a winning team can be a boost to one's self-esteem. "If I make a touchdown or I make a shot," says young Eddie, "I feel pretty proud of myself."

Fame, Fortune, and Popularity

For other youths, though, the real appeal of team sports is gaining the approval and recognition of their peers. "Every time you do something good," explains 13-year-old Gordon, "everybody's always patting you on the back."

The book *Teenage Stress*, by Susan and Daniel Cohen, acknowledges: "If there seems to be any sure road to popularity, especially for boys, it's athletics. . . . You will rarely find the star of the football or basketball team hurting for recognition." One survey revealed just how highly esteemed athletes are. Students were asked whether they preferred to be remembered as an athletic star, a brilliant student, or the most popular



The popularity of athletes attracts many youths to organized sports

person. Among boys, being an "athletic star" was the number one choice.

That a football or basketball player garners more respect than a scholar is not so amazing when you consider the worshipful attention the media heap upon professional athletes. Much of the publicity focuses on their astronomical salaries and lavish life-styles. Little wonder that many youths, particularly those in the inner city, may see school sports as a stepping-stone to prosperity—a ticket out of poverty!

Unfortunately, reality falls miserably short of such expectations. An article in *Current Health* magazine entitled "How Many Athletes Make It to the Pros?" gave some sobering statistics. It reported: "More than 1 million boys [in the United States] play high school football; almost 500,000 play basketball; and about 400,000 participate in baseball. From high school to college, the

number of participants drops drastically. Only about 11,000 athletes altogether participate in college football, basketball, and baseball." From there, the statistics take an even gloomier turn. "Only about 8 percent [of college athletes] are ever drafted by professional teams, and only about 2 percent sign a professional contract." The article then gives this reminder: "Even signing a contract doesn't mean that an athlete will make the team."

'Most top university players who receive sports scholarships fail to graduate'

All told, then, "only one out of every 12,000 high school athletes will become a pro." That may not be a lot better than the odds of winning first prize in a lottery! But at the very least, you may wonder, cannot an athlete receive a free college education for all his trouble? Once again, the odds are not so good. According to the book *On the Mark*, by Richard E. Lapchick and Robert Malekoff, "of the millions of high school athletes . . . , only 1 in 50 will get a scholarship to play in college." Another dismal statistic is: "Of the top players who receive scholarships in big-money sports like football and basketball, fewer than 30 percent will graduate from college after four years."

For the vast majority of players, the dream of becoming a rich and famous athlete is simply a fantasy—a pipe dream.

Dropouts

When you consider the prospects of improved health, character development, and

increased popularity, joining an organized sports team may still seem like the smart thing to do. But before you rush out the door to attend tryouts, consider what was said in the *Ladies' Home Journal*: "More kids are signing up for organized sports today than did any previous generation. The bad news: They are dropping out of these sports programs in record numbers." Dr. Vern Seefeldt, an expert on the subject, is quoted as saying: "By the time they're fifteen, seventy-five percent of kids who have ever played a sport have dropped out of it."

Consider Canada, where the sport ice hockey enjoys enormous popularity. In one amateur hockey league, 53 percent of its over 600,000 players were under 12 years old. However, only 11 percent were over the age of 15. The reason? Most youngsters have quit by that age. Why do so many quit?

Researchers say that such dropouts usually give a surprisingly simple reason for their departure: The games are no longer fun. Indeed, playing on a team can be an exhausting and time-consuming project. *Seventeen* magazine told its readers that simply trying out for a team may involve working "three hours a day, five days a week . . . for about one or two weeks." If you survive that gauntlet and make the team, many more hours of workouts and practice drills are in your future. Typical is the member of a girl's basketball team who spends over three hours a day training for her game. That time could be spent in doing something more worthwhile.

Of course, many youths do not mind the grueling routine. They enjoy the fun and the challenge of perfecting their athletic skills. But there are other reasons why a large number of youths drop out of organized athletics. You need to be aware of them in order to decide whether to join a team or not. As Proverbs 13:16 says, "everyone shrewd will act with knowledge." A future article will therefore continue this discussion.

"If I Could Change a Moment in Time"

STUDENTS in a school in California, U.S.A., were asked to write an essay on the above theme. One of the finalists in the essay contest was Eric, an 11-year-old son in a family of Jehovah's Witnesses. He composed the following Bible-based essay himself.

"World War II was a deadly war. Many innocent people died. But the moment I have chosen would make this war not exist in the history books at all. Think about the assassination of John F. Kennedy. This man died an ugly death, but the moment I have chosen would make this too not exist in the history books. Martin Luther King, Jr., died in 1968 for trying to change the thinking of the world, but the moment I have chosen would predate this time also. If I could change this moment in time, the world would be different, everything as we know it would be changed, and all things, including times and people, would be different. This moment the course of history was changed to make the world as we know it today—deadly, violent, sick, and wicked."

"Well, you might be wondering, 'Is this moment a disease? Is this moment a government? Or is this moment a war?' Ask yourself, 'If it were a disease, how could it keep the acts of men from being wicked?' 'It couldn't,' you would say. Then you think, 'It must be a government that would fix all our problems.' But a government is run by men, and all men are imperfect and die. So wouldn't their good works die with them? Then you say, 'It has to be a war like

World War II.' No! It couldn't be that because in war one side wins, and with that, the other side loses. None of these things mentioned would permanently end death, violence, sickness, and wickedness. You may be wondering what this moment in time is that I would change.

"Sin. Death. Sin and death are what I would change. But how? We have always had sin and death. Sin and death are part of our daily lives. Then how can you change what has always been here? You would have to stop it at the moment it started. The rebellion of Adam and Eve against God's government caused things to be the way they are today. The ones involved chose to do things their way, and thus we have sin and death.

"So the exact moment that would have to be changed is when *the first lie* was told by Satan the Devil against that perfect government. Because of this lie, all of us are suffering for what our first parents, Adam and Eve, did. They sinned against the only true Leader of government, God."

