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# News Updates

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## MEDJUGORJE ON THE MOVE

In the summer of 1981, six Croatian children said they had been receiving daily visitations from the Virgin Mary. In the nearly two decades since, more than 20 million people have made pilgrimages to a shrine in Medjugorje, a small town in Bosnia (the former country of Yugoslavia). From the United States alone, more than 150 Marian Groups have visited the site of the purported visions. The visionaries and their "Apparition Hill" have become a lucrative industry.

Now, for those in the United States seeking a message from the mother of Jesus through the Medjugorje visionaries, travel to the war-torn country is no longer a necessity. Ivan Dragicevic, one of the visionaries, is drawing thousands in meetings across this country. According to Jan. 17, 2000, *Newsweek* magazine, "Devotees come to watch him commune with Mary, then translate her messages to the crowd." Dragicevic, now 34, says the Virgin Mary usually appears to him at 6:40 p.m. — apparently regardless of the city in which he is conducting his intermediary rituals. From Boston to Dallas to Oakland, Calif., Dragicevic finds himself a celebrity in America and a man in demand, the magazine reported.

Dragicevic says Mary appears to him with "black hair, blue eyes, rosy cheeks, a white veil and a crown of stars." He also says he has seen heaven.

The Medjugorje visions have never been verified or sanctioned by the Catholic Church, either locally or universally. In 1987, the bishops of Yugoslavia stated that "one cannot affirm that supernatural apparitions are involved." Likewise, the Vatican offers no endorsement, saying it is continuing to investigate the reports.

—MKG

## UFO SIGHTINGS INCREASE IN CHINA

China is a country where reports of the supernatural and unearthly are normally suppressed by the communist leadership. However, in the recent past few months, "China is buzzing with a rising number of UFO sightings," according to an Associated Press news story. In December, people from more than a dozen cities reported UFO sightings. In Pusalu, a poor farm community 30 miles from Beijing, villagers said they saw a person-size object, bathed in golden light and slowly moving skyward.

"Some of these sightings are real, some are fake and, with others, it's unclear," said Shen Shituan, the honorary director of the China UFO Research Association. Shituan is also president of Beijing Aerospace University and a rocket scientist. His UFO research association claims a membership of 50,000.

UFO watching, interest and research continues to grow in China. A bimonthly magazine about UFO sightings has a circulation of 400,000. While the state-run media service also has acknowledged UFO sightings, a representative for the Communist Party said, "Some say it was caused by an earthquake. Some say it was a UFO. Some say it was a ray of Buddha. I'm telling everyone to call it an auspicious sign."

Others offer added skepticism. Geremie Barne, a Chinese culture watcher from the Australia National University suggested, "All of that sort of millennial fear and trepidation fits in so nicely with Chinese cosmology — and also the Hollywood propaganda that everybody's been lapping up."

—MKG

## HINN SAYS TBN WILL RAISE DEAD VIEWERS

Undaunted by the news media's debunking of his claim that a man was raised from the dead at one of his healing crusades, Benny Hinn presses on with divine revelations of worldwide resurrections.

"I'm telling you, I can feel the anointing talking here. People are going to be canceling funeral services and bringing their dead in their caskets, placing them — My God, I feel the anointing here — placing them before a television set, waiting for God's power to come through and touch them," Hinn told Paul and Jan Crouch and their Trinity Broadcasting Network viewing audience last fall. The program originally aired live Oct. 19, 1999. It has been replayed several times on TBN, including Jan. 7, 2000.

Of course, according to the controversial faith healer, the television sets will need be tuned to TBN. "You're going to have people raised from the dead watching this network. ... People around the world who will lose loved ones will say to undertakers, 'Not yet, I want to take my dead loved one and place him in front of that TV set for 24 hours,'" Hinn announced to the network's followers.

Hinn also alleged that God was showing him "rows of caskets lining up in front of this TV set." "I see them

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argument. So, let me say without hesitation that my predictions did not come true. The events did not take place. ... So, at this point in the aftermath of the rollover, I look foolish. I was prepared for this. I thought it was better to risk my reputation or credibility in a life-saving effort than to tell people, 'yes, Y2K will cause problems,' and then refuse to define what degree of problems and what to prepare for."

Still, some may question the sincerity of North's wordy confession. Anybody who writes that much to apologize (over 4500 words) isn't really apologizing — especially when North, throughout, puts the blame onto others. As well, his confession falls short of Christian reconciliation in that he fails to ask forgiveness. His apology also concludes with an appeal for ministry donations to continue the work.

Moreover, his words of regret are posted, not on his ministry's web site ([www.GaryNorth.com](http://www.GaryNorth.com)), but on the DiscoverTruth.com web site. (If it does appear on North's site, it is not readily available and is well hidden among a maze of documents.) North's ministry, on its web site, continues to publish and promote the same "doom and gloom reports" of Y2K devastation. As such, web surfers who log onto the site are completely unaware that any apology was issued.

—MKG

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## NEWS UPDATES

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bringing them closer to the TV set and as people are coming closer, I see loved ones picking up the hands of the dead and letting them touch the screen and people are getting raised as their hands are touching that screen," Hinn said. "The word will spread that if some dead person be put in front of this TV screen, they will be raised from the dead — and they will be by the thousands," Hinn promised the Crouches and the viewers of their *Praise the Lord* show.

Yet Hinn had much more to tell viewers of the world's largest network of religious stations. "TBN will no longer be just a television network, it will be an extension of heaven to earth. ... The Lord just said to me these words, ... 'TBN will not only be a Christian network, it will be an extension of heaven to the earth,'" he declared. Hinn went on to say, "So if you want to go to heaven, if you want to see heaven, if you want to taste heaven — turn on that channel because you will."

Once again Hinn's declarations put him more at home with the occult than a biblical setting. His concept that TBN is to become an open passage to a higher spiritual realm closely resembles an occult vortex known as a "Cone of Power," through which spiritual powers energize agents on earth.

Hinn also weakens his claim of divine revelation for the careful listener. "Now the Lord just told me — and I don't know whether this is true or not..." he said during the TBN broadcast.

—MKG

## ENGLAND DENIES SCIENTOLOGY CHARITABLE STATUS

The foreign crusade of the Church of Scientology suffered yet another setback when it recently was "denied the tax benefits that go with gaining charitable status in England and Wales," according to a Religious News Service article. The December 9 ruling was one more defeat in Europe for the Los Angeles-based sect. Germany and several other European nations have opposed the church, claiming it is "more a business than a genuine religious movement," the report stated.

Similarly, the Charity Commission, which oversees and regulates charities in England and Wales, stated the controversial group did not meet the qualifications of a "public benefit" organization, which is a primary requirement in securing charitable status. However, the church was granted nonprofit tax status in Sweden.

The church responded to the Charity Commission's decision by saying they were "wrong on the law and wrong on the facts," according to the Associated Press. Scientology says it has 15,000 followers in England.

—MKG

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## BOOKS IN REVIEW

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- Balancing submission and authority,
- Balancing covering and counseling,
- Balancing sorrow and joy,
- Balancing the Law and the Gospel,
- Balancing the church and family, and much more.

Adams succeeds in his purpose: "It is my hope to observe the importance of proper balance in a number of specific areas, to point out some of the imbalances currently weakening the church, to describe the sorts of influences that tend to knock Christians off balance, and to suggest some of the ways in which to counter these. So far as I can tell, there has been a lack of interest in this subject that, consequently, has resulted in great confusion" (page viii).

This book is recommended, knowing it will help to keep you on track and balanced.

—GRF