

Awake!

December 22, 1989



Is YOUR GOD ALIVE?



FUNERAL FOR A FORMER GOD

By Awake! correspondent in Japan

EMPEROR HIROHITO was regarded as a living deity," observed *Japan Quarterly* earlier this year. The *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* lists him as the 124th human descendant of the sun goddess Amaterasu Omikami, who is identified as the "chief divinity of the Shintō pantheon."

So when Japanese soldiers were asked to sacrifice their lives for this "living deity," they did so with astonishing zeal. There were no fiercer combatants during the second world war than Japanese devotees who fought for their god, the emperor.

Overwhelmed, however, by military forces of superior numbers, the Japanese lost the war. Less than five months afterward, on January 1, 1946, Hirohito, in a historic edict, repudiated before the nation the "false conception that the Emperor is divine." He said that "mere legends and myths" had been responsible for this belief.

What a shock! Millions of Japanese people were deeply shaken. For over 2,600 years the

After reigning for more than 62 years, Japan's Emperor Hirohito died this past January 7. He was 87. Representatives from 164 countries attended his funeral on February 24. Yet, many agonized over whether to attend or not. Why? And what does Hirohito's death have to do with the question on our cover: Is Your God Alive?

Hirohito (opposite): U.S. National Archives photo
Japanese character (above left) means "god, deity"

emperor had been considered a deity!* And now he is not a god? This man once so exalted that people would not even raise their eyes to look at him, *he is not a deity?* Giving up the long-held belief that the emperor was divine was not easy. Indeed, several former imperial Japanese soldiers, in a centuries-old tradition, killed themselves upon learning of the death of Hirohito.

Really, who was this Hirohito? And what made his role in history so controversial? On February 24, 1989, as the hearse carrying his casket left the Imperial Palace in Tokyo and headed toward Shinjuku Gyo-en park for the state funeral, millions of television viewers and some 200,000 roadside onlookers had opportunity to reflect on such questions.

The Person and His Reign

Hirohito, meaning "Broad-Minded Benevolence," was the name given the son of Emperor Taisho at his birth on April 29, 1901. On Christmas day 1926, when his father died, Hirohito replaced him as emperor. The name chosen by court scholars for the era of his reign was Showa, or Enlightened Peace. So after his death, he came to be known, not as Emperor Hirohito, but as Emperor Showa.

* Although the early emperors in the list of 124 (125, counting Akihito, Hirohito's son) are acknowledged to be legendary, from at least the fifth century C.E. or so, the emperors have been real persons. This makes Japan's imperial institution the oldest hereditary monarchy in the world.

Yet, the early part of Hirohito's reign was anything but enlightened peace, considering the Japanese military ventures in Manchuria and China in the 1930's, the invasion of French Indochina in 1940, and the attack on the United States in 1941. The name of Hirohito's reign is especially ironic when one considers that during the early years, literally millions of lives were snuffed out by wars fought with his assumed approval.

Despite Japan's postwar economic recovery, not everyone considers the period of peace that Japan has since enjoyed to be an enlightened peace. "When I look back on the Showa Era, I feel emptiness," said 86-year-old Japanese author Sue Sumii. "Since Japan's defeat in the war, I think the country has been in decline . . . Japan's prosperity is an illusion."

Mixed Feelings

Many of the countries that Japan dominated and fought against had to rationalize sending representatives to Hirohito's funeral. The Koreans, for example, were still aware of 'scars left on their country' by Japan's domination of the Korean Peninsula "in the name of the Emperor." In the British press, there was a call for a boycott of the funeral. Many could not forget that some 27,000 British prisoners of war died at the hands of the emperor's armies.

The situation was similar in the United States, where considerable blame for Japan's

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military aggressions is placed upon Hirohito. As a *New York Times* editorial expressed it at the time of his death: "In his exalted position, he might have helped spare the world limitless tragedy."

Even in Japan, where Hirohito has generally been glorified as a peace-loving emperor, some feel that he bears a heavy responsibility. Katsuro Nakamura recalls that on receiving word of his older brother's death in the war, his father said: "My son was killed by that fellow Hirohito." Another older Japanese man, Masashi Inagaki, explained: "For a long time I blamed him for the war in which we had to suffer so much." But he added: "My bitter feelings began to fade away as I realized that the emperor himself had to carry the past all through his life."

When Confidence Is Misplaced

It might be said that millions of Japanese offered their lives on the altar of this Shinto deity, not to mention the lives of millions of others that were offered on the same altar by the emperor's armies. Those who believed were led into the labyrinth of militarism in the name of their god, only to learn later that he was not a god after all. As the *Asahi Evening News* said: "Millions of Japanese had been sacrificed over the misunderstanding."

What was the reaction of believers when their god renounced his godship in 1946? One

who had fought for the emperor said that he felt like "a boat that had lost its rudder in the midst of an open sea." His reaction was typical. Those who survived the war "were suddenly abyssed into a vacuum," laments Sakon Sou, a Japanese poet. How could they fill that vacuum?

"I had been completely deceived. I had fought not for God but for an ordinary man," says Kiyoshi Tamura. "What was there for me to believe in after that?" Kiyoshi worked frantically to acquire riches, but these failed to bring consolation. When your belief is shattered, empty values may rush in to fill the vacuum.

A lesson can be learned from reflection on Emperor Showa and his funeral. It is that worshiping "what you do not know" is disastrous. (John 4:22) Whom do you worship? Do you have solid basis for believing that that person truly is God and that he is worthy of your worship?

All of us need to reflect on this matter, since even today some individuals, such as the Dalai Lama, are viewed as living Buddhas, and they are worshiped by their devotees. Many who profess Christianity have been taught to believe in a Trinity, and so they worship as God a triad supposedly made up of the Father, the Son, and the holy spirit. Consider in the next article how the Japanese were led to believe in a god who really is not God, and see what we can learn from this.

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.

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DEVOTED TO A MAN-GOD

Why?

THE depth of devotion to the emperor during and prior to World War II may be hard for many today to comprehend. "A picture of Hirohito was stored in a special shrine at school," Mitsuko Takahashi recalls, "and every morning pupils were to stop and do an act of worship toward that shrine."

"When the emperor passed by," Masato Sakamoto remembers, "we had to bow our heads very low. We were made to believe that the emperor was too awe-inspiring for ordinary humans to look upon directly." Children, in fact, were told that they would be blinded if they looked at his face.

The military and political leaders of Japan used the educational system to indoctrinate devotion to the emperor. "I taught young ones, 'Be willing to die,'" says Kazuo Matsumoto, whose 50 years of teaching included the war period. "I sent many youths to the battleground. I cannot blot out this blameworthiness from my past."

The youths of Japan were told that subjects of the emperor were *aohitogusa*, or "growing human weeds," and that they were to protect him by serving as his shield. Toshio Mashiko, who took part in several suicide attacks in the Philippines and survived them, explained: "We were taught that dying for the emperor was the highest honor for his subjects."

Many actually believed in the saving power of the emperor, so they raced into battle with fearless abandon. Shunichi Ishiguro, for example, thought that bullets would bounce off his body because he was a soldier for what the people were taught was "the Divine Nation."