On Saturday, August 12, 1995, Eric read his essay at a special assembly day of Jehovah's Witnesses in Norco, California. The audience was delighted to hear of a youth taking advantage of an opportunity at school to give a thought-provoking witness about the cause of human suffering. How grand it will be when Jehovah God destroys "the original serpent" and removes all the suffering for which the Devil has been responsible!—Revelation 12:9; 21:3, 4; Genesis 3:1-6.



Fascinating Ethiopia

BY A WAKEI CORRESPONDENT IN ETHIOPIA

FOR years Ethiopia was known as the hidden empire. And while its centuries of isolation have ended, few today are aware of its fascinating history, diverse peoples and cultures, and unusual geographic features. With over 50 million inhabitants—nearly as many as in France—it is hardly a land to be overlooked.

Apparently it was the ancient Greeks who coined the word "Ethiopia," meaning "Region of Burnt Faces." However, its early political history is shrouded in mystery and legend. Tradition claims that Ethiopia was part of ancient Sheba of Biblical fame and that its queen was the wealthy dignitary who visited King Solomon. A number of past rulers of Ethiopia thus claimed to be descendants of a man named Menelik, supposedly the offspring of a romance between Solomon and this queen.

In all likelihood, though, Sheba was actual-

ly located in southwest Arabia.* The Bible does mention Ethiopia in both its Hebrew ("Old Testament") and Greek ("New Testament") sections. Acts chapter 8, for example, tells of an Ethiopian "eunuch," or government official, who converted to Christianity. But according to present-day boundaries, Biblical Ethiopia primarily embraced the area now known as Sudan.

By the third century of our Common Era, the Aksum kingdom had been established in Ethiopia. It reached its peak under King 'Ezānā in the fourth century. A convert himself, 'Ezānā converted his entire empire to "Christianity." Ethiopia stayed in touch with the Western world for a while, but such relations were severed by the seventh century. *The Encyclopedia Americana* explains: "For almost 1,000 years afterward, Ethiopia was iso-

* For further information, see the article "Sheba" in *Insight on the Scriptures*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.



lated from the rest of the Christian world in its efforts to defend itself against the encroaching Muslims from the north and east, as well as from pagan invaders from the south." In particular did the Muslim conquests of Egypt and Nubia cut Ethiopia off from the rest of Christendom.

Unlike other African lands, Ethiopia never went through an extended period of European colonization, except for a brief Italian presence about the turn of this century and from 1935 to 1941. In 1974 a military coup brought a violent end to the old empire. Since 1991 a new government has brought reforms toward making this land a more open society. As a result, it is now possible to take a closer look at this once hidden country.

The People and Their Culture

It is hard to make generalizations regarding the Ethiopians because the variety among them is so great. There are the Afar nomads who roam the sizzling Danakil Desert. To the west there are the dark-skinned Nilotic peoples. In the south live particularly the Oromo people. The Amhara people dwell in the central highlands, where they cultivate the windy mountaintops. Not surprisingly, then, Ethiopia has nearly 300 languages. Ethnic groups have their own hairstyles, type of clothing, and architecture. The architecture ranges from the circular bamboo *tukuls* common in the south to the thatched adobe homes in central Ethiopia and storied stone structures in the north.

There is also a fascinating variety of personal names. More than mere labels, the exotic-sounding names have meanings that are almost always well-known locally. Girls may be called Fikre (My Love), Desta (Joy), Senait (Goodness), Emnet (Faith), Ababa (Flower), or Trunesh (You Are Good). Some samples of men's names are Berhanu (Light), Wolde Mariam (Son of Mary), Gebre Yesus (Servant of Jesus), Haile Sellassie (Power of the Trinity), or Tekle Haimanot (Plant of Religion).

Many of these names give clear evidence of the influence of the Orthodox religion. Indeed, religion pervades virtually all of Ethiopian culture! The calendar of 13 months is full of religious festivals. Most prominent among these are *Meskel*, the "Festival of the Cross," and *Timkat*, with its colorful processions to celebrate the baptism of Christ. And it should come as no surprise that most of Ethiopia's traditional art is religious in nature.

Geographic Features

Your first glimpse of Ethiopia should also take in its stunning geography. One prominent feature is the Great Rift Valley, which bisects the country on its way to Kenya. Along its edges are found many hot springs and caves. Seven beautiful lakes dot its course. Highlands of over 6,600 feet rise on either side, culminating in the north in the Simyen Mountains. These are called the Roof of Africa with a peak height of over 15,000 feet! The towering buttresses and dazzling gorges of this area are truly spectacular. Not far from there is Lake Tana and the source of the Blue Nile. This has its own impressive gorge that winds its way westward toward Sudan. Near Lake Tana, the Blue Nile also provides a beautiful spectacle—the Tisissat Falls, which cascade over cliffs like a smaller version of the famous Victoria Falls. In the northeast, multicolored salt pans decorate the Danakil, a desert that constitutes Africa's lowest point. It is below sea level.

Ethiopia produces an amazing variety of crops, ranging from wheat, barley, bananas, maize, and cotton to grapes, oranges, and a profusion of spices. Ethiopia also claims to be the original home of the coffee plant, and to this day it is a major producer of coffee beans. Then there is the unusual grain called teff. It resembles grass, and its tiny seeds are ground to provide *injera*, Ethiopia's main staple food and national dish. *Injera* is made in a special oven and is often presented in a large round basket, the decorative *mesob*. Placed on the

The "mesob" is used to serve "Injera," Ethiopia's national dish

floor of many Ethiopians homes, the *mesob* is both utilitarian and indispensable as part of the decor!

Wildlife

What does Ethiopia have to offer in regard to wildlife? Quite a lot. In fact, Ethiopia has a number of remote game parks populated by a variety of antelope and lions. Over 830 species of birds are said to reside in this country, some of which are found only in Ethiopia.

