

Awake!

February 22, 1999



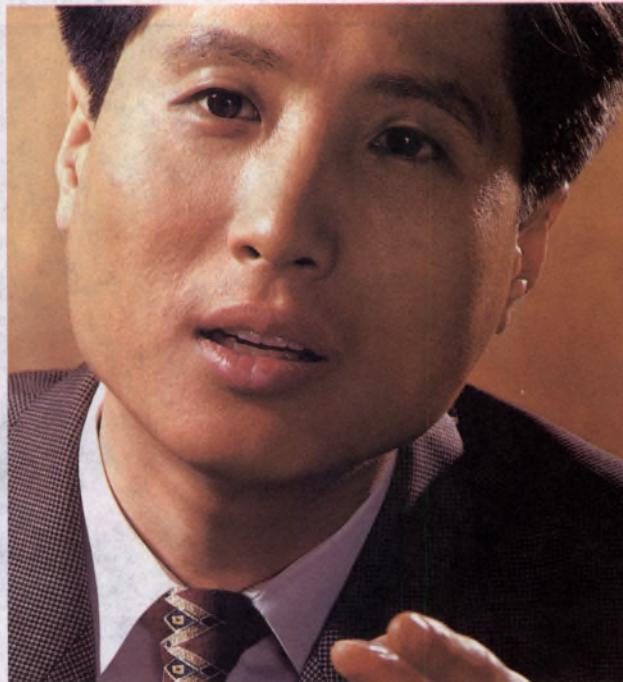
**SHOULD YOU
DISCUSS RELIGION?**

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Should You Discuss Religion?

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To discuss religion amicably can be challenging. Learn how to discuss it in a way that can truly prove beneficial.



Half a Century Under Totalitarian Tyranny **10**

Learn what it was like to suffer under Nazi occupation and then under Soviet oppression.

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Why is gossip so common, yet what are often its consequences? What can you do about it?

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DO YOU DISCUSS RELIGION?

*"Please, let's change the subject.
There are two things I never discuss
—religion and politics!"*

*"I leave religion to the wife and kids."
"I do not want to discuss religion now.
I just got home from church."*

DO THESE comments sound familiar? Some prefer not to discuss religion because they view it as a matter between them and God. Jesus himself said: "When you pray, go into your private room and, after shutting your door, pray to your Father who is in secret; then your Father who looks on in secret will repay you."—Matthew 6:6.

On the other hand, Jesus and his disciples did not feel that every aspect of religion should be private. They freely and openly talked about a variety of spiritual topics, and this resulted in their teachings being spread throughout the world. (Acts 1:8; Colossians 1:23) Of course, not everybody was inclined to talk with them, and some who did remained skeptical.

Today, too, attitudes toward discussing religion vary from person to person and from culture to culture. In many Western lands, for example, people tend to be quite concerned with secular matters—education, employment, sports, computers, TV, and so forth. In other cultures, people are more willing to talk about their beliefs. Yet, regardless of people's background, things happen in their lives that move some who previously were not interested in religion to reassess their spiritual need.

Intolerance Discourages Many

Those who refuse to discuss religion may have seen or been involved in a discussion that boiled over into a heated argument. "Difference of religion breeds more quarrels than difference of politics," said a renowned orator. Also, Richard M. Johnson,

WHAT PROMINENT PERSONS HAVE SAID

"If Jesus is the way to God, it is imperative for followers of Jesus to share this with other people."—Ben Johnson, professor of evangelism at Columbia Theological Seminary.

"Jesus taught his disciples to take the gospel to the people. The Great Commission demands that we go into all the world. The Lord commanded his followers to go into the highways and byways."—Kenneth S. Hemphill, director of the Southern Baptist Center for Church Growth.

"Unless we are witnesses, we cannot be authentic Christians. . . . Every Christian is called to be a missionary and witness."—Pope John Paul II.

"Too many preachers . . . are more interested in building big congregations and church construction projects and their next pastoral assignment than they are in preaching the uncompromising and uncomfortable message contained in the Gospel."—Cal Thomas, author and columnist.

"We've got to knock on doors . . . Like the (Jehovah's) Witnesses and some of the others, we've got to get out there and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ."—Thomas V. Daily, Catholic bishop.

an early American vice president, observed: "Religious zeal enlists the strongest prejudices of the human mind; and, when misdirected, excites the worst passions of our nature under the delusive pretext of doing God service."

Does it strike you as odd that something as potentially elevating and ennobling as the teachings of the Bible should be misused to promote intolerance, bigotry, and hatred? Actually, it is not those teachings of the Bible that make religion unpalatable to many. Rather, it is a corruption of them. Consider, for example, Christianity.

By word and example, Christianity's Founder, Jesus Christ, encouraged love of God and love of neighbor, not intolerance and fanaticism. The tools employed by Christ and his followers in their ministry were reason and persuasion. (Matthew 22:41-46; Acts 17:2; 19:8) And they prayed for their enemies and persecutors.—Matthew 5:44; Acts 7:59, 60.

True religion enlightens mind and heart, and it draws people together. For sincere truth seekers, therefore, dignified religious discussion can be very fruitful, as we shall see.

WHY IT SHOULD BE DISCUSSED

"By iron, iron itself is sharpened. So one man sharpens the face of another."—Proverbs 27:17, the Bible.

BLADES are not sharpened by being hit together. Sharpening is a more gentle process. Likewise, there are right and wrong ways to sharpen the mind through conversation, especially on sensitive topics such as religion.

To begin with, we must respect the dignity of the other person and demonstrate that respect in our words and manner. "Let your utterance be always with graciousness,

seasoned with salt," says the Bible. (Colossians 4:6) Graciously spoken and seasoned speech is not dogmatic in tone, even when the speaker is convinced that he is correct and that the other person is in error.

Graciousness is also reflected in the way we listen. We cannot be listening graciously if we interrupt or if our mind is not tuned in because we are preparing our next argument. The one speaking will most like-

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.

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ly sense our apparent lack of interest in his or her viewpoint and perhaps end the discussion. Also, we should never force or browbeat another into changing his views. After all, it is 'God who makes the seed of truth grow' in a responsive listener's heart.—1 Corinthians 3:6.

We have the fine example of the apostle Paul, who employed "reason" and "persuasion" in his ministry. (Acts 17:17; 28:23, 24) Paul discussed religion with people wherever he found them, such as in the marketplace and at their homes. (Acts 17:2, 3; 20:20) Jehovah's Witnesses strive to imitate that example by going wherever people may be found and reasoning with them from the Scriptures.

Avoid Misunderstandings

The nation of Israel had just settled into the Promised Land when a misunderstanding over an altar took them to the brink of civil war. The people settling to the east of the Jordan River built an altar, yet the other tribes mistakenly thought that it was an altar for false worship. Therefore, they prepared for military action to discipline their brothers. But prudence prevailed. The would-be aggressors first sent a delegation to inquire as to the reason for the altar. Much to their relief, they learned that it was simply a monument—"a witness"—to remind all the tribes of their unity before Jehovah God. Talk saved the day—and many lives!—Joshua 22:9-34.

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¹ Audiocassettes also available.

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Similarly, misunderstandings today often result in estrangement and even prejudice. For example, a few people have viewed Jehovah's Witnesses as religious fanatics because of reports about their refusal to take blood transfusions. Yet those who have personally inquired of the Witnesses about this matter have often been pleasantly surprised to learn that there is a Biblical basis for their position and that there are safe, effective alternative treatments. (Leviticus 17:13, 14; Acts 15:28, 29) In fact, because of problems with the blood supply, one columnist wrote: "Thank God the Jehovah's Witnesses are pioneering research in blood substitutes."

Likewise, some have refused to speak with the Witnesses because they have been told that Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in Jesus Christ. How far from the truth that is! The Witnesses, in fact, emphasize the role of Jesus in our salvation, explaining that he is God's Son, whom God sent to earth to ransom humans from sin and death. By speaking with the Witnesses on this matter, people have had misunderstandings cleared up.—Matthew 16:16; 20:28; John 3:16; 14:28; 1 John 4:15.

Truth—Popular or Unpopular?

What is perhaps surprising to many is that when it comes to religion, the popular way is generally the wrong way. Jesus Christ himself taught: "Go in through the narrow gate; because broad and spacious is the road leading off into destruction, and many are

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the ones going in through it; whereas narrow is the gate and cramped the road leading off into life, and few are the ones finding it.”—Matthew 7:13, 14.

In Noah’s day, only eight persons spoke spiritual truth—Noah, his wife, his three sons, and his sons’ wives. Their warning message and their work of building the ark no doubt made them objects of ridicule, even abuse. Yet Noah and his family were not intimidated; they continued preaching and building. (Genesis 6:13, 14; 7:21-24; 2 Peter 2:5) Similarly, only three persons obeyed God’s directions and survived the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.—Genesis 19:12-29; Luke 17:28-30.

What about our time? “Were Christ to return in the flesh today, people would probably kill him again,” said a householder to one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. This person felt that Jesus’ teachings and lofty moral standards would be as unpopular today as they were 2,000 years ago. Do you agree?

If so, you are correct, for Jesus warned his disciples: “You will be objects of hatred by all the nations on account of my name”—a prediction that has proved true. (Matthew 24:9) Jewish leaders in Rome said to the apostle Paul concerning Christianity: “As regards this sect . . . , everywhere it is spoken against.” (Acts 28:22) The unpopularity of Christianity, however, did not stop Christ’s followers from sharing their beliefs with others. Nor did it stop honesthearted people from talking to the Christians.—Acts 13:43-49.

Today Jesus’ message is more important than ever. Why? Because world conditions indicate that we are now living in “the last days” of this system and that these days will culminate in a cleansing of wrong-doing from the earth. Jesus compared our time with the days of Noah. (2 Timothy 3:

1-5; Matthew 24:37-39) So this is no time to take our beliefs for granted, for everlasting life will be given only to those who know God and who “worship [him] with spirit and truth.”—John 4:24; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9.

How to Find the Right Path

Francis Bacon, a 17th-century English philosopher, essayist, jurist, and statesman, advised searchers for truth “to weigh and consider.” And an early U.S. president, Thomas Jefferson, said: “Reason and free inquiry are the only effectual agents against error. . . . They are the natural enemies of error.” So if we are genuinely searching for truth, we will “weigh and consider” and pursue “reason and free inquiry.”

Identifying why such an approach is vital, British scientist Sir Hermann Bondi noted: “Since at most one faith can be true, it follows that human beings are extremely liable to believe firmly and honestly in something untrue in the field of revealed religion. One would have expected this obvious fact to lead to some humility, to some thought that however deep one’s faith, one may conceivably be mistaken.”

How can a person, therefore, determine if he is indeed on the ‘cramped road leading off into life’? Jesus taught that God must be worshiped ‘with truth.’ So reason dictates that if two teachings are opposed to each other, both cannot be true. For example, either humans have a soul that survives death or they do not. Either God is going to intervene in human affairs or he is not. Either God is a Trinity or he is not. Truth seekers want factual answers to such important questions. Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that God has given us the answers in his Word, the Bible.*

* For evidence that the Bible is the Word of God, please see the book *The Bible—God’s Word or Man’s?*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.



An Ethiopian official welcomed a Bible discussion

Since "all Scripture is inspired of God," the main way to test various teachings is to measure them against the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:16) In so doing, you "*prove to yourselves* the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2) Can you 'prove to yourself' that your beliefs are rooted in the Bible? Being able to do so is important because God does not want you to be misled along with "the entire inhabited earth." —Revelation 12:9.

Are Teachers Necessary?

Jesus did not hand his disciples a few scrolls and say: "The answers to your questions are all in there. Go home and find them for yourselves." Rather, he patiently and kindly taught them God's word. In turn, those who accepted his teachings adopted his methods when they taught still others. Take the example of the disciple Philip. He spoke to an honesthearted Ethiopian official who had earlier become acquainted with the Scriptures from his contact with the Jews. But the man needed help. So Philip —a representative of the Christian congre-

gation—was directed to help him. Had this official been unwilling to discuss religion, he would not have learned about Jesus' role in God's purpose. What a fine example this Ethiopian is to all who are searching for the truth!—Acts 8:26-39.

Are you willing to discuss your beliefs and ask questions as this Ethiopian did? You certainly have much to gain by doing so. Jehovah's Witnesses are happy to discuss the Bible with people who sincerely want to know what it says. The Witnesses do not proffer their own personal opinions. Rather, they strive to show people what the Bible itself says.

The Ethiopian official learned some remarkable things about Jesus Christ, such as how he would be used by God in connection with our salvation. Today, the outworking of God's purpose is much closer to its completion. Fear-inspiring, wonderful things are about to happen right here on earth. The following article will show that everyone on earth will be affected. Of course, how we will be affected will depend on our attitude and the action we take.

THE HOPE OFFERED BY TRUE RELIGION

BY NATURE we like to talk about things that concern or excite us. This is one reason why Jehovah's Witnesses delight in sharing the Bible's wonderful message with others. That message, which features the Kingdom of God, contains the answers to questions about the things that really concern people today, such as the future, security, health, and happiness.—Luke 4:43.

But first, what is God's Kingdom?

A Thrilling Hope

God's Kingdom is a government of God ruled by his Son, the "Prince of Peace." The Bible says regarding him: "There has been a child born to us, there has been a son given to us; and the princely rule will come to be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called . . . Prince of Peace. To the abundance of the princely rule and to peace there will be no end."—Isaiah 9:6, 7.

PROMISES OF A PARADISE EARTH

Total peace will prevail on earth. "In his days the righteous one will sprout, and the abundance of peace until the moon is no more."—Psalm 72:7, 8.



Even the dead will be brought back to life.
"There is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous."

—Acts 24:15.

Perfect health will be enjoyed forever.
"[God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore."—Revelation 21:3, 4.

Looking far into the future, yes, to our own period of history with its rulers, another Bible prophecy foretold: "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. . . . It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite."—Daniel 2:44.

This Kingdom of God, ruled by Christ, the Prince of Peace, will fulfill the prayer Jesus taught his followers to pray, namely: "Our Father in the heavens . . . , let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth." (Matthew 6:9, 10) What will it mean for the earth and for us when God's Kingdom comes? Consider the promises made by Jehovah God himself, as recorded in the Bible. Some of them are illustrated on these pages.

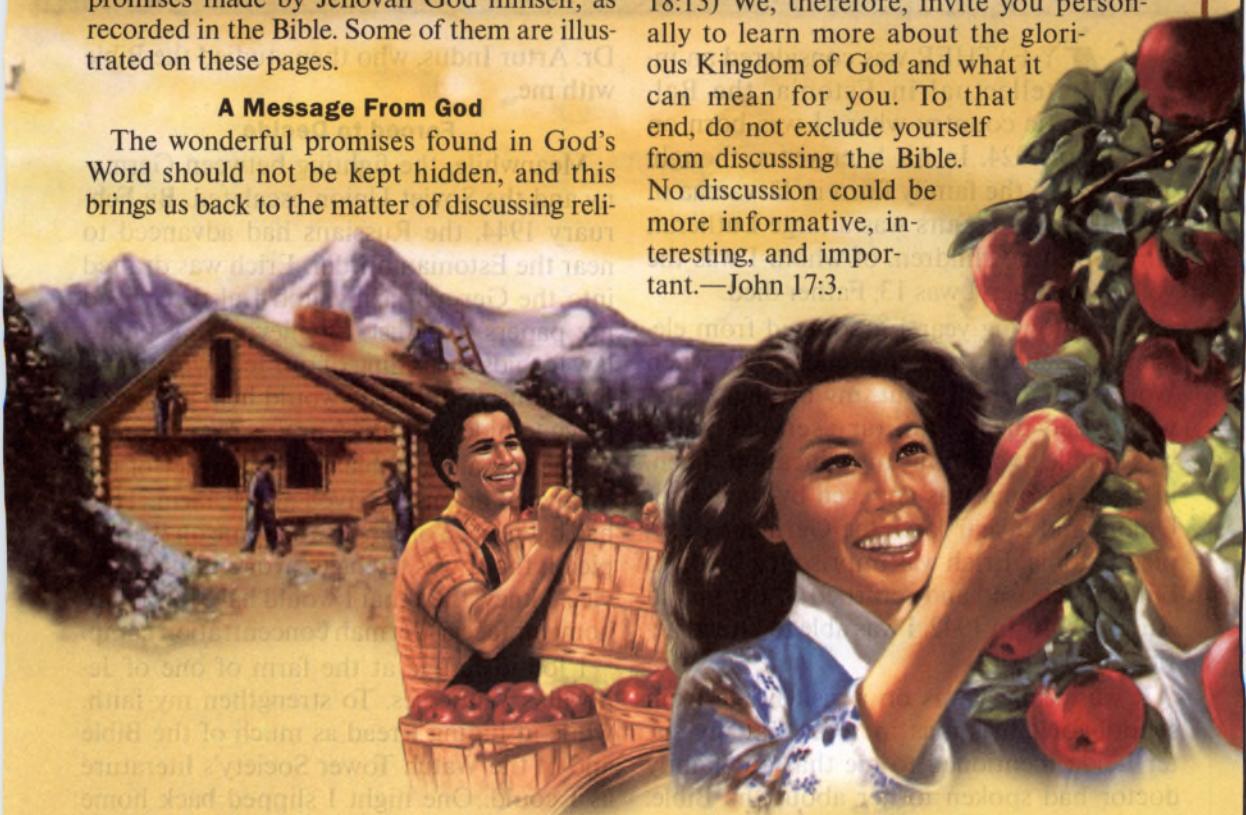
A Message From God

The wonderful promises found in God's Word should not be kept hidden, and this brings us back to the matter of discussing reli-

gion. Jesus foretold that prior to the end of the present system of things, his followers would take the initiative to preach about God's Kingdom: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come."—Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8.

It is this message regarding God's Kingdom that Jehovah's Witnesses are proclaiming worldwide. This magazine's companion, *The Watchtower*, is published in 130 languages, and on the cover of each of the more than 22 million copies printed per issue are the words "Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom."

As a wise person, you want to make informed decisions about your life. (Proverbs 18:13) We, therefore, invite you personally to learn more about the glorious Kingdom of God and what it can mean for you. To that end, do not exclude yourself from discussing the Bible. No discussion could be more informative, interesting, and important.—John 17:3.



People will build and occupy their own homes. "They will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage."

—Isaiah 65:21.

Food will be abundant.

"There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains there will be an overflow."

—Psalm 72:16.

Half a Century Under Totalitarian Tyranny

As told by Lembit Toom

In 1951, I was sentenced to ten years of slave labor in Siberia. We were transported thousands of miles to a camp far above the Arctic Circle.

The work was exhausting, the weather brutal, and the living conditions terrible. Let me explain how I came to be there and why our suffering was not in vain.



MY FATHER was considered an intellectual in Estonia, the Baltic country where I was born on March 10, 1924. In his later years, though, he managed the family farm in Järvamaa in central Estonia. Ours was a large Lutheran family of nine children, of whom I was the youngest. When I was 13, Father died.

The following year I graduated from elementary school. In September 1939, when World War II broke out, my brother Erich was called up for military service, and I was unable to continue my education. Then, in 1940, Estonia was annexed by the Soviet Union, and a year later the Germans occupied Estonia. Erich was imprisoned by them but was released and returned to Estonia in August 1941. In 1942, I was able to attend agricultural school.

It was while I was on a visit home from school for Christmas in 1943 that my sister Leida mentioned to me that our family doctor had spoken to her about the Bible. He had given her some booklets published by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. I read them and immediately searched out

Dr. Artur Indus, who then studied the Bible with me.

Forced to Decide

Meanwhile, the fighting between Germany and the Soviet Union escalated. By February 1944, the Russians had advanced to near the Estonian border. Erich was drafted into the German army, and I also received my papers to enlist. I believed that God's law forbids the killing of our fellowmen, and Dr. Indus said that he would help me find a place to hide until the war was over.

One day a constable and the leader of the local civil defense arrived at our farm. They had been given orders to arrest me on the suspicion that I was trying to avoid military service. I knew then that I would have to flee my home or face a German concentration camp.

I found refuge at the farm of one of Jehovah's Witnesses. To strengthen my faith, while in hiding I read as much of the Bible and of the Watch Tower Society's literature as I could. One night I slipped back home to pick up some food. The house was full of German soldiers, since my brother Erich had returned with some of his friends for a

few days' vacation. I was able to speak with Erich secretly on the threshing floor that night. It was the last time I ever saw him.

