

Awake!

September 8, 1990



YOUTH
Meeting the
Challenge of
the 1990's



"NEARLY one fifth of the earth's residents are young people between the ages of 15 and 24." So reported the *UN Chronicle*. It was estimated that at the beginning of this new decade, the world's youth population reached the *one thousand million point!* Today's youth are conspicuous—a powerful force to be reckoned with.

Psychology Today reported on a survey of 6,000 adolescents in ten different lands. It was found that in spite of huge disparities in economic status and culture, youths display attitudes and values that "are remarkably uniform." From such surveys a global portrait of today's youth has emerged, and what it reveals may very well surprise you.

Today's Youth

A Global Portrait

POPULAR stereotypes portray teenagers as drug-crazed rebels, empty-headed, self-centered and lazy, who have little on their minds but clothing, TV, and sex. For the majority, however, this negative view of youth appears to be far removed from reality.

A survey reported in *Psychology Today* found that 'nearly three quarters of those surveyed appeared to be well-adjusted. They were generally happy, self-controlled, caring toward others, concerned with the repercussions of their actions.' Far from being alienated from their parents, most youths were found to "hold very positive attitudes toward their families."

Other surveys reveal that many of the hopes, aspirations, and fears of today's youths likewise reflect sane, sober thinking. In 1985 the *Unesco Courier* asked youths in 41 lands: "What is the problem of most concern to all young people today?" They received such thoughtful answers as "problems of war and peace" (50 percent), "unemployment and work" (30 percent), and "the future" (10 percent).

Even when the focus shifts to personal ambitions, youths again take a surprisingly pragmatic approach. After polling "a nationally representative group of young [U.S.]

men and women ages fourteen to twenty-one," *Seventeen* magazine told its young readers: "More than anything else, you want to get married and have a family. The second thing you want is a job or a career. You aim to make money. You are worried about money, too, and education. But more than 60 percent of you don't believe the problems of the world are too great for your generation to make things better."

By and large, then, youths the world over want the very same things their elders seek: happiness, security, close families. They are concerned about the world they live in and sincerely want to improve it. Nevertheless, there is a dark side to this portrait.

Sad and Self-Destructive Youths

The aforementioned study made this grim discovery: "One-quarter of the adolescents tested said they are frequently sad and lonely and feel empty emotionally, as well as overwhelmed by life's problems. A few even admitted suicidal thoughts and leanings." In some lands youths go beyond mere thinking. The suicide rate among older teenagers in the United States virtually doubled in the last 20 years!*

Another cause of great concern is the worldwide increase in teenage use of drugs, such as marijuana, heroin, cocaine, and crack, a form of cocaine. One 14-year-old girl in the United States said about marijuana smoking: "It's not even the 'in' thing anymore. It's just part of everybody's life almost."

Neither have developing lands escaped this problem. The sight of youths smoking

* According to the book *Helping Your Teenager Deal With Stress*, some believe that "car crashes are the method used most often by older youths committing suicide." Since automobile accidents are not generally counted as suicides, teen suicide statistics may be understated.

coca paste and similar substances is common in many such lands. UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar thus said that the problem of illicit trafficking in and abuse of drugs "presents as destructive a threat to present and coming generations as the plagues which swept many parts of the world in earlier ages."

The use of legal drugs, such as alcohol and tobacco, among youths also has many experts—and parents—worried. Reports the *UN Chronicle*: "Over the past 30 to 40 years, according to WHO [World Health Organization], increasing percentages of children and adolescents are using illegal drugs."

Today's Youth

The Challenges They Face

Awake!

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tion], increasing percentages of children and adolescents have begun to drink alcohol; the quantities and frequency of consumption have increased; and the age at which drinking begins has declined."

Granted, only a minority of young people are depressed or engaging in self-destructive behavior. Worldwide, however, it still amounts to many millions who have severe problems. As we will next see, young people today are being exposed to stresses and pressures that are unique to the times we are living in.

"**R**ESEARCH shows that the teen years are without a doubt among the most confusing and stressful times of life." So wrote Dr. Bettie B. Youngs in her book *Helping Your Teenager Deal With Stress*. In times past, youths had their hands full just being young. Nowadays, though, they must deal with both the travails of adolescence and the formidable adult pressures of life in the 1990's.

Wrote Dr. Herbert Friedman in *World Health* magazine: "The transition from child

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to adult has never before taken place in a period of such dramatic change, be it the extraordinary increase in the world's population, the accelerated urbanisation which has accompanied it, and the technological revolutions in communications and travel that have almost overnight created conditions never seen before."

One teenage girl named Kathy thus says: "It is so hard growing up in a time like ours." Drug addiction, suicide, alcohol abuse—these are the reactions of some youths to the stresses and strains of these "critical times hard to deal with."—2 Timothy 3:1.

Revolution in the Family

Dr. Youngs recalls: "Our parents had time for us. Many of us had mothers who made full-time careers of child rearing." But today, "many women cannot or choose not to stay at home and rear their children full-time. They work and have to juggle careers and families. There aren't enough hours in the day; something has to give. Too often, what gives is the time and support a parent can give her child. During the most vulnerable time of life, a teenager is left alone to cope with physical, mental, and emotional changes."—*Helping Your Teenager Deal With Stress*.

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 importantly, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world before the generation that saw the events of 1914 passes away.

Contents: Feature Articles

Today's Youth—A Global Portrait	3
Today's Youth—The Challenges They Face	4
Today's Youth—Meeting the Challenges of the 1990's	7
Reader Response to the Book <i>Young People Ask</i>	9

The 1990's will no doubt continue to see family structures dramatically altered by divorce (50 percent of marriages in the United States end in divorce), illegitimate births, and the growing trend for couples to live together though unmarried. Already, about 1 out of 4 families in the United States is headed by a single parent. A growing number of families are stepfamilies formed by remarriage.

Are children in such family structures at risk of emotional or psychological damage? Some claim, for example, that children in single-parent households are more prone to loneliness, sadness, and insecurity than are youths raised in traditional families. True, many single-parent families and stepfamilies function with little apparent detriment to the children. The Scriptures make it clear, though, that God intended for children to be reared by two parents. (Ephesians 6:1, 2) Variations from this ideal situation are sure to bring added stresses and strains.

A revolution in family life is also going on in many developing lands. There, the traditional structure was the extended family, in which all adult family members had a share in raising children. Urbanization and industrialization are rapidly cutting extended family ties—and the flow of needed support for youths.

Also in This Issue

Rock Badgers—Lovable and Instinctively Wise	15
From Hitler's Army to a Ministry in Spain	17
Which Language Is Spoken Most?	21
The Bible's Viewpoint	22
Suicides—A Resurrection?	22
Human Rule Weighed in the Balance Is 'Government by the Best' Really the Best?	24
Watching the World	28
From Our Readers	30
Ruling Increases Rights of Patients	31



The breaking up of families through divorce and separation has deprived many youths of needed parental support

Writes one young African woman: "There are no aunts or any other relative to counsel me on what it means to grow up. Parents expect this subject to be covered at school—and the school leaves it to the parents. The sense of children belonging to the community is no longer there."*

Economic Anxieties

Young people also feel much anxiety over the world's worsening economy. In fact, 4 out of 5 youths live in developing lands and face the prospects of life-long poverty and unemployment. Says 17-year-old Luv, a resident of India: "Amongst youth in our country, at present there is a great deal of unemployment, so is it surprising that young

* This and other quotations from youths in developing lands are taken from the March 1989 issue of *World Health* magazine.

people get sick and unhappy, fall victim to vices, run away from home or even commit suicide?"

Youths in the affluent West have money worries of their own. Consider, for example, a U.S. teen survey reported in the magazine *Children Today*: "When questioned about specific topics that concerned them, teenagers tended to identify issues relating to money and the future." Among the top ten concerns of teens were "paying for college," the "country heading for [an economic] depression," and "not earning enough."

Ironically, though, some experts believe that even financially advantaged youths will suffer in the long run. *Newsweek* magazine observed: "By the '80s, three out of four [U.S.] high-school seniors were working an average of 18 hours a week and often taking home more than \$200 a month"—probably more pocket money than their parents had! Predictably, these "earnings were immediately spent on cars, clothing, stereos and other artifacts of the adolescent good life."

Writer Bruce Baldwin notes that such youths "grow up with expectations . . . that the good life will always be available for the asking whether they develop personal accountability and achievement motivation or not." But they "suffer a rude awakening when they leave home. The artificial home environment may in fact be so far removed from the real expectations of the marketplace and the demands of mature adult functioning that they may experience something akin to culture shock."

Shifting Moral Codes and Values

Dramatic shifts in morals and other values are also a source of confusion among youths.

"Sex . . . in my grandmother's youth was a word unheard of," says Ramani, a young woman from Sri Lanka. "Sex in marriage was not discussed, not even in the family or with the doctor, and sex outside marriage was nonexistent." However, old taboos have all but vanished. "Teenage sex has become almost a way of life," she reports.

Not surprisingly, when a survey was taken of 510 high (secondary) school students in the United States, their number two concern was "that they might contract AIDS"! But now that the door of the "new morality" has been flung open, few youths seem willing to take seriously any talk of closing it by practicing monogamy—much less by waiting till marriage. As one French youth asked: "At our age, can we commit ourselves to be faithful all our life?" AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases will thus continue

to threaten the life and health of many youths.

What Kind of Future?

Young people have another nagging concern. The prospect of inheriting a ruined earth—its atmosphere depleted of ozone, its temperatures soaring under a global greenhouse effect, its lush forests stripped away, its air and water unfit for breathing and drinking—worries many youths. Although diminishing at present, the threat of nuclear war makes some wonder if mankind will even *have a future!*

It is clear, then, that young people today face enormous challenges. Without help, direction, and guidance, their present and future happiness is at serious risk. And without hope for the future, no sense of security can be attained. Fortunately, help for today's youth is readily available.

NOVEMBER 1985. Dignitaries from 103 lands gathered at the United Nations headquarters to map out "a global strategy addressing the problems of the world's young people."

—*UN Chronicle*.

Five years have elapsed, and the problems of youth loom larger than ever. Clashes of political philosophy, a dearth of funds, and ever-shifting priorities have frustrated the well-meaning attempts of governments to work together in behalf of young people.

Religion has likewise failed to be an effective force for good. Recent Gallup surveys in the United States reveal that while the vast majority of youths (about 90 percent) believe in God (or a universal spirit), only a

Today's Youth

Meeting the Challenges of the 1990's

Questions Young People Ask— Answers That Work

Here is just a sampling of the Bible counsel offered in this book on some current issues.

The AIDS Epidemic: "Avoid immorality. Any other sin a man [or, woman] commits does not affect his body; but the man who is guilty of sexual immorality sins against his own body."—*I Corinthians 6:18*, "Today's English Version"; compare Proverbs 5:3-20.

Abuse of Alcohol: "Do not come to be among heavy drinkers of wine, among those who are gluttonous eaters of flesh. For a

drunkard and a glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe one with mere rags. At its end [wine] bites just like a serpent, and it secretes poison just like a viper."—Proverbs 23:20, 21, 32.

Employment: "Have you beheld a man skillful in his work? Before kings is where he will station himself; he will not station himself before commonplace men."—Proverbs 22:29.

"Whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah, and not to men."—Colossians 3:23.

Fear of Nuclear Extermination: "This is what Jehovah has said, the Creator of the heavens, He the true God, the Former of the earth and the Maker of it, He the One who firmly established it, who did not create it simply for nothing, who formed it even to be inhabited."—Isaiah 45:18; 55:10, 11; Ecclesiastes 1:4.

Economic Uncertainty: "They will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. They will not build and someone else have occupancy; they will not plant and someone else do the eating. . . . They will not toil for nothing."—Isaiah 65:21-23.

minority consider religion to be very important in their lives. Furthermore, religion has done little or nothing to curb promiscuous sexual behavior.

Then there are the so-called experts—psychologists, sociologists, counselors, and the like—who dispense advice to youths. Some of it is sound and helpful. Their advice, though, tends to focus on physical concerns: the economic hardships of teen pregnancy, avoiding AIDS, the physical dangers of drug abuse. Rarely, if ever, do they confront the far more important moral issues involved. The "experts" are generally content to follow the current swings of popular sentiment or to repeat catchy slogans, such as "Safe sex" or "Just say no!"

What about parents? All too many are preoccupied with the business of living. Insecure as to what guidance to give or uncomfortable with discussing delicate matters, many parents tend to beg off when

touchy issues arise. Little wonder, then, that many youths turn to inexperienced peers for help.

The Best Source of Help for Youths

How, then, can youths get practical answers to the questions that perplex them? Questions such as: 'Should I give drugs and alcohol a try?' 'What about sex before marriage?' 'How do I know if it is real love?' 'What does the future hold for me?'

It may surprise some to hear that the best source of advice for youths is God's Word, the Bible. The Bible? Yes, it has much to say to young people. (See Proverbs, chapters 1-7; Ephesians 6:1-3.) Furthermore, it was inspired by our Creator, who is keenly aware of "the turbulent desires of youth." (2 Timothy 2:20-22, Phillips; 3:16) Before you brush aside the idea that this ancient book could be pertinent to life in the 1990's, consider: Is it likely that most of the advice

being proffered by today's "experts" will be read and respected a mere 50 years from now? Yet, the Bible continues to be taken seriously thousands of years after it was written!

True, human society has changed much since Bible times, but human nature has not. Youthful desires are still basically the same. The Bible is thus as current as ever. And it gets right to the root of many of the problems that concern youths today. At the same time, it offers young people a hope for the future.

Since the Bible comes from our Creator, we would expect its counsel to be workable, practical. The true-life experiences of thousands of Christian youths today, who follow the Bible's advice, prove that it is! To help young people, the Watch Tower Society has published a book called *Questions Young*

People Ask—Answers That Work. It covers a wide spectrum of the concerns of youths, and its counsel is consistently based on the Bible! The enthusiastic response of young readers to this book testifies not only to the efficacy of the Bible's instruction but to the fact that young people *want* and *thrive on* Bible direction. The following article presents some of the heartfelt expressions made by youths from all over the world.

Whether you are young or old, you owe it to yourself to become familiar with the Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses have helped millions do so through a free home Bible study arrangement, and they would be more than happy to assist you. By becoming familiar with and applying the Bible's counsel, youths can learn not only practical solutions to today's problems but the way to gain the favor of God, who invites young ones to serve him.—Ecclesiastes 12:1.

Reader Response to the Book *Young People Ask*

SOME thought they were in trouble. "I thought they wanted to counsel us on our conduct," said one 15-year-old girl named Shereda. Others were simply apprehensive. A ten-year-old British lad named Timothy recalls: "When I found out I had to sit away from my mum and dad, I didn't want to go."

The cause of this anxiety? An announcement made on Friday morning of the 1989 "Godly Devotion" District Conventions of Je-

ovah's Witnesses* that youths between the ages of 10 and 19 were to sit in a reserved section. Any apprehension was put to rest when the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work* was released and distributed free of charge to all the youths present. The reactions?

"I was lost for words; tears ran down my face."—Mike.

* Held worldwide beginning in June 1989.

"It brought tears to my eyes when I saw the fantastic information in the book. Just the fact that it was a gift from the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses to the youth was an example of just how much they care about us."—*Eighteen-year-old Margie.*

A ten-year-old named Naomi, whose father recently died, particularly appreciated receiving the book. She recalls:

"This was the first large assembly our family went to without my daddy. I was so sad the first day. But it made me happy to know that our brothers and our heavenly Father, Jehovah, are taking care of us until we have our daddy back in the new world."

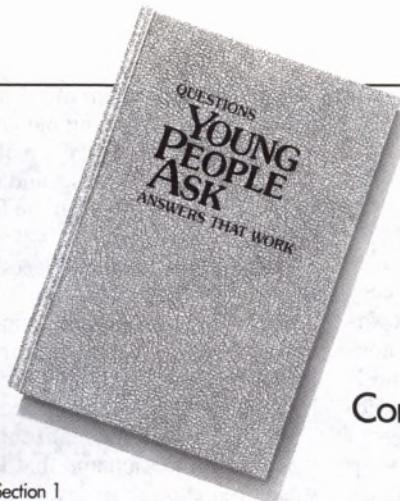
The book covers, in condensed form, about half the "Young People Ask . . ." articles that have appeared in the *Awake!* magazine from 1982 to 1989. It has 39 chapters, grouped by subject into ten sections. (See box next page.) What is the value of having all this information in one handy book? One youth explains: "Often I knew I should look up previous 'Young People Ask . . .' articles to help me with a problem, but I never seemed to get around to it. Now there's a publication that I can pick up at any time to use as a guide."

The *Young People Ask* book also has powerful visual appeal. "I love the colorful pictures," says 11-year-old Heather. The photos portray youths from all over the world. Said



A group of youths from France sent this photo (right) as a symbol of 'the loving protection and support' of Jehovah and his organization in providing the book *Young People Ask*.





Contents

Section 1

The Home Front:

Dealing With Family Members

Chapter	Page
1 Why Should I 'Honor My Father and My Mother'?	11
2 Why Don't My Parents Understand Me?	18
3 How Can I Get My Folks to Give Me More Freedom?	26
4 Why Did Dad and Mom Split Up?	34
5 How Can I Deal With My Parent's Remarriage?	42
6 Why Are My Brother and Sister So Hard to Get Along With?	50
7 Should I Leave Home?	56

Section 2

You and Your Peers

8 How Can I Make Real Friends?	65
9 How Can I Cope With Peer Pressure?	73

Section 3

A Look at How You Look

10 How Important Are Looks?	82
11 Do My Clothes Reveal the Real Me?	90

Section 4

Why Do I Feel This Way?

12 Why Don't I Like Myself?	98
13 Why Do I Get So Depressed?	104

14 How Can I Make My Loneliness Go Away?	115
15 Why Am I So Shy?	121
16 Is It Normal to Grieve the Way I Do?	127

Section 5

School and Work

17 Should I Quit School?	134
18 How Can I Improve My Grades?	140
19 Why Won't the Kids Leave Me Alone?	150
20 How Can I Get Along With My Teacher?	158
21 How Can I Get (and Keep!) a Job?	166
22 What Career Should I Choose?	174

Section 6

Sex and Morals

23 What About Sex Before Marriage?	181
24 How Can I Say No to Premarital Sex?	192
25 Masturbation—How Serious Is It?	198
26 Masturbation—How Can I Fight the Urge?	205
27 Honesty—Is It Really the Best Policy?	212

Section 7

Dating, Love, and the Opposite Sex

28 How Can I Get Over a Crush?	219
29 Am I Ready to Date?	225
30 Am I Ready for Marriage?	236
31 How Do I Know If It's Real Love?	242
32 How Can I Carry On a Successful Courtship?	252

Section 8

The Trap of Drugs and Alcohol

33 Drinking—Why Not?	262
34 Why Say No to Drugs?	272

Section 9

Leisure Time

35 Does It Matter What I Read?	283
36 How Can I Control My TV Viewing Habits?	289
37 Why Can't I Have a Good Time Once in a While?	296

Section 10

Your Future

38 What Does the Future Hold for Me?	305
39 How Can I Get Close to God?	311

a Canadian youth: "The illustrations are most captivating and well represent our real feelings when we are faced with a problem." Little wonder, then, that many youths began devouring its contents immediately.

'I Couldn't Stop Reading It'

One 17-year-old girl wrote, on hotel stationery:

"We're halfway home from our convention and have four hours of driving ahead of us. I've already read ten chapters."

Some were hooked by the table of contents:

"When I read the table of contents, it was like looking at my own life. So many of the questions were ones I had asked myself at one time or another."—Sixteen-year-old Kathy.

'My Favorite Part of the Book Is . . .'

Many youths commented on which of the ten sections (listed below) of the book *Young People Ask* particularly helped them:

The Home Front: "My sister and I always fight. But the book has helped me to be good to my sister. And if we fight, we say we're sorry and that we didn't mean what we said."

"I used to think that my sister got everything she wanted, but I now realize I was jealous of her. I realize, too, that my parents aren't being unfair but are only trying their best to spread their love around."

"It helped me to know that my mom and dad didn't split up because of me."

You and Your Peers: "It helped me to understand that if I want a friend, I have to be one. Also, I learned not to hang around with kids who are bad associations."

A Look at How You Look: "I thought I was overweight, and I would barely eat anything for

days. But I would gorge myself the next day and gain the weight back. I decided I was ugly and unattractive. A dear friend told me to read the section on 'looks.' Tears ran down my face as I read it. I have now set my priorities straight, and I am concentrating on my service to God—not my appearance."

Why Do I Feel This Way?: "I was severely depressed, to the point of having strong suicidal thoughts. Now I've begun trying to face my fears and have received professional help. I was so relieved to read there will be an end to this 'constant dread.'"

School and Work: "I've been having trouble with my grades and with being picked on at school. I plan to use the counsel at school."

Sex and Morals: "There are a lot of pressures put upon teens to do wrong, but by applying Bible principles, I can resist my peers."

"I have the problem of masturbation, and it is causing me great distress. But I will make a real effort to apply this counsel and try to be the best youth I can be for my heavenly Father."

Dating, Love, and the Opposite Sex: "I have had more than a crush on one girl for some time now. I don't do stupid stuff or embarrass myself around her. Still, I had the feelings you described. The book helped me realize this was just infatuation and that I wasn't old enough to date yet."

The Trap of Drugs and Alcohol: "I am a freshman in high school, and they have already offered me drugs. The book helps me to say no."

Leisure Time: "I used to watch TV Monday through Friday. The book helped me cut down on my TV viewing—Sunday and Friday only!"

Your Future: "I used to think that the Bible was boring—but not anymore! I try to read it 15 minutes every day!"

"It has really helped me in my prayers. Now I can talk to Jehovah as to a very close friend."

Even some "nonreaders" were won over: "I don't like reading that much, but this book is so good that when I start reading it, I can't put it down. I have read almost the whole book in three days."—*Fifteen-year-old Jennifer.*

"I'm not the best reader and don't read a lot. After I got home from the convention, I was tired and could hardly keep my eyes open. But I thumbed through this publication, began reading, and read a whole chapter! Since then, I've read a chapter every day,

till tonight—I read two!"—*Seventeen-year-old Tiffany.*

And there were some skeptics:

"I thought I would be a little too old for some parts of the book. So I started reading Section 6, 'Sex and Morals.' This helped me tremendously in making some major decisions. No one is too old for this book!"—*Nineteen-year-old Sabrina.*

Indeed, having finished it, many feel that reading it once is not enough:

"I got baptized a year ago, but things got rough, and I got depressed. Once I even ran

away from home! So when I received the new book, I felt that Jehovah knew just what I needed. It is fantastic! I've already read it twice."—*J. S.*

"I am writing down every scripture word for word inside of the book so it will make it easier for me to read the book the second time around. No exaggeration: This book has made me a better person."—*Eighteen-year-old Aida.*

'You Never Feel You Are Being Told What to Do'

Over a year has elapsed since the release of the *Young People Ask* book, yet appreciative comments continue to be received. Part of the reason for its success is no doubt that while it is directed to young people, the book is not childish; nor is it written in a way that makes its readers feel that they are being preached to. Some youths put it this way:

"This book even has a touch of humor to it. Backed up by God's Word, the Bible, it is far better than any teen magazine."

"You never feel that you are being told what to do; rather, you are made aware of several possibilities and the consequences of each one. Jehovah's viewpoint is always clearly shown and backed up Scripturally."

Many expressed appreciation for the tone of the writing and the insight it showed into their feelings.

"My father has never shown any form of affection for me, but the counsel contained in the book seemed to come from a loving father who counsels us for our benefit."—*Stefano, Italy.*

"The feeling I immediately got was that of talking to someone who knew me very well and not that of reading a printed page."—*Myriam, Italy.*

"Many of the examples used were so close to home. I could relate to them completely."—*A teenage girl.*

"I know there are no teenagers on the Governing Body. Yet, all that you write about young people is so accurate; it's like being talked to directly by Jehovah himself."—*Fifteen-year-old Aubree.*

Not Just for Young People

Many chapters offer insight into problems faced by adult Christians, problems such as shyness, depression, loneliness, and unemployment. Not surprisingly, then, many adults have also expressed appreciation for the book. Said the wife of a traveling minister of Jehovah's Witnesses:

"My husband and I don't have any children of our own. However, I found the way the material is presented to be of value to us also. The book could just as easily have been entitled 'Questions People Ask—Answers That Work!'"

Other adults heartily agree:

"There are sentences, phrases, and principles that have been very beneficial to my youthful life of 41."

"You wouldn't think a book written for young people could help a woman of 61. But it helped me to think positively about the past and to give up the grudge I have held against my parents."

"I found out that 'older people ask' also. Nothing in my long years as a Christian has ever helped me more to understand myself. Incidentally, I am 74 years young."

Letters have also been received from many Christian parents:

"I have three teenagers, and this book was an answer to my prayers. Thank you for being there for us. Satan is trying everything to draw my children away. But now

I'm equipped to do my utmost with skill, thanks to this timely book."

"This system wears us down on a day-to-day basis. My youngest child is 12, and his interest in spiritual things has taken a real beating over the past year. I can't tell you how good it is to see that he is working toward baptism as a result of the convention and this new book."

"Tears came to my eyes as my children received their copies. No other religious organizations care so much about their young people!"

"I'm a single parent, and I feel really scared and not qualified enough sometimes as a parent. My oldest son is 11 years old and has a teacher that doesn't like him. How comforting to find a chapter in the *Young People Ask* book that dealt with that situation!"

Many testified to the effectiveness of a feature called "Questions for Discussion" appearing at the end of each chapter:

"We read the book together as part of our regular family Bible study. It has drawn all of us closer. I notice that the children are at ease with the questions, and it really lends itself to an opening up of feelings that may not be so easy to express."

Answers That Really Work!

Of course, the test of this book's value is not its popularity but its practicality. In other words, do its answers *really work*? Many youths enthusiastically affirm that they do:

"Before I read this book, I was just tagging along to the Kingdom Hall with my mother and my sister because I couldn't stay at home alone. I was leading a double life. Now all that has changed a whole lot for the better."

"You can leave the truth, but it doesn't leave you. At the age of 27, I tried coming

back to the Kingdom Hall—alone, scared, and repentant. I had severe bad habits and felt that God could never forgive me. But an older sister gave me the new *Young People Ask* book. I found that it discussed all my problems and told how to deal with them. I cried. I can't express my appreciation enough for this book. Answers that work—and how!!!"

"The book got me to do some serious thinking. At first I really didn't consider myself to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I had a girlfriend. I was hanging out with people of the world. I even used to steal. But after reading the book, I realized I was doing something wrong in my life. I prayed to Jehovah that he would forgive me and thanked him for giving me this wonderful new book."

These are but a sampling of the hundreds of letters received. We are encouraged and deeply moved by the fine response of you young ones. Clearly, you want to do what is right, and you appreciate the direction Jehovah lovingly provides in his Word. It is also evident that the answers from God's Word truly *work*!

You will therefore be glad to know that the series "Young People Ask . . ." in *Awake!* will continue dispensing sound, Bible-based advice on subjects that concern you. Do not miss a single article! And if you have not done so already, read—and reread—the publication *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*.* Share it with your classmates. Look up the scriptures cited. Discuss the chapters with your parents. Apply its counsel. And no doubt you'll agree with 16-year-old Kent, who said: "It's like having a handbook to help me through the most impressionable years of my life."

* Available by writing the publishers of this magazine.

Rock Badgers



Lovable and Instinctively Wise

By *Awake!* correspondent in South Africa

WHAT creatures does the Bible call "instinctively wise . . . not mighty, and yet upon a crag is where they put their house"? These remarkable little fellows, about the size of a rabbit, are called conies, marmots, or rock badgers in different translations of the Bible.—Proverbs 30:24-26.

The rock badger is a hyrax, found only in parts of Africa and extreme southwestern Asia. In southern Africa, where he is found in great numbers, he is known as rock dassie, a name derived from the Dutch word for "badger."

Although dassies look somewhat like rodents, they have certain features that are actually "a mixture of everything," according to scientist Gerrie de Graaff. "Their incisors

resemble those of rodents, their molars those of rhinos, their vascular system that of whales and their feet those of elephants!" No wonder they have the zoologists puzzled!

As they are not very fast-moving animals, nor able to defend themselves very well, dassies wisely live in the crags and crevices of rocky outcrops or cliffs. These provide shelter from wind and rain, as well as protection from predators. Understandably, then, they seldom venture far afield except for their two main meals a day.

And what meals! For such small creatures, they eat an astonishing amount of plant material. Even more astonishing is the speed with which it is all gobbled up. Why, they spend less than an hour a day at it! And

their digestive system, which copes marvelously with this habit, is described by zoologist J. J. C. Sauer as being "unique in the animal kingdom."

No Easy Meal

A common sight in rocky areas is dassies, looking very much like rocks themselves, basking in the brilliant African sunshine. Very tempting that is for the black eagle, who has a special fondness for dassies. But the little fellow is not so easily taken. His eyesight is so keen that he can detect movement more than half a mile away! And even if the eagle is right against the sun, the dassie will spot him. How is that possible? His eyes are equipped with a special membrane that filters the sun's rays, enabling him to look directly into the sun without harm. No sooner is the enemy spotted than the alarm is given—a sharp bark by the sentry dassie—and immediately the rocks are cleared, all dassies having dropped down into the crevices between and under the rocks. The eagle will have to try again for his meal.

Highly Sociable

Community living—what an advantage it is at night when dassies feel the cold! It is so helpful to have fellow dassies to lie with, pressed tightly together, all facing outward. Some may even pile on top of the huddled group until there are three or four layers of dassies—up to 25 at a time—sharing warmth with one another!

It could have its drawbacks, though, as they are aggressive little animals. But their instinctive wisdom comes to the rescue. Dr. P. B. Fourie explains: "They normally lie with their heads away from one another, do not feed in close proximity to one another and utter a variety of appeasement calls when they are forced to move closely past one another." And because their calls are

usually low-pitched and can be heard only a few yards away, they can communicate with one another without attracting predators.

Agile and Lovable Pets

Many an observer has marveled at the way dassies can dash up a smooth rock-face that is almost perpendicular. How do they do it? By forming their feet, which have thick, soft soles, into friction pads. And because their feet are always damp, being the only parts of their bodies that perspire, the traction is that much stronger.

These endearing creatures are easily tamed. And there is no need to worry about their cleanliness—they constantly groom themselves with a hind foot, which has a handy little claw specially for that purpose. In her book *Born Free*, Joy Adamson confesses to being puzzled at first that her pet dassie habitually scratched herself. Later she realized that with this claw, the dassie kept her fur sleek, so that neither flea nor tick was ever found on her.

How would one go about housebreaking a pet dassie? No need to. In the wild, they set aside a specific location to be used as a toilet by the whole colony. So as pets, dassies "spontaneously learn to use the toilet," explains Fourie. "Without flushing it, of course!" he adds. And so it was with Joy Adamson's dassie. "Her excretory habits were peculiar . . . At home Pati invariably perched herself on the rim of the lavatory seat, and thus situated presented a comical sight. On safari where no such refinements were provided for her, she was completely bewildered, so we had eventually to rig up a small lavatory for her."

How delightful it will be in time to become fully acquainted with these and other creatures that Jehovah has made "instinctively wise"!

From Hitler's Army to a Ministry in Spain



As told by Georg Reuter (above, holding flag)

WHAT is the meaning of life? For most of us, there comes a time in life when we ask that crucial question. A death in the family, a serious accident, or just the ravages of old age may compel us to reflect on the whys and wherefores of our existence.

In my case it happened in the summer of 1930, when I was only six years old. I lived with my parents in the city of Essen, Germany. I will never forget how my carefree world was shattered the day I found our beloved canary dead in its cage. 'How could this happen?' I asked myself. 'It has always sung so beautifully.'

I gently put the dead bird into an empty can and buried it in our garden. But I couldn't forget the matter. Although weeks and months passed, I kept pondering its fate until I could

contain my curiosity no longer. I marched resolutely into the garden and dug up the can. When I opened it, what a surprise! The bird was no longer there. All that remained was a few bones and feathers. Was that all there was to the life of a bird? And what about us? What happens to us when we die?

At that time my questions remained unanswered. But unknown to me, there were horrendous events looming on the horizon, events that would make me search more fervently for the answers to those nagging questions of my childhood.

Nazi Brainwashing and Violence

The years passed quickly, and I became an apprentice in the building trade. Meantime, Hitler had come to power, and his propaganda machine was running at top speed to brainwash the nation. People would say "Heil Hitler!" instead of "Good morning." Everywhere there were uniforms: the *Jungvolk* (Young Folk), the *Hitler-Jugend* (Hitler Youth), the *Bund Deutscher Mädchen* (League of German Girls), the SA (*Sturmabteilungen*, or storm troopers), and the SS (*Schutzstaffel*, Hitler's elite guard). And I remember vividly the countless parades, the music and the fanfare in the streets—it was an exciting time for an impressionable youngster.

Soon I found myself participating, carried along by the general enthusiasm. The air was filled with such nationalistic slogans as,

"Today, Germany is ours; tomorrow, the whole world will be ours" and, "The flag means more than death." Gullible teenager that I was, I accepted them at face value.

But even in those early years, there was an ugly side to the Nazi regime. One morning in November 1938, I saw a Jewish synagogue in flames. Strangely, there were firemen standing around, but they didn't move a finger to put out the fire. That same day the main shopping mall was covered with broken glass. Jewish shops had been plundered and vandalized during what later came to be called *Kristallnacht* (Crystal Night). These acts had been organized by the SS as "spontaneous demonstrations" of popular protest against the Jews. Hatred of the Jews was preached everywhere.

My Role in World War II

When I was 16 years old, I heard the fateful radio announcement on September 1, 1939: German troops had crossed the Polish border. The invasion of Poland had begun, and World War II had erupted.

When my apprenticeship was completed, I entered the German army. After my initial training, I was sent to Poland where I witnessed the burning of the Jewish ghetto of Warsaw. I saw trains loaded with pathetic people, en route to the fearful concentration camps. Something seemed horribly wrong, but I dismissed my doubts. I still trusted in the infallible wisdom of the Führer.

Soon after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, I was sent to the Caucasus region. How sad it was to see such a beautiful area soaked with the blood of war! Then came the dreadful winter of 1942-43, for which the German army was totally unprepared. We could not even bury our dead comrades in the frozen soil. That winter marked the end of our advance—the battle of Stalingrad was lost; a

whole army was lost. Although Hitler's propaganda described our retreat as an establishment of "secure frontiers," we soldiers just wanted to get back home as best we could. Those harsh realities of war finally convinced me that Hitler's grandiose dreams were nothing more than shallow make-believe.

During the retreat from the U.S.S.R., I was hit by shrapnel. It caused a serious chest wound, and I was taken to a military hospital. There, I came face-to-face with the appalling aftermath of war: the mutilated soldiers, the despair, and the abject futility of it all. My thoughts returned to that dead canary. Was there really any difference between men and animals?

I was one of the fortunate ones. I recovered from my injuries and also came out of the war alive. At the end of the war, I was sent to a French prisoner-of-war camp, but finally I was able to return to my family, all of whom had survived those terrible years.



Georg and Magdalena Reuter in Spain

My Outlook Changed Forever

During my long absence, my parents and my brother had become Jehovah's Witnesses, so we were soon engrossed in long conversations about religion. I couldn't believe in a God who would permit so much wickedness and suffering. We German soldiers had worn a belt with a buckle inscribed "God with us." But where, I asked, had God been when we were suffering and dying? The clergy had assured us that Hitler was a gift from God, but thanks to him our country lay in ruins.

Using the Bible as the basis for his explanation, my father patiently showed me why we were living in such trying times. He helped me to understand that God does not support either side in men's wars and that very soon He would be "making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth." (Psalm 46:9) He showed me from the Scriptures that as far as death itself is concerned, there is "no superiority of the man over the beast."—Ecclesiastes 3:19.

The following Sunday, my parents invited me to accompany them to a public talk sponsored by Jehovah's Witnesses. I shall never forget that day. The meeting was held at a school where small benches served as seats. I had no desire to return to school, yet here I was, sitting with my long legs tucked under one of those tiny benches. But the talk presented was so interesting that it made me forget my discomfort. During the second hour, I noticed that the entire audience zealously participated in the consideration of a Bible subject, offering answers to the questions raised by the conductor of the meeting.

When the meeting was over, many of those present came over to welcome me. Their sincere friendliness overwhelmed me. I was quite a heavy smoker, so the fact that nobody smoked struck me right away.

From that day onward, I went to all the Witnesses' meetings and even offered my own

comments. At last, things were beginning to become clear to me. I realized that God was not the one to blame for all the bloodshed of World War II. I learned that it was his purpose to establish an earth-wide paradise with everlasting blessings for obedient mankind. And there was a place for *me* in that divine purpose if I so desired.

This was certainly a message worth publicizing. Hitler had boasted about his "Thousand-Year Reich" but had only ruled for 12—and with what a ghastly outcome! It is Christ rather than Hitler, or, indeed, any other human ruler, who can and will establish a thousand-year reign over the earth, after removing all forms of wickedness that presently afflict mankind. —Revelation 20:4.

That wonderful hope enthralled me, and I couldn't wait to tell my friends about these things. At last I had found the real meaning of life. Of course, I had to quit smoking first, something that by no means was easy for me. But I set a date, and from that day onward, I refused to contaminate myself with tobacco. I realized that as a minister of God, I was required to free myself from "every defilement of flesh and spirit."—2 Corinthians 7:1.

Full-Time Bethel Service

After my dedication and baptism, I soon began to work as a full-time minister of Jehovah's Witnesses, along with my brother. We finished our secular work at noon, and then we would travel by bicycle to the area where we were to preach. Although we had hardly any literature in those early postwar years, we cared as best we could for the interest we found, leaving magazines, books, or brochures on a temporary basis so that as many people as possible could benefit from the message. But soon this situation was to change.

Brother Nathan H. Knorr, who was then president of the Watch Tower Society, had

recently visited Germany and had seen the need for more literature. Soon the first shipments arrived from Brooklyn, which meant extra work at the branch office in Germany distributing this literature to all the congregations. One day my brother and I received a telegram saying: "Come immediately to the Bible House [Bethel]."

I remember commenting to my brother that such an assignment would surely give us the opportunity to study the Bible almost all day long. But such misconceptions about Bethel were quickly dispelled when we were told on arrival: "We need one man for the printery and another for the Shipping Department! So please think it over, and then decide who will volunteer for which job." I ended up working in the Shipping Department, and my brother in the printery.

During those busy days, our time for Bible reading was certainly limited. Sometimes we worked around the clock in order to send all the literature to the congregations on time. Nevertheless, association with faithful brothers, such as Erich Frost, Konrad Franke, and August Peters, all of whom had spent many years in concentration camps, contributed greatly to our spiritual growth.

In the department where I worked, there was a young sister, Magdalena Kusserow. She had endured four years in a concentration camp for refusing to give the "Heil Hitler!" salute, whereas I had been sent to a French prisoner-of-war camp for having fought misguidedly in behalf of that ideal. Nevertheless, the truth of God's Word had brought us together. We had the same goals, and we decided we wanted to serve God together.*

Locomotive Kitchen

After our marriage, we were eager to con-

* The life story of Magdalena Kusserow Reuter appeared in the September 1, 1985, issue of *The Watchtower*.

tinue in full-time service, knowing that there was so much work to do. And we were blessed with many interesting assignments. For example, in 1951, I was assigned to supervise the Cafeteria Department for the three-day convention in Frankfurt am Main, where we planned to feed some 35,000 delegates.

Ahead of us was a daunting task—to provide, with so little equipment, hot meals for such large numbers. But we hit upon the idea of using 51 large steam kettles, which could be heated by means of a steam locomotive. Where would we find a locomotive? We finally convinced the railway company to lend us one of theirs, and a firm in Frankfurt am Main manufactured some low-pressure valves for us. This meant that the locomotive could supply steam at just the right pressure for cooking.

What a relief it was for all of us when a trial run the day before the convention proved to be a great success! There were extensive newspaper reports describing this "new invention" for mass feeding, accompanied by photographs of our kitchen and the locomotive. Thus, much favorable publicity was given to the "Clean Worship" assembly, where the attendance finally reached over 47,000.

While still at that convention, I received the invitation to serve as a traveling representative of the Watch Tower Society. Accompanied by my wife, I served first in the circuit work, visiting a different congregation each week, and then in the district work, visiting whole circuits at assemblies. What a privilege it was to serve alongside brothers like Martin Poetzinger (who later became a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses), H. Dickmann, and R. Kelsey. We learned so much from these mature brothers. Each day spent with them turned out to be a blessing because each had different gifts to impart.

Missionary Service in Africa and Spain

In 1961, I had the privilege of attending the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead in Brooklyn, New York, in a class that consisted mainly of brothers and that lasted for ten months. During that time, my wife, who could not accompany me, remained in Germany. Although separated, we exchanged our experiences in our frequent letters, so the time just flew by.

Our missionary assignment was Togo, a small country in West Africa. There we had to learn a new language, Ewe, in order to reach the hearts of the people of that land. It was well worth the effort. To the hospitable people of Togo, any foreigner is a friend, but if he speaks their language, they consider him their brother.

Soon after arriving in Togo, I began conducting a Bible study with a young African named Abraham, who spoke some English. Before long he was accompanying me in the preaching activity, and he proved to be an invaluable assistant in helping me to explain the Bible's message to Ewe-speaking people.

We made good use of the book *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*, which contained many pictures and was ideal for conducting Bible studies. Even so, some concepts were hard for the simple rural folk to grasp. How could they understand the number 144,000 mentioned in Revelation chapter 7, when they were

familiar with coins of only 25, 50, or, at the most, 100 francs? My companion was adept at using his fingers, and if necessary his toes as well, to overcome this problem. And on other occasions, we would make drawings in the sand.

We felt very sad when we, because of health problems, had to return to Europe, first to Luxembourg and then to Germany. But the missionary spirit was still in our hearts, and after a short while, we thought of moving to serve where the need was greater—to Spain.

After learning another language, we again had the privilege of serving our spiritual brothers in the circuit work and of spending a year at the construction site of the new Bethel Home near Madrid. It has been most satisfying for Magdalena and me to serve here in Spain. Although we don't have the strength we had before, our lives are meaningful because we keep on learning, and we keep on sharing with others what we have learned.

Looking back, I can say that my search for the meaning of life was greatly rewarded. I saw the fallacy of trusting in men like Hitler, and once I got to know the truth of the Bible, I dedicated myself to God. What satisfaction that has given me! Now I know that my future need not be like that of the dead canary. I have the hope of a meaningful life that will never be cut short!—Revelation 21:1-4.

Which Language Is Spoken Most?

If you are thinking in terms of the most popular international language, you will probably answer "English" to that question. Yet, according to the 1990 *World Almanac and Book of Facts*, Mandarin Chinese, spoken by some 844 million

people, is the language most used by the human family. This compares with 437 million, spread all over the world, who speak English. Which language do you think would be third in the world league? French or Spanish?

No. It is Hindi, spoken by 338 million people, mainly in India. Hindi and Urdu, which is spoken by 90 million, mainly in Pakistan, "are essentially the same language, Hindustani," according to the same publication.

Suicides—A Resurrection?

THE tragic news of a suicide does not close a chapter in the lives of relatives and friends; it opens one—a chapter of mixed feelings of pity and anger, sorrow and guilt. And it raises the question: May we entertain any hope for our friend who took his or her life?*

Although self-inflicted death is never justified, never righteous, the apostle Paul did hold out a beautiful hope for even some unrighteous ones. As he told a Roman court of law: "I have hope toward God . . . that there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." —Acts 24:15.

Nevertheless, many theologians have long dismissed any suggestion that the resurrection of the unrighteous might offer hope for those who commit suicide. Why?

Theologians Contradict Resurrection Hope

William Tyndale identified part of the problem in the foreword of his 16th-century Bible: "In putting departed souls in heaven, hell, or purgatory you destroy the arguments whereby Christ and Paul prove the resurrection." Yes, centuries ago, churchmen introduced a non-Biblical concept: immortal souls that leave the body at death and go straight to heav-

en, purgatory, Limbo, or hell. That concept clashed with the Bible's clear teaching of a future resurrection. As Baptist minister Charles Andrews asked: "If the soul is already blissfully in heaven (or is already justifiably roasting in hell), what need is there for anything further?"

He added: "This inner contradiction has remained to plague Christians throughout the centuries."

One result of such errant theology was that "since Augustine's time [354-430 C.E.], the church has condemned suicide as a sin," says Arthur Droege in the *Bible Review*, December 1989, "a sin beyond redemption, just like apostasy and adultery."

The harsh verdict of being "beyond redemption," or hopelessly consigned to hellfire, carried the judgment-at-death argument to its shaky extreme. Admits the *National Catholic Reporter*: "Two of the church's greatest doctors railed against suicide—Augustine branding it 'detestable and damnable wickedness' and Aquinas indicating it was a mortal [unforgivable] sin against God and the community—but not all churchmen have agreed."

Happily, we can avoid such "inner contradiction" by accepting two compatible Bible truths. First, "the soul that is sinning—it itself will die." (Ezekiel 18:4) Second, the real hope for dead souls (people) is to live again through "a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." (Acts 24:15) What, then, may we



Kollektie Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo

* This article is intended for the survivors of suicide victims. For a fuller discussion of the subject of suicide, see *The Watchtower*, August 1, 1983, pages 3-11 and *Awake!*, August 8, 1981, pages 5-12.

reasonably expect for people who commit suicide?

An Unrighteous One to Be Resurrected

Jesus told a criminal sentenced to death: "You will be with me in Paradise." The man was unrighteous—a lawbreaker rather than a distraught suicide victim—guilty by his own frank admission. (Luke 23:39-43) He had no hope of going to heaven to rule with Jesus. So the Paradise in which this thief could hope to come back to life would be the beautiful earth under the rule of Jehovah God's Kingdom.

—Matthew 6:9, 10; Revelation 21:1-4.

For what purpose will God awaken this criminal? So that He mercilessly can hold his past sins against him? Hardly, for Romans 6:7, 23 says: "He who has died has been acquitted from his sin," and "the wages sin pays is death." Although his past sins will not be accounted to him, he will still need the ransom to lift him to perfection.

Therefore, theologian Albert Barnes was wrong and misleading when he asserted: "Those who have done evil shall be raised up to be condemned, or damned. This shall be the object in raising them up; this the sole design." How beneath a God of justice and love! Rather, a resurrection to life on a paradise earth will furnish this former criminal (and other unrighteous ones) a golden opportunity to be judged by what they do *after* their resurrection.

—1 John 4:8-10.

A Merciful Opportunity

Stunned friends of a suicide victim may thus take comfort in knowing that "Jehovah has shown mercy to those fearing him. For he himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust." (Psalm 103:10-14) Only God can fully understand the role of mental sickness, extreme stress, even genetic defects, in

a "suicidal crisis," which, the *National Observer* noted, "is not a lifetime characteristic [but] often a matter only of minutes or of hours."

—See Ecclesiastes 7:7.

Granted, one who takes his own life deprives himself of the opportunity to repent of his self-murder. But who can say whether one driven to suicide might have had a change of heart had his fatal attempt failed? Some notorious murderers have, in fact, changed and earned God's forgiveness during their lifetime.

—2 Kings 21:16; 2 Chronicles 33:12, 13.

Thus, Jehovah, having paid "a ransom in exchange for many," is within his right to extend mercy, even to some self-murderers, by resurrecting them and giving them the precious opportunity to "repent and turn to God by doing works that befit repentance."—Matthew 20:28; Acts 26:20.

The Responsible, Scriptural View of Life

Life is a gift from God, not something to be abused or to end at one's own hand. (James 1:17) Hence, the Scriptures encourage us to see ourselves, not as immortal souls, but as valuable creations of the God who loves us, who treasures our being alive, and who looks forward with joy to the time of the resurrection.

—Job 14:14, 15.

"Love strengthens our recognition that suicide—though evading one's own burdens—only heaps more problems on loved ones left behind. As far as the one who rashly took his own life is concerned, we humans cannot judge as to whether he will get a resurrection or not. How reprehensible was he? God alone searches 'all hearts and every inclination of the thoughts.' (1 Chronicles 28:9) But we may be confident that 'the Judge of all the earth is going to do what is loving, just, and right.'

—Genesis 18:25.

HUMAN RULE Weighed in the Balances



PART 3

Is ‘Government by the Best’ Really the Best?

Aristocracy: government by the nobility, a privileged minority, or an elite class thought best qualified to rule; oligarchy: government by the few, either of persons or of families, often for corrupt and selfish purposes.

IT SEEMS logical that the best kind of government would result if it was composed of the best people. The best people are better educated, more qualified, and more competent—so goes the argument—and therefore better able to lead others. An aristocratic government headed by such an elite class may be one of several kinds; for example, rule by the wealthy, a plutocracy; rule by the clergy, a theocracy; or rule by officials, a bureaucracy.

Many primitive societies, under the rulership of tribal elders or chiefs, were aristocracies. At one time or another, Rome, England, and Japan, to name but three, all had aristocratic governments. In ancient Greece, the word “aristocracy” was used in reference to the city-states, or *poleis*, in which a small group governed. Often a number of prominent families shared power. In some cases, however, single families seized power illegally and set up a more tyrannical type of rule.

Like other Greek city-states, Athens was originally an aristocracy. Later, as cultural changes weakened class distinctions and disrupted its unity, the city took on democratic forms. Sparta, on the other hand, reputedly founded in the ninth century B.C.E., was ruled by a military oligarchy. This city soon rivaled the much older Athens, and both cities fought for supremacy of the Greek world of their time. Thus, rule by the many, as in Athens, came into conflict with rule by the few, as in Sparta. Of course, their rivalry was complex, involving more than just a disagreement about government.

A Noble Ideal Perverted

Political differences were often the subject of philosophical arguments among Greek philosophers. Plato’s former student Aristotle made a distinction between aristocracies and oligarchies. He classified pure *aristocracy* as a good form of government, a noble ideal that enabled

persons with special abilities and high morals to devote themselves to public service for the benefit of others. But when headed by an oppressive and selfish elite, a pure aristocracy deteriorated into an unjust oligarchy. This he considered a perverted form of government.

While advocating rule by 'the best,' Aristotle admitted that combining aristocracy with democracy would probably produce the desired results, an idea that still appeals to some political thinkers. In fact, the ancient Romans actually did combine these two government forms with a measure of success. "Politics [in Rome] was everyone's affair," says *The Collins Atlas of World History*. Nevertheless, at the same time, "the richest citizens and those who were fortunate enough to be high born formed an oligarchy which shared out among itself the offices of magistrate, military commander and priest."

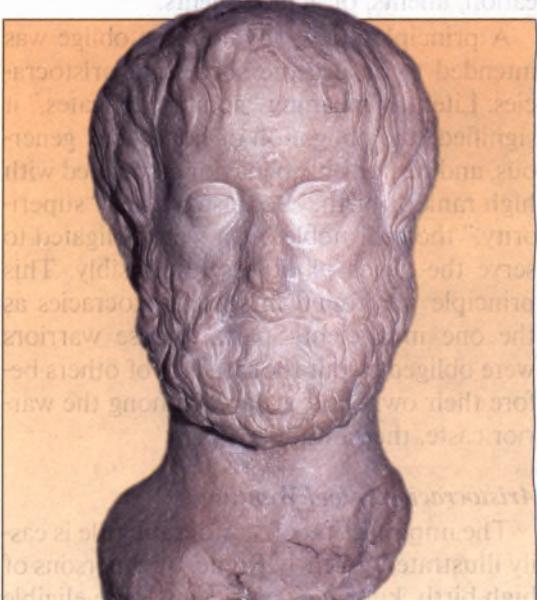
Even in late medieval and early modern times, European urban centers combined democratic and aristocratic elements in their government. Says *Collier's Encyclopedia*: "The extremely conservative Venetian Republic, which Napoleon finally overthrew, provides the classic example of such an oligarchy; but the Free Cities of the Holy Roman Empire, the cities of the Hanseatic League, and the chartered towns of England and western Europe reveal the same general tendencies toward tight oligarchical control by a relatively small but proud and highly cultured patriciate [aristocracy]."⁷

It has been contended, and with some justification, that all governments are aristocratic in nature, since all of them strive to have the best qualified people in charge. The concept of a ruling class has served to strengthen this view. A reference work therefore concludes: "Ruling class and elite are becoming synonymous terms to describe as actual what Plato and Aristotle argued for as ideal."⁸

In Search of 'the Best'

Centuries before these Greek philosophers made their appearance, a feudal society (based on lords and vassals) was bringing a measure of stability and peace to ancient China under the royal house of Chou. But after 722 B.C.E., during what is called the Ch'un Ch'iu period, the feudal system gradually weakened. In the last part of this period, a new elite emerged, composed of the former "gentlemen," who served in feudal households, and the descendants of the old nobility. Members of this new elite moved into key government positions. Confucius, the renowned Chinese sage, as *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* points out, stressed that "ability and moral excellence, rather than birth, were what fitted a man for leadership."

But in Europe over two thousand years later, the process of picking the elite, those best qualified to rule, had little to do with "ability



National Archaeological Museum, Athens

Aristotle believed that aristocracy and democracy combined would produce the best form of government

and moral excellence.” Harvard professor Carl J. Friedrich notes that “the elite in aristocratic England of the eighteenth century was an elite based primarily on blood descent and riches. The same thing was true in Venice.” He adds: “In some countries such as eighteenth-century Prussia, the elite was based on blood descent and military prowess.”

The idea that the good qualities of ‘better people’ were passed on to their offspring accounts for the marriage practices of monarchs in bygone days. During the Middle Ages, the idea of biologic superiority prevailed. Marrying a commoner was equivalent to diluting the nobleness of the clan, an offending of divine law. Monarchs were obliged to marry only those of noble birth. This idea of biologic superiority later gave way to a more rationalized justification—that of a superiority based on better opportunities, education, talents, or achievements.

A principle known as noblesse oblige was intended to ensure the success of aristocracies. Literally meaning “nobility obligates,” it signified “the obligation of honorable, generous, and responsible behavior associated with high rank or birth.” Because of their “superiority,” those of noble birth were obligated to serve the needs of others responsibly. This principle was found in such aristocracies as the one in ancient Sparta, whose warriors were obliged to put the interests of others before their own, and in Japan among the warrior caste, the samurai.

Aristocracies Found Wanting

The imperfection of aristocratic rule is easily illustrated. In early Rome, only persons of high birth, known as patricians, were eligible for membership in the Roman Senate. The common people, known as plebeians, were not. But far from being men of “ability and

Modern-Day Oligarchy

“Oligarchic tendencies . . . have been detected in all the great bureaucratic structures of advanced political systems. The growing complexity of modern society and its government thrusts ever greater power into the hands of administrators and committees of experts. Even in constitutional regimes, no fully satisfactory answer has been found to the question of how these bureaucratic decision makers can be held accountable and their powers effectively restrained without, at the same time, jeopardizing the efficiency and rationality of the policy-making process.”—*The New Encyclopædia Britannica*.

moral excellence,” as Confucius had demanded of rulers, members of the Senate became increasingly corrupt and oppressive. Civil strife was the result.

Despite recurring periods of reform, the senatorial oligarchy persisted, at least until Julius Caesar established a dictatorship a few years before his assassination in 44 B.C.E. After his death, aristocratic government was revived, but by 29 B.C.E. it had once again been replaced. *Collier’s Encyclopedia* explains: “With the growing power, wealth, and geographic extent of Rome, the aristocracy had become a corrupt oligarchy, and its loss of civic spirit was reflected in a loss of public respect. Its collapse ushered in an absolute monarchy.”

For the next 1,200 years or so, aristocratic governments, even though monarchical in name, were the European norm. In time many political, economic, and cultural changes gradually modified the system. But during the entire period, European aristocracy remained powerful, able to retain its landholdings and

its stranglehold on military offices, while becoming ever more parasitic, extravagant, arrogant, and frivolous.

In the 1780's the aristocracy suffered a severe blow. Louis XVI of France, finding himself in financial straits, pleaded with members of the French aristocracy to forgo some of their fiscal privileges. But instead of supporting him, they took advantage of his difficulties, hoping to undermine the monarchy and regain some of their own lost power. "Dissatisfied with government of the people, by the king, for the aristocracy, they [the aristocracy] sought government of the people, by the aristocracy, for the aristocracy," explains Herman Ausubel, professor of history at Columbia University. This attitude helped precipitate the French Revolution of 1789.

These events in France brought about momentous changes that were felt far beyond the boundaries. The aristocracy lost its special privileges, the feudal system was abolished, a Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen was adopted, as was also a constitution. In addition the powers of the clergy were restricted by decree.

Government by the few—even if the few were thought to be the best—had been weighed in the balances by the many and had been found wanting.

Finally Finding 'the Best'

The obvious fact that 'the best' do not always live up to their name points up one of the major weaknesses of 'government by the best,' namely, the difficulty in determining who 'the best' really are. To meet the requirements for being best qualified to govern, more is necessary than just being rich, of noble blood, or capable of military prowess.

It is not difficult to ascertain who the best doctors, cooks, or shoemakers are. We simply view their work or their products. "With gov-

ernment, however, the situation is not so easy," notes Professor Friedrich. The difficulty is that people disagree as to what a government should be and what it should do. Also, the goals of government are continually changing. Thus, as Friedrich says: "It remains quite uncertain as to who the elite is."

For a 'government by the best' to be really the best, the elite would have to be chosen by someone with superhuman knowledge and infallibility in judging. The chosen would have to be individuals of unbreakable moral integrity, completely devoted to the immutable goals of their government. Their willingness to put the welfare of others before their own would have to be beyond doubt.

The Bible indicates that Jehovah God has chosen just such a class—his Son Jesus Christ and a few of his faithful followers—and has appointed them to rule over the earth for a thousand years. (Luke 9:35; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14; Revelation 20:6) Not as fallible humans but as infallible immortal spirit creatures, Christ and his corulers will shower the earth with the blessings of lasting peace, security, and happiness, restoring humankind to perfection. Could any human government—even a 'government by the best'—offer as much?

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

*The Garbage Glut
—Will It Bury Us?*

*Berlin—A Mirror
of Our World?*

*Tobacco's Most
Vulnerable Victims*

WATCHING THE WORLD

THE BEST MILK

A recent study of Scottish mothers and their newborn infants shows that the nutritional value of mother's milk and the protection it provides cannot be imitated by commercial formulas. The study published in *Le Figaro*, a French newspaper, shows that infants who were breast-fed for 13 weeks or longer clearly had fewer infections during their first year of life than had those who were completely weaned before 13 weeks or were given bottle formulas from birth. Mother's milk favors the formation of a certain type of bacteria that inhibit the growth of harmful bacteria in a baby's intestines. The complex composition of mother's milk also varies from day to day according to the age and needs of the infant, even permitting the nursing infant to adapt to climatic changes. *Le Figaro* says: "It has no equal."

IMPOTENT BISHOPS

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the United States recently announced its plans to use the services of an international public-relations firm. The goal, according to the *National Catholic Reporter*, is "to peddle a moral message that the bishops themselves cannot get across." The issue in question is the church's position on abortion, which is not shared by many Catholics. The *National Catholic Reporter* notes that "with 342 bishops, 53,000 priests, 20,000 parishes, 100,000 women religious, more than 230 Catholic colleges and universities, 7,000 parochial schools and more than 50 million

laypeople—the U.S. bishops still can't persuade people that abortion should be outlawed."

"FALSE VALUES"

At 22 years of age, Boris Becker is one of the leading tennis players in the world; he is also one of the wealthiest—with holdings estimated at \$75 million (U.S.). His fortune was built on winning tennis matches. However, the young German athlete believes that he is



overpaid: "It's a joke when you think of it—how much I get for just hitting a tennis ball over the net." According to *Parade Magazine*, he said that in today's society "there's so much money around that nobody should go hungry or homeless. People pay too much attention to false values."

PLATINUM BRIDE

Platinum is more precious than gold and as an investment commodity, well sought after. According to *The Times* of London, at a promotional presentation of *Platinum 1990*, an annual review of the industry, a bridal gown made of platinum was unveiled to the public. The dress was designed and made in Japan at a cost of £300,000 (\$500,000, U.S.). Super-thin platinum foil, lined with Jap-

anese paper, was cut into 0.013-inch strips for weaving. Strict instructions from Japan included the terse statement: "Ironing the costume is strictly prohibited."

ROCKING BUILDINGS

According to the Tokyo newspaper *Asahi Shimbun*, a number of residents in the city of Kawasaki, Japan, had been expressing concern over what they thought to be a series of earthquakes. "There are times when we feel a tremor that could reach 5 on the seismic scale," said a sushi-shop owner. Water from the tank in which he kept fish for sushi would splash out on his customers. Kawasaki city's Environmental Protection Bureau investigated the matter and located the epicenter—a newly opened hall for rock concerts. "The cause of the quakes," reported the *Asahi Shimbun*, was "the jumping of rock fans in rhythm as one person." The man-made "earthquakes" were felt within a radius of 820 feet of the concert hall.

AIDS IN CHINA

"It's a sad fact that the AIDS virus has appeared in China," noted the magazine *China Today*. Yes, this vast land has recently been added to the long list of AIDS-afflicted countries. The magazine adds that "in China, scientific and medical efforts towards AIDS control have therefore gone hand in hand with attempts to wipe out the rather ugly social phenomena that can lead to the disease in the first place—pornography, prostitution, drug abuse and so

on." Some victims have been infected through the injection of blood products. Accordingly, in an effort to slow down the spread of AIDS, the Chinese government has since 1984 been limiting the import of blood plasma.

FUTURE BUSINESS ETHICS

A study carried out among 1,100 students across Europe shows that the business world of the future may be under the control of "a new breed of young men and women, go-ahead, profit-oriented and not always guided by sound ethics," according to the German newspaper *Wiesbadener Tagblatt*. The newspaper added that there was a clear tendency to sacrifice good business ethics in the pursuit of success. Over 70 percent of those questioned held that ethics have little or no place in business life.

KILLER MICROBES

"Contrary to widespread impression, pneumonia never disappeared as a major killer after the introduction of antibiotics. It remains the most common cause of death from infections and is the sixth leading killer of Americans," reports *The New York Times*. While a number of modern health measures, such as antibiotics and vaccines, have reduced the incidence of bacterial infection considerably, such measures "cannot always be relied on to be a last-minute salvation, particularly if the microbes have gotten the upper hand by spreading through the body." *The Times* added that "of an estimated 500 infectious diseases, no effective treatment exists for about 200."

CATHOLICS AND THE BIBLE

A parish priest in Sydney, Australia, has publicly admitted that

Catholics traditionally have little knowledge of the Bible, according to the Sydney *Daily Mirror*. To help rectify this dearth of Bible knowledge, the Catholic Church has decided to offer courses on the Bible in ten suburban centers throughout the city of Sydney. The planned course will cover four five-week terms, and the hope is that about 2,000 will enroll. The *Daily Mirror* commented that the Catholic Church and the Bible "do not go hand in hand for many worshippers" and so fittingly headed its article: "Back to Basics for the Faithful."

ALCOHOLISM AND GENETICS

In a recent scientific study reported in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, scientists claim to have pinpointed a gene that puts people at risk of becoming alcoholics. However, scientists caution that no single gene leads to alcoholism. The head of the



research team said: "The good Lord did not make an alcoholic gene, but one that seems to be involved in pleasure-seeking behaviors." Rather, "some people with the gene they studied did not become alcoholics, while some who lacked the gene did become alcoholics, [the researchers] said. Social and cultural factors may set off the affliction for many alcoholics who are not genetically predisposed to [it]."

CHILD STRESS

Children are not exempt from excessive stress. The Brazilian magazine *Superinteressante* reports that according to the World Health Organization, "one in every five children in the Western world is stressed." The most common causes listed for stress in children are "separation of the parents and too much school work." The magazine quotes Francisco De Fiore, a professor of pediatrics at the University of São Paulo who explains that "cardiovascular problems do not show up in children since the still-growing heart can handle the overload of stress. However, this is not the case with the stomach and the immunological system. Hence, stress in children normally is synonymous with poor digestion, frequent colds, and all kinds of allergies."

CLERGY MORALS

According to *The Toronto Star*, the Ottawa archdiocese of the Roman Catholic Church in Canada was recently ordered by the courts to pay \$150,000 for failing to act on a complaint against one of its priests. The priest was accused of sexually assaulting young boys. The victims' families "felt driven to seek a civil remedy because, having gone to the church for help after the assaults, they were shut out by officials, including the archbishop," noted one lawyer. According to the *Star*, another lawyer stated that Catholic Church officials, on discovery of child-abuse complaints, have historically kept the priests in the clergy. He said: "Instead of reporting them to the police or booting them out of there like most any other institution, they have, out of loyalty to their own, just moved them around secretly."

FROM OUR READERS

Epilepsy I am writing to express my great concern about your article on epilepsy.

(June 22, 1990) It states that in order to prevent Sandra from biting her tongue or mouth during a seizure, her husband placed a book in her mouth! This is against all medical practice in this country. As an epileptic myself, I certainly don't want anyone to do this to me, as this could result in broken teeth.

L. M., England

The article was not making medical recommendations but relating a personal experience. Most authorities generally advise the public not to insert hard objects or fingers into the mouth of a person having a seizure or to attempt to force the jaws open. Doing so can do more harm than good, injuring both the victim and the one rendering aid. However, the executive director of the New York Epilepsy Institute assured "Awake!" that placing something relatively soft (such as a folded handkerchief) into the side of a victim's already open mouth can prevent damage to the mouth.—ED.

Teen Pregnancy I must compliment you on the excellent advice you gave in your article on teen pregnancy. (May 8, 1990) At age 16, I gave birth to my daughter. Though her father was willing to marry me, my family advised me that I was too young. My family helped me till I later married. Years later I began studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Today my daughter serves as a full-time minister. I am so glad I did not get an abortion or enter a premature marriage!

L. B., United States

It was disappointing to read that while adoptive parents can provide better for a child materially, love and affection are best supplied by its natural parents. As an adoptive mother,

mine is the wonderful privilege of raising our small son in Jehovah's ways.

C. R., Federal Republic of Germany

We are sorry if the article caused some misunderstanding. Many adoptive parents do a superb job of giving their children needed support and love. However, the article was discussing the possibility that a child put up for adoption might not be raised by Christian standards. Such being the case, an unwed girl should not conclude that she has nothing to offer her child. She can raise him by Bible standards and show him true love—something that is more important than economic advantages.—ED.

Guarantees Your article "It Pays to Know Your Guarantee" (June 8, 1990) contains good suggestions. Another factor to have in mind is that some warranties are valid only in the country where the item is purchased, even though the manufacturer has a worldwide service network. I bought a well-known camera in another country, and when I found it to be defective, local representatives of the company refused to repair it.

J. K., Spain

Thanks for the reminder. Read all warranties carefully!—ED.

Five Common Fallacies Thank you for your article. (May 22, 1990) It stimulated my thinking and was very useful in helping others to distinguish between sound reasoning and empty deception.

R. C., Italy

Dinosaurs The article about dinosaurs (February 8, 1990) was very practical for our country, where many people believe in evolution. *Awake!* has begun to appear in our country for the first time this year. We read each issue with enthusiasm.

F. C., Czechoslovakia

THE right of a person to control his or her own body is a concept that has long been recognized at common law," stated Mr. Justice Sydney Robins of the Court of Appeal of Ontario, Canada. But what provoked this issue in the first place?

In 1979 Mr. and Mrs. Malette of Quebec, Canada, were involved in a car accident that killed the husband and left the wife severely injured and unconscious. When she was rushed to the hospital, it was found that she was carrying a signed Medical Directive/Release Card, clearly refusing blood transfusions on specific religious grounds. (There are also health hazards associated with blood transfusions.) The doctor who attended her, believing that her situation was critical, ignored those instructions and took it upon himself to administer blood. As a consequence, Mrs. Malette sued the doctor and the hospital for assault and battery and religious discrimination. In the trial court, she was awarded \$20,000. The case was appealed to the highest court of Ontario, the Court of Appeal.

One of the arguments repeated in the Court of Appeal decision in favor of Mrs. Malette was:

"The right to refuse treatment is an inherent component of the supremacy of the patient's right over his own body. . . . However sacred life may be, fair social comment admits that certain aspects of life are properly held to be more important than life itself. Such proud and honourable motivations are long entrenched in society, whether it be for patriotism in war [or] protection of the life of a spouse, son or daughter . . . Refusal of medi-

Ruling Increases Rights of Patients

cal treatment on religious grounds is such a value."

The appeal court opinion continued: "Regardless of the doctor's opinion, it is the patient who has the final say on whether to undergo the treatment. . . . If a doctor were to proceed in the face of a decision to reject the treatment, he would be civilly liable for

his unauthorized conduct . . . A doctor is not free to disregard a patient's advance instructions [such as the Medical Directive/Release Card carried by Jehovah's Witnesses] any more than he would be free to disregard instructions given at the time of the emergency." The court added that "to transfuse a Jehovah's Witness in the face of her explicit instructions to the contrary would . . . violate her right to control her own body and show disrespect for the religious values by which she has chosen to live her life."

The appeal judge then made a powerful point against the doctor who had claimed that the card was of no value in this emergency. "I do not agree . . . that the Jehovah's Witness card can be no more than a meaningless piece of paper. . . . The instructions in the Jehovah's Witness card imposed a valid restriction on the emergency treatment that could be provided to Mrs. Malette and precluded blood transfusions. . . . Her written statement is plainly intended to express her wishes when she is unable to speak for herself."

In his conclusion the judge made the logical point that when Witnesses refuse transfusions, "they must accept the consequences of their decision. Neither they nor their dependents can later be heard to say that the card did not reflect their true wishes."

of her husband no longer
lounged at such a house."

The doctor could only
tell him that "Rutherford
had come to the conclusion
that the patient had passed
beyond the power of his
doctor to cure," and so
had given up his practice.

He had no desire to go
to the place where he

had been so kindly treated
by the man who had
been his doctor.

One evening Dr. Wilson
was called to the home of
the doctor's son.

The doctor had just
come from the town of
Winnipeg, and was returning
to his country home.

"I have just got

the doctor's wife to
see you again," said the
doctor's son.

"I am sorry to hear
that your father has

passed away," said the
doctor's son.

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THE DOCTOR'S WIFE

BY MARY WILSON

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