Among the more unusual animals is the stately walia ibex, a splendid mountain goat that remains only in the lofty heights of the Simyen Mountains. A mere few hundred still live among the most inaccessible cliffs. They can jump over a seemingly bottomless abyss without a slip.

There is also the beautiful gelada. Because of its long hair and the striking red spot on its chest, it has also been called lion monkey and bleeding-heart baboon. You do not have to travel far to see animal life. Why, the roads in Ethiopia often teem with camels, mules, cattle, and donkeys!

Admittedly, the country is far from problem free. The capital city, Addis Ababa, is a modern metropolis with more than a million people. But it suffers from housing shortages and unemployment. Drought and civil war have resulted in homelessness, cripples, and a large number of widows and orphans. Jehovah's Witnesses in this land are working hard to help Ethiopians to see that the ultimate solution to their problems is God's Kingdom by Christ Jesus.—Matthew 6:9, 10.

In the meantime, Ethiopia is a land worth getting to know. We hope this brief glimpse has whet your appetite, so that you will take another glimpse, perhaps someday a first-hand look, at this fascinating land.



The Child of a Frog

"The child of a frog is a frog."

This Japanese proverb means that a child grows up to be just like its parent.
My mother was a geisha.

I GREW up in a geisha house run by my mother. So from when I was small, I was surrounded by beautiful ladies who wore the most expensive kimonos. I knew that when I got bigger, I would join their world. My training began in 1928 on the sixth day of the sixth month when I was six years old. The figure 666 was said to guarantee success.

I studied Japan's traditional arts—dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, performing the tea ceremony, and so forth. Every day after school I ran home, changed, and went to my lessons. There I would be with my school friends again because we were all children of geisha. It was a busy time, and I enjoyed it.

In those days before World War II, compulsory schooling ended at age 12, so that is when I started to work. As a fledgling geisha, I dressed in gorgeous kimonos with sleeves hanging down almost to my feet. I felt elated as I went on my first assignment.

My Work as a Geisha

My work basically involved entertaining and acting as a hostess. When wealthy men planned dinner parties at exclusive eating establishments, they would call up a geisha house and request the services of a few geisha. The geisha were expected to liven up the evening and ensure that each

guest went home satisfied, feeling that he had a good time.

To do this, we had to anticipate each guest's need and provide for it—even before the guest realized he had a need. The hardest part, I think, was having to adapt at a moment's notice. If guests suddenly wanted to watch dancing, then we danced. If music was desired, we got out our instruments and played the music requested or sang whatever kind of song was asked for.

A common misunderstanding is that all geisha are high-class, expensive call girls. This is not the case. Although there are geisha who make their living by selling themselves, there is no need for a geisha to stoop to that. I know because I never did. A geisha is an entertainer, and if she is good, her skills bring her work, expensive gifts, and generous tips from customers.



Admittedly, few are good enough to make it to the top. Most geisha become professional in just one of Japan's traditional arts. But I held diplomas in seven such arts, including Japanese dance, flower arranging, the tea ceremony, the Japanese drum known as *taiko*, and three styles of music played on the three-stringed *shamisen*. Without these qualifications, to make a living, I would perhaps have felt the need to do whatever customers asked.

Practicing, when I was eight





With my adoptive mother

When Japan was not economically stable, girls sometimes chose to become geisha in order to support their families.

They borrowed money to pay for their training and kimonos. Others were sold by their families to geisha houses. Their owners, having paid large sums of money, required repayment from the girls. Geisha in these circumstances were greatly disadvantaged, for their training began late and they started off heavily in debt. Many of these geisha resorted to or were forced into immorality to meet financial responsibilities.

My services came to be in demand by well-known people in the world of sports, entertainment, business, and politics. Cabinet and prime ministers were among my clients. These men treated me with respect and thanked me for my work. Although I did not join in the general conversation unless invited, I was sometimes asked for my opinion.

So I read newspapers and listened to the radio daily in order to keep up-to-date with the news. Parties at which I served were often held for the purpose of negotiations, so I had to be discreet and not repeat things I heard.

Who Is My Mother?

One day in 1941, when I was 19, I was called to an eating house and found two women waiting for me. One of them announced that she was my birth mother and that she had come to take me home. The other woman employed geisha and offered me work. She thought I should work to support my birth mother rather than my adoptive mother. It had never crossed my mind that the woman who had raised me was not my real mother.

Confused, I ran home and told my adoptive mother what had happened. She had always been in control of her emotions, yet tears now filled her eyes. She said she had wanted to be the one to tell me that when I was one year old, I had been handed over to a geisha house. On hearing the truth, I lost all trust in people and became withdrawn and quiet.

I refused to accept my birth mother. It was obvious from our brief meeting that she knew of my success and wanted me to work to support her. From the location of her friend's operation, I knew that working there involved immorality. I wanted to sell my artistic talents, not my body. So I thought then, and I still do, that I made the right decision.

Although I was upset with my adoptive mother, I had to admit that she had trained me so that I could always make a living. The more I thought about it, the more I felt indebted to her. She had carefully and consistently chosen my work, protecting me from men who called upon the services of geisha only for immoral purposes. To this day, I am thankful to her for that.

She taught me principles. One that she emphasized was that my yes should mean yes

My daughter was the pride of my life

and my no, no. She also taught me to accept responsibility and to be strict with myself. Following the principles she taught, I was successful in my work. I doubt whether I would have received such help from my birth mother. My adoption probably saved me from a very rough life, and I decided that I was very glad it had happened.

A Son in the Midst of War

I gave birth to a son in 1943. In line with traditional Japanese culture, which does not recognize "sin," I did not think I had done anything wrong or shameful. I was thrilled with my son. He was the most precious thing I had—someone to live and work for.