A Narrow Escape

That same night, after I returned to the farm where I was hiding, it was raided. The local constable and men from the civil defense were acting on a report that someone was hiding at the farm. I slipped into the crawl space under the floor, and shortly I heard the sound of cleated boots above my head. Threatening the farmer with a rifle, the officer shouted: "There is a man hiding in this house! How can we get to the crawl space under the floor?" I could see the searching beam of light from their flashlight. I inched back a little more and lay there and waited. After they left, I stayed in the crawl space for a while to be sure that the danger had passed.

Before morning I abandoned the house, grateful to Jehovah that I had not been discovered. Christian brothers helped me to find another hiding place, where I stayed until the end of the German occupation. Later I heard that the constable and the local civil defense leader had been killed, evidently by Russian partisans. On June 19, 1944, I symbolized my dedication to God by water baptism, and my sister Leida also became one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Soviet reoccupation of Estonia began in June 1944, and a couple of months later, I was free to return home to help out with the farm work. But in November, not long after my return, I was ordered to report to the Russian army. Full of courage, I witnessed boldly to the recruiting committee. They informed me that the Soviet system was not interested in my beliefs and that everyone must serve in the army. However, for the rest of the war, I managed to remain free, and I devoted myself to helping provide Bible literature to fellow Witnesses.

Postwar Activity

When the war ended in May 1945 and amnesty was granted to conscientious objectors, I returned to school. By the early part of 1946, I concluded that there was no future for me in farming in Estonia, since the Soviet system of collectivization had taken over the private sector. So I quit school and began sharing more fully in the Kingdom-preaching work.

Under Soviet rule, our ministry could no longer be carried on openly. Actually, contact with the Watch Tower Society had been cut off during World War II. Therefore, with an old mimeograph machine, I helped to duplicate the literature that we had preserved. We also did our best to hold congregation meetings.

Persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses by the KGB (the Soviet State Security Committee) began in August 1948. Five of those who were taking the lead in the work were arrested and imprisoned, and soon it was apparent that the KGB wanted to arrest everyone. A committee of four of us was formed to organize the preaching work, encourage our Christian brothers, and assist those in prison. Since I still had relative freedom to move about, I was used to make contact with fellow Witnesses.

A formal written protest dated September 22, 1948, was sent to Soviet officials in Estonia. It described our organization and the purpose of our work, and it demanded the release of our imprisoned fellow believers. The response? Further arrests. On December 16, 1948, we sent another declaration of protest to the Estonian SSR Supreme Court Council demanding the acquittal and release of our brothers. Copies of this and other petitions are still on file in the Tallinn city archives.

It was dangerous to travel, since we could not obtain proper documents. Yet, we visited the congregations in Aravete, Otepää,

Tallinn, Tartu, and Võru on a powerful four-cylinder block-engine motorcycle with a side-car that had been purchased from a Russian officer. We affectionately called it the Chariot.

Our Protest to Stalin

On June 1, 1949, another petition was mailed to the highest office of the Estonian Socialist Republic as well as to Nikolay Shvernik, chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. This document, a copy of which we retrieved from the Tallinn archives, bears the stamp of Nikolay Shvernik, indicating that he received it and sent a copy to Joseph Stalin, head of government of the Soviet Union. The last part of the petition reads:

"We demand that Jehovah's Witnesses be released from prison and that the persecution against them be stopped. Jehovah God's organization, by means of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, should be permitted to preach, unhindered, the good news of Jehovah's Kingdom to

all the inhabitants of the Soviet Union; otherwise, Jehovah will utterly destroy the Soviet Union and the Communist Party."

"This we demand in the name of Jehovah God and the King of his Kingdom, Jesus Christ, and also in the name of all imprisoned fellow believers."

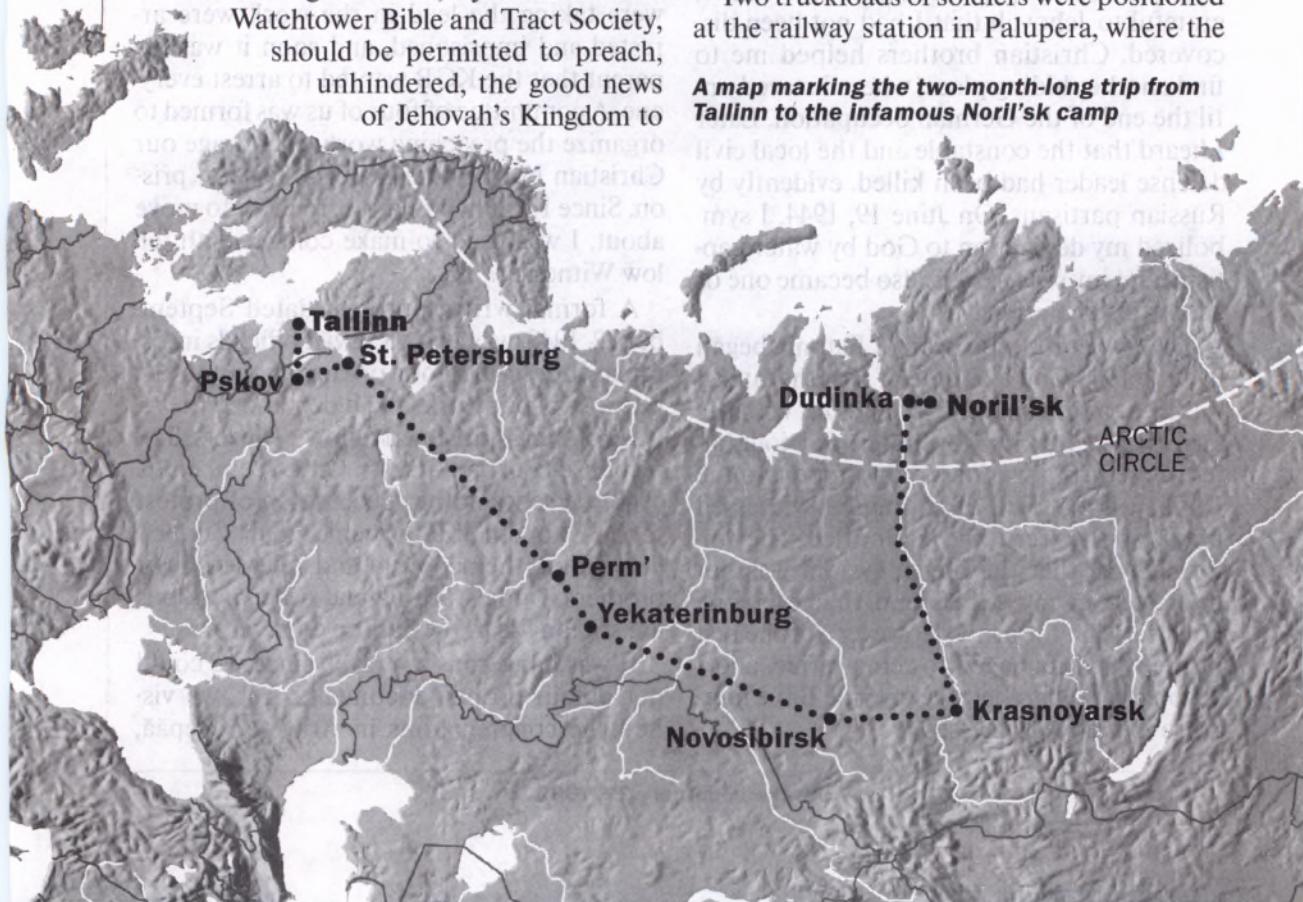
"Signed: Jehovah's Witnesses in Estonia (June 1, 1949)."

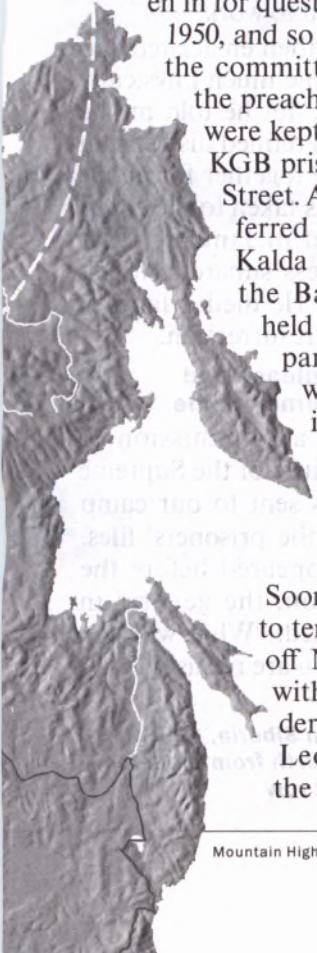
Persecution Intensifies

Early in 1950, we received three issues of *The Watchtower* from someone returning from Germany. So that all of our Christian brothers could benefit from this spiritual food, it was decided that we would organize an assembly on July 24, 1950, in a Bible student's hay barn near the village of Otepää. Somehow, however, the KGB learned of our plans, and they prepared to make a massive arrest.

Two truckloads of soldiers were positioned at the railway station in Palupera, where the

A map marking the two-month-long trip from Tallinn to the infamous Noril'sk camp





brothers were to disembark. In addition, a soldier with a radio transmitter lay in wait along the Otepää/Palupera road, a short distance from the assembly site. When certain brothers we were expecting to arrive early failed to show up on schedule, we suspected that our plans had been discovered.

I took along fellow Witness Ella Kikas and raced by motorcycle to the railway station two stops before Palupera. The train had just pulled in, so Ella and I boarded it at opposite ends and ran through the cars shouting for all to get off. When the Witnesses got off, we made arrangements to hold our assembly in another barn the following day. Thus the KGB plan for a massive arrest of Witnesses was foiled.

Two months following the assembly, however, arrests began on a large scale. I was taken in for questioning on September 22, 1950, and so were the other three on the committee that was overseeing the preaching work in Estonia. We were kept for eight months in the KGB prison in Tallinn on Pagari Street. Afterward, we were transferred to the general prison on Kalta Street, which was called the Battery. There we were held for three months. Compared with the KGB prison where we had been kept in a cellar, this one on the Baltic Sea was like a holiday resort.

Difficult Life in Siberia

Soon after, I was sentenced to ten years in a camp in far-off Noril'sk, Siberia, along with Harri Ennika, Aleksander Härm, Albert Kose, and Leonhard Kriibi. There the sun does not set for two

months during the summer, and in the winter it does not rise above the horizon for two months.

In August 1951, we began the first leg of our trip from Tallinn to Noril'sk by train. We traveled some 3,500 miles, by way of Pskov, St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad), Perm', Yekaterinburg (formerly Sverdlovsk), Novosibirsk, and Krasnoyarsk, on the Yenisey River. Finally, in early October, we boarded a scow at Krasnoyarsk and were towed north more than 1,000 miles. Two weeks later we reached the town of Dudinka, far above the Arctic Circle. At Dudinka we transferred to a train again for the next 75-mile leg of the trip to Noril'sk. From the Noril'sk station, we walked the final ten miles to the work camp outside town in heavy snow.

Since my winter clothing had been stolen when we were on the scow, I had only a summer coat, a cap, and light footwear. We had been weakened by the many weeks of travel from Tallinn, and we hadn't been given our meager daily ration of food. So some prisoners fainted. We helped them along until horses were fetched, and then we put them on horse-drawn sledges.

Upon arrival at the camp, we were registered, taken to a sauna, and given our food ration for the day. The barracks were warm, and I soon fell into a deep sleep. However, in the middle of the night, I awoke with acute pain caused by inflammation in my ears. The next morning I was given medical attention and was excused from work. But prison officials were angry that I couldn't work and gave me a beating. I was thrown into solitary confinement for a month, as they said I was "disrupting the peace in the camp." Thankfully, medication from the infirmary was provided, and the time in solitary gave me opportunity to regain my health.

The first winter in the camp was the hardest. The work, mostly in the open-pit nickel mine, was exhausting, and the little food we

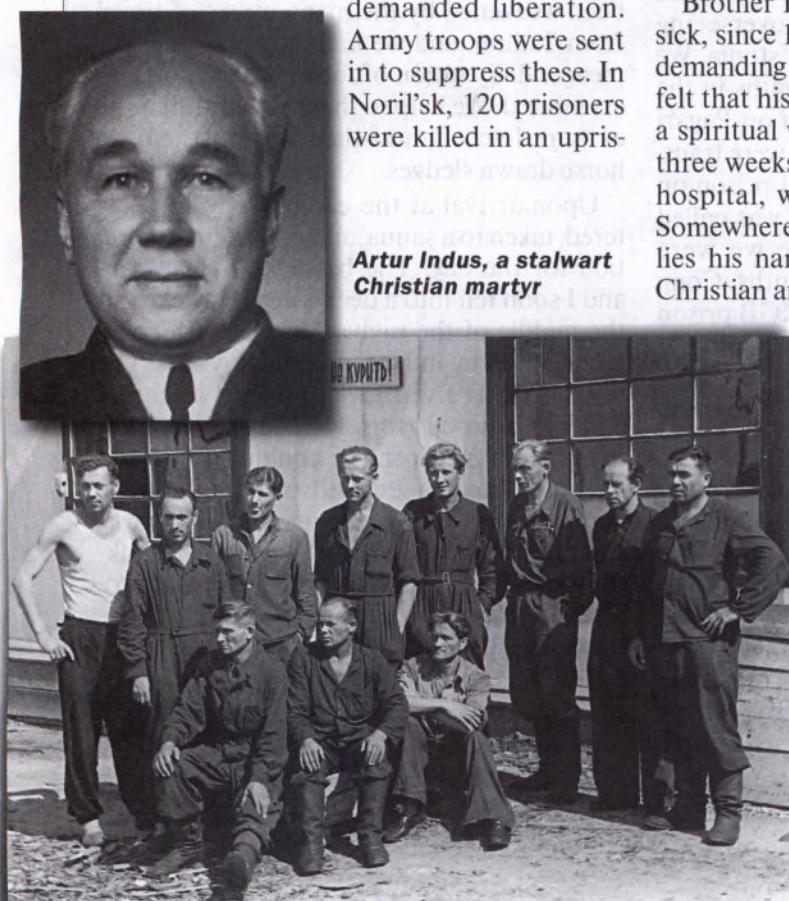
received was inferior. When many showed symptoms of scurvy, we were given vitamin C injections to alleviate the disease. Happily, though, we met many fellow Witnesses in the camp, who were from Moldova, Poland, and Ukraine.

Changes in Prison Life

In the spring of 1952, prisoners started to receive a small salary, which allowed us to buy food to augment our diet. Also, some Witnesses began to receive food in boxes with false bottoms in which Bible literature was concealed. A Witness from Moldova once received a tin of lard. As the lard was consumed, the stomach lining of a pig appeared. Inside it were three issues of *The Watchtower!*

When Stalin died, on March 5, 1953, prison life changed dramatically. Initially, strikes and uprisings broke out as prisoners demanded liberation. Army troops were sent in to suppress these. In Noril'sk, 120 prisoners were killed in an uprising.

Artur Indus, a stalwart Christian martyr



**Prisoners in Siberia, 1956.
I am the fourth from the left
in the back row**

ing; but the Witnesses did not become involved, and none of them were killed or wounded. In the summer of 1953, work in the nickel mine came to a standstill for two weeks. Afterward, prison life got easier. Some prisoners were freed, and others had their prison terms shortened.

A Faithful Witness

Following this time of camp turmoil, I was transferred to a camp to the south near the city of Tayshet, in the province of Irkutsk. There I met up with Artur Indus, who had first studied the Bible with me. He had refused to work in the camp as a doctor, choosing instead to accept more physically demanding work. He explained: "My conscience did not allow me to authorize sick leave for healthy prisoners who had been given positions of responsibility, while truly sick prisoners were forced to work."

Brother Indus was by then emaciated and sick, since he had not done much physically demanding work before. Yet he told me he felt that his suffering had refined his heart in a spiritual way. We were together for about three weeks. Then he was taken to the camp hospital, where he died in January 1954. Somewhere in the endless subarctic forest lies his nameless grave. He died a faithful Christian and awaits the resurrection.

Release and Journey Home

In 1956 a Commission of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet was sent to our camp to review the prisoners' files. When I appeared before the commission, the general in charge asked: "What will you do after you are released?"

**With my wife, in front
of the former KGB
headquarters where we
were often interrogated**

"We will see when the time comes," I replied.

I was excused from the room, and when I was invited back, the general said: "You are the Soviet Union's worst enemy—you are an ideological enemy." Yet he added: "We are going to set you free, but we are going to follow you." I was freed on July 26, 1956.

For two days I visited with Ukrainian Witnesses in Suyetikha, a village near Tayshet, to which they had been exiled in 1951. Next I stopped for four days in the district of Tomsk, near where Mother had been exiled. From the train station, I walked 15 miles to the village of Grigoryevka. There I found conditions that were even worse than those many of us had experienced in the camps! My sister Leida had been released from a prison camp in Kazakhstan and had come to the area some months earlier to be with Mother. But since her passport had been confiscated, she had not as yet been able to return to Estonia.

Under Pressure in Estonia

In time, I arrived back home in Estonia and went straight to my parents' farm. I discovered, as had been rumored in Siberia, that the government had destroyed all our buildings! A few days later, I contracted polio. I was in the hospital for a long time and continued therapy afterward. To this day, I walk with a limp.



Soon I got a job with a company for which I had worked during the summer of 1943, the Lehtse Peat Company. Through them I was given an apartment, and when Mother and Leida returned from exile in December 1956, they came to live with me in Lehtse.

In November 1957, I married Ella Kikas, who had also recently returned from a prison camp in Siberia. Two months later we moved to Tartu, where we got a little apartment in a private house. I was finally able to get a job as a driver at the Consumer Cooperative of the District of Tartu.

While in Siberia I had translated ten *Watchtower* study articles from Russian into Estonian and had brought them home with me. Later, we received the book *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*, which we also translated into Estonian. We then made typewritten copies of the book. In the meantime, the KGB kept up their surveillance. Since we were familiar with their tracking methods, we were always watchful and careful, like animals who were being hunted.

Targets of the KGB

In the early 1960's, the KGB initiated a slander campaign against the Witnesses. My wife and I were major targets. Newspapers began to carry slanderous articles, and we were berated on radio and television. Twice the KGB held public meetings at my workplace. Also, a satiric comedy about me was staged by professional actors at the Estonia Theater in Tallinn. The situation reminded me of David's words: "Those sitting in the gate began concerning themselves about me, and I was the subject of the songs of drinkers of intoxicating liquor."—Psalm 69:12.

These efforts to disgrace us continued until 1965 when a final meeting took place, at the Worker's Public Health Building in Tartu. Both Ella and I were there, as were KGB agents and a capacity crowd. Several times when Ella was questioned, the audience responded with applause. It was clear that the audience was on our side. The KGB agents were disappointed and angered by the outcome.

Spiritual Hunger Satisfied

Even though the Communists tried to stop the dissemination of our literature, after about 1965 we were able to provide our Christian brothers with a relatively good supply. However, the clandestine activity of translating and then printing in secret hideaways demanded much time and energy. Re-

ferring to my underground activity and method of transporting literature, a KGB agent once said to me: "You, Toom, are like a suitcase with a false bottom."

Our meetings, of course, had to be held in secret and in small groups. And our preaching was done informally. Our brothers had to be prepared to have their apartments searched at any time. So the Watch Tower Society's literature had to be hidden away very carefully. Yet, even under these conditions, many who loved Bible truth were found and took their stand on the side of the Kingdom.

When Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev began his reforms in the 1980's, we realized more freedom to serve God. Eventually, in 1991, the Soviet Union disintegrated, and Jehovah's Witnesses received legal recognition. Currently we have four congregations in Tartu, and recently the construction of our own Kingdom Hall complex was completed. There are now more than 3,800 Witnesses sharing in the ministry in Estonia, compared with perhaps 40 or 50 when I began preaching well over half a century ago.

A Satisfying Christian Life

Never have I doubted that I made the right decision when I took my stand to serve Jehovah. I look back with a heart full of deep satisfaction, happy to see that Jehovah's organization continues to move forward vigorously and that there are yet more and more who want to serve Jehovah.

I am very grateful to Jehovah that his love and protection have carried my wife and me through these many years. Keeping in mind that Jehovah's righteous system is close at hand has given us spiritual strength. Surely, as we consider the marvelous growth in the numbers of those worshiping Jehovah, we are convinced that the suffering we have experienced has not been in vain.—Hebrews 6:10; 2 Peter 3:11, 12.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Flying—How Did It Start? How Safe Is It?

Rio de Janeiro—Beautiful and Challenging

Is It Wrong to Pronounce God's Name?