When the tide of war had definitely turned against Japan, a young



boy, Isamu, expressed his uneasy feelings to his mother. "Don't you worry," his Shinto mother assured him, repeating the widely held view: "We will never lose because the *kamikaze** (divine wind) will blow away our enemies."

A God but Rarely a Ruler

Emperor worship has a long history in Japan, being a part of the lives of the people for well over a thousand years. And religious tradition is hard to eradicate. For example, even in Christendom people say: 'If my religion was good enough for my parents, it is good enough for me.' And, 'Everyone believes this, and they can't all be wrong.' But over the centuries, hundreds of millions of people have been wrong in believing that their leaders were divine! Consider, briefly, the history of the Japanese emperor.

His role through the centuries has varied considerably. "The emperor was thought to possess magical powers to propitiate or intercede with divinities," explains the *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*. "But because of the awe that surrounded his person, it was also considered inappropriate for the emperor to concern himself with the secular business of the government. That business, including both the making and execution of policies, belonged to ministers serving the emperor."

So the emperor served principally a priestly function, not a political one. "The only extended period of Japanese history in which the emperor combined both functions in a real sense," observes the above-mentioned encyclopedia, "was from the reign of TENJI in the latter half of the 7th century through the reign of KAMMU at the end of the 8th and beginning of the 9th century."

Except for that time in particular, Japanese

emperors did not really rule. After the ninth century, the power of the emperor decreased, and, in time, the shogun, a term signifying "military commander," came to exercise political authority. Although the emperor theoretically appointed the shogun, the shogun was the real ruler. But then, after centuries of ruling Japan, the shogunate government relinquished powers to the emperor in 1867.

In that year Emperor Meiji, Hirohito's grandfather, was made the ruler of Japan. He later granted a constitution to his subjects that stipulated that the emperor was "sacred and inviolable." But paradoxically, while the emperor was granted political authority, he was not given political power. He reigned but did not, in fact, rule.

The Constitution stated: "The respective Ministers of State shall give their advice [and assistance] to the Emperor and be responsible for it." According to the *Kodansha Encyclopedia*, "this effectively meant that political responsibility fell not on the emperor but on his ministers."

So it was the ministers of government that actually exercised political power. The emperor, however, was presented to the common people as a god with absolute authority over the nation. Thus, the ruling class used the emperor's traditional and officially promoted divinity to subjugate the common people. The wars Japan fought in this 20th century were waged in the emperor's name. And the people generally believed that he was a god who possessed miraculous powers.

Yet, surprising to many, Hirohito evidently did not believe in his own divinity. "I have never considered myself a god," he told the American military command after the second world war. After repudiating the "false conception that the Emperor is divine and that the Japanese people are superior to other races," he is reported to have asked his wife:

* Members of the Japanese air corps who made suicide attacks on a target (as a ship) were also called kamikaze.

"Do you see any difference? Do I look more human to you now?"

Of course, other Japanese also saw through the front of divinity and discerned the reality. They reasoned on evidence. Minoru Yamanaka, for example, who served for four years in the emperor's army, explained: "The emperor's father died at the age of 47 and his grandfather at 59, earlier than many others. So I never thought that the emperor was God."

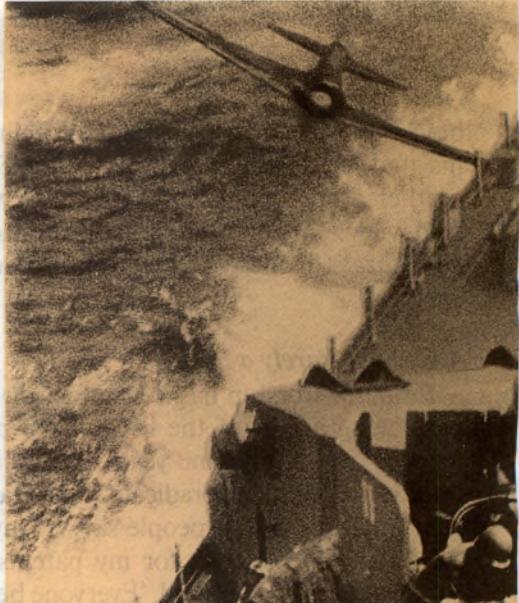
The Question of Responsibility

Hirohito's illness and death reopened the sensitive question: What responsibility did the emperor bear for Japan's military aggressions? Apparently the view of the majority is that Hirohito, as an individual, was opposed to the war but that he was obligated to go along with the decisions of his ministers. Hence, regarding his ministers' plans to attack the United States in 1941, he claimed: "I could not override their decisions. I believe this was in accordance with the provisions of the Japanese Constitution."

On the other hand, Hirohito took the initiative and made the decision to surrender when his ministers were divided on the issue. Then, a few days after that decision was made, on August 15, 1945, his subjects were shocked to hear his voice for the first time as he announced the surrender on national radio. He called for them to "bear the unbearable and endure the unendurable."

Months afterward, the British government declared: "It was not the atomic bomb which caused the Japanese surrender, it was the Emperor's rescript ordering them to do so. Without that we should have had a costly invasion."

Thus, when there were postwar cries to try Hirohito as a war criminal, General Douglas MacArthur, the U.S. commander of the Allied occupation of Japan, firmly resisted them. He later explained: "I believed that if



Above: Official U.S. Navy photo. Right: U.S. Army

Thousands died in the name of the emperor

Hirohito acknowledged his responsibility for the war to General Douglas MacArthur

the Emperor were indicted, and perhaps hanged, military government would have to be instituted throughout all Japan, and guerrilla warfare would probably break out."

MacArthur met Hirohito on September 26, 1945, and he was impressed. Instead of trying to shirk responsibility for the war, the emperor offered himself "as the one to bear sole responsibility for every political and military decision made and taken by [his] people in the conduct of the war."

Yet, perhaps the majority in Japan today do not hold Hirohito responsible for a war that was evidently promoted by his ministers. Therefore, when the emperor lay on his deathbed a year ago, Hitoshi Motoshima, the mayor of Nagasaki, stirred up tremendous resentment by daring to say publicly: "From my own experiences with army education, I



“...I think the Emperor bears responsibility for the war.”

Motoshima noted that as an army officer who instructed recruits during the war, he “was forced to tell people to die in the name of the Emperor.” Motoshima apparently feels, as do others, that the voice of an emperor who was worshiped by his subjects would have carried tremendous weight had it been raised in opposition to the war.

A Matter of Concern

“But,” some may say, “that is all history.” That may be, but traditional beliefs do not die easily. At the famous Shinto shrine at Ise in central Japan, a Shinto priest recently said: “Many people come here to worship the sun goddess as the divine ancestor of our Emperor and our Japanese race.”

The degree of reverence for the emperor is illustrated by the threats to kill Motoshima for his comments about the emperor’s responsibility for the war. A man was arrested trying to break into Motoshima’s office with a can of gasoline, and nearly a hundred sound trucks clogged the streets of Nagasaki broadcasting, “Death to Motoshima.” Reverence for the emperor has also been shown in other ways.

For example, when Hirohito’s condition became critical, a tremendous wave of self-restraint swept the country. Festivals and parties were canceled, adversely affecting businesses catering to happy occasions. Schoolchildren were forced to cancel their athletic meets. Even the Yakuza, or gangsters, stopped fighting and shooting. Life in Japan was dramatically affected, causing *The Daily Yomiuri* to say that “the country has rather overreacted to the Emperor’s illness.”