In 1945 the bombing was very bad in Tokyo, and I had to flee the city with my son. There was little food, and he was very sick. People jammed the railroad station in mass confusion, but we somehow managed to board a train going north to Fukushima. We stayed there in an inn that night, but before I could take my little boy to a hospital, he died of malnutrition and dehydration. He was only two. I was devastated. The boiler man at the inn cremated my son's body in the fire he used to heat the bathwater.

Soon after that the war ended, and I went back to Tokyo. The city had been flattened by the bombing. My home and everything I owned was gone. I went to a friend's house. She lent me her kimonos, and I started to work again. My adoptive mother, who had evacuated to a place outside Tokyo, demanded that I send money and build her a house in Tokyo. Such demands made me feel lonelier than ever. I was still grieving over my son and longed for consolation, yet she never even mentioned my child. All she was concerned about was herself.

Family Duties

Tradition taught that everything we have we owe to our parents and ancestors and



that it is the duty of children to repay their parents by obeying them without question and caring for them until they die. So I did my duty, but my adoptive mother's demands were excessive. She also expected me to support her brother's two children whom she had adopted. Until I was 19, I had thought of them as my brother and sister.

Many geisha never married, and they avoided having children of their own. They often adopted baby girls from poor families and trained them as geisha for the sole purpose of receiving financial support to enjoy a comfortable life in old age. Unhappily, I began to see why I had received all the care and training I had. It was simply future financial security.

I accepted all of this, although I did wonder why, in addition to my adoptive mother, I had to support my "brother" and "sister," who were both healthy and able to work.

Nevertheless, I supported the three of them, doing everything they asked. Eventually, the day before she died in 1954, my mother knelt on her bed, bowed, and thanked me formally. She said that I had done enough. This one acknowledgment and expression of thanks made up for my years of work. The satisfaction of knowing I had fulfilled all my responsibilities still moves me to tears.

Providing for My Daughter

In 1947, I became the mother of a little girl, and I decided to work hard to amass wealth for her. Every night I went out to work. I also began performing on stage in Japan's main theaters, such as the Kabukiza in Ginza. This too paid well.

Whether dancing or playing the *shamisen*, I always received the lead parts. Yet, despite having success that other geisha only dreamed of, I was not happy. Perhaps I would not have been so lonely had I married, but the life of a geisha and marriage do not go well together. My only consolation was Aiko, my little girl, and I built my life around her.

Normally, geisha train their daughters, whether natural or adopted, to do the same work. I followed that custom, but later I began to think about the kind of life I was preparing her for. If continued, it would mean that generation after generation would never know what it was like to have a real family. I wanted to break that chain. I wanted Aiko, and her children after her, to enjoy marriage and a normal family life. I did not want the child of this frog to become a frog!

When Aiko was entering her teens, she became uncontrollable. Since my adoptive mother's death a few years before, Aiko's only companions at home had been the maids I employed. She desperately needed my time and attention. So even though I was in my mid-30's and at the peak of my career, I decided to put the geisha world behind me and accept only work dancing and playing the *shamisen*. I quit for the sake of Aiko. We began having evening meals together, and almost

immediately she mellowed. Giving her my time worked wonders.

In time, we moved to a quiet residential area, where I opened a coffee shop. Aiko grew up, and I was relieved to see her marry Kimihiro, a gentle man who showed understanding toward the life I had led.

Religion Becomes an Issue

In 1968, Aiko gave birth to my first grandchild. Not long afterward she began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. This surprised me because we already had a religion. I had installed a large Buddhist altar in our home after Mother—my adoptive mother—died, and I would kneel before it regularly in worship of her. Also, I would visit the family grave every month to report to her on all that happened.

Ancestor worship satisfied me. I felt that I was doing what I should to care for my ancestors and to show them gratitude, and I brought Aiko up to do the same. So I was horrified when she told me that she would no longer participate in ancestor worship, nor would she worship me when I died. 'How,' I asked myself, 'could I have brought forth such a child, and how could she join a religion that taught people to be so ungrateful to their forefathers?' For the next three years, it was as if a black cloud were hanging over me.

A turning point came when Aiko was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. A Witness friend of Aiko, surprised that I was not present for my daughter's baptism, told Aiko that she would call on me. I was furious, but simply because correct manners had been firmly ingrained in me, I welcomed her when she came. For the same reason, I could not say no when she stated that she would return the following week. These visits continued for weeks, infuriating me so much that at first I learned nothing from what she said. Gradually, though, the discussions made me think.

I began recalling things Mother used to say. Although she wanted to be worshiped af-

**I worshiped Mother before
this family altar**

ter death, she wasn't convinced about an afterlife. What parents want most, she would say, is for children to be kind to them and to talk warmly with them while they are still alive. When I read such scriptures as Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10, and Ephesians 6: 1, 2, and saw that the Bible encourages the same thing, I felt as if scales fell from my eyes. Other things Mother had taught me were also in the Bible, such as that my yes should mean yes and my no, no. (Matthew 5:37) Wondering what else the Bible taught, I agreed to a regular Bible study.

The sadness and frustration I had felt for most of my life melted away as I progressed in Bible knowledge. When I began attending meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses, I was deeply impressed. Here was a different world. People were genuine, kind, and friendly, and my heart responded. Especially was I moved upon learning of Jehovah's mercy. He lovingly forgives all repentant sinners. Yes, he would forgive all my past failings, and he would help me to enjoy a new life!

Changes in My Life

Although I wanted to serve Jehovah, I had strong ties to the entertainment world. I was then in my 50's, but I was still performing on stage. I was also a leader and one of the two organizers of *shamisen* musicians when Dan-



juro Ichikawa performed *Sukeroku* at the Kabukiza. Since very few *shamisen* players can provide the *katoubushi* style accompaniment needed for *Sukeroku*, there would be no one to replace me if I quit. So I felt trapped.

However, an elderly Witness, who was also involved in a traditional form of Japanese entertainment, asked me why I thought I had to quit. "People have to work to support themselves," he explained. He helped me see that I was doing nothing unscriptural and that I could serve Jehovah and continue my performances.

For a while I continued at the Kabukiza, Japan's premier theater. Then, shows began to fall on meeting nights, so I asked to be replaced on those nights. Soon, though, our meeting times changed, and I could fit in both work and meetings. Yet, to get to meetings on time, I often had to jump into a waiting taxi immediately after the show finished instead of relaxing with the other performers as was the custom. Finally, I decided to quit.

At the time we were well into rehearsals for a six-month series of performances in Japan's major cities. To bring up the subject of leaving would have caused a lot of trouble. So, without mentioning my intentions, I began training someone to be my successor. When the tour was completed, I explained to each person concerned that I had fulfilled my responsibilities and that I was quitting. Some became angry. Others accused me of being conceited and deliberately causing them trouble. It was not an easy time for me, but I stuck to my decision and quit after 40 years of performing. Since then, I have taught the *shamisen*, and this provides a little income.

Living Up To My Dedication

A few years earlier, I had dedicated my life to Jehovah God.

I was baptized on August 16, 1980. The feeling that overwhelms me now is that of deep gratitude to Jehovah. I judge myself as having been somewhat like the Samaritan woman that is mentioned in the Bible at John 4:7-42. Jesus spoke to her kindly, and she repented. Similarly, Jehovah, who "sees what the heart is," kindly showed me the way, and because of his mercy, I have been able to start a new life.—1 Samuel 16:7.

In March 1990, when I was nearly 68 years old, I became a pioneer, as full-time ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses are called. Aiko too is a pioneer, as are her three children. They grew up to be like their mother in keeping with the Japanese proverb: "The child of a frog is a frog." Aiko's husband is a Christian elder in the congregation. How blessed I am to be surrounded by my family, all walking in the truth, and to have loving spiritual brothers and sisters in the congregation!

Grateful as I am to my ancestors, my greatest thanks go to Jehovah, who has done more for me than any human could. In particular, it is gratitude for his abundant mercy and comfort that moves me to want to praise him for all eternity.—*As told by Satsuko Takahashi*.



**With my daughter,
her husband, and
my grandchildren**



THE MIGHTY LAMMERGEIER

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN BRITAIN

THE lammergeier is a majestic bird, measuring upwards of four feet from beak to tail. It can be seen soaring effortlessly on its ten-foot-wide wings over mountain ranges in Europe and Africa and, at times, at an altitude of up to five miles in the Himalayas. This stately creature, with its orange breast and neck and black-and-white head, has long bristles hanging from its lower beak. These give rise to its other name, the bearded vulture. Living in remote and inhospitable regions, what food does it find to sustain itself?

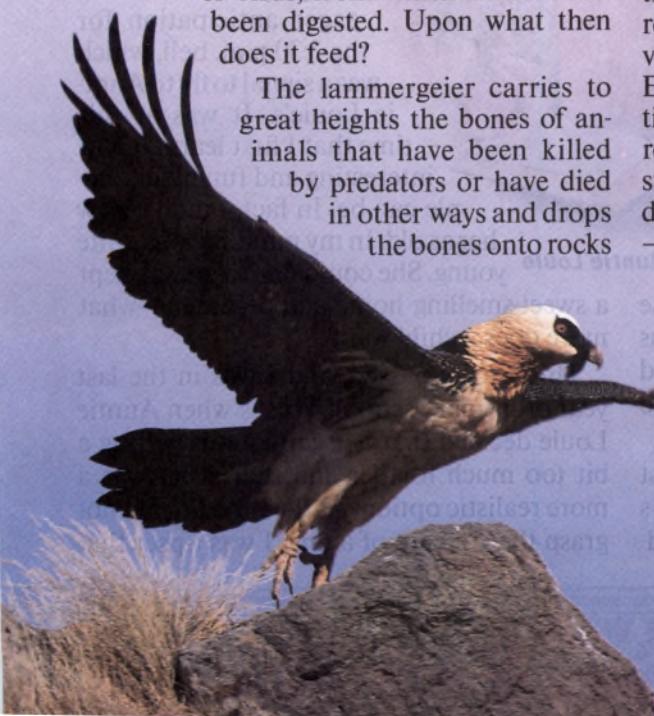
Some reference books maintain that the lammergeier preys on living creatures—chamois, lambs, kids, hares, and small quadrupeds—but other authorities disagree. “There is no authenticated account of this bird ever attacking a living animal,” states *The World Atlas of Birds*, although it is known to eat fur pellets regurgitated by other birds, from which all flesh has been digested. Upon what then does it feed?

The lammergeier carries to great heights the bones of animals that have been killed by predators or have died in other ways and drops the bones onto rocks

below. The assumption has always been that it smashed the bones in this way solely to get to the bone marrow. Now, following detailed examination of living and dead specimens of the bird, researchers from Glasgow University in Scotland have been able to offer a different explanation, reports *The Economist*.

The lammergeier swallows bones in pieces as large as ten inches by one and a half inches. Yet, the researchers, to their surprise, found that the bird has no special digestive system, such as a gizzard, to cope with its indigestible diet. The only unusual feature is an extremely elastic esophagus that enables the bone fragments to pass through. The lammergeier’s stomach, however, tells more.

The scientists were surprised to find in the stomach a large number of cells secreting an unusually strong acid—harsher than battery acid—that dissolves the calcium of the bone, thereby liberating the protein and the marrow fat. This food provides a higher energy value than a meal of the same weight of flesh. Even more astonishing is the fact that digestive enzymes are found in such an acid environment. So now the mystery of how this strong creature is sustained on such a meager diet of 90 percent bones has been solved—another wonder of creation.



© Nigel Dennis, Photo Researchers

My Dear Friend

Who are your friends? Are they only those of your own age group? Read a youth's account about one of her friends, who is about seven decades older than she.

OUR family moved to Aberdeen, Scotland, about nine years ago, when I was only six. This was a frightening time for me because I had to start in a new school and I had to make new friends. But something gently eased me into my new situation. An older lady, whom my parents had met once before, lived just around the corner from us. I was duly introduced and soon was surprised to find how interesting she was. She was young at heart, and she dressed with a beautiful elegance.

The house we were staying in was rented, so we moved to a permanent home about a mile from Auntie Louie's. I use the expression "auntie" out of respect and as a term of endearment. I was sad when we had to move, for my brother and I had begun to visit her regularly.

However, the school I attended was just around the corner from Auntie Louie's house. So every Friday after classes end-



With Auntie Louie

ed and before I went to my evening Scottish Country Dancing practice at the school, I went to Auntie's for tea. This became my routine. I would bring one of my storybooks along, and she would read to me while I ate cucumber sandwiches and drank a glass of cool milk.

I remember that Fridays seemed to drag by as I waited in eager anticipation for the 3:30 p.m. bell, which was a signal to fly to Auntie Louie's. It was at this time that I first learned how interesting and fun older people can be. In fact, I didn't view her as old. In my mind she was quite young. She could drive, and she kept a sweet-smelling home and a garden—what more does a child want?

Three years passed, and I was in the last year of primary school. This is when Auntie Louie decided that her garden was getting a bit too much for her and that a flat was a more realistic option. At the time I could not grasp the concept of aging. I was upset that

her flat was in a different part of town. Fridays never held the same charm for me as they had before.

In 1990 my move to secondary school loomed. What would I do in such a big school? How would I cope? I was to go to a different school from my friends, as our family lived in a different area. But again Auntie Louie was there because the flat that she had moved to was right next to my secondary school! I asked her if I could come to her flat at lunchtime to eat my sandwiches. Thus another precious routine was established.

I believe that this is when our relationship changed from a child-adult relationship to a mutual enjoyment of each other's company. This was evident in many ways, but one way in particular was when we started to read the classics together—*Jane Eyre*, *Villette*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *The Woman in White*—instead of my storybooks. My taste had matured.

Auntie Louie taught me that a love for people is a skill and an art. If it had not been for her, I may not have realized that till I was much older. She taught me to *listen*, and many people in this too-busy world never learn that, whether old or young. As I curl up on her sofa, she tells me stories of her life and experiences she has had. I feel warmed by the irresistible knowledge this lady has.

Auntie Louie gave up much—marriage, children, a career—to look after her parents and her aunt through traumatic illnesses. This enabled her younger brother to remain in the full-time ministry.

Over the past two years, Auntie Louie has been failing in health, and I can see the frustration, hardship, and pain that old age brings. Recently, at the age of 84, she had to give up driving, and this has tried her a great deal. She was used to a very active life, and now being tied to her home is so frustrating. She has had to battle with the feeling that she is bothering people. No matter how many times we tell her that we love her and that

we would do anything for her, she still feels guilty.

What makes it worse now is that it is difficult for her to wash and dress herself. Even though she has done this for others, it is a trial now to find herself in need of such assistance. This is teaching me that even when people can't do everything for themselves, they still deserve our respect.

Above all else, however, this experience has helped me to understand what it is like to grow older. Every single thing that Auntie Louie can no longer do makes me cry. Most of all, when I see her frustrated or in bad pain, I want to cry and cry. What I regret especially is that all her wisdom may not be enjoyed and appreciated by another child younger than I am.

Sometimes I wonder whether I do enough for her. Does she enjoy and love me as much as I do her? But when I go for lunch and give her a hug, all doubts disappear.

I feel honored to have such a friend. She has taught me so many fine qualities—most of all she has taught me love. I would not swap her friendship for that of a hundred friends my own age. Although I will soon leave school and won't be going to lunch at her flat anymore, I will never stop loving, visiting, and assisting my dear friend. She has taught me that life can be happy and fulfilling if you think of others before yourself.
—Contributed.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

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WATCHING THE WORLD

British Church Thefts

"Places of worship are no longer considered sacrosanct," reports *The Sunday Times* of London. Candlesticks, bishops' chairs, brass lecterns, medieval flagons, and ancient fonts are stolen from England's churches and sold as garden ornaments. This illegal trade is international, with artifacts stolen to order. One missing stained-glass window turned up in a Tokyo restaurant. The annual loss to the churches amounts to nearly \$7 million. Now sophisticated surveillance devices are being installed and security firms employed to guard ecclesiastical premises.

More Abortions in Canada

A record high of 104,403 abortions were performed in Canada in 1993, which is a 2.3-percent increase over the previous year. According to *The Toronto Star*, "that amounts to 26.9 abortions per 100 live births." Why the rise? While this has been attributed by some to the increasing number of private abortion clinics in the country, officials at Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada point to economic pressures as "the number one reason given for having abortions." Anna Desilets, executive director of Alliance for Life, a pro-life group, feels that "easy access to abortion leads people to use it as birth control, at taxpayers' expense."

Babies With AIDS

The number of Venezuelan babies with AIDS is increasing at an alarming rate, reports *El Universal* of Caracas. "Previously between two and six chil-

dren with AIDS were reported annually," explains one expert, "but now we have from two to six cases a week." The percentage of infected women, who in turn transmit the virus to their babies, increases on a daily basis. "It is important to remember," concludes the newspaper report, "that the statistics handled by the Ministry of Health only reflect the tip of the iceberg."

Violent Women Increase

"Females are more often involved in violence than in the past," claims University of Ottawa criminologist Tom Gabor. "The violence," reports the newspaper *The Globe and Mail*, "is increasingly committed by females who take the lead, rather than the secondary



role. These are not handmaidens to a male evil genius." Violent-crime charges against adult females have risen from 6,370 in 1983 to 14,706 in 1993. Men, however, still account for the majority of violent crimes. According to the *Globe*, "in 1993, 88.6 per cent of adults and 76.3 per cent of youths charged with violent crimes were male."