YOUNG PEOPLE ASK . . .

"At my high school, it's like an epidemic. We don't have drugs, or guns, or fighting—we have gossip. That's the big problem."

—16-year-old Michelle.*

SOME say it is delicious. Others say it is poison. A steady stream of it flows through magazines, newspapers, and television programs. It is also the spice of many conversations. What is it? Casual talk about people and their personal affairs, otherwise known as gossip.

Perhaps nothing grabs our attention more quickly than the words, *"Have you heard the latest?"* What follows those words may be fact or fiction—or perhaps a little of each. Whatever the case, the temptation to engage in gossip can be powerful. "It's so hard *not* to be interested in other people's business," says 17-year-old Lori. "There's an unspoken promise between you and your friends that when you find out something juicy, you *have* to tell them."

Why We Do It

Why do we find gossip so intriguing? For one thing, humans are social creatures. In other words, people are interested in people. It is only natural, then, that sooner or later our conversation will veer toward the latest goings-on in the lives of friends and acquaintances.

* Some names in this article have been changed.



What's So Bad About Gossip?

Is this bad? Not always. Quite often, informal conversation provides useful information, such as who is getting married, who just had a baby, and who is sick. Even first-century Christians discussed the latest happenings in the lives of fellow believers. (Ephesians 6:21, 22; Colossians 4:8, 9) Really, casual talk about friends and acquaintances is an integral part of the way we communicate and maintain healthy relationships.

The Pitfalls of Harmful Gossip

Sometimes, though, discussion about the lives of others is motivated by something other than concern. For example, 18-year-old Deidra says: "People gossip to gain popularity. They think they'll be [popular] by knowing a story that's better than the one they've just been told." The desire to impress others might even impel the gossiper

to distort the facts. "If you know the story, you have the power to manipulate it," explains 17-year-old Rachel. "It's like your canvas, and you can make the story as abstract as you want."

At times, untrue gossip is used as a means of retaliation. "I spread a false rumor about my friend once," says 12-year-old Amy. "I did it because she had said something about me." The result? "At first I was thinking, Wow, I really got her back." However, Amy goes on to explain: "Soon it got out of hand and I started to hurt a lot more from doing it than if I had kept my mouth shut in the first place."

It is easy to see how gossip can become, as one mental-health expert puts it, "like a flame that gets out of hand really quickly." (Compare James 3:5, 6.) When this happens, the results can be disastrous. For example, what if something is spread that should have remained confidential? Or what if the gossip is false and by broadcasting it you ruin someone's good reputation? "One of my friends started the rumor that I do drugs, which is not true," says 12-year-old Bill. "That really hurt."

Silencing Malicious Gossip

With good reason the Bible says that "death and life are in the power of the tongue." (Proverbs 18:21) Yes, our words can be like tools for building or like weapons

for destroying. Sad to say, many today use their tongue for the latter purpose. They are like some described by the psalmist David who have "sharpened their tongue just like a sword, who have aimed their arrow, bitter speech, to shoot from concealed places at someone blameless."—Psalm 64:2-4.

Those who want to please God should not spread untrue reports, for the Bible states that "false lips are something detestable to Jehovah." (Proverbs 12:22) Deliberately starting or passing on a rumor that you know is untrue is lying, and the Bible says that Christians are to "put away falsehood" and to "speak truth each one . . . with his neighbor."—Ephesians 4:25.

So before saying something about another person, ask yourself: 'Do I really know the facts? Will what I say cause my listener to think less of the person I am talking about? If so, what is my motive in saying it?' Remember this: The fact that something is *true* does not in itself justify spreading it—especially if the information will harm someone's reputation.

Another question to ask is, 'How will my gossiping affect *my* reputation?' Yes, by gossiping you say something about yourself. For example, Kristen says: "If you can afford to spend so much time talking about other people, then your own life must not be very interesting." Lisa found that her reputation as a gossip cost her the confidence of her

The person who gossips to you about others . . . will likely gossip to others about you



closest friend. "It got to the point where she questioned whether I could be trusted," she says. "It was awful—I had to *prove* that she could depend on me."

If you are known as a gossip, people might come to view you as someone likely to do injury, and they may no longer seek your company. A Bible proverb states: "A gossip goes around and tells secrets; don't have anything to do with a person whose mouth is always open." (Proverbs 20:19, Beck) But did you know that you can contribute to harmful gossip without even uttering a word?

Listening—The Other Side of Gossip

It takes at least two people to engage in gossip—a speaker and a listener. While the listener may seem less culpable than the speaker, the Bible presents a different slant on the matter. At Proverbs 17:4, we read: "The evildoer is paying attention to the lip of hurtfulness. A falsifier is giving ear to the tongue causing adversities." So the *listener* of gossip bears a heavy responsibility. "In some ways it is even worse to listen to gossip than to speak it," says writer Stephen M. Wylen. Why is this so? "By providing an eager audience," Wylen continues, "you encourage the speaker to go on."

What should you do, then, when hurtful gossip reaches your ears? Without taking on an air of self-righteousness, you could simply say: 'Let's change the subject' or, 'I don't really feel comfortable talking about this. After all, she is not here to defend herself.'

But what if people draw away from you because you refuse to share in their conversations? In one sense this could work out for your protection. How? Well, remember that the person who gossips to you about others will likely gossip to others about you. Therefore, you can spare yourself much grief by drawing close to youths and adults who do not tear down others with their speech. Says Wylen: "Whatever loss you suffer by not gos-

"The World's Greatest Gossip Engine"

Have you heard the latest? With the advent of electronic mail, E-mail, gossip has now gone high tech. In fact, writer Seth Godin calls E-mail "the world's greatest gossip engine." While acknowledging its benefits, he warns: "Someone can start with something that's a fact or a misstatement, and suddenly thousands of people are potentially privy to it."

E-mail can reach a wide audience—and reach them quickly. Says Godin: "It's the first new form of communication that combines the weight and measured thought of something written with the speed and instant tenacity of a telephone call." Wisely, then, when sending E-mail, be sure to make the intent of your message clear. And by all means, do not pass on unconfirmed information to friends.

siping, you will soon see that you have lost nothing but the opportunity to make yourself miserable. In the end you will come out ahead because you will gain a reputation as a trustworthy person."

Most important, you will acquire a good name with God. He is interested in the way we speak of others, for Jesus Christ warned: "Every unprofitable saying that men speak, they will render an account concerning it on Judgment Day; for by your words you will be declared righteous, and by your words you will be condemned."—Matthew 12: 36, 37.

It is the course of wisdom, then, to follow the apostle Paul's admonition: "Make it your aim to live quietly and to mind your own business." (1 Thessalonians 4:11) Doing so will help you to maintain good relationships with others and a good standing with God.

CHEMICAL PESTICIDES KILL MORE THAN BUGS

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN BRAZIL

IT'S perfect," says farmer Domingos dos Santos as he looks over his crop of cassava plants on his farm in southern Brazil. He has reason to be satisfied. The leaves of his plants look as if no harmful insect has ever set foot on them. Another feat of chemical insecticides? No. "Last year and this year," says Domingos, "I didn't have to buy one drop of insecticide."

Domingos belongs to a growing group of farmers who are reluctant to use chemical pesticides to protect their crops.* Instead, they use methods that do away with or, at least, reduce the use of chemicals. "What kind of methods?" I asked Sandro Müller, an agronomist who has been conducting some experiments at a citrus plantation near São Paulo. "Why does it make sense for farmers to hold back on the use of the insecticide duster in the first place?"

The Pesticide Cycle

To help me visualize one dark side of the use of chemical insecticides, Sandro says: "Imagine a group of police officers chasing a bunch of bank robbers. To get away, the robbers dash into a busy office building. With the robbers lost in the crowd, the police call in a helicopter that drops a gas bomb on the office complex. This kills not only the robbers but also innocent office workers and the building's security guards.

* The most widely used types of pesticides are (1) insecticides, (2) herbicides, (3) fungicides, and (4) rodenticides. Each type is named after the pest it controls.

Something like this happens when a farmer bombards his crop repeatedly with potent insecticides. They kill harmful insects, the robbers, but they also knock out useful ones, the security guards."

"But at least the crop has been saved," I reply. Yet Sandro points out that pesticides used indiscriminately start a harmful cycle. How so? Some bugs survive the spraying because they are resistant to certain pesticides. Afterward they find themselves sitting in the middle of a crop free from all 'security guards,' or useful insects—courtesy of the farmer's spraying.

Plenty of food and the lack of natural enemies guarantee a rapid increase in the insecticide-resistant bug population, which forces the farmer to spray again, perhaps resorting to an even more potent type of insecticide. In some bean-growing areas in South America, farmers spray every week. The end result of this cycle? "If you sow pesticides," said one farmer, "you reap poison."

Pesticide Use—A Lesser Evil?

Research shows that the man who is poisoning pests is also poisoning himself. In Brazil alone, reported the magazine *Guia Rural*, pesticides poison some 700,000 people each year—that is an average of one person every 45 seconds! And the World Health Organization reports that worldwide 220,000 people die each year from exposure to toxic pesticides. Besides,

PESTICIDE HERITAGE

Even if integrated pest management were practiced by all farmers worldwide starting today, the pesticide problem would be far from over. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) estimates that there are more than 100,000 tons of leftover pesticides stored in developing countries. "A significant part of the stocks," notes *Our Planet*, a magazine published by the United Nations Environment Programme, "are left-overs of pesticides obtained under aid agreements." These supplies include large amounts of DDT and other pesticides that are now regarded as hazardous waste. If this pesticide heritage is not removed, comments *Our Planet*, "disasters can be expected."

Cleaning up, though, is a costly business. Removing the pesticide heritage in Africa alone may cost up to \$100 million. Who will foot the bill? The FAO calls upon the donor lands to help do so. Yet, as the FAO points out, "assistance should also be sought from agrochemical companies, which often played a role in excessive or unnecessary pesticide supplies." So far, though, these companies have remained "reluctant to make financial contributions towards the clean-up of old stocks."

pesticides are doing great harm to our environment.

Though some people today feel that opening a pesticide container is much like opening Pandora's box, using pesticides is often seen by others as the lesser of two evils. This is how the argument goes: It is either pesticides and food or no pesticides and hunger. After all, the number of people on earth is growing while the amount of land fit for farming is shrinking. If global starvation is to be prevented, crops have to be protected against harmful insects that are capable of destroying them.

Clearly, pests constitute a major problem. Fortunately, though, a growing number of farmers around the world are learning that there is an approach that is better than dusting crops with heavy doses of pesticides. It is called integrated pest management, or IPM.

IPM—An Alternative

"What is IPM?" I asked Professor Evônio Berti Filho, who is head of the Entomology Department at the University of São Paulo in Piracicaba and a leading researcher in natural pest control. Professor Berti explained that the goal of IPM is to reduce

insecticide use to the minimum necessary and to employ only those insecticides that kill specific harmful bugs. Restrained spraying is then augmented by natural forms of pest control.

One such form of pest control is crop rotation. For example, from year to year, a farmer may rotate crops of corn with beans. Bugs that love corn but do not care for beans either starve or move out in search of neighborhoods with more corn. Then, the next time corn is planted, most of the bugs may be gone—at least for a while. And by the time the corn-loving bugs return en masse, another crop rotation may soon force them to pack up again.

Biological control is another component of IPM. It consists of farmers recruiting as allies insects, bacteria, viruses, fungi, and other natural enemies of pests. For example, Brazilian researchers observed that in nature many caterpillars died after contracting a virus called *baculovirus*. They figured that since the virus is harmless to humans, they could spray crops with a liquid containing this virus and it would work as a biological insecticide against caterpillars feasting on soybean and cassava crops.

MODIFIED PLANTS

Why Controversial?

Biotechnology is another weapon in the fight against pests. With man's growing knowledge about the inner workings of the DNA molecule, researchers have been able to combine DNA fragments of different species and develop plants that come with built-in defense mechanisms against pests.

Corn is one example. Genetic engineers transferred a gene from another source into the DNA of corn. The introduced gene, in turn, produced a protein that proved to be deadly for pests. The result is a genetically manipulated corn plant that holds its ground against its insect enemies.

Nevertheless, engineered plants are controversial. Opponents argue that they may make people ill or that modified crops could become thriving weeds. Some scientists warn that plants equipped with an insect-killing gene will hasten resistance in pests. "We should temper our enthusiasm about genetic engineering," cautions entomologist Berti. "Remember how thrilled people were in the 1950's when insecticides were hailed as miracles? Today we know better. Miracle insecticides have given rise to miracle insects. Who knows what problems today's engineered miracle plants will cause?"

Even if all biological problems can be solved, some people have moral concerns about scientists' meddling with genetic codes. Some feel that biotechnology may resolve old pesticide problems but leave us with new ethical problems instead.

It worked. Caterpillars died a few days after chewing the sprayed crops. As a bonus, the dead caterpillars also provide the farmer with free ammunition for future battles. How?

"The farmer simply puts the dead, infected caterpillars in a blender," explained Professor Berti, "pulverizes them, filters the

blended mass, and stores the resulting liquid in a freezer." Then the farmer thaws the virus-infected liquid, mixes it with water, and sprays the mixture on his crop.

This biological insecticide may lack the swift punch of its chemical counterparts, yet it has, says one researcher, at least a 90-percent success rate.

Beating Bugs—The Natural Way

Recruiting useful insects as allies to combat harmful bugs is another important part of biological pest control. Yet, despite efforts to convince farmers to employ this form of bug control, many farmers in Brazil and elsewhere are still reluctant to do so. Why? It seems that the idea of purposely releasing insects on farmland makes about as much sense to farmers as releasing cockroaches in apartments would make to city dwellers. "To most farmers," Professor Berti told me, "all insects are plant eaters. The last thing a farmer wants is more of them."

Clearly, then, biological pest control will gain popularity only when farmers understand that some insects are their allies. For example, fruit growers in California, U.S.A., enlisted the help of ladybugs in the late 1800's. At the time, harmful insects, accidentally imported from Australia, had attacked and virtually eliminated all lemon and orange trees. It took the ladybugs less than two years to get the insect invaders under control, saving California's citrus groves!

Control That Makes a Difference

Today some farmers in Brazil are rediscovering the role of the *joaninha* (little Joanna, the name for the ladybug here) as a reliable 'security guard.' "*Joaninhas* combat plant lice in this citrus growth," Sandro told me as we walked along rows of orange trees in the citrus plantation under his care.

He stopped at an orange tree, reached for a twig with young leaves, and bent it down. Aphids, or plant lice—sluggish insects the size of a pinhead—sat motionless with their beaks anchored in the leaves, sucking sap.

These lice, though, are food for the 'security guard.' In fact, among some types of ladybugs, one individual bug may munch on 800 lice during its life span. Is that enough to make a difference? "It is," said Sandro, "if you leave enough grass and weeds between the citrus trees to provide a home for plenty of ladybugs and other natural enemies." In the past, when biological control was not practiced in this orchard, noted Sandro, chemical insecticides were sprayed every two weeks. Today, thanks to natural enemies like the ladybugs and other insects, the need to spray insecticides has dropped to every two or three months.

The ladybug is only one of many natural allies that farmers count on. Bees, wasps, birds, spiders, frogs, toads, to name a few, are all members of the round-the-clock pest-control army. Even fish help to replace the spray can. How?

In China, reports researcher Xiao Fan, of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry in Nanking, Kiangsu Province, the need for insecticides was reduced when fish began to be raised in flooded rice fields. Farmers pull a rope over the plants so that the insects drop into the water. "Because the planthoppers pretend to be dead when they fall from the rice plants," explains Fan, "they are easily eaten by the fish."

Using less pesticide also allows useful insects to survive. These insects join forces with the bug-eating fish in fighting pests. Thanks to biological pest control, says Fan, the use of large amounts of poisonous insecticides is a thing of the past. The health and ecological benefits, he adds, are obvious.



A ladybug may eat hundreds of pests

Granted, farmers are embracing IPM more for economy than for ecology. After all, cutting down on expensive pesticides saves money, and that means greater profits—an incentive with a timeless and global appeal. Nevertheless, if more economic profits also lead to less poisoned crops and less environmental damage, then IPM brings benefits to farmers and consumers as well as the ecology. As one observer put it, with IPM "everybody wins."

EMERALDS

VERY PRECIOUS AMONG GEMS



PRIZED for their lustrous green color, emeralds have graced the crown jewels and have embellished the thrones of some of the oldest royal dynasties in history. Today, as in the past, they are a symbol of wealth and power.

Worldwide, emeralds are usually considered to be more precious than diamonds. As a rule, only rubies are considered more valuable. Yet, claims geologic technician Terri Ottaway, "carat for carat, emeralds of the highest quality are the most expensive gems in the world." Depending on its quality, an emerald that would fit into the palm of your hand and weigh one tenth of an ounce could be worth one million dollars!

Part of the value of emeralds comes from their scarcity. They are a type of beryl crystal. Emeralds are formed from a combination of the common elements aluminum and silicon with the rare element beryllium. Small amounts of trace elements, either chromium or vanadium, give emeralds their spectacular green tint.

Mined From Ancient Times

For thousands of years, almost all the world's supply of emeralds came from Egypt. The fabled Cleopatra's Mines, located about 440 miles southeast of Cairo, were vigorously worked first by the Egyptians and later by the Romans and the Turks. What an arduous enterprise that must have been! The blistering

desert sun and the abrasive dust and grime in the underground mines must have caused severe hardship for the workers. In addition, all supplies had to be brought in by caravan from the Nile River, a week's journey, at best. Despite these enormous difficulties, the mines were in almost continuous operation from about 330 B.C.E. to 1237 C.E.

In ancient times people coveted emeralds, both for their beauty and for their supposed magical, curative powers. Emeralds were touted as a cure for many kinds of diseases. It was also believed that they could influence fertility and desire in females. Understandably, a brisk and profitable trade developed between Egypt and other nations as far away as India.

This monopoly lasted until the Spanish conquistadores arrived in South America in the early part of the 16th century. Shortly afterward, Jiménez de Quesada conquered what is now known as Colombia. Some years later, in 1558, the Spaniards located a mine at Muzo. The emeralds found there were breathtaking in both quality and size.

The Spaniards promptly seized control of the mine and enslaved the local population, using them to do the exhausting, dangerous work of digging out the gems. Within a few years, a veritable flood of big, almost flawless emeralds



All emeralds: S. R. Perren Gem and Gold Room, Royal Ontario Museum; Ancient Egypt Gallery, Royal Ontario Museum

reached Europe, many of them finding their way into the hands of the Ottoman Turks, the Persian Shahs, and even the royalty of India. These stones were sculpted and engraved, becoming the foundation for many priceless jewel collections.

High Security Ineffective

Today the world's poorest people painfully extract these gems from a hard, reluctant earth, causing journalist Fred Ward to observe: "It is one of the emerald trade's exquisite ironies that most of the people who find the stones cannot even imagine accumulating enough money to wear one." Since the temptation for workers to hide a stone and smuggle it out is almost irresistible, most mines operate in-house security forces. Guards toting machine guns watch workers intently as they laboriously dig and scrape.

Despite these measures, however, experts claim that much of the worldwide trade in emeralds remains illegal. "Most emeralds move off the record, untaxed, unseen, buried in a world market that the trade calls black. Almost every high-quality emerald is smuggled at some time in its history," says *National Geographic* magazine.

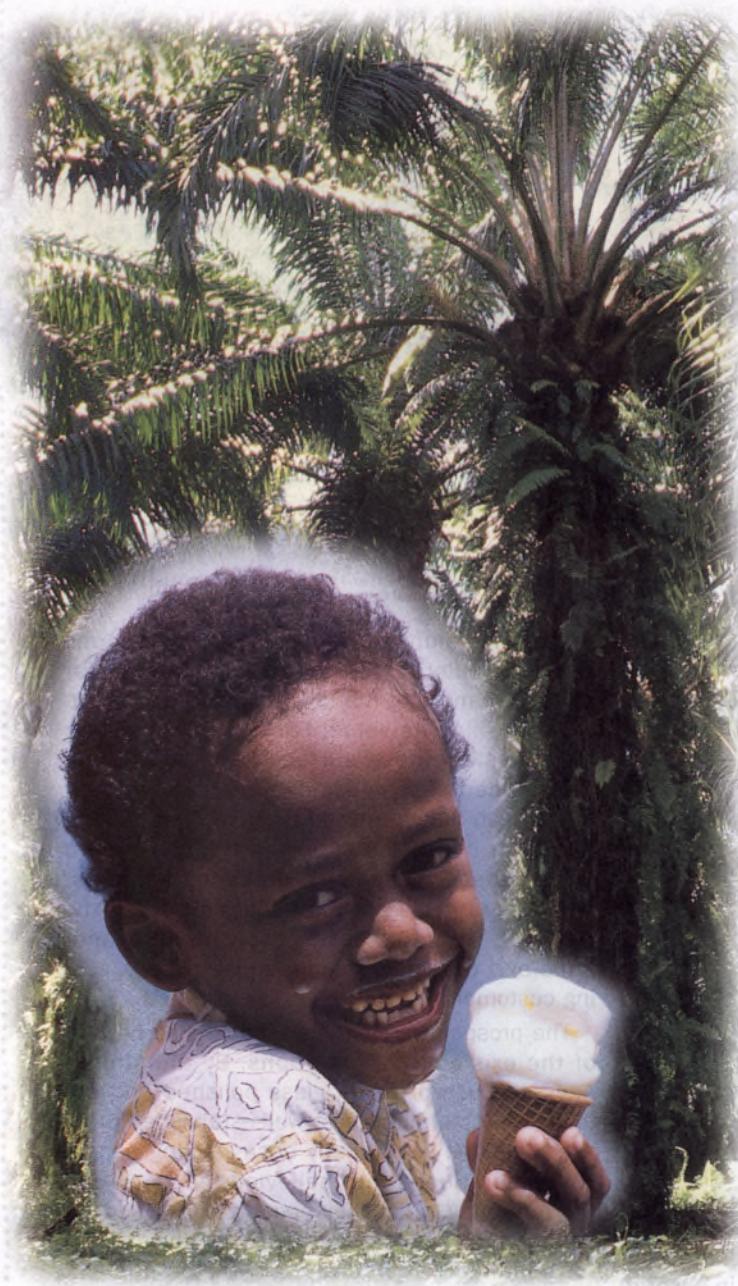
Buyer Beware!

Because of the way they grow, emerald crystals have many natural, internal imperfections

called inclusions. When these imperfections reach the outer surface of a stone, they appear as cracks, marring the stone's finish and greatly diminishing its value. For centuries dealers have masked these surface flaws by soaking the cleaned and polished gems in a hot bath of oil, such as cedarwood or palm. The heating forces air out of the cracks in the stones and lets oil seep in, effectively obscuring the flaws. The treated gems are then sold as top quality. However, within a year or two, the oil evaporates and the imperfections are exposed, leaving customers puzzled and disheartened.

The prospective customer should also beware of the existence of imitations. By the Middle Ages, the use of green glass polished and cut to imitate emeralds was a well-established practice. Over the years many unsuspecting people have been duped into believing that they had the real thing when they actually possessed an imitation. *National Geographic* observes: "Professionals are fooled along with the public." Tests, however, are available that enable a reputable gemologist to guarantee an emerald's authenticity.

Although man's greed has somewhat tarnished their image, emeralds are nevertheless still beautiful, rare, and valuable. They remain a precious marvel of God's creation.



The Oil Palm

A Multipurpose Tree

By *Awake!* correspondent in the Solomon Islands

GUADALCANAL—to many people the name of the island is synonymous with some of the most savage fighting of World War II. Today, however, any who return to this former battleground in the Solomon Islands will find a very different scene—seemingly endless regiments, not of soldiers, but of stately oil palms.

The soil beneath these lush and majestic oil palms once covered tons of leftover bombs and other hazardous war materials. But these war implements have been removed to make way for the oil palm. How did cultivation of this tree get started? And why can we say that this beautiful tall tree is multipurpose?

A Rich History

The first modern description of a tree resembling the oil palm was recorded in the mid-15th century by the Venetian Alvise Ca'da Mosto, who explored the western coast of Africa. Then, nearly 500 years ago, African slaves took the fruit with them to countries across the Atlantic. Thus palm oil has emerged as one of the most widely used vegetable oils in the world today. Oil palms yield more oil per acre than any other oil-producing plant. In addition, the oil palm is a perennial plant that bears fruit and oil for 25 to 30 years.

An important factor in the production of palm oil, especially in some lands in the Far East, was a discovery made in the late 1970's. Previously it was thought that oil palms were mainly pollinated by the wind. Therefore, a poor crop was attributed to unfavorable climatic conditions. However, recent research has revealed that pollination is done mainly by insects!

Thus, the transfer from West Africa to the Far East of insects that could pollinate the trees proved to be beneficial.

The oil palm's reddish-orange fruit yields two kinds of oil. Both are used in a variety of products, some of which you likely use. Before we consider these, let's visit a palm oil mill and see how the oil is extracted.

Processing the Golden Fluid

As we approach the mill, our tour guide greets us and takes us inside. All around us heavy machinery is operating. The first step in processing the fruit of the oil palm, he explains, is to place it in a huge cylindrical steam oven. Each bunch of fruit has about 200 date-size fruitlets, which are tightly packed together. The steam oven sterilizes the fruit and helps to loosen the fruitlets from the bunch.

The next step is to separate the fruitlets from the bunch by using a machine called a stripper. The detached fruitlets are then sent to a huge blender, where the fleshy outer pulp is separated from the nut. This fibrous outer flesh is then squeezed in a huge extruder, or press, to obtain crude palm oil. After being cleaned and refined, the palm oil is ready to be shipped.

There is, however, a second type of oil. This comes from the nut. The oil palm's nut must first be cracked open to get at the kernel. Afterward, the kernels are pressed to release their precious liquid. This oil is called palm-kernel oil.

The residue from the kernels is used to produce a nutritious livestock feed. Similarly, after the fruitlets have been stripped away, the remnants of the fruit bunches are returned to the fields to serve as mulch. The fruit's fiber and shells are also recycled, being used as fuel for the mill's boilers. Quite an efficient operation!

From Ice Cream to Face Cream

Palm oil is the second most widely used vegetable oil in the world, after soybean oil. *The World Book Encyclopedia* says: "During the 1700's, the English used palm oil as a medicine and hand cream." Today, however, it can be found in ice cream, margarine, shortening, and cooking oils, as well as in such nonfood products as soaps and cosmetics.

Two Tons a Day by Hand

Thud . . . thud. Thud . . . thud! The air is filled with the sound of falling fruit bunches as workers on the plantation harvest the oil palms. How do they reach the fruit when it is so high up in the trees?

Using a sharp curved blade that is attached to the end of an extendable pole, harvesters cut fruit off trees that are sometimes the height of a four-story building. On an average day, each worker will harvest between 80 and 100 bunches of fruit and carry them to the roadside for pickup. With each bunch of fruit weighing close to 55 pounds, that adds up to a lot of lifting! It takes four and a half tons of fruit to produce one ton of palm oil.



Palm-kernel oil is also used in the manufacture of margarine as well as chocolate and other confectioneries. But that is not the end of the oils' uses. After additional processing, components of palm and palm-kernel oil are made into pharmaceuticals, soaps, detergents, candles, and even explosives!

Indeed, the oil palm has found a welcome home in the Solomon Islands. The impact of the oil palm on the economy is highlighted by the fact that 13 percent of the country's exports come from this tree.

When we look up at an oil palm, it is amusing to imagine that a product of this bright-orange fruit may be dripping off a laughing child's mouth in the form of ice cream and that it may be on his mother's face, in her makeup. Yes, the oil palm is a versatile tree, and we can be thankful for its bountiful fruitage.

WATCHING THE WORLD

Bible Proofreading Errors

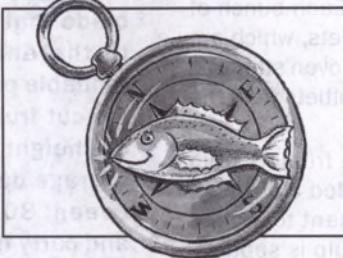
"Errors in Bible printing were fairly commonplace in the 17th and 18th centuries," notes *Bible Review* magazine, "but that doesn't mean they were taken lightly." For example, what became known as the Fool Bible came out during the reign of Charles I. In Psalm 14, the printers mistakenly changed a word. As a result, the first verse read: "The fool hath said in his heart there is a God." This brought a fine of 3,000 pounds. Another company, Barker and Lucas, was fined 300 pounds in 1631 for omitting a word in what was called the Adulterous Bible. This put them out of business. Their version read: "Thou shalt commit adultery." Similar was the Sin On Bible, of 1716. Where Jesus told the man he healed to "sin no more," it has him saying "sin on more." Not to be overlooked is the Vinegar Bible, published in 1717. The chapter heading over Luke 20 says, "The parable of the Vinegar," instead of reading, "The Parable of the Vineyard."

Roller Cops

In an effort to get more in touch with people in their neighborhoods, some police officers in North America are putting on in-line skates. Patrolling on foot, horseback, and bicycle is also becoming more common, reports *The Toronto Star*. Police are using skates in such big cities as Chicago, Miami, and Montreal. One of the pioneer roller cops, Sergeant Bill John-

ston of the Fort Lauderdale police force, says: "It's been accepted wholeheartedly from the get-go. With skates on, you kind of become more public-oriented, more approachable." *The Toronto Star* points out that "being on skates is an advantage—surprising car thieves in parking lots, for example."

Fish Compass



How do rainbow trout navigate? New Zealand biologists have found that they have "a magnetic compass in their noses," reports *New Scientist* magazine. Many birds and reptiles and some mammals can orient themselves relative to earth's magnetic field. But scientists had never identified north-sensing cells, cells believed to contain the magnetic mineral magnetite. In trout, researchers at the University of Auckland discovered a nerve fiber in the fish's face that fires when exposed to a magnetic field. Tracing the fiber led them back to the fish's nose, where they found nerve cells that contain magnetite.

Soccer Violence

The intense rivalries between various teams participating in last year's World Cup soccer competition sparked

celebrations that often ended in violence. In Mexico, more than 1,500 police were called out to control fans of the Mexican team. Over 200 people were detained by the police, reports Mexico's newspaper *El Universal*. A firecracker thrown during the mayhem exploded in the face of one young fan, destroying part of his skull. In Argentina, Belgium, and Brazil, celebrations also deteriorated, resulting in injuries and arrests. In France, reports Mexico City's newspaper *Excelsior*, about 1,000 people were arrested in connection with the World Cup matches, and 1,586 were prohibited from ever reentering the country.

Your Hands and Health

"When a person sneezes and puts his hand across his mouth or blows his nose, the hands need washing before touching telephones or doorknobs," says *The Medical Post* of Canada. *The Post* quoted the U.S. Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology, which says that "80% of common infections are spread directly by hands and touching, not through the air." Dr. Audrey Karlinsky of the University of Toronto recommends washing frequently and rubbing soap into your hands "for 10 to 15 seconds, taking care to get in between the fingers and under the nails." After that, she suggests, you should rinse your hands in hot water and use a paper towel to turn off the faucet. How can you get children to take enough time?

Have them recite the whole alphabet while they soap up, suggests Dr. Karlinsky.

New Blood Virus

Following the discovery of a new virus in the blood of European donors, French health authorities have decided to set up a "permanent scientific watch group," reports the French newspaper *Le Monde*. The infectious agent, known as transfusion transmitted virus (TTV), was first identified in Japan in 1997, where 10 percent of blood donors are infected. Doctors do not yet know the virus' exact pathological role, but studies in Britain revealed the presence of TTV in 25 percent of a group of patients suffering from severe liver infections of unknown origin. At present, there is no standardized screening process for this virus, states *Le Monde*.

First Measured 'Sunquake'

Analyzing images taken by the European Space Agency's Soho spacecraft, researchers Valentina Zharkova of Scotland's Glasgow University and Alexander Kosovichev of Stanford University, in California, have detected a 'sunquake' for the first time. "It came after a moderate-sized flare—an explosion of hydrogen and helium above the Sun's surface—was detected in July 1996," reports *The Daily Telegraph* of London. With a magnitude of 11.3, it had waves two miles high and produced ripples similar to those caused when a stone is thrown into a pond. These ripples traveled up to 70,000 miles across the

sun's surface, reaching a speed of 250,000 miles an hour. This 'sunquake' released about the same amount of energy as the United States consumes in 20 years and 40,000 times the seismic power of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, which measured 8.3 on the Richter scale.

Bundle of Joy—And More Work!



"Many young couples underestimate the additional work load that comes with a child. This often leads to conflict between the mates after the child's birth," writes Germany's *Nassauische Neue Presse*. A study carried on at the University of Groningen, in the Netherlands, showed that young mothers are often dissatisfied because of the radical changes brought by the birth of a child. On average, mothers need an additional 40 hours a week for the child—of which 6 are for the extra cleaning, laundry, and cooking required and 34 are devoted directly to their offspring. For fathers, 17 hours devoted directly to the child was their only additional activity. According to the report, the marital stress "is not so much a question of who changes the diapers or gets up at night to bottle-feed the baby but, rather, of the dividing up of the housework."

TV and Accidents

Children who spend much time watching TV may be inclined to attempt to imitate the dangerous stunts they see. According to a study conducted by Spanish researcher Dr. José Umberos Fernández, the likelihood of childhood injury increased with every hour that a child spent in front of a TV set. Fernández suggests that this is because TV presents a distorted view of reality. What might parents do to offset this effect? According to the Greek newspaper *To Vima*, parents should share in selecting the programs their children see and help them to use a "critical and demanding eye," instead of accepting everything they see as reality.

Kids and Caffeine

Even if children do not drink coffee or tea, many consume enough caffeine in carbonated and chocolate drinks to suffer withdrawal symptoms when they stop drinking them, reports *The New York Times*. A team of psychiatrists led by Dr. Gail A. Bernstein, of the University of Minnesota Medical School, focused on the effects of caffeine on the attention span of 30 school-age children. The children's intake of caffeine was raised to the equivalent of drinking three cans of cola a day. After one week the children stayed off caffeine for a day. On this day and for a week afterward, the students' attention span dropped sharply. "The best way to prevent this phenomenon," commented the researchers, "is to have children avoid consuming high levels of caffeinated beverages."

FROM OUR READERS

End of Poverty Thank you so much for the June 8, 1998, *Awake!* series "The End of Poverty Nears." It really put things in perspective and made me aware of my own complaining attitude. I am unemployed and have little spare money. I thought I was in poverty. Hardly! This article shows that there are others worse off than I am. I should be grateful for what I already have —food, clothing, good health and, most important, Jehovah. I so much look forward to the end of poverty. My resolve is to keep seeking Jehovah's Kingdom and to stop complaining.

C. W., New Zealand

Celibacy For some years I have been a reader of your magazines. I have to protest your one-sided reporting about the doctrines of the Catholic Church in the article "The Bible's Viewpoint: Is Celibacy a Requirement for Christian Ministers?" (June 8, 1998). There is no "enforced celibacy" in the Catholic Church! There is only a *voluntarily* chosen celibacy that is a prerequisite for a certain profession. Whoever claims that he was forced into celibacy is lying.

R. G., Germany

We believe that there is an important distinction between the phrase enforced celibacy and the notion that people are forced into celibacy. If, for example, a corporation establishes a dress code and hires only those who agree to adhere to it but fires those who violate it, then it could be said that the corporation has an "enforced" dress code. In a similar sense, it is fair to say that there is "enforced celibacy" in the Catholic priesthood. Our article, however, mainly points out the lack of a Scriptural basis for making celibacy a prerequisite for Christian ministers. (1 Timothy 3:2) Rather than criticizing those who choose singleness as a life course, the article noted that this "has proved to be a rewarding and spiritually satisfying way of life for some."—ED.

My Choice Between Two Fathers I learned the truth of God's Word from a school friend when I was 14 years old. My parents, especially my father, opposed my study. Fortunately, he never followed through on his threats to expel me from the house. I persevered and was baptized five years ago. Like the brother in the article (June 8, 1998), I hope that one day my parents will share my hope of living in Jehovah's righteous new world.

W. S. L., Brazil

Tears came to my eyes when I read the article. My father has been a determined opponent of my beliefs. Even though we can talk reasonably with each other at times, whenever the subject of the Bible or Jehovah's Witnesses comes up, I fear his angry outbursts. He has attacked me physically several times. But the article gave me warm encouragement to stand firm, even in the face of such strain.

I. H., Germany

The article moved me deeply. Since I grew up in a religiously divided family, I can understand the emotional suffering of the young man who was forced to make such a difficult choice.

A. M., Italy

Fibromyalgia Thank you so much for the article "Understanding and Living With Fibromyalgia." (June 8, 1998) I have been suffering from fibromyalgia for six years. The article is thorough and accurate. Also, the scriptures in the box encouraged me greatly.

N. M., United States

The article generated a considerable response. We hope to publish more comments in a future issue.—ED.

Visiting Slavery's Ugly Past

JUST off the coast of the African country of Senegal, near the city of Dakar, lies Île de Gorée. For 312 years, until 1848, this island served as a center for a flourishing trade in human souls. Archives from the French port of Nantes show that between 1763 and 1775 alone, more than 103,000 slaves were traded from Gorée through the port of Nantes.

Today an average of 200 visitors a day tour the Maison des Esclaves, the Slave House museum. Tour guide Joseph Ndiaye recounted some of the horrors experienced by the helpless victims: "Our ancestors were deported, their families separated, their hides branded, like so much cattle." Whole families arrived in chains. "The mother might go to America, the father to Brazil, the children to the Antilles," related the guide.

"After being weighed," Ndiaye explained, "the men were appraised by their age and origin, with certain ethnic groups prized for their hardiness or as supposedly prolific breeders. The Yoruba, for example, were prized as 'stallions.'"

Underweight captives were fattened like geese before they were auctioned. Slave traders chose young women to use for their sexual pleasure each night. Rebellious slaves were

Gianni Dagli Orti/Corbis
Yann Arthus-Bertrand/Corbis



Marchand d'Esclaves de Gorée

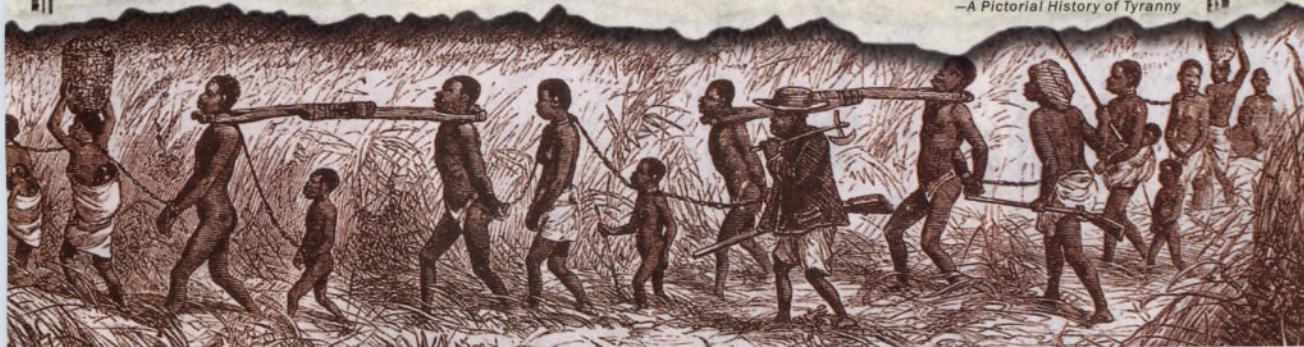


hanged by the thorax instead of by the throat, to prolong their agony.

Pope John Paul II visited Gorée in 1992. *The New York Times* reported that "he apologized for the slave trade, asking forgiveness for all who had taken part in it, including the Catholic missionaries who had accepted the bondage of Africans as part of the normal order of things."

Not everyone, however, is willing to acknowledge what took place. Two and a half years ago, before the Nantes records were unearthed, a French Jesuit asserted that only 200 to 500 slaves a year were sold at Gorée. Until now, Mr. Ndiaye observed, "the world has never come to terms with the enormity of this evil."

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—A Pictorial History of Tyranny



Helped in His Search

LIFE is hard for many people throughout the world, and some are searching for the reason why this is so. A 35-year-old man with two children wrote from the city of Grodno, Belarus:

"A woman stopped me on the street and offered me the *Awake!* magazine. I didn't know what this magazine was about, but since it was attractive in appearance, I took it. When I came home, I looked at the articles, and they caught my interest.

"I do not think of myself as a believer. However, in your publication I found reliable answers to many questions that were disturbing me. Our life isn't easy now, and we especially need the Bible's help. I would like to ask you to send me more information about God and his teachings. For a long time, I have sought answers to many questions, and your publication has helped me in my search."



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