Some were alarmed by this zealotry. But even if they did not agree with it, they generally tolerated and condoned it, probably considering the adverse consequences if they did not. “To be conservative at this point is the safest thing,” said one psychologist. But a former soldier lamented: “People are just looking around and following what others are doing. It is exactly the same framework that prodded us into the war.”

But should how we behave, and especially whom we worship, be determined simply by the behavior and worship of those around us? Think of the millions whose unfounded religious beliefs have caused them to give their lives in fruitless wars! Blindly following the crowd can clearly be disastrous. Reflection on these historical events should teach us that worshiping ‘what we do not know’ can indeed be calamitous. (John 4:22) How vital, then, that we examine whether we are worshiping what we really know!

DO YOU WORSHIP A LIVING GOD?

ALTHOUGH Tadashi Ishiguro was born after World War II—after the Japanese emperor's historic repudiation of divinity—he still believed that the emperor was divine. "He should not have renounced his divinity," Tadashi said.

However, his brother reasoned with him on the matter: 'The emperor, just like other men, grows old and gets sick. He cannot escape the eventuality of all men: death. He cannot save himself, let alone other people.' After that discussion, during which his brother referred to the Bible, Tadashi decided to take a closer look at his beliefs.—Ecclesiastes 3:19; Romans 5:12.

In time, he began to see the wisdom of the Biblical exhortation: "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man." Why not? Because, as the Bible says, "to [him] no salvation belongs. His spirit goes out, he goes back to his ground; in that day his thoughts do perish." (Psalm 146:3, 4) Indeed, putting trust in mortal humans as deities

Tadashi decided to take a closer look at his beliefs



only leads to disappointment, even disaster!

The Japanese archipelago supposedly was created by drops of water falling from the spear of Izanagi, the father of the sun-goddess Amaterasu Omikami. But such a belief has no real foundation. What, then, about the belief that the Japanese emperor is a human descendant of this goddess and hence is divine? Is this not also unfounded mythology? Because they worshiped what they did not really know, thousands of Japanese sacrificed their lives in behalf of one who was unable to help them. How sad!

As a result of discussions with his brother, it became obvious to Tadashi that our beautiful earth, as well as the life upon it, is the product of a powerful and loving Creator. (Hebrews 3:4) According to the Bible, the true God is "from time indefinite to time indefinite." (Psalm 90:2) He is alive forever. He is not limited to a life span of 70 or 80 years, nor is he dependent upon counsel from advisers.—Psalm 90:10; Romans 11:34.

Rather, the Bible says about the Creator: "He is doing according to his own will among the army of the heavens and the inhabitants of the earth. And there exists no one that can check his hand or that can say to him, 'What have you been doing?'" (Daniel 4:35) How different from humans who may be treated as gods but cannot fulfill even their own will!

As Tadashi studied the Bible, his faith in the God who inspired it grew. This One is no mythological god. Rather, he is a real, invisible Person. In the Bible, which God inspired humans to write, he tells us that his name is Jehovah. (Psalm 83:18) He also tells us about what he has done, about what he purposes to do, and about how he should be worshiped. Yet, how can you be sure that Jehovah is a living God so that your trust in him will not be in vain?

Well, in declaring his superiority over all

others, Jehovah said: "I am the Divine One and there is no other God, nor anyone like me; the One telling from the beginning the finale, and from long ago the things that have not been done; the One saying, 'My own counsel will stand, and everything that is my delight I shall do.'"—Isaiah 46:9, 10.

Thus, his Godship is confirmed by his ability to foretell the future and to see that his own will is accomplished. He is able to protect and save his servants, unlike humans who are revered as gods but have to be protected by their subjects. So, in time, Tadashi came to worship the God of the Bible, joining his brother in serving Jehovah God as one of His Witnesses.

Whom Will You Worship?

Many gods are worshiped today, including humans to whom people attribute divine powers. The Bible notes: "There are those who are called 'gods,' whether in heaven or on earth." (1 Corinthians 8:5) In the ancient Greek city of Athens, for example, an altar was erected on which was inscribed: "To an Unknown God." (Acts 17:23) So the Athenians were among those who worshiped what they admittedly did not really know.

The possibility thus exists that we today could also become involved in worshiping what we do not know. Millions of Japanese became involved in such worship, being deceived by false ministers who promoted the belief that the emperor was divine. Even the emperor was in on the deception. So learn the lesson: The fact that our parents believe something or that ministers say that something is true in itself does not make it so. We need to make an examination to make sure that we really know what we are worshiping.

The ancient Athenians, or the Japanese who lived prior to World War II, are far from being the only ones who worshiped what they

really did not know. Even today millions of people in Christendom worship a Trinity. If you are such a person, ask yourself: Do I really know the God I am worshiping? What is his name? How can he be three persons in one God? What is the source of my belief?

Believers in the Trinity probably assume that Jesus Christ and his apostles taught it and that it is a Bible teaching. But it is not. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* acknowledges: "The formulation 'one God in three Persons' was not solidly established, certainly not fully assimilated into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the end of the 4th century [hundreds of years after Jesus and his apostles were on earth]. . . . Among the Apostolic Fathers, there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective."

On the other hand, hundreds of years be-

fore Jesus Christ came to earth as a man, the trinity teaching was firmly entrenched among peoples whose religions were based on mythology. For example, the ancient Egyptians worshiped the trinity of Osiris, Isis (his wife), and Horus (his son). And the Hindus, even down to this day, worship a trinity made up of the three-headed Trimurti of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva.

So rather than simply going along and worshiping the way those around you do, examine to make sure that you really know what you are worshiping. The Athenians, who were worshiping what they did not really know, were told that God "is not far off from each one of us," and that he could be found by anyone earnestly searching for him. We can be confident, therefore, that if we make an earnest search for the true, living God, we will find him.—Acts 17:27.

Boredom Can Cause Stress and Depression

"BOREDOM can be one of the most crushing, grinding stresses which humans experience." So reports Dr. Jay Shurley, professor emeritus of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the University of Oklahoma, in an article in *Elle* magazine. "Boredom," he said, "is the uncomfortable, quite unpleasant feeling that something is not right with our lives. It's a request for stimulation of a particular kind, a signal that our needs are not being met, a feeling of being trapped. It's very stressful, and it can lead to a variety of problems—depression, drug use, psychosomatic illness, or something as simple as sleeping a lot to escape the boredom."

Dr. Shurley's research on the

causes and the effects of boredom was part of a five-year project in the Antarctic. One of his more startling observations was that boredom can initiate a vicious circle. It can engender great stress in a person. Stress, in turn, can cause boredom that then creates even more internal stress.

The effects of this boredom-stress cycle can be devastating. Dr. Shurley claims: "Many divorces result from a husband or wife being bored with a job, bored now that the kids are gone, bored with a dull social life, but who can't or won't face the fact that the problem is basically personal." So the bored mate divorces and "finds someone new, and for a while that solves the

problem. For a while. Then it's back to square one." Yes, boredom once again plunges the individual down into the doldrums.

"The human mind," said Dr. Shurley, "is hungry for change, challenge, learning, and new experience. Variety isn't the spice of life. It's the stuff of life." In this connection, Dr. Shurley explained why the rich have special problems with boredom. "They can have almost anything they want. But for something to be truly satisfying, it has to be worked for, worked up to. When nothing is really challenging, even the most glamorous, privileged existence is boring—one reason so many people in this situation turn to drug use."



Mom and Dad Are Illiterate How Can I Respect Them?

THOMAS EDISON is recognized the world over as the inventor of the electric light bulb. Henry Ford is likewise known worldwide for his introduction of mass-production techniques to manufacturing. But did you know that both Henry Ford and Thomas Edison had little formal education?

The apostles Peter and John were pillars of the early Christian congregation. They were bold and eloquent speakers of truth. Yet, they were said to be "men unlettered and ordinary" when it came to secular education.
—Acts 4:13.

Yes, throughout history there have been men and women who have accomplished great things in spite of having little formal education. And no reasonable person would hold them in any less esteem on that account. Clearly, then, there is more to human worth and dignity than formal education.

This is not to say that a formal education is unimportant or that illiteracy, the inability to read and write, is not a handicap. In many lands, a person without a secondary school diploma has great difficulty finding employment. One unable to read cannot tap the vast storehouse of knowledge locked up in books and magazines. A person who cannot write may be embarrassed when asked to sign his name or fill out a form.

What, though, if one's own parents are illit-

erate? In Africa and other parts of the developing world, it is not uncommon for literate youths to have parents who cannot read or write. And even in industrialized lands, some youths have educational advantages that their parents did not enjoy. At any rate, if this is true in your case, how do you feel about your parents? Are you embarrassed by their lack of education? Or, worse yet, do you sometimes feel that they are ignorant and unworthy of respect?

Why Respect Is Fitting

If such negative feelings afflict you from time to time, it might help you to reflect on the fact that God requires that you respect your parents. Ephesians 6:2, 3 commands: "Honor your father and your mother"; which is the first command with a promise: "That it may go well with you and you may endure a long time on the earth." One dictionary defines the showing of honor as 'treating with respect.' Note, too, that your future life prospects hinge on your showing your parents respect. Disrespect for them amounts to disrespect for God.

After all, you are indebted to your parents for imparting life to you. To the best of their ability, they provide you with food, clothing, and shelter—a difficult task in many developing lands—and no doubt will continue doing so for years to come. No price tag could

possibly be put on the value of your parents' time, tender care, and loving direction. Should they be belittled because they lack certain educational advantages? Literate or illiterate, they are your parents.

Remember, too, that it is your parents who have sponsored whatever formal education you have had, often at great sacrifice to themselves. Should that not invoke your appreciation?

The Education Parents Have

Really, your parents are probably more educated than you are. Formal schooling does provide a broad foundation on which a person can build throughout his life. But it does not teach you all you need to know in life.

A common saying in Ghana is: "An adult was once a child, but a child has never been an adult." Your parents have something that you can't get out of a book: experience in living. Have you ever held a job, paid bills, cared for small children, or managed a household? Your parents have already accumulated years of experience in these matters.

The Bible further shows at Hebrews 5:14 that one's perceptive powers are "trained to distinguish both right and wrong," not simply

through reading and studying, but "through use"! Your parents are thus in a position to give you moral guidance, to instill values in you. Particularly is this so if your parents are God-fearing.

Interestingly, the advantage your parents have over you in experience does not diminish even when you become old enough to manage a household yourself! Proverbs 23:22 says: "Listen to your father who caused your birth, and do not despise your mother just because she has grown old." This advice was directed, not to children, but to adults with aging parents. Yes, even when one is an adult, it is wise to listen to one's parents, respecting the wisdom they have gained through experience. Parents may be illiterate, but that does not mean that their counsel lacks value.

Illiterate but Successful

The real-life experiences of youths raised by illiterate parents well illustrate the truth of the foregoing. Kwabena, a Ghanaian youth, says of his mother who is illiterate: "She was a firm disciplinarian. I have grown to love her more, out of appreciation for the values she instilled in me for my good. My older sisters are successful wives, and my mother can take a significant part of the credit for this."

Reginald, on the other hand, was raised by his grandfather who was also illiterate. Recalls Reginald: "His directions were mature and consistent, contributing to my being able to shoulder serious responsibilities very early in life."

Kwasi is another Ghanaian youth whose mother never had the benefit of a formal education. Did this put her at a severe disadvantage with her son? No. Recalls Kwasi: "I have always admired my mother for her mental prowess. She was a trader, and during my early years at secondary school, anytime she wanted some calculations done, I had to re-

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

***Homeless Children—Is There
a Solution?***

***I Live With
Muscular Dystrophy***

***'The Most Pervasive Form of
Child Abuse'***

Parents can be rich sources of advice even when they lack the skills of literacy

sort to pen and paper. She used mental arithmetic. Very often she was the one who got the correct answers first!"

Be a Help to Your Parents!

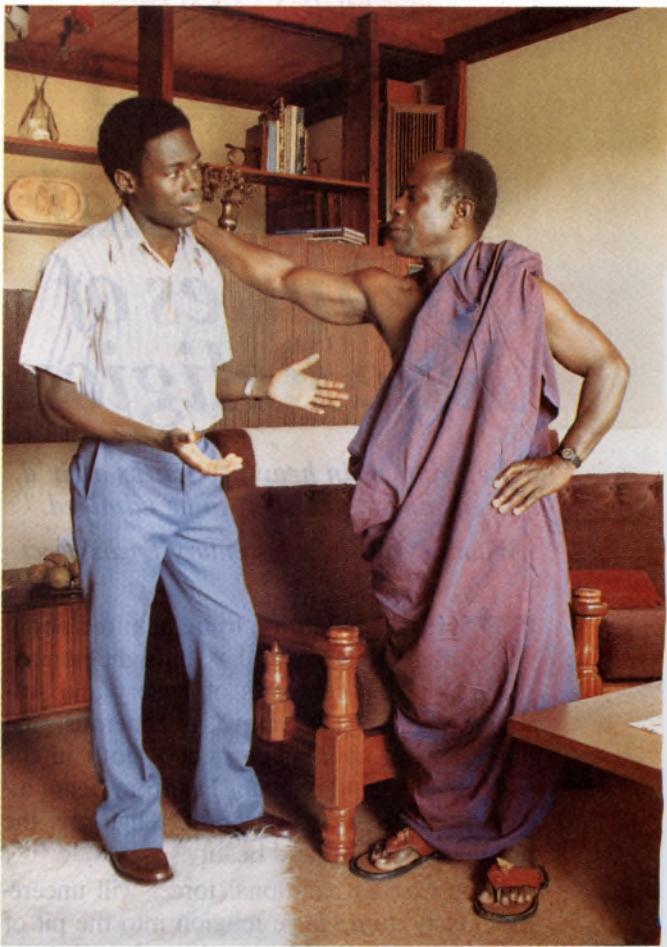
True, literacy does afford you certain advantages. But this is no reason to treat your parents condescendingly. As a youth, Jesus Christ had a singular advantage over his parents. He was perfect. Yet, the Bible record shows that "he continued subject to them." —Luke 2:51.