Priests and Marriage

The Australian newspaper *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported that a growing number of

influential Catholics argue that "an end to enforced celibacy would help stem the loss of priests." Celibacy is viewed as a chief deterrent preventing young men from entering the priesthood. Highlighting the problem, the *Herald* provided some revealing figures. New South Wales' main priest-training center had an average peak of 60 entrants a year from 1955 to 1965. But the corresponding figure between 1988 and 1994 was only nine entrants a year. The deputy director of another priest-training college in Sydney stated that, in his opinion, allowing clergy to marry might prove to be a "quick fix" solution but not a long-term remedy for the dire shortage of priests in Australia.

Patient Killers

The United Nations is trying to raise \$75 million to begin the removal of an estimated 110 million land mines in 64 countries, reports the *International Herald Tribune*. It costs only about \$3 to produce an antipersonnel (AP) mine no larger than a pack of cigarettes. But to locate and remove such a mine from the ground costs between \$300 and \$1,000. Removal of the mines is hampered by another problem. Said a United Nations spokesman: "Every year 2 million new AP mines are laid in addition to the 100 million-plus already out there." Experts agree that it will take decades to clear the world of what a Cambodian general described as "patient killers that never fail."

Bridge Suicides

More than one thousand persons have committed suicide

by jumping off San Francisco's famed Golden Gate Bridge since it was opened in 1937. "Killing oneself by jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge has a romance to it, an allure. It's so beautiful there. There's a particular fantasy involved," said suicide expert Richard Seiden. Few of the jumpers live to tell the tale, which is not surprising since they hit the water at 75 miles per hour and usually rupture internal organs. A study of 500 people who had been persuaded not to jump revealed that less than 5 percent ended up killing themselves later.

Traffic-Related Deaths

With 26 deaths for every 100,000 inhabitants, Argentina now leads the world in the number of traffic-related fatalities, according to the Argentina newspaper *Clarín*. During 1993 there were 8,116 such deaths in the country. The number rose to 9,120 in 1994. But during the first six months of 1995, there had already been more than 5,000 traffic-related deaths. In 1994 about 25 percent of the victims were pedestrians. Just in the province of Buenos Aires, traffic-accident deaths increased by 79 percent. A large percentage of the accidents were due to the failure of drivers to calculate well when passing other vehicles.

Children Smoking

A 1993/94 report shows that more children are smoking in Britain. The number of smokers 11 to 15 years of age has increased from 10 percent to 12 percent. This increase doubles what government health officials expected for 1994, notes the *Independent* newspaper. Although there has been a de-

cline in adult smoking, some 29 percent of British men and 27 percent of the women still smoke. "A more marked reduction in adult smoking may be required before teenagers' attitudes are significantly affected," the report concludes.

Oral Hygiene for the Aged

"Oral hygiene can be a matter of life and death for elderly people," says *Asahi Evening News*. Japanese scientists concluded that "elderly people can reduce the risk of pneumonia simply by brushing their teeth." In a study of 46 elderly people, one group of 21 had their teeth brushed



thoroughly by nurses daily after lunch. They were also given dental hygiene checkups two or three times each week. After three months it was found that the 21 had suffered ten fewer days of fever than the 25 who did not follow the routine. Better health was attributed to the absence of oral bacteria. A previous study concluded that "saliva or food particles accidentally inhaled into the lungs often cause pneumonia," said the newspaper.

Immortality for Sale?

"For \$35, Immortality Can Be Yours," claims the *Register-Guard* of Eugene, Oregon, U.S.A. Microbiologist James Bicknell offers to preserve your DNA so that, as the paper puts it, "in

some future century, a loving descendant could use the biological information in the DNA to make a copy of you." Dr. Bicknell is marketing a DNA kit that consists of two pieces of sterile gauze and a small container of liquid. "You rub the gauze on the inside of your cheeks," he says, "insert the gauze in the liquid, and mail it back to me." He then extracts the DNA from the cells that were rubbed off onto the gauze and deposits the DNA on some filter paper. The paper is then preserved in a tube in a small aluminum box with your name engraved on it for you to display as you wish. Says the *Guard*: "He figures people save ashes of the dead, locks of hair and fingernail clippings. A box of DNA is something to pass on to the grandkids."

Gene Therapy Under Fire

Expectations were high six years ago when gene therapy in humans first began. Scientists expected, in time, to cure inborn genetic diseases by injecting corrective genes into their patients. They also hoped to inject genetic material that would cause harmful cells, such as cancer cells, to self-destruct. Yet, after much enthusiastic research, the therapy is coming under attack. States the *International Herald Tribune*: "For all the frenzy, there has not been a single published report of a patient who was helped by gene therapy." Leading scientists fear that the research is being pushed too quickly by commercial and personal interests, rather than by concern for patients. One problem is that the cells treated by gene therapy may be attacked and destroyed by the body's immune system, which sees them as foreign.

FROM OUR READERS

Watching the World Your magazines get more and more interesting. They deal with all kinds of subjects—current events, sports, science, and so forth. "Watching the World" is extremely interesting. I think that if TV news were based on this feature, it would be a lot more interesting.

R. S., Italy

I really appreciate the topics covered in "Watching the World." One I could relate to completely was in the April 22, 1995, issue. The topic was "What Makes Teachers Popular?" The article said that students don't necessarily like the teachers that give less homework, but they like the teachers that are kind, caring, and fair. That is the truth! I've had so many experiences with teachers that favor the students that are popular in an effort to be popular. But in the long run, such teachers don't stay popular. Thanks again for this valuable information.

L. K., United States

False Predictions Thank you for the series "False Predictions or True Prophecy—How Can You Tell the Difference?" (June 22, 1995) Although I have studied the Bible daily for 42 years and have tried to absorb the information about the sign of the last days, I can say that the clear sum-up you gave of all the scriptures on this subject really helped me. You have made this subject easier to remember. It was wonderful spiritual food!

M. B., United States

Stealing I am 13 years old, and the problem I was having was stealing. I would steal money, or I would go to a store and steal bubble gum. I wanted to stop, but nothing helped until I received the June 22, 1995, *Awake!* and turned to the article "Young People Ask... Stealing—Why Not?" It really touched me. It

helped me pray to Jehovah and know that he would forgive me in a large way. I want to be in God's Kingdom, and I know that people who steal will not be there. Thanks for publishing this article.

J. A., Canada

I am 23 years old and am locked up for stealing. It all started because of peer pressure. They wanted me to do a prank on someone, and from there things escalated. The article is so true. I just hope young people heed the counsel before it's too late. That way, they can avoid ending up where I am—in prison.

M. S., United States

Life Story I just finished reading the article "How I Benefited From God's Care." (June 22, 1995) Reading about how Celeste Jones was mistreated by family members—and yet kept her faith and endured—made me promise that I would try hard never again to complain about my own health problems.

J. P., United States

As a person somewhat less disabled than Celeste Jones, I have an inkling of the courage it has taken for her to remain steadfast. Special thanks to all those who have quietly assisted Celeste and given her the care necessary for her ministry.

W. R., Canada

I was touched by the article. It has strengthened my faith and helped me to realize that the most effective way to help our neighbors is to use all possible means to preach to them.

P. H. P., Nigeria

I was greatly moved and encouraged by Celeste's experience. I am aging and experiencing all the aches and pains that accompany aging, but her experience gives me added strength to cope.

M. R., Jamaica



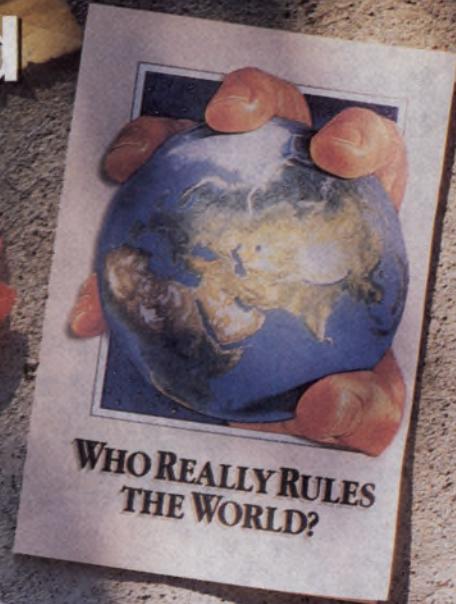
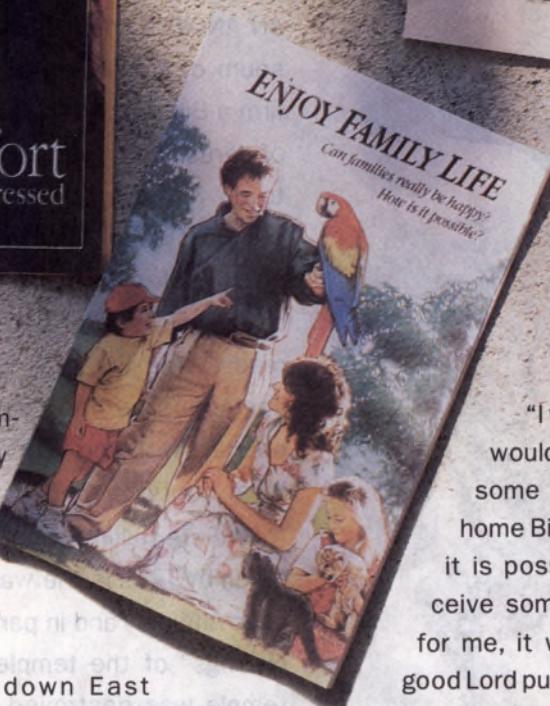
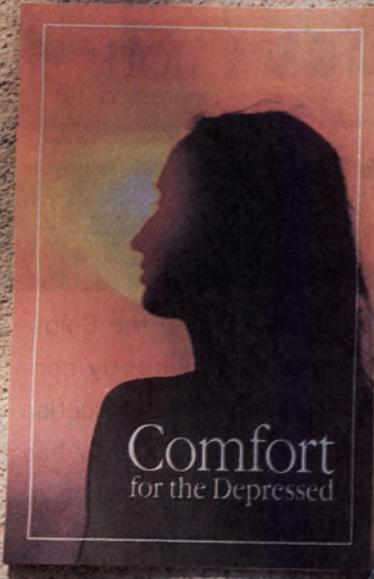
The Colosseum and Bible Prophecy

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN ITALY

AN ANCIENT inscription found in the Colosseum of Rome, Italy, may indirectly confirm a Bible prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem. The inscription evidently has to do with the building and inauguration of the Colosseum in 80 C.E. As reconstructed by Professor Géza Alföldy of the University of Heidelberg, Germany, the inscription reads: "The Emperor Titus Vespasian Caesar Augustus had the new amphitheater erected with the proceeds of the booty." What booty?

"We are talking about the immense booty taken by Titus in the war against the Jews," says Alföldy, "and in particular, the gold furnishings" of the temple in Jerusalem. This temple was destroyed in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy. (Matthew 24:1, 2; Luke 21: 5, 6) Alföldy concludes that the Colosseum —along with the famed Arch of Titus, which depicts the Roman victors loaded with the booty taken in the Jewish war—is a monument to this historic victory of the Romans.

They Attracted Her Attention



In May 1995 a woman in New York City wrote to the headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York. She explained:

"I was walking down East 124th St., between First and Second Avenues. I happened to look down, and the wind was blowing some tracts. I stooped and picked up three of your tracts, *Comfort for the Depressed*, *Enjoy Family Life*, and *Who Really Rules the World?* I read through them and enjoyed them very much."

"I would appreciate it if you would be so kind and send me some information on the free home Bible study course. Also, if it is possible, I would like to receive some of your literature. As for me, it was a blessing that the good Lord put the three tracts in front of my path for me to find. The Lord does work in mysterious ways."