

# Awake!

AUGUST 8, 2003



What's Happening to  
**THE WEATHER?**

# Awake!

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COVER: AP Photo/Bullit Marquez; Tahiti: Photo courtesy of Tahiti Tourisme; below: AFP PHOTO EPA-CTK/LIBOR SVAČEK

## What's Happening to THE WEATHER? 3-9

Strange weather patterns have wreaked havoc on places throughout the world. Does this mean that something is wrong with the weather?



# THE WEATHER Is Something Wrong?

**W**HEN two Englishmen meet, their first talk is of the weather." So quipped the famous writer Samuel Johnson. In recent years, though, the weather has become more than a conversation starter. It has become a matter of grave concern to people all over the world. Why? Because the weather—which was always unpredictable anyway—seems to be increasingly erratic.

For example, during the summer of 2002, Europe was struck with unusually heavy rainstorms. They led, in fact, to what was described as "the worst central European floods in over a century." Take note of the following news reports:



Flooding in Germany (above) and in the Czech Republic (left)

**AUSTRIA:** "The provinces of Salzburg, Carinthia, and Tirol were hit especially hard by severe rainstorms. Many streets were swamped in sludge, with piles of mud and debris up to 15 meters [50 feet] high. At Vienna's Südbahnhof station, a thunderstorm caused a train accident that injured several people."

**CZECH REPUBLIC:** "It has been a harrowing experience for Prague. But in the provinces the tragedy has been much worse. As many as 200,000 people have been moved from their homes. Whole towns have been submerged by the floods."

**FRANCE:** "Twenty-three dead, 9 missing, and thousands sorely affected . . . Three people were fatally struck by lightning during Monday's storms. . . . A fireman died after rescuing a couple in distress; they had been carried away in their car by the waters."

**GERMANY:** "Never before in the history of the Federal Republic have towns and villages been evacuated to such an extent as they have been now during this 'flood of the century.' Residents have fled their hometowns by the thousands. Most have done so as a precautionary measure. Some were rescued from the floods at the last minute by boat or helicopter."

**ROMANIA:** "About a dozen people have lost their lives since mid-July because of the storms."

**RUSSIA:** "At least 58 people died on the shores of the Black Sea . . . About 30 cars and buses remain on the seabed, with no search of them possible after new storm warnings were issued."

### **Not Confined to Europe**

In August 2002 the German daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported: "New spells of heavy showers and storms in Asia, Europe, and South America have wreaked havoc. On Wednesday at least 50 died in a landslide in Nepal. A typhoon killed eight people in southern China and brought heavy rainfall to central China. The China floods caused the Mekong River to reach its highest water level in 30 years, submerging upwards of 100 houses in northeast Thailand. . . . In Argentina at least five people drowned after heavy rains. . . . Over a thousand people have perished because of the summer storms in China."

While water was plaguing many parts of the world, the United States was experiencing a severe drought. It was reported: "Concerns are nationwide regarding low and dry wells, widespread record low stream flows, and a more than double the normal amount of wildfires for the season. With crop and pasture losses, drinking water supply shortages, wildfires and dust storms, experts predict that the adverse economic impact of the drought of 2002 will be in the billions of dollars."

Parts of northern Africa have been experiencing a devastating drought since the 1960's. According to reports, "rainfall was twenty to forty-nine per cent lower than in the first half of the 20th century, causing widespread famine and death."

The El Niño weather pattern—triggered by a warming of the waters of the eastern Pa-

cific—periodically causes flooding and other weather disruptions in North and South America.\* The CNN news organization reports that the 1983/84 El Niño was "responsible for more than 1,000 deaths, causing weather-related disasters on nearly every continent and totaling \$10 billion in damages to property and livestock." This phenomenon has returned with regularity (about every four years) since it was first identified in the 19th century. But some experts believe that "El Niño has stepped up its schedule" and that it will "appear more often" in the future.

An article published by the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration gives this reassurance: "Most of that 'weird' weather we've been experiencing—that unusually warm fall or that particularly wet winter—is due to normal, regional changes in the weather." Nevertheless, there are signs that a serious problem may exist. The environmental-activist organization Greenpeace predicts: "Dangerous weather patterns including more powerful hurricanes and heavy rains will continue to wreak havoc across the planet. More severe droughts and floods will literally change the face of the Earth, leading to the loss of coastal lands and the destruction of forests." Is there any substance to such claims? If so, what is the cause of these "dangerous weather patterns"?

\* See the article "What Is El Niño?" in the March 22, 2000, issue of *Awake!*

## **Awake!®**

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

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# What's Happening to THE WEATHER?

**"The catastrophic floods and severe storms we are now experiencing will become more frequent."**

—THOMAS LOSTER, A WEATHER RISKS SPECIALIST.

**I**S SOMETHING really wrong with the weather? Many fear that there is. Meteorologist Dr. Peter Werner from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research says: "When we observe global weather—the extremes in precipitation, floods, droughts, storms—and note its development, we can rightly say that these extremes have quadrupled over the last 50 years."

Many feel that the unusual weather patterns are evidence of global warming—the so-called greenhouse effect run amok. Explains the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: "The greenhouse effect is the rise in temperature that the Earth experiences because certain gases in the atmosphere (water vapor, carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and methane, for example) trap energy from the sun. Without these gases, heat would escape back into space and Earth's average temperature would be about 60°F colder."

Many charge, however, that man has unwittingly tampered with this natural process.

Says an article in *Earth Observatory*, an on-line publication of the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration: "For decades human factories and cars have spewed billions of tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere . . . Many scientists fear that the increased concentrations of greenhouse gases have prevented additional thermal radiation from leaving the Earth. In essence, these gases are trapping excess heat in the Earth's atmosphere in much the same way that a windshield traps solar energy that enters a car."

Skeptics point out that only a small percentage of greenhouse gas emissions are man-made. However, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a research group that is sponsored by both the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme, reports: "There is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities."

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\*Audio cassettes also available.

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## "Is Global Warming Harmful to Health?"

An article in *Scientific American* raised this intriguing question. It predicted that global warming "will expand the incidence and distribution of many serious medical disorders." For example, in some places "the number of deaths related to heat waves is projected to double by 2020."

Less obvious is the role global warming could play in infectious disease. "Mosquito-borne disorders are projected to become increasingly prevalent," since mosquitoes "proliferate faster and bite more as the air becomes warmer. . . . As whole areas heat up, then, mosquitoes could expand into former-

ly forbidden territories, bringing illness with them."

Finally, there are the effects of flood and drought—both of which can result in polluted water supplies. Clearly, the threat of global warming must be taken seriously.

Climatologist Pieter Tans of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration says: "If I had to put a figure on it, I would say that it is 60 percent our fault . . . The remaining 40 percent is due to natural causes."

### Possible Consequences of Global Warming

What, then, has been the apparent result of the buildup of man-made greenhouse gases? Most scientists now agree that the earth has indeed heated up. Just how dramatic has this temperature rise been? The 2001 IPCC report says: "Global surface temperatures have increased between 0.4 and 0.8°C since the late 19th century." Many researchers believe that this small rise could account for the dramatic changes in our weather.

Admittedly, the earth's weather system is astonishingly complex, and scientists cannot state with certainty what—if any—the effects of global warming are. However, many believe that as a result of global warming, there has been increased rainfall in the Northern Hemisphere, drought in Asia and Africa, and escalating El Niño events in the Pacific.

### Needed—A Global Solution

Since many view this problem as man-made, cannot man solve the problem? A number of communities have already enacted laws to limit pollution emissions from cars and factories. However, such efforts—commendable as they are—have had little or no impact. Pollution is a *global* problem, so the solution

would have to be global! In 1992 the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro was convened. Ten years later, in Johannesburg, South Africa, the World Summit on Sustainable Development was held. Some 40,000 delegates attended this meeting in 2002, including about 100 national leaders.

Such conferences have done much to bring about a general consensus among scientists. The German newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel* explains: "Whereas most scientists back then [in 1992] had their doubts about the greenhouse effect, it goes practically unquestioned today." Even so, Germany's environment minister, Jürgen Trittin, reminds us that the real solution to the problem has still not been found. "Johannesburg must therefore be not only a summit of words," he stressed, "but also a summit of action."

### Can Environmental Damage Be Halted?

Global warming is just one of many environmental challenges facing mankind. Taking effective action may be far easier said than done. "Now that we have finally faced up to the terrible damage we have inflicted on our environment," writes British ethologist Jane Goodall, "our ingenuity is working overtime to find technological solutions." But she cautions: "Technology alone is not enough. We must engage with our hearts also."

Consider again the problem of global warming. Antipollution measures are costly; often,

poorer nations simply cannot afford them. Some experts thus fear that energy restrictions will send industries fleeing to poorer lands where they can operate more profitably. Even the best-intentioned leaders, therefore, find themselves caught in a bind. If they protect their nations' economic interests, the environment suffers. If they push for environmental protection, they endanger the economy.

Severn Cullis-Suzuki, of the World Summit advisory panel, therefore argues that change must come through individual action, saying: "Real environmental change depends on us. We can't wait for our leaders. We have to focus on what our own responsibilities are and how we can make the change happen."

It is only reasonable to expect people to behave with respect for the environment. But getting people to make needed changes in their life-styles is not so easy. To illustrate: Most people agree that automobiles contribute to global warming. Hence, an individual may want to cut back on driving or do without an automobile completely. But doing so may not be so easy. As Wolfgang Sachs from the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment, and Energy recently pointed out, "all the places that play a role in daily life (workplace, kindergarten, school, or shopping center) lie so far apart that you cannot manage without a car.... Whether I personally want a

*The greenhouse effect causes heat to build up in the atmosphere instead of escaping into space*



NASA photo

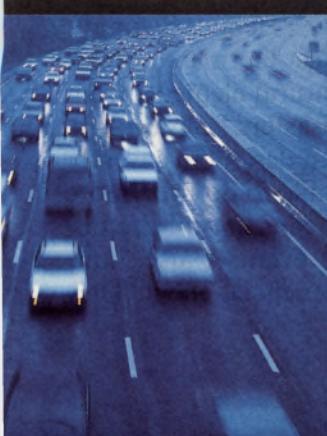
car or not has nothing to do with it. Most folks simply have no choice."

Some scientists, such as Professor Robert Dickinson of the Georgia Institute of Technology's School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, fear that it might already be too late to spare earth from the consequences of global warming. Dickinson believes that even if pollution ceased today, the effects of past abuses to the atmosphere would still last for at least another 100 years!

Since neither governments nor individuals can solve the problems of the environment, who can? From ancient times, people have looked to the heavens for help in controlling the weather. As naive as such efforts were, they do reveal a basic truth: Mankind needs divine help to solve these problems.

## **"There is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities"**

*Man has released billions of tons of pollutants into the air, accelerating the greenhouse effect*





# NO MORE WEATHER DISASTERS!

**M**ODERN MAN has lost respect for the earth in his greed for comfort, speed and commercial gain." So reads the jacket for the book *5000 Days to Save the Planet*. We are living with the results of man's greed. And whether theories about global warming prove true or not, one thing is sure—man is damaging our beautiful planet. Our only hope is the fulfillment of the Bible's promise that God will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth."—Revelation 11:18.

God will replace the corrupt system of human rulership with an entirely new system. Before brushing off that idea as religious nonsense, consider this: Who would know more about the needs of earth's environment than its Creator? Does he not have a vested interest in what happens to this planet? The Bible makes it clear that he does, saying at Isaiah 45:18 that Jehovah is "the true God, the Former of the earth and the Maker of it, He the One who firmly established it, who did not create it simply for nothing, who formed it even to be inhabited." To fulfill that purpose, God can and will intervene.

God will do this by bringing in a new government, or kingdom, to manage the earth. When Christians pray the so-called Lord's Prayer and say, "Let your kingdom come," they are asking for this government to take over. (Matthew 6:9, 10) God's Kingdom, or government, will demonstrate an understanding of earth's intricate natural cycles. It will thus be able to restore areas of the earth that have been ruined by pollution and environmental abuse. Isaiah 35:1, 6 says: "The desert plain will... blossom as the saffron.... For in the wilderness waters will have burst out, and torrents in the desert plain."

## Until God Intervenes

After the floods of 2002, Helmut Schmidt, former chancellor of West Germany, wrote: "No one can prevent natural elements from breaching the dams. Disasters keep on happening." True. And when destructive weather strikes, humans are able to do little more than cope as best they can. For all the distress such catastrophic events cause, however, they can have a beneficial effect. They



**In God's new world, we will not have to fear dangerous weather conditions**

can move people to demonstrate love and concern for their neighbors. (Mark 12:31) The European floods, for example, seemed to have this effect upon some. One newspaper wrote: "Eager volunteers have come from all over Germany to tackle the job [of relief]. It is the largest volunteer operation since World War II."

Included among these volunteers were many of Jehovah's Witnesses. The following article discusses the relief work carried out by Witnesses in four different lands that were hit by violent storms. The conduct of these Christians is a foregleam of life under the rule of God's incoming government, in which love and brotherly concern—not avarice and selfishness—will prevail.—Isaiah 11:9.\*

Christians can take comfort in the promise God made to the ancient Israelites: "I also shall certainly give rain for your land at its appointed time, autumn rain and spring rain." (Deuteronomy 11:14) That promise will also prove true for those privileged to live in God's new world—a world that will be free of weather-related disasters.

\* If you would like to learn more about the Bible's promise of a Kingdom government, please contact Jehovah's Witnesses locally or write to the publishers of this magazine.

## Perfect Weather Control

In God's new world, people will not have to fear having their home or crops wiped out by freakish storms. (2 Peter 3:13) The Bible makes it clear that God and his Son, Jesus Christ, are fully capable of controlling the weather. Consider the following texts.

- Genesis 7:4: "*In just seven days more I am making it rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights.*"
- Exodus 14:21: "*Jehovah began making the sea go back by a strong east wind all night long and converting the sea basin into dry ground, and the waters were being split apart.*"
- 1 Samuel 12:18: "*Samuel called to Jehovah, and Jehovah proceeded to give thunders and rain on that day, so that all the people were greatly in fear of Jehovah and of Samuel.*"
- Jonah 1:4: "*Jehovah himself hurled forth a great wind at the sea, and there came to be a great tempest on the sea; and as for the ship, it was about to be wrecked.*"
- Mark 4:39: "*With that he [Jesus, empowered by God] roused himself and rebuked the wind and said to the sea: 'Hush! Be quiet!' And the wind abated, and a great calm set in.*"





**GERMANY** A house  
devastated by the storm

# SOMETHING NO STORM COULD WASH AWAY

BY AWAKE! WRITERS IN  
GERMANY,  
AUSTRIA,  
MEXICO,  
AND KOREA

DURING the year 2002, catastrophic weather events took place in many lands. Europe was hit by a series of disastrous floods. In other parts of the globe, Mexico was struck by a devastating hurricane, and Korea by a typhoon. Tragic as these events were, they served to strengthen the bonds of love that exist among true Christians.

Following the 2002 floods in Europe, former chancellor of West Germany Helmut Schmidt was asked what sort of help victims needed. He replied: "People need food and shelter, they need some money in their pockets, and they need spiritual care." Jehovah's Witnesses had a significant role in providing both physical and spiritual relief to storm victims. Consider the relief work they did in Germany, Austria, Mexico, and Korea.

## Willing Hands in Germany

When the threat of the impending flood disaster became known, many of Jehovah's Wit-

nesses in Germany joined the efforts of the general public to stave off the floodwaters. Says 19-year-old Kathleen, who lives in Dresden: "I could not just sit and do nothing. Once I heard that some people stood at risk of losing everything, I just had to go and help."

German Witnesses began organizing themselves to give swift and effective aid. As Christians, they felt a special obligation to help their spiritual brothers and sisters. But they also showed love for their neighbors. (Mark 12:31) More than 2,000 volunteers were thus grouped into crews of between 8 and 12 people, each group being assigned a specific task in the disaster area. At the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Selters, Germany, 13 telephone lines were reserved to take thousands of calls from people inquiring about the disaster and offering help.

Ronnie and Dina are full-time ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses, who spend their time helping friends and neighbors learn Bible



**GERMANY** Over 2,000 volunteers gave swift relief

truths. When they learned of the approaching floodwaters, they first went to the city center of Dresden to assist in the frantic efforts being made to save its historic buildings. Once the flood subsided, Ronnie and Dina joined other Witnesses in cleaning the Kingdom Hall in Freital, which had been flooded with filthy water. The group then began helping their neighbors. The owner of a restaurant opposite the hall heaved a sigh of relief when the Witnesses cleared his cellar and ground floor of rubble and sludge.

Siegfried and Hannelore live in Colmnitz, a village some 25 miles southwest of Dresden. The stream that normally flows through the village swelled to a torrent, inundating their

house and garden. Once the water subsided, neighbors were astonished to see about 30 Witnesses, strangers to the area, arrive to help clean Siegfried and Hannelore's home. Next, the group began cleaning up neighboring gardens. Several villagers asked what prompted them to travel 60 miles to help people they had never met. The Witnesses were thus able to offer spiritual encouragement to the victims in Colmnitz.

Suburbs of the town of Wittenberg were also hit by the floods. A Witness couple named Frank and Elfriede worked alongside their neighbors for several days before the flood, filling and stacking sandbags to reinforce the banks of the river. Once the flood subsided,



**AUSTRIA** Repairing their  
Kingdom Hall in Ottensheim

**Left:** A team of volunteers  
return from Au, where they  
helped local Witnesses and  
their neighbors

Frank and Elfriede visited victims, taking them food and consolation. Frank recalls: "One lady we called on could not believe that we, as strangers, brought her a meal without wanting any payment. She told us that no one from her church had called on her. And the organization that had brought her meals had charged her each time. People were amazed to see Jehovah's Witnesses with a hot meal in their hands instead of Bible literature."

**Austria—Quick Response to Disaster**

Floodwaters also wreaked havoc in neighboring Austria. Three committees were set up to oversee relief measures. Priority was given to repairing three Kingdom Halls that were severely damaged. Also, among the Witnesses nearly 100 families were affected by the floods, and 50 homes were flooded. Some lost everything but the clothing on their backs. The branch office in Austria informed local congregations of the situation, and a relief fund

was set up. By September more than \$34,000 had been contributed.

One mother wrote: "My eight-year-old son is very thrifty and had saved up about \$14. However, when he heard that some of our brothers had lost all their belongings, he was willing to contribute all of his savings to the disaster fund."

Under the direction of Regional Building Committees (RBC), which normally supervise the construction of Kingdom Halls of Jehovah's Witnesses, teams were organized to help restore homes that had been damaged by the floods. "Newspapers should report on what you people are accomplishing here," exclaimed one observer. Some even changed their perception of Jehovah's Witnesses. "Up until now," says one Witness parent, "my children, who are not Witnesses, would always turn a cold shoulder to me when I tried to share my faith with them. But now they are listening for the first time!"

Efforts were also made to help many who were not Witnesses. For example, one woman was deeply moved when one Witness came to

her house at 7:30 a.m. and asked if she needed help. The woman had to be evacuated, as the waters were already beginning to enter her home. When she returned, however, she found a note from the Witnesses on her garden gate. It read: "If you need help, let us know immediately." Witnesses helped her to clear her house and property of sludge and debris.

A team of 100 Witnesses went to the township of Au to help local Witnesses and their neighbors. Team leaders called from door to door asking the residents if they needed help. People were astonished to see that Witnesses came equipped with water-removal and cleaning equipment, such as pumps, brooms, and shovels. Work that normally would have taken homeowners a week to complete was finished within a matter of hours. People watched with tears in their eyes.

Approximately 400 local Witnesses were involved in the relief effort—often working around the clock. For onlookers, it was a dramatic testimony to the power of true Christianity.

### **Isidore Strikes Mexico**

Isidore was born as a tropical storm north of Venezuela. On September 22, 2002, Isidore hit Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula as a category 3 hurricane. With winds of 120 miles per hour and heavy rains, it caused some of the

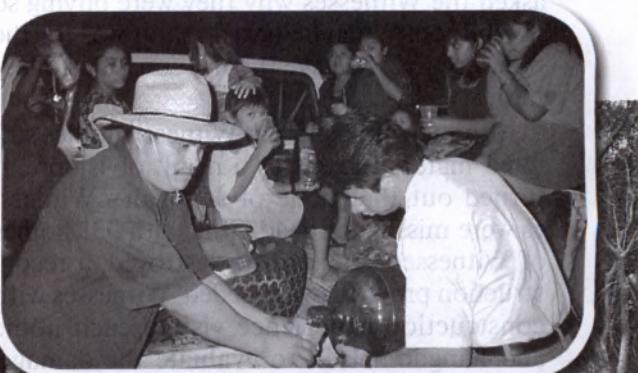
**MEXICO** Right: A relief committee provides drinking water for storm survivors

Below: Building a replacement house

most severe damage in the history of the Mexican states of Yucatán and Campeche as well as some damage in the state of Quintana Roo. In Yucatán alone, some 95,000 homes were seriously damaged, affecting about 500,000 people.

So effective a role did Jehovah's Witnesses play in relief efforts in Yucatán that a newspaper headline in northern Mexico declared: "Jehovah's Witnesses Come to the Rescue." A relief committee was formed in advance of the storm's arrival. Emergency arrangements were made to house several hundred local Witnesses. Nearby congregations provided emergency funds. Clothing, medicine, and over 22 tons of food were dispensed to storm survivors, including many non-Witnesses. Local elders were assigned to visit and encourage victims of Isidore.

After the storm hit, local relief committees were formed to help seek out missing Witnesses. Several had been isolated in the bush and other places for up to three days without food



or drinking water. In some areas the water had risen so high that it covered light poles! Thus, motorboats were obtained and used in searching for victims, feeding them, and transporting them to safer areas.

Local authorities lent boats and other equipment to the Witnesses, who offered to give aid in areas where few people dared to go. At first, an army official objected to letting the Witnesses make such a dangerous search. However, when he saw their intrepid spirit, he said: "I am convinced that you would go in with helicopters, if necessary, to rescue your people. Our vehicles are available to take your people wherever you wish."

One store owner was curious as to why some Witnesses were buying bottled water in such large quantities. They explained that it was for their spiritual brothers and others who needed it. The man decided to give them all the bottled water he had—free of charge. The following day he donated more water—a considerable amount. At another store, a customer asked the Witnesses why they were buying so much food. When he heard that it was for the flood victims, he gave them a donation to buy more.

Although almost 3,500 Witness families suffered material losses as a result of Isidore, it turned out that none of Jehovah's Witnesses were missing or dead. Still, with 331 homes of Witnesses damaged or destroyed, a reconstruction program was needed. Witnesses with construction experience visited each home and Kingdom Hall to evaluate the damage. To date, some 258 homes have been repaired and 172 replacement houses built. Also, the 19 damaged Kingdom Halls are in the process of being rebuilt.

An elder of a congregation in the state of Yucatán was moved to say: "I have read in our publications about the relief work carried out in other countries. However, living it is something else. My faith as well as that of many brothers has been strengthened by seeing with what swiftness and concern Jehovah's orga-

nization and our dear brothers have come to our aid."

One woman said: "I would have liked it if my church had given help as you Witnesses have done." And another woman, who was rescued by the Witnesses, said: "Thanks to Jehovah's Witnesses, we are not dead. They showed their love, risking their lives to rescue us when our house was under water."

#### A Typhoon Strikes Korea

On August 31 and September 1, 2002, Typhoon Rusa cut a swath across Korea. Said Song-pil Cho, a congregation elder: "It felt like standing under a shower. And it just kept on raining and raining and raining." Over 34 inches of rain came down in less than 24 hours—the heaviest one-day precipitation on record there.

According to *The Korea Herald*, across the nation 28,100 houses and 210,000 acres of farmland were submerged. Some 70,000 people were forced to evacuate. The typhoon killed 301,000 head of livestock, sank 126 ships, and downed hundreds of electric power poles. More than 180 people were reported dead or missing. Among them were two of Jehovah's Witnesses.

As in Europe and Mexico, Jehovah's Witnesses responded quickly. Contributions from Witnesses poured in from all over the country. These included clothes, blankets, and other necessities. Still, some congregation members lived in areas that had been cut off and isolated. Roads had been destroyed, and bridges wiped out. There was no electricity or phone service. So teams were organized to hike in and provide needed assistance. Song-pil Cho, who worked with one of the relief teams, describes one area they assisted: "Seven bridges and large sections of the road had been washed out. When we finally reached the town, damaged and destroyed houses were everywhere. There was a terrible odor, and dead animals were all around. But how we rejoiced when we met up with our six Christian brothers and



KOREA From left to right:  
An inundated city section;  
high-pressure water cleaning;  
laundering in a nearby stream

sisters! They had lost their material possessions, but all of them were alive and well."

Actually, Jehovah's Witnesses were well prepared for this disaster. Since flooding is not uncommon during the monsoon season, their RBC in the Seoul area had already begun organizing for future disaster relief. Starting in 1997, it sponsored yearly training sessions so that volunteers would be ready to respond if an emergency arose.

On September 2, RBC relief workers arrived at the east coast city of Kangnung and set up headquarters at the local Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses. The first priority? Getting clean water to survivors. When heavy flooding takes place, water lines are usually damaged; floodwater is highly contaminated. The RBC arranged for large tank trucks full of water to be sent into afflicted areas.

After floodwaters recede, everything is coated with a foul-smelling thick mud. Nevertheless, an effective cleaning method has been developed. Since nearly all homes in the area are made of cement, they can be cleaned by stripping the rooms of wallpaper and linoleum and hosing them down with high-pressure water.

Flooding renders most electrical appliances useless. However, if within a few days, appliances such as refrigerators and boilers are disassembled by qualified electricians and then

thoroughly cleaned, dried, and reassembled, in most cases they will continue to function. The RBC is organized to do such work. The boilers that do not need replacement are used to dry out the houses. That process takes between two and three weeks.

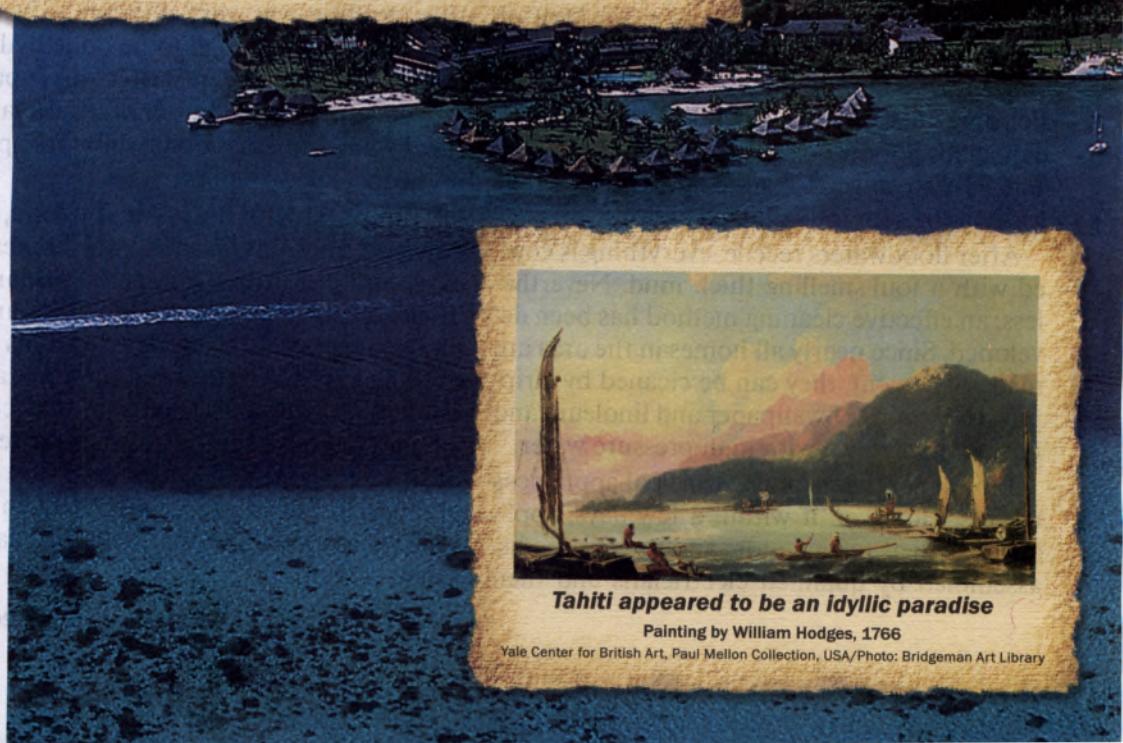
Flood-damaged clothes and blankets must also be thoroughly washed within a few days if they are to remain usable. Volunteers from a local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses helped bag up the soiled possessions of their Christian brothers. The sludge permeating this clothing was very difficult to wash out—and the washing had to be done by hand in a very, very cold stream. After a newspaper reporter learned of this labor of love, a large picture of the Witnesses doing the work appeared in the local newspaper.

The disastrous floods in Europe, North America, and Asia washed away homes, property, and countless innocent human lives. Tragic though they are, such events are common during these "last days" of this system of things, which are marked by "critical times hard to deal with." (2 Timothy 3:1) Such catastrophes may also serve as a dramatic reminder of this fact: True Christians have love for one another and for their neighbors. Such unselfish love is something that no storm can wash away.

# Tahiti

## and the Search for Paradise

*For days the ship had been tossed by the Pacific. In the sweltering sun, the seamen were tirelessly repeating the same monotonous routine and were no doubt sick of the sour wine, the fetid water, and the rotten food. Suddenly, a cry cut the air: "Land! Land three quarters to port bow!" Far off in the distance, the shadowy peak of an island could be seen. A few hours later, no doubt remained —an island was in sight.*



*Tahiti appeared to be an idyllic paradise*

*Painting by William Hodges, 1766*

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, USA/Photo: Bridgeman Art Library

Since its sighting by Europeans, Tahiti has been synonymous with the word "paradise." The 18th-century French explorer Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, who led the expedition described at the outset, later wrote: "I thought I was transported into the garden of Eden." Two centuries later Tahiti continues to draw visitors. Like their predecessors, many come in search of paradise.

Why, though, is man so fascinated by the dream of paradise? And how did Tahiti come to be viewed as the embodiment of that dream? In answer, let us go back to the beginning of man's existence.

### Paradise Lost

It is with good reason that the word "paradise" resonates within us. Quite simply, we were made to live in Paradise! According to the Bible, our first parents were blessed by God with a home described as a "paradise"—a beautiful park, or garden. (Genesis 2:8, footnote) This park evidently occupied a portion of the region called Eden, which means "Pleasure." Although modern scholars tend to view Eden as a myth, the Bible presents it as a historical reality, giving geographic clues as to its original location. (Genesis 2:10-14) Two geographic markers—the rivers Pishon and Gihon—can no longer be identified. So the garden's exact location remains a mystery.

Photo courtesy of Tahiti Tourism



**Friendly Tahitians  
welcomed Bougainville  
with hospitality**

By permission of the National Library  
of Australia NK 5066



**Jehovah's Witnesses  
delight in telling their  
neighbors about the  
Paradise that is to come**

Our first parents rebelled against God and lost Paradise for all of us. (Genesis 3:1-23) Nevertheless, man has been unable to erase the desire for paradise from his heart. Echoes of the Bible account have even appeared in the mythology of many lands. The Greeks, for example, developed the myth of a Golden Age—an ideal time when humankind lived an easy, peaceful life.

Many have tried to find the long-lost Eden. Some sought Eden in Ethiopia—unsuccessfully, of course. Legend even held that a sixth-century cleric named Brendan found paradise on an island in the southwest Atlantic. Other legends claimed that paradise lay hidden on a high mountain. Frustrated with the contradictions of these legends, the famous explorer Christopher Columbus lamented: "I have not found neither have I ever read a text from the Latin or the Greek that for a certainty stated in which corner of the world the earthly paradise can be found." Eventually, he became convinced that it was located somewhere south of the equator.

After his third trip to the New World, Columbus said: "It seems that this land is the earthly paradise, for it complies with the description of the saints and the scholarly theologians that I have mentioned." The New World, however, did not prove to be the paradise Columbus imagined.

### **Future Utopias**

Nevertheless, some scholars were undeterred. Instead of promoting a return to Eden, they pioneered the concept of a future, man-made paradise. Writers began spinning tales of "perfect" societies—a welcome contrast to the corrupt societies in which they lived. None of these fanciful schemes, however, were truly Edenlike. Rather than imagining a life of freedom in a boundless park, these visionaries dreamed of a highly organized urban paradise. In the 16th century, for example, British statesman Sir Thomas More related an imaginary trip to a land he called Utopia. This word means "nowhere."

Subsequent writers built on More's ideas by adding a few of their own. "Utopias" were imagined by dozens of European writers during the following centuries. Again, these imaginary "ideal" societies were anything but gardens of pleasure. The Utopias tried to organize happiness by enforcing rigid order. But in doing so, they stifled originality and human freedom. Nevertheless, as history professor Henri Baudet observed, dreams of Utopian societies revealed a "never-slackening desire for a better life . . . and a more righteous society."

### **Tahiti—Birth of a Legend**

In the 18th century, the unexplored South Seas offered explorers one last chance to find an undiscovered paradise. But when Bougainville set sail toward the Pacific in December 1766, his motives were primarily to explore, conquer new colonies, and open new markets.

After months of seafaring, Bougainville came upon Tahiti. He had been unable to drop anchor at the other islands that he had seen because of their coral reefs. Tahiti offered safe harbor. There the worn-out crew found a welcoming people and abundant supplies. For those seamen, reality seemed to surpass fiction. Not only was Tahiti a tropical paradise but it also had many features that resembled the fictional Utopias.

For one thing, Tahiti was an island community, just like the Utopian lands portrayed in fiction. Furthermore, it truly had a paradisalike appearance. Hundreds of fast-flowing rivers and waterfalls punctuated luxuriant,

## **In Our Next Issue**

- **Bullying—What Can You Do About It?**
- **How Can I Stop Trying to Be Perfect?**
- **St. Petersburg—Russia's "Window on Europe"**



breathtaking landscapes. Lush tropical vegetation grew seemingly without human toil. Tahiti's idyllic beauty was enhanced by its healthful climate and lack of typical tropical dangers. There were no snakes, dangerous insects, or active volcanoes on this island.

Then, there were the Tahitians themselves—tall, handsome, and healthy. The toothless seamen, their gums swollen from scurvy, were impressed by the Tahitians' white teeth. The inhabitants also had a cheerful disposition; they quickly won over the sailors with their hospitality. It also appeared, at least at first glance, that all Tahitians were equal—one of the basics of Utopian literature. Poverty was unknown. Tahitians lived without sexual restrictions. Indeed, the sailors indulged in immoral relations with some of the comely Tahitian women.

Yes, to Bougainville and his crew, Tahiti seemed to be Eden regained. Bougainville thus left the island, eager to tell the world about the paradise he had found. When he completed his three-year trip around the world, he published an account of his adventures. A best-seller, the book gave birth to the myth that the exotic island was perfect in every way. Paradise had been lost, but it seemed that Tahiti was paradise *now!*

### The Dangers of a Myth

Myths, however, often clash with reality. For one thing, Tahitians suffered illnesses and died the same as everyone else. Far from all being equal, they lived in a strict, and sometimes despotic, social hierarchy. They waged tribal wars and offered human sacrifices. Like people in general, not every Tahitian was strikingly beautiful or handsome. And historian K. R. Howe

believes that the women Bougainville's men had encountered were likely "ordered to prostitute themselves" so as to put the invaders at ease.

Still, the myth of "paradise found" grew. Writers and artists, such as the French painter Paul Gauguin, flocked there. Gauguin's colorful portrayal of life in Tahiti helped increase the island's popularity. With what consequences for Tahiti? The myth reduced the island and its inhabitants to stereotypes. Upon their return home, visitors to the island would routinely be asked, "Tell us about your adventures with the Tahitian girls."

### Paradise—A Lost Hope?

In recent years Tahiti has faced other challenges. Cyclones buffeted the island in the early 1980's, damaging its coral reefs. But the greatest threats have come from man himself. Construction projects have resulted in soil erosion and pollution. Says Donna Leong, an expert on waste management: "The tourist industry generates huge amounts of waste products. . . . If pollution of their environment is not taken care of, Tahiti and the other islands will not be the land of lush flora and fauna and crystal blue lagoons."

Nevertheless, the hope of a restored paradise is far from dead. Why, Jesus Christ himself promised a repentant wrongdoer: "You will be with me in Paradise"! (Luke 23:43) Jesus was not referring to some rigid Utopia, as portrayed in fiction, but to a global paradise, overseen by a heavenly government.\* The more than 1,700 Witnesses of Jehovah in Tahiti put their hope in this future Paradise. They volunteer their time to share that hope with their neighbors. For while beautiful Tahiti has many paradisaic features, it pales in comparison with the global Paradise God will soon usher in. The search for this Paradise is not in vain.

\* For further information on God's promises of Paradise, see the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

# Crossword Puzzle

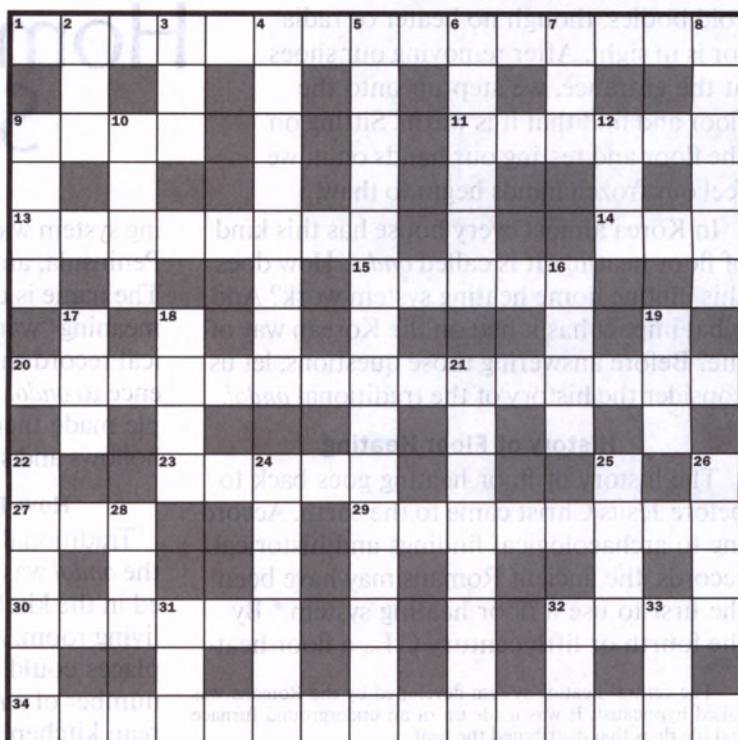
## Clues Across

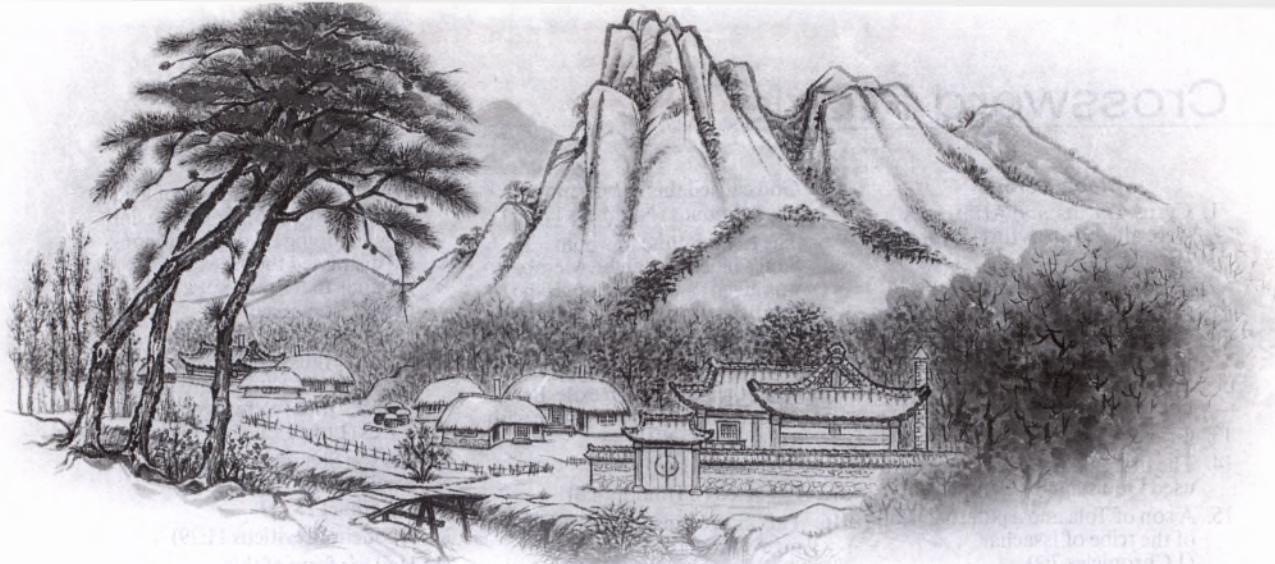
1. Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes were all known as this [4 words] (Ezra 4:5-7)
9. Remain (1 Corinthians 16:13)
11. James compared the tongue to this, illustrating the tremendous power the tongue has in controlling the direction of one's whole body (James 3:3, 4)
13. Grand (Psalm 8:1)
14. The first person reported to have used God's name (Genesis 4:1)
15. A son of Tola and a paternal head of the tribe of Issachar (1 Chronicles 7:2)
20. It contains the names of those who have proved themselves to be faithful and loyal to Jehovah [4 words] (Revelation 20:12)
23. A church doctrine
27. The scales of Leviathan are said to fit so closely together that not even this "can come in between them" (Job 41:16)
29. What Queen Vashti kept doing in regard to King Ahasuerus' request to appear before him (Esther 1:12)
30. Father-in-law of Aaron's son Eleazar and grandfather of Phinehas (Exodus 6:25)
32. Paul mentioned that when an heir is in this stage of development, he does not differ from a slave in his household (Galatians 4:1)
34. Joshua and Caleb were among the 12 men who did this in Canaan [4 words] (Numbers 14:6)

## Clues Down

2. A watchman's booth (Isaiah 1:8)
3. Figuratively, by means of this, "an angel" locks Satan in the abyss for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1-3)
4. A creature that would inhabit Edom's ruins following its desolation (Isaiah 34:14)
5. Elijah used his in anointing Elisha as his successor [2 words] (1 Kings 19:16, 19)
6. A beloved Christian in Rome whom Paul commends for her "many labors in the Lord" (Romans 16:12)

7. God caused this to bud and produce almonds (Numbers 17:1-11)
8. The Meholathite to whom Saul's oldest daughter, Merab, was given as wife, although she had been promised to David (1 Samuel 18:19)
9. Unchanging (Hebrews 13:8)
10. After the Babylonian exile, Benjaminites from this city returned with Zerubbabel's caravan (Nehemiah 11:31)
12. Expected (2 Timothy 4:6)
16. This kind of answer "turns away rage" (Proverbs 15:1)
17. A letter of the Greek alphabet
18. Employed (Exodus 1:14)
19. Separated from (Acts 12:7)
21. What God decreed that a man and his wife should be [2 words] (Matthew 19:4-6)
22. A Christian in Troas, with whom Paul had left his cloak (2 Timothy 4:13)
24. When Jews accused Paul of leading men into another persuasion in worshiping God, this proconsul dismissed the case on the grounds that it was not a violation of Roman law (Acts 18:12-16)
25. In Jesus' illustration of the noble who left home "to secure kingly power," these were given to his slaves (Luke 19:12-24)
26. His son Shammah was one of David's mighty men (2 Samuel 23:11)
28. A rodent (Leviticus 11:29)
31. Hail is a form of this (Psalm 147:17)
32. The month in which Solomon completed the construction of the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 6:38)
33. A Levite musician who accompanied the ark of the covenant when it was moved to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 15:18)





BY AWAKE! WRITER IN  
THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

**S**HIVERING in Korea's cold winter weather, we are invited into the home of a smiling householder. The welcoming indoor air warms our cold bodies, though no heater or radiator is in sight. After removing our shoes at the entrance, we step up onto the floor and find that it is warm. Sitting on the floor and resting our hands on it, we feel our frozen hands begin to thaw.

In Korea almost every house has this kind of floor heating. It is called *ondol*. How does this unique home heating system work? And what impact has it had on the Korean way of life? Before answering those questions, let us consider the history of the traditional *ondol*.

#### History of Floor Heating

The history of floor heating goes back to before Jesus Christ came to the earth. According to archaeological findings and historical records, the ancient Romans may have been the first to use a floor heating system.\* By the fourth or fifth century C.E., a floor heat-

\* The central heating system developed by the Romans was called hypocaust. It was made up of an underground furnace and tile flues that distributed the heat.

# ONDOL

## A Unique Home Heating System

ing system was popular throughout the Korea Peninsula, and it came to be called *ondol*. The name is derived from Chinese characters meaning "warm hollows." The Chinese historical record the *Books of Old Tang* makes reference to *ondol*, saying: "In winter [Korean] people made themselves warm by making long hollows and supplied fire in them."

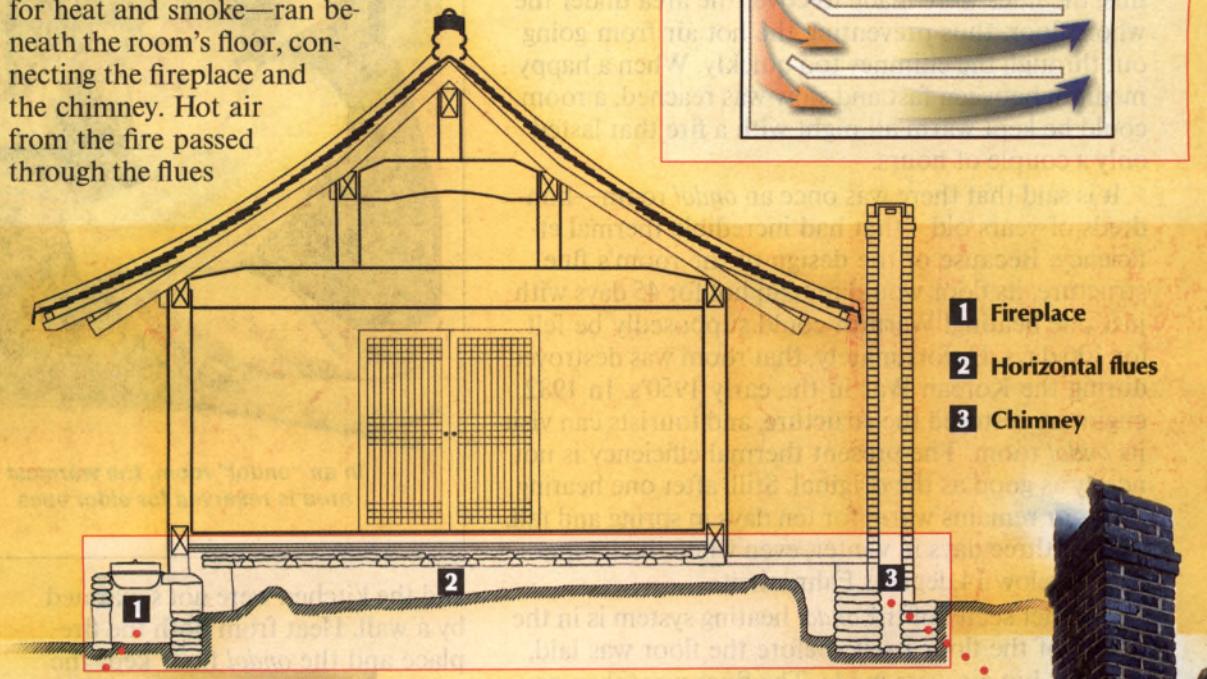
#### How Traditional *Ondol* Worked

Traditionally, the source of heat for the *ondol* was a fireplace. This might be located in the kitchen or on the outside wall of the living room. A kitchen with two or three fireplaces could be surrounded by a matching number of *ondol*-heated rooms. In an old Korean kitchen, you might find one or two big

iron cauldrons on the fireplace. Thus, the fire used for cooking rice or soup was also used to heat the room next to the kitchen! Efficient, was it not?

In general, the kitchen was built two and a half to three feet lower than the room that was being heated. The difference in level made it easy for the smoke and hot air to run under the floor of the elevated room. Smoke running under the floor? Yes, that is the secret of *ondol*.

Horizontal flues—passageways for heat and smoke—ran beneath the room's floor, connecting the fireplace and the chimney. Hot air from the fire passed through the flues



A fireplace was used both for cooking food and for heating the adjoining room

A good chimney-and-flue system was essential for an efficient "ondol"

◀ Location: Korean Folk Village ▶



and heated the stone and mud floor. This was not as easy as it sounds. Two conflicting requirements had to be met. For the fuel to burn well, its smoke had to pass quickly through the flues and go out the chimney unhindered. Flues that were straight and short were best for that purpose. For the heat from the fire to warm the floor, however, the hot air and smoke had to stay in the flues as long as possible. To accomplish this, the flues were made to cover the area under the whole floor, thus preventing the hot air from going out through the chimney too quickly. When a happy medium between fast and slow was reached, a room could be kept warm all night with a fire that lasted only a couple of hours.

It is said that there was once an *ondol* room—hundreds of years old—that had incredible thermal efficiency. Because of the design of the room's flue structure, its floor would remain hot for 45 days with just one heating! Warmth could supposedly be felt for 100 days. Unfortunately, that room was destroyed during the Korean War in the early 1950's. In 1982, engineers restored the structure, and tourists can visit its *ondol* room. The present thermal efficiency is not nearly as good as the original. Still, after one heating, the floor remains warm for ten days in spring and fall, and for three days in winter, even when the temperature is below 14 degrees Fahrenheit.

Another secret of the *ondol* heating system is in the design of the floor itself. Before the floor was laid, flues for hot air were made. The flues were then covered with flat, thin stones that were two or three inches thick. As the floor near the fireplace is naturally warmer, thicker stones were used there to prevent heat loss. Next, yellow earth was laid on top of the stones, and the floor was leveled. Finally, several layers of yellow paper sheets were pasted onto the base.

In a room heated by the traditional *ondol* system, the floor at the far end of the room tended to be cool. Elderly people, such as grandparents or parents, as well as guests were thus invited to sit in the warmer area. This was an expression of respect.

The traditional *ondol* rooms found in the northern part of the Korea Peninsula differed somewhat from those in the south. In the north the *ondol*-heated room

Location: Korean Folk Village



*In an "ondol" room, the warmest area is reserved for older ones*

and the kitchen were not separated by a wall. Heat from both the fireplace and the *ondol* floor kept the room warm. In the south, a wall separated the kitchen from the living room, preventing the smoke from disturbing people sitting there.

Koreans traditionally used wood to fuel this type of fireplace. So before starting the *ondol*, they stacked dried firewood next to the fireplace. Then they used paper and straw to start the fire. Charcoal was also used as fuel. In the 20th century, however, Koreans began using charcoal briquettes. It is essential, of course, that an *ondol* room be well maintained. If cracks develop in a flue,

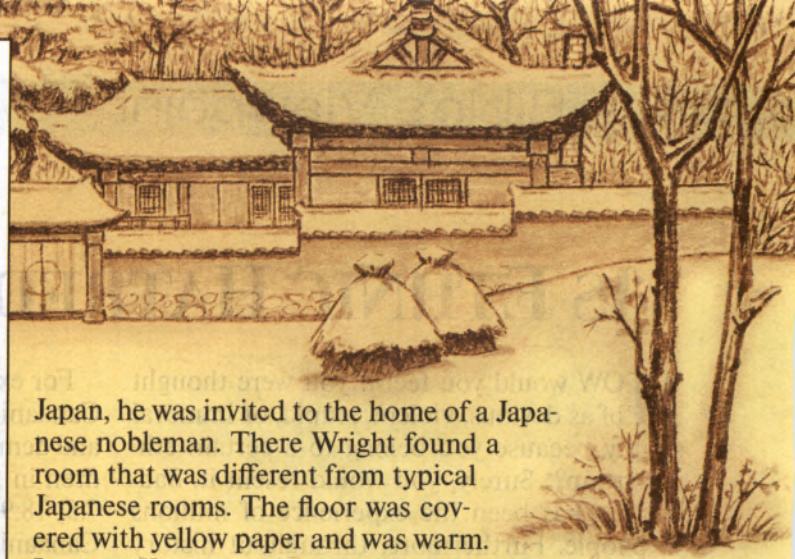


carbon monoxide can leak into the living room through the floor, possibly resulting in fatalities.

#### **Modern-Day Ondol**

Nowadays, the traditional *ondol* system is rarely seen in Korean homes. Instead, modern-day houses, including high-rise *ondol* apartments, use an updated version of *ondol*—hydronic radiant floor heating. This uses hot water instead of hot air to warm the floor. Interestingly, the Koreans were not the ones who developed this system.

In the early 1900's, when the famous American architect Frank Lloyd Wright was building a hotel in



Japan, he was invited to the home of a Japanese nobleman. There Wright found a room that was different from typical Japanese rooms. The floor was covered with yellow paper and was warm.

It was a Korean *ondol* room! The Japanese gentleman had experienced *ondol* in Korea and could not forget it. So back in Japan he had an *ondol* room built in his house. "The indescribable comfort of being warmed from below" impressed Wright. He decided then and there that *ondol* was the ideal heating system and began incorporating it in his buildings. Wright invented radiant floor heating, using hot water running through pipes instead of hot air through flues.

The radiant floor heating system was a good match with the life-style of Koreans at that time. Once it was imported, the simplified system caught on quickly. Today almost all Korean homes use it.

#### **Ondol and Life-Style**

*Ondol* has had a great impact on the Korean life-style. For one thing, because the floor is much warmer than the indoor air, people naturally sit on the warm floor rather than on colder chairs. Koreans thus sit, eat, associate, and sleep on the floor. To keep the floor even warmer, they sometimes cover it with a thick bed quilt called *ibul*. When family members come in from outside, they put their cold legs under the bed quilt to enjoy the comfortable warmth together—a real bonding experience!

As the Korean life-style has become increasingly Westernized, the younger generation often prefer to sit on chairs at a table and to sleep in beds. Still, most Koreans prefer the snugness of an *ondol* floor, using a hot-water floor heating system. If you visit Korea, you will no doubt enjoy this unique home heating system—*ondol*.

## IS ETHNIC HATRED JUSTIFIED?

**H**OW would you feel if you were thought of as devious, violent, stupid, or immoral simply because you belong to a certain ethnic group?\* Surely, you would resent it. Sadly, that has been the experience of millions of people. Furthermore, throughout history countless innocent people have been abused and even murdered, merely because of their race or nationality. Indeed, most of the bloody conflicts going on today are rooted in ethnic hatred. Yet, many who support such violence actually profess belief in God and the Bible. And there are those who claim that racism is here to stay—a part of human nature.

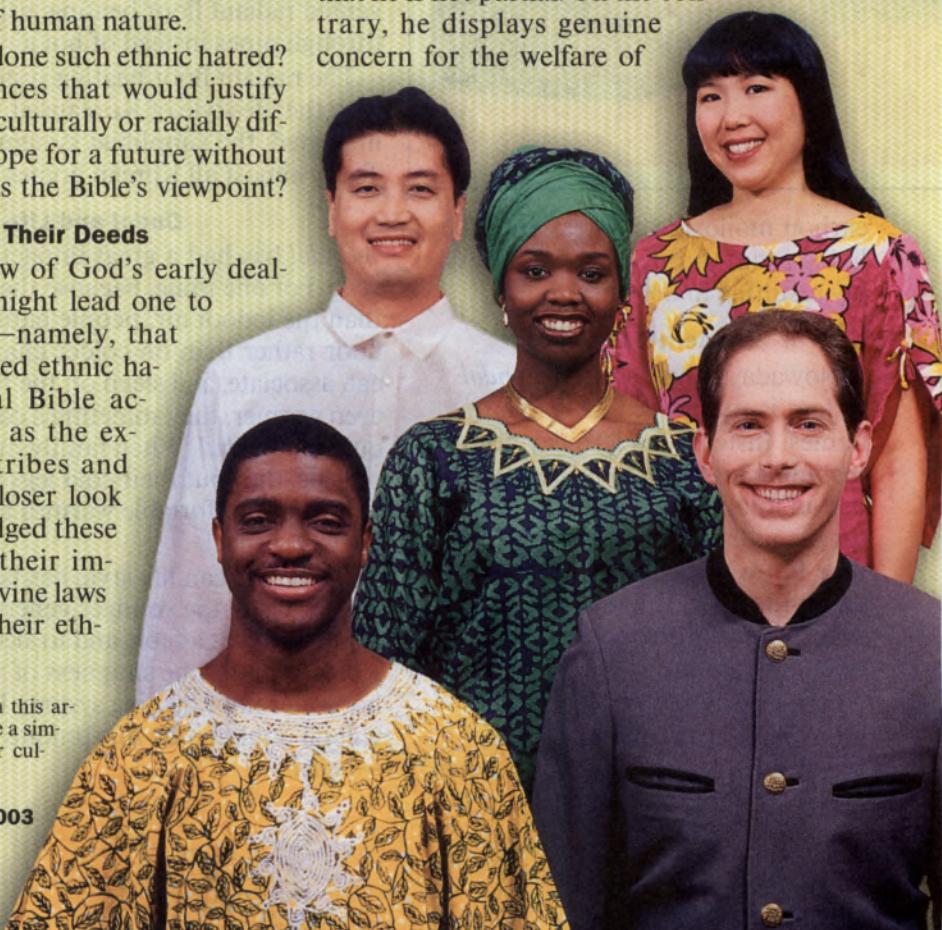
Does the Bible condone such ethnic hatred? Are there circumstances that would justify hating those who are culturally or racially different? Is there any hope for a future without ethnic hatred? What is the Bible's viewpoint?

### Judged by Their Deeds

A superficial review of God's early dealings with mankind might lead one to a wrong conclusion—namely, that God actually supported ethnic hatred. Do not several Bible accounts portray God as the executioner of entire tribes and nations? Yes, but a closer look indicates that God judged these peoples because of their immoral disregard for divine laws and not because of their ethnic background.

For example, Jehovah God condemned the Canaanites because of their depraved sexual and demonistic rituals. They even burned children in sacrifice to false gods! (Deuteronomy 7:5; 18:9-12) In some cases, however, certain Canaanites demonstrated faith in God and repented. Accordingly, Jehovah spared their lives and blessed them. (Joshua 9:3, 25-27; Hebrews 11:31) One Canaanite woman, Rahab, even became an ancestress of the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.—Matthew 1:5.

The Law God gave to the Israelites shows that he is not partial. On the contrary, he displays genuine concern for the welfare of



\* "Ethnic group" as used in this article denotes people who share a similar racial, national, tribal, or cultural origin.

all peoples. At Leviticus 19:33, 34, we find the following compassionate command from God to the Israelites: "In case an alien resident resides with you as an alien in your land, you must not mistreat him. The alien resident who resides as an alien with you should become to you like a native of yours; and you must love him as yourself, for you became alien residents in the land of Egypt. I am Jehovah your God." Similar commands are found in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. Obviously, Jehovah did not justify ethnic hatred. He insisted on ethnic harmony.

### **Jesus Promoted Ethnic Tolerance**

When Jesus was on earth, Jews and Samaritans tended to despise one another. On one occasion the people in a Samaritan village turned Jesus away simply because he was a Jew headed for Jerusalem. How would you have responded to that rejection? Jesus' disciples may have reflected the prejudices of the day when they asked him: "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and annihilate them?" (Luke 9:51-56) Did Jesus allow his disciples' embittered spirit to influence him? On the contrary, he rebuked them and peacefully sought lodging in a different village. Shortly thereafter, Jesus gave the parable of the neighborly Samaritan. This forcefully illustrated that a person's ethnic background in itself does not make him an enemy. In fact, he might turn out to be a very good neighbor!

### **Ethnic Groups in the Christian Congregation**

During his earthly ministry, Jesus focused primarily on making disciples among people of his own national extraction. But he indicated that others would eventually become his followers. (Matthew 28:19) Would individuals of all ethnic groups be accepted? Yes! The apostle Peter stated: "For a certainty I perceive that God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34, 35) The apostle Paul later reinforced this concept by clearly stating that a person's ethnic

extraction was of no consequence in the Christian congregation.—Colossians 3:11.

A further indication that God accepts people from all ethnic groups is found in the Bible book of Revelation. In a divinely inspired vision, the apostle John saw "a great crowd . . . out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues," who received salvation from God. (Revelation 7:9, 10) This "great crowd" will be the foundation of a new human society in which people of all backgrounds will coexist peacefully, united by their love of God.

In the meantime, Christians do well to resist the urge to judge others because of their ethnic background. Viewing people as individuals, the way God does, and not just as members of ethnic groups is just and loving. Is that not how you want to be viewed? Jesus aptly admonishes us: "All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them." (Matthew 7:12) Living without ethnic hatred is refreshing. It results in greater peace of mind and peace with others. More important, it brings us in harmony with our impartial Creator, Jehovah God. What a compelling reason to reject ethnic hatred!

### Crossword Solutions

T	H	E	S	C	R	O	L	L	O	F	I	F	E
K	U	A	A	I	I	O							
E	A	j	i	B	S	A	M	L					
M	A	J	E	S	T	I	C	I	E	V	E		
A	I	H	I	I	S	U	I						
S	T	A	Y	G	F	R	U	D	D	E	R		
U	E	I	I	F	E	O	D						
T	H	E	K	I	N	G	O	F	P	E	R	S	I

# Watching the World

## Protect Your Voice

"Voice disorders are a common but under-treated problem," says South Africa's *Natal Witness* newspaper. According to Julie Barkmeier, an assistant professor of speech and hearing sciences, such disorders are often the result of nodules, polyps, or irritations that develop on the vocal cords when a voice is misused. A popular medical textbook says that such misuse would include shouting, speaking in an unnatural low tone, or inhaling irritants such as cigarette smoke or industrial fumes. "When [vocal cords] vibrate too much, they can smack against each other, leading to soft and swollen spots that develop into callous-like nodules," reports the *Natal Witness*. The result is a hoarse, raspy voice. "If you have a pronounced change in your voice that persists for two weeks or more, you should get examined by your doctor," the article advises. "To protect your voice, . . . don't yell or talk loudly, don't cough or clear your throat frequently, drink lots of water, reduce your caffeine intake, don't smoke and, before speaking, take a deep breath. . . . Finally, give your voice a rest."

## No Longer "an Unknown Child"

Ninety years after the *Titanic* sank in April 1912, a small victim of that disaster has been identified, says *The Times* of London. His body, along with 43 other unidentified victims found floating in the water, was buried in Nova Scotia, Canada. His gravestone read: "An Unknown Child." A team of 50

## Birds' Amazing Balancing Act

Birds have an organ of equilibrium in the inner ear that coordinates their movements in flight. But this organ does not explain their ability to stand erect and walk, "since their bodies, unlike those of humans, are oriented horizontally and their tails are not an adequate counter-weight," says Germany's *Leipziger Volkszeitung*. "After four years of research, animal physiologist Reinhold Necker succeeded in finding a second organ of equilibrium in pigeons," the paper explains. Necker discovered nerve cells and cavities containing fluid in the pelvic region of birds, which evidently control their balance. "When the fluid spaces were opened," says the report, "the pigeons were no longer able to sit erect or walk once their eyes were covered. They fell from their perches or toppled over on their sides. Yet, they were still able to fly."



scientists, historians, genealogists, and dentists used DNA matching to identify the child as Eino Panula, a 13-month-old Finnish boy who died with his mother and four brothers. The family intended to start a new life in America, where Eino's father, who had made the trip earlier, waited for them in vain. When nobody claimed or identified the dead child, the crew of the Canadian recovery ship "adopted" him, paying for and tending his grave. Other nameless victims of the *Titanic* may also be identified through DNA matching. To aid the investigation, a "maternal relative [of one of the victims] gave a blood sample just after his 100th birthday," said *The Times*.

## Earth Simulator

On March 11, 2002, Japanese engineers switched on the most powerful supercomputer ever built. Their goal was "to create a virtual twin of our home planet," says *Time* magazine. Called the Earth Simulator, the computer is the size of four tennis courts and cost about \$350 million. It performs over 35 trillion calculations per second, five times faster than its closest rival, an American military machine capable of 7.2 trillion calculations per second. "By plugging real-life climate data from satellites and ocean buoys into the Earth Simulator," says *Time*, "researchers can create a computer model of the entire planet, then scroll it forward in

time to see what will happen to our environment. Scientists have already completed a forecast of global ocean temperatures for the next 50 years."

### The Value of Reading

"The enthusiasm of children for reading in their spare time has a bigger effect on their educational success than their families' wealth and class," states *The Independent* of London. An international study of the reading habits of 15-year-olds found that "being more enthusiastic about reading" and being "a frequent reader" were a greater advantage than having well-educated parents in good jobs. The study found that "15-year-olds from the most deprived backgrounds who were extremely enthusiastic readers scored higher in reading tests

(an average of 540) than the children of the most high-status professionals who were uninterested in reading (491)," said the paper. A survey of over 1,000 teens found that "girls are much more likely to read for pleasure than boys." Seventy-five percent of girls compared with 55 percent of boys said that they had read a book in the past month.

### A Parasite That "Plays Dead"

Brazilian researchers have discovered an ingenious ruse used by the parasites that can infect the human immune system and cause leishmaniasis, reports the Brazilian daily *Folha de S. Paulo*. The parasites exploit a normal process in the body whereby cells that are no longer needed or that become harmful self-destruct (apoptosis) and

are swallowed up by scavenger cells called macrophages. The parasites mimic the molecular signals produced by cells in the early stages of apoptosis, thus tricking the scavengers into devouring them. Once inside the scavenger cells, the parasites multiply rapidly and then infect other cells. Symptoms include sores, swelling of the spleen and liver, and in some cases death. According to *Folha de S. Paulo*, researchers hope that the discovery of the parasite's strategy will lead to new treatments for leishmaniasis.

### Mosquito Protection

"With over 2,500 species, mosquitoes are present on the entire planet," states the magazine *México Desconocido*. While both males and females feed on nectar, only the females bite. As a result, they transmit malaria, dengue, and West Nile virus to humans. How can you protect yourself from mosquitoes? The report suggests the following: (1) Avoid going outside at dusk and at night, when mosquitoes are most active. (2) Use mosquito netting, preferably impregnated with repellent. (3) Wear loose clothing with long sleeves and pants and, if necessary, a hat with netting to cover the entire head. (4) Apply repellent to exposed areas of skin. (5) Take 300 milligrams of vitamin B<sub>1</sub> daily. This makes the perspiration of some people obnoxious to mosquitoes. (6) In swampy areas, spread mud over your skin as an emergency shield. If you are bitten, avoid scratching because bleeding can lead to infection. Apply a calamine lotion instead.

### Plastic Card Donations

"A growing number of Canadian churches" are adopting "modern banking practices, introducing bank cards and credit cards as convenient ways for parishioners to make collection-plate donations," says the *Vancouver Sun* newspaper. Debit machines have been placed in church halls along with "donation envelopes with options for automatic account withdrawal and credit card payment." Individuals simply swipe their card, key in the amount they wish to donate, and then put a copy of the receipt in the collection plate. As one pastor stated: "A cashless society is where society is going. Why not the church?" A church treasurer joked: "You get air-miles on your card, plus you go to heaven for donations. Just think of it as double reward points."



## From Our Readers

**Safe to Fly?** I am 10 years old and live in California, U.S.A. I am thankful for the *Awake!* on the subject "Is It Still Safe to Fly?" (December 8, 2002)



There are 47 people from my school who are going on a trip from San Diego to Sacramento. I was worried that there might be a crash or a hijacking. But this article reassured me, and the information about updated safety methods made me feel more confident. I will try to get this issue to all my classmates who are scared or insecure about flying.

*V. M., United States*

**Deadly Mission** I was touched by the experience of Toshiaki Niwa as related in the article "From Deadly Mission to Peaceful Pursuit." (December 8, 2002) I was born in the Philippines some years after World War II. Many of the war stories told by my family included the brutality of the soldiers. As a child, I used to ask, "How could they do that?" Brother Niwa's experience provided much insight into this question. Thank you for publishing articles like this one. Such a life transformation is another proof of Jehovah's magnificent power.

*A. C., United States*

**Stem Cells** I have been an *Awake!* reader for 20 years, and thanks to its articles, I have received a general knowledge of many subjects. When people started talking about cloning and stem cells, I could not understand how certain tissues could be reproduced outside the human body. Thanks to the series "Stem Cells—Has Science Gone Too Far?" (November 22, 2002), I now understand how this is possible and why the subject is controversial.

*F. M., Italy*

While I was reading these articles, I felt frightened at the methods humans are using to cure grievous sicknesses. I thank you so much for your efforts to put these articles together and convey facts to us about these things. Now I look forward even more keenly to the day when God will cure all our ills.

*T. F., Philippines*

**Love in Action** The article "Love in Action—A Marathon Relief Effort" (November 22, 2002) impressed me so much! What volunteers achieved in Houston those many months is powerful evidence that true love is in action among God's people and that our Creator is abundantly blessing the efforts of his servants.

*C. T., Germany*

Reading this article, I could not hold back my tears. When the Elbe River flooded, 44 people from our congregation had to be evacuated. My husband and I were lovingly taken in by a family in our congregation, and our two grown sons were taken in by another family. Since this disaster, our congregation has drawn much closer together. As a family, we truly appreciate the relief work during disasters such as the one in Houston.

*S. R., Germany*

**Fire** I read with interest the article "The Two Faces of Fire." (September 22, 2002) However, I take exception to the caption accompanying the picture on page 25, which states: "Stunned elk avoid a fire sweeping through Montana's Bitterroot River valley." I have an enlargement of the same picture, and the elk do not seem to be stunned. Smoke jumpers often see deer and elk along the fringes of fires they are fighting, and these animals are licking minerals or rolling in the ash. Even in large fires, they know what to do. They seem to take it in stride.

*B. D., United States*

**"Awake!" responds:** We appreciate the observation. Of course, no one can state with certainty just what emotions, if any, animals feel in such situations.

# A Benefit to the Community

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN SPAIN

FOR centuries Spanish cities have apportioned land for places of worship. City governments believed that religious faith would benefit their communities. Since Catholicism was the State religion, municipal property was traditionally donated almost exclusively to the Catholic Church. But times have changed.

In 1980 a Spanish law guaranteeing religious freedom stated that "no faith shall be the Official State religion." This has moved some city officials publicly to recognize the work carried out by Jehovah's Witnesses. As a mark of this recognition, they have donated land for the building of Kingdom Halls.

Various city administrations have expressed the opinion that such donations are well deserved because of "the educational nature of [the Witnesses'] work," as well as the "public and social benefit of such." Others have cited "the noteworthy presence of Jehovah's Witnesses in the city" and "the nonlucrative nature of their work."

Many of the Kingdom Halls have been built within 48 hours through use of a special construction method implemented by construction teams of Witness volunteers. The mayor of La Línea, in southwestern Spain, commented: "I am very impressed by the unselfishness of the volun-

teers, and I feel they deserve our support. We need more of this sort of spirit in today's divided world." He called the new Kingdom Hall "a monument to the spirit of cooperation."

Neighbors have also observed this community spirit. During the construction of a double Kingdom Hall in Vitoria, in northern Spain, Marian, who lives nearby, said: "If everybody reflected this kind of love, we would not have the problems we are suffering today." After watching the building go up, a local architect exclaimed: "I would like to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses to be able to feel your joy!"

In the city of Zaragoza, in northeastern Spain, officials granted the Witnesses a 6,000-square-foot site, free of charge. A local newspaper described the construction site as "an ant's nest of Jehovah's Witnesses, where hundreds of little ants work together." Neighbors gave the workers a warm welcome. One of them said: "The priests make me lose my faith, but you have given it back to me."

Witnesses are grateful for the assistance of both neighbors and local authorities in the construction of their places of worship. They are resolved to use their Kingdom Halls for the best educational work possible for the community—that of preaching and teaching the Word of God.

La Línea,  
Cádiz, Spain





# THE QUESTION OF HOW LIFE BEGAN

In France, both in schools and in the media, the theory of evolution is presented as indisputable fact. As a consequence, even if people believe in God, they usually consider evolution to be the only possible explanation for the emergence of life. Yet, many who are fascinated by the complexity of living organisms are unconvinced by the theory. The France branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses received the following letter:

"Recently I found a book that you publish entitled *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?* in a secondhand bookshop. This little book was of great interest to me, since I think it addresses the real issues at stake. Trained as a physicist, I have for many years been interested in the complex problems of 'Darwinism' and other 'evolution theories.' These claim to explain the transformation of inanimate things into living organisms, or the origin of life from the inanimate."

After reading what he described as "your little book," the writer of the letter observed: "*Life—How Did It Get Here?* is very well put together and documented and presents a very good summary of the difficulties and insoluble contradictions faced by the synthetic theory of evolution commonly accepted by many contemporary scientists."

He then asked for further information.