In view of this, have you given thought to how you could use your skills to the advantage of your parents? They may, for example, appreciate your reading to them their mail, the newspaper, the Bible, and Bible-based publications. Or they may benefit by your writing letters or filling out forms on their behalf.

Remember, when Jehovah God helps his people, "he gives generously to all and without reproaching." (James 1:5) In other words, he never makes us feel stupid for having needed his help. So deal with your parents in a modest, gracious way, and they will be more likely to accept your help.

Since the skills of reading and writing are so useful in the Christian congregation, you might even give your parents modest encouragement to take advantage of various literacy programs that might be available. Interestingly, in many lands where illiteracy prevails, the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses is often used as a center of learning. Perhaps a kind word of encouragement from you would be all they need to be motivated to take advantage of the educational program offered there.

In some African lands, children wait till the death of their parents and pay them the "last



respects" by providing an expensive coffin for their burial. How much better it is to show your parents deep respect now while they are alive! Never be embarrassed that they were deprived of certain opportunities when they were young. They have qualities that more than make up for their lack of secular education. Always show respect for them, both in word and in deed. Be "ready to obey," even when you disagree with them. (James 3:17) Treasure the warmth, love, and wisdom that your parents have, qualities that mean far more than the ability to read and write.

The Eternal Beauties of True Religion

**"Religion, if in heav'nly truths attir'd,
needs only to be seen to be admired."**

William Cowper, 18th-century English poet

THREE is nothing to be admired about false religion. It has brought humankind 60 centuries of misery and suffering. Its lying, deceptive, treacherous, and hateful ways have made it ugly both in the sight of God and of man. Far from being attired in heavenly truths, false religion is the antithesis of truth and beauty.

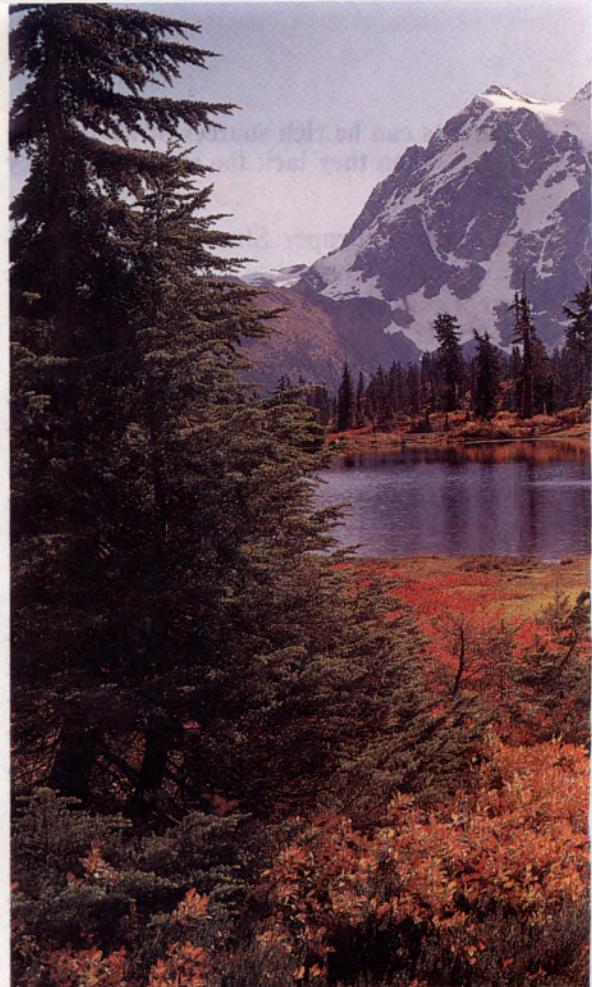
Soon God's executional forces will uncerrimoniously dump false religion into the pit of eternal extinction. Shortly thereafter, the rest of Satan's system will follow. But true religion, as well as those who practice it, will live on. What a joy then to see its eternal beauties displayed to a degree we today can scarcely imagine!

What Beauties?

Many are the beauties of true religion. Here are but a few. Why not take time to look up the cited Bible texts that prove these eternal beauties to be Bible-based?

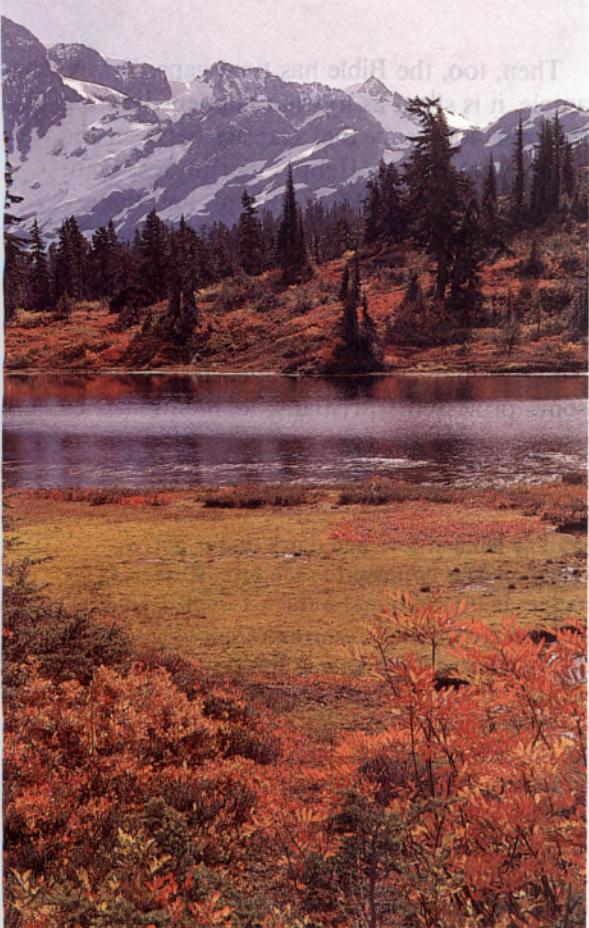
Among the many eternal beauties of true religion are:

- It is based on the truth of an infallible



God, whose name is Jehovah, upon whom we can unconditionally rely.—Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 55:10, 11.

- It is available to everyone with a humble heart, not reserved for only those with superior intelligence.—Matthew 11:25; 1 Corinthians 1:26-28.
- It is blind to race, social status, and economic position.—Acts 10:34, 35; 17:24-27.
- It offers the well-grounded hope of life in a world of peace and security without sorrow, sickness, misery, and death.—Isaiah 32:18; Revelation 21:3, 4.
- It provides a framework within which its members can live as a worldwide loyal broth-



erhood, united in doctrine, conduct, and spirit.—Psalm 133:1; John 13:35.

- It offers everyone—man, woman, and child—an opportunity to share actively in God's work, filling life with purpose.—1 Corinthians 15:58; Hebrews 13:15, 16.
- It warns us of hidden dangers, instructing us how to conduct ourselves so as to be benefited.—Proverbs 4:10-13; Isaiah 48:17, 18.

And why can it be said that these beauties are eternal? Simply because they will last as long as does true religion itself—forever.

Filling In the Gaps

It can be said that death is one of the greatest enemies of truth, since people often take to

their graves information that no other humans know. The exact details of even comparatively recent events—for example, the 1963 assassination of U.S. president J. F. Kennedy—are still a matter of controversy. What are the facts? Who really knows? Many who might know are no longer alive. And if this is true of an event only 26 years in the past, what about events that took place hundreds or even thousands of years ago?

Additionally, historians are only human, limited in knowledge and working under the handicap of personal imperfections and possible prejudices. That is why the objective person does well to refrain from being dogmatic about things for which he has no authoritative, divinely inspired record.

Writing about religious history presents similar problems, since authorities often disagree on the facts. In the series "Religion's Future in View of Its Past," *Awake!* has tried to present well-documented facts, but it must be admitted that at present there are certain things we simply do not know. For example, to what extent did professed Christian groups existing during and after the Dark Ages really adhere to true Christianity?

Of these groups, professor of church history A. M. Renwick notes: "Much historical research is still called for in order to bring out the true story and the theological position of those numerous bodies." According to Renwick, "in the past historians have depended too much on the statements of the enemies of the dissenting groups for their assessment of their doctrine and morals." Of course, depending too much on the statements of their friends might also result in a slanted view. So even after much historical research, many questions would possibly still remain unanswered.

What about the Bible? As a divinely inspired book embodying some religious history, it is reliable in everything it says. But it says

very little about all the different forms of false religion that have ever existed. Understandably so, since it was provided to serve as a textbook for the true religion, not for the false.

Even as regards true religion, the Bible does not tell us everything. It provides us with sufficient information to identify true religion successfully, but at times it omits details. While these details might be fascinating and interesting to know, at the moment they are not vital.

Then, too, the Bible has time gaps. For example, it is silent as to what happened during the over 400 years that elapsed between the completion of the Hebrew Scriptures, commonly called the Old Testament, and the appearance of Jesus. And since the Bible was completed, almost 1,900 years have passed.

So for the better part of 18 centuries, we have no inspired record about Christianity. This is what causes the uncertainty about some professed Christians, as mentioned by

Identifying Your Religion as True or False

- True religion inspires in its worshipers an unbreakable bond of love and unity that is not affected by national boundaries. (John 13:35) False religion does not inspire such love. Rather, in imitation of Cain, its members go out and kill one another in international wars.—1 John 3:10-12.
- True religion keeps free of human politics and looks to the Creator to solve world problems by means of his Kingdom government. False religion follows Nimrod's example at the Tower of Babel. It merges itself with politics, trusts in political gods in whose affairs it meddles, and thus lays the basis for its own destruction.—Daniel 2:44; John 18:36; James 1:27.
- True religion recognizes Jehovah as the true God, the only one able to deliver from oppression. False religion, such as practiced in ancient Egypt and Greece, offers a multitude of helpless mythical gods who are all without merit.—Isaiah 42:5; 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6.
- True religion promises eternal life on earth in happiness. False religion—for example, Buddhism—views life on earth as undesirable and as something from which to be liberated in an uncertain hereafter.—Psalm 37:29; Revelation 21:3, 4.
- True religion, by means of its holy book, the Bible, imbues people with unshakable faith; it gives them a guaranteed hope and motivates them to acts of genuine love toward God and neighbor. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) False religion, despite its holy books, is for the most part ineffectual in doing these things.—1 John 5:3, 4.
- True religion is marked by humble overseers. False religion is noted for its ambitious, independent-minded leaders, who are willing to twist the truth and who seek political or worldly gain.—Acts 20:28, 29; 1 Peter 5:2, 3.
- True religion, the way of proper submission to God, yields a spiritual, not a literal, sword. False religion, on the other hand, compromises true doctrine, breaks Christian neutrality, and pursues human concerns more than divine interests.—2 Corinthians 10:3-5.
- True religion wins the hearts of unbelievers over to the worship of the true God. False religion contributes to a climate of skepticism, freethinking, rationalism, and secularism.—Luke 1:17; 1 Corinthians 14:24, 25.
- True religion, as practiced by Jehovah's Witnesses, is spiritually flourishing as never before. False religion, its skirts splattered with blood, is suffering from spiritual malnutrition and waning support.—Isaiah 65:13, 14.

What is religion's future in view of its past? False religion has no future. Desert her! (Revelation 18:4, 5) Turn to true religion. It will last forever.

author Renwick. Nevertheless, it is apparent that at least some individuals down through the centuries were adhering to early Christianity. There are, however, unresolved questions that have to do with the motives and possible sincerity of certain individuals of bygone years. What about some of the Reformation leaders? For that matter, what about men like Confucius and Muhammad? Although present religious systems can be accurately judged on the basis of their fruitage, individuals—especially if they are long dead—often cannot be.

If, however, in God's new world, it should be the Creator's will to have the history books rewritten—including those of religious history—it will be possible. This is because of another beauty of true religion—the assurance that the dead will be resurrected.—John 5: 28, 29; Acts 24:15.

Imagine the joy of getting accurate answers to our questions by talking to resurrected humans who actually did the things we have read about in the history books. Imagine being able to fill in missing details, such as the name of the Pharaoh who died at the Red Sea and who experienced the plagues of Egypt.

If such a record should someday be written, it will be written to glorify and eternally vindicate the founder of true religion, Jehovah God. Of this there can be no question. The question that does remain, however, is this: Will you be there to read it?

Admiration Is Not Enough

The eternal beauties of true religion are not always as easily seen as Cowper's words, quoted at the beginning of this article, would seem to indicate. Therefore, the first issue of *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence* made the following observation 110 years ago: "Truth, like a modest little flower in the wilderness of life, is surrounded and *almost* choked

by the luxuriant growth of the weeds of error. If you would find it you must be ever on the lookout. If you would see its beauty you must brush aside the weeds of error and the brambles of bigotry. If you would possess it you must stoop to get it."

It is hoped that "Religion's Future in View of Its Past" has helped our readers "brush aside the weeds of error and the brambles of bigotry" so as to appreciate more fully the eternal beauties of true religion.

But appreciation is not enough. Apt is the Chinese proverb: "Teaching that enters the ears but not the heart is like dinner eaten in a dream." If we are to benefit personally from the eternal beauties of true religion—not just dream about them—it is vital that what we learn reaches our heart, not just our ears.

Read carefully the box entitled "Identifying Your Religion as True or False." Then ask yourself: 'Do I now agree that as far as the worldwide empire of false religion is concerned, Voltaire was right when he called religion "the enemy of mankind"? Has this glance into religious history helped me to identify true religion, and do I know in this late stage of human affairs where it can be found? If so, do I want to be like the person described by 18th-century French essayist Joseph Joubert, who "finds in it his joy and his duty"?

May all those answering yes to the above questions continue to benefit by reading *Awake!* and its companion publications. We would invite you to follow the wise advice offered by the above-mentioned *Zion's Watch Tower*: "Be not content with one flower of truth. Had one been sufficient there would have been no more. Gather ever, seek for more."

Yes, continue to gather, continue to seek—seek for more of the eternal beauties of true religion!

POLAND

Hosts Jehovah's Witnesses

DURING August 1989, a most remarkable display of international peace and unity occurred in Poland. The occasion was the "Godly Devotion" Conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses held in the Polish cities of Poznan and Chorzów, August 4-6, and in Warsaw, August 11-13.

What made these conventions so special? In modern times Jehovah's Witnesses have had conventions that were larger, that lasted longer, and that had more nations represented. But over 166,000 persons will tell you that seldom have conventions generated more enthusiasm, manifested such Christian unity, or been marked by so many spontaneous expressions of Christian love.

'Only the New World Better'

Delegations were present from at least 37 nations, along with individuals from many others. Five members of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses shared in the program. Over 12,000 guests came from Western Europe, the United States, and Japan, making this the largest group of international travelers ever handled in Poland.

Thousands more came from the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, as well as other Eastern European countries. This was the first convention ever for most of these delegates, although many have been Witnesses for 30 or more years. The feelings of such

ones who for the first time were able to assemble with their Christian brothers can best be summed up by a delegate from Kazakhstan, Soviet Union, who said:

"For many years we have been waiting for this day, and now we are here at this international convention. We find it difficult to grasp all of this and take it all in. It is like a dream. It is impossible to express in words everything we have seen and heard. When we saw the gigantic, bowl-shaped stadium full of people and heard the music, our eyes filled with tears. And the prayer—while all of us were motionlessly united—it sent cold shivers down our backs. It was so solemn and unanimous. This convention in Warsaw is such a splendid and grand event that only the new world will be better. We will always remember these wonderful days."

When first faced at the conventions with tens of thousands of fellow Witnesses, many of these visitors were visibly moved. In Warsaw they started a wave of applause that swept the stadium for well over five minutes. As a Western European delegate remarked: "At that moment, few were thinking about the hot weather or the hard benches or going home to soft chairs. They wanted more instruction and loving fellowship."

Each day reports were given by foreign delegates, who related experiences from their

own countries. The last of 24 such reports was reserved in Warsaw for a delegate from the Soviet Union. "We do not have enough words to express our joy that we can be in your midst," he began. "We greatly appreciate that so many of us have been able to come here and that we have been received so hospitably by you. We also rejoice at being able to have personal contact with so many of you brothers. Some of us have come from far away places, such as Vladivostok on the coast of the Pacific Ocean, a train ride of six days. Some of us had problems getting tickets because so many wanted to go at the same time, and there were only so many seats available. But with Jehovah's help, we made it."

Appropriately, in his concluding comments on Sunday, a member of the Governing Body thanked the governments of

Eastern Europe for allowing so many of Jehovah's Witnesses from their countries to attend the conventions.

A United Brotherhood

In describing her experiences at the Polish conventions, one Witness said: "It was just like Babel in reverse." Whereas confusion and disunity resulted at the Tower of Babel as people began speaking different languages, here was a marvelous manifestation of unity in thought, conduct, and actions, despite the problem of language.—Genesis 11:1-9.

This unity among fellow believers of different nationalities did not go unnoticed by outsiders. The publication *Sztandar Młodych* observed: "The only airline passengers arriving at Warsaw airport who were neither confused nor lost in the crowd were

HISTORICAL

MILESTONES

1928 Poland's 300 Witnesses hold their first small assemblies.

1939 As World War II starts, 1,100 Witnesses are preaching; many are imprisoned, and some die in German concentration camps.

1945 By the end of World War II, the number of Witnesses has more than doubled to 2,500.

1946 In June, 1,500 attend assembly near Lublin; 298 are baptized. In September 5,600 attend assembly in Katowice.

1947 A convention in Kraków is attended by 7,000; 476 are baptized. Two Gilead graduates arrive to help organize the preaching work.

1950 A peak of 18,000 Witnesses reached in March. The Memorial attended by 24,000. In July the work is banned, making it necessary to hold small meetings in private homes.

1968 One-day district conventions are first held in the forests with 100 or 200 present; later, as many as 1,000 attend.

1980 Almost 2,000 Witnesses from Poland travel to Vienna, Austria, for the district convention.

1981 A convention even larger than that of 1980 is held in Vienna for the Polish brothers.

1982 Polish government grants Witnesses permission to rent halls and stadiums for one-day assemblies.

1985 Three-day district conventions attended by over 94,000 persons are held in Poland. There are hundreds of guests from 16 nations, including four members of the Governing Body.

1989 "Godly Devotion" District Conventions overflow three stadiums, with five members of the Governing Body attending; total attendance 166,518, with 6,093 baptized. Two tracts released in Polish, *What Do Jehovah's Witnesses Believe?* and *Why You Can Trust the Bible*, as well as the 32-page brochure *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*

Jehovah's Witnesses. Fellow believers had prepared announcements in many languages, information desks, and signboards and provided transportation to the city."

The singing at the conventions was noteworthy, as tens of thousands sang in unison in over 20 different languages, all expressing the same thoughts in a spirit of love and unity. Also, in Warsaw portions of the program were translated into 16 languages (at Poznan into 13 and at Chorzów into 15). This had never before been done in Poland.

The 16 translators stood on the field directly in front of their particular language group. The speaker spoke from the platform, and each translator translated into the language of the audience in that section of the stadium. Loudspeakers pointed directly at that particular language sector made it possible to hear one's own language without being unduly disturbed by the translations being presented in other languages in other sections.

Despite serious economic problems in Poland, thousands of visitors were provided with private accommodations by their Polish brothers. Sixteen thousand were accommodated by the brothers in Poznan, 21,000 in Warsaw, and 30,000 in Chorzów. One family housed 18 and fed 21. And a congregation of 146 Witnesses accommodated 1,276 persons!

Fine News Coverage

Television, radio, and newspaper reports were for the most part factual and impartial. Noting in its headlines that "Jehovah's Witnesses Practice Their Religion in 212 Countries," the Polish publication *Sztandar Młodych* praised them by using in its article such subtitles as, "Consistent," "Orderly," "Modest," and "Industrious." Of the stadium in Warsaw, it said: "Not a single cigarette butt or piece of paper thrown by an

unruly child. Jehovah's Witnesses do not smoke, and their children are not unruly."

The newspaper *Życie Warszawy* mentioned that convention preparations had been going on for an entire year and said: "Among other things, the stadiums where the conventions took place were reconditioned."

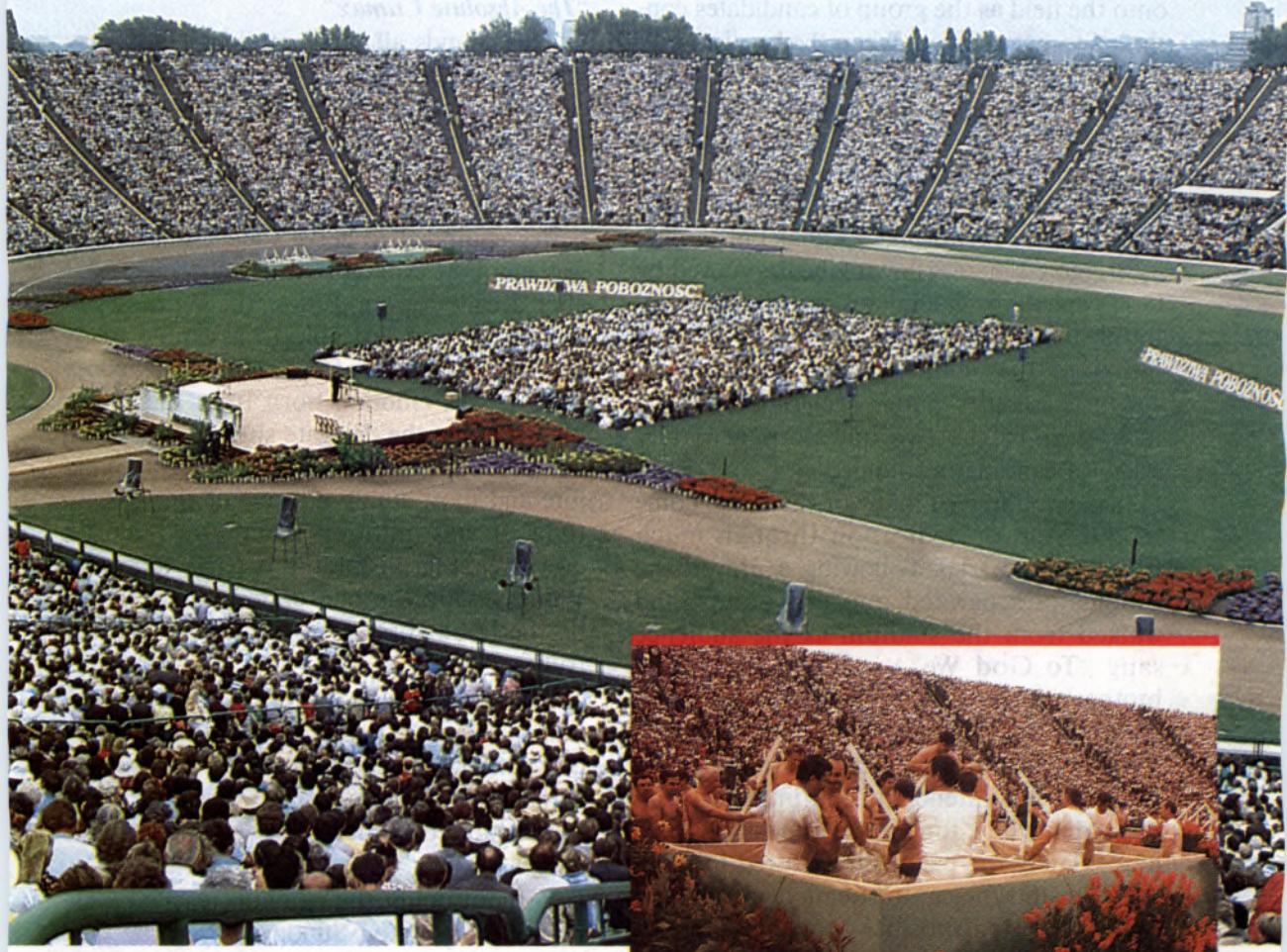
The newspaper *Express Wieczorny* reported: "What struck all the observers was the prevailing order at the stadium. The disposal of garbage at assigned places, the temporary but clean toilets, many information stands—all of it was amazing." To accomplish this, over 3,500 Witnesses spent time preparing and decorating the Warsaw stadium.

This newspaper also interviewed some of the delegates, asking them: "What did the Warsaw convention mean to you?" A Polish Witness said: "I am moved by the fact that I could meet our brothers from Czechoslovakia and the U.S.S.R., countries in which Jehovah's Witnesses are not officially recognized as a religious association."

And a Witness from the Soviet Union was quoted as saying: "I think it is the greatest experience of my life. . . . For the first time in my life I was able to meet so many of my brothers from all over the world. Moreover, this meeting was excellently organized; discourses were translated into 16 languages, our Polish brothers were our hosts—really everything was wonderful."

Życie Warszawy noted: "The world convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in Warsaw has now ended. . . . The convening of such conventions was made possible, as we recall, after the Religious Association of Jehovah's Witnesses in Poland—now more than 80 thousand believers strong*—was registered some months ago. Since May 12 this previously illegal religious group has enjoyed legal status."

* The newspaper's estimate.



Baptismal candidates at Warsaw sitting before the platform, and the crowd watching their baptism

Calling the conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses "a manifestation of unity," this newspaper said that "as regards orderliness, peacefulness, and cleanliness, convention participants are examples to imitate."

The Baptism

Everyone, whether able to speak Polish or not, was overwhelmed by the thrilling spectacle of the baptism. In Warsaw a large number



of chairs had been placed on the playing field immediately in front of the platform to seat the baptismal candidates. But during the morning program, it was exciting to see attendants hastily moving additional chairs

onto the field as the group of candidates continued to grow. Then, when the baptism talk was to begin, the huge audience grew quiet. They were about to experience something they would never forget. As the speaker welcomed the baptism candidates, the entire stadium broke into spontaneous applause. And then, as if by prearranged signal, but in reality triggered by overflowing hearts moved by God's spirit, the candidates responded by enthusiastically waving their hands in greeting to the overflow audience encircling them.

The candidates' public declaration of faith in answer to the two questions generally asked of candidates sounded clear and determined—and indeed many of them had come to this step of dedication through much hardship and trial. Following a prayer, the candidates separated into two groups and walked from the stadium as the audience sang "To God We Are Dedicated." The brothers exited from the field through a tunnel leading to their dressing rooms, while the sisters went through another tunnel leading to theirs. Attendants and immersers, all dressed in white, took up their positions, and immediately the candidates, attired in modest swimsuits, began to stream back onto the field, where 12 baptismal pools had been set up, 6 on one end of the field for the sisters, and 6 on the other end of the field for the brothers.

Enthusiastic applause continued through the 45 minutes during which 1,905 were baptized in Warsaw. (The previous week, 1,525 had been baptized at Poznan and 2,663 at Chorzów, for a grand total of 6,093, or 3.7 percent of the peak attendance.) At least two crippled brothers were lovingly lifted from their wheelchairs before being baptized, including one who had been brought out onto the field on a stretcher to listen to the baptism talk.

"The Absolute Climax"

This sounds all very emotional,' you may say. Well, it was! But it was not the kind of emotion you find at Christendom's religious revivals. The emotion of the Polish conventioners was based on accurate knowledge of God's Word, so those in attendance would be better equipped to serve God afterward. It was emotion evoked by the knowledge that after decades of opposition, the Witnesses in Poland were at last able to assemble freely with fellow believers from neighboring countries. It was emotion born from the joy of knowing that the delegate sitting next to you had perhaps never attended a convention before and most surely not one of this magnitude. It was emotion stemming from an overwhelming, visible proof that Jehovah's Witnesses are the one united, international brotherhood that serves the living God of truth.

One delegate from Western Europe summed it up by saying: "Despite having attended every convention since 1952, as far as atmosphere, enthusiasm, joy, love, appreciation, and gratefulness are concerned, this was the absolute climax."

Without doubt the emotion reached a climax in Warsaw on Sunday during the final prayer. Although thousands could not understand its words, everyone sensed the spirit, the love, the dedication, the exultation, the heartfelt recognition of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, and the determination to continue in Jehovah's work that it expressed. The awe-inspiring silence as some 60,000 heads bowed in prayer to their God was broken only by the unmistakable sound of joyful sobs of appreciation. As the prayer ended, no one had difficulty saying "Amen" from the bottom of his heart. There followed a spontaneous outburst of applause that echoed through that vast assemblage for more than 11 minutes.



Part of the section reserved at Chorzów for delegates from the Soviet Union, and some of the buses that brought Russian Witnesses to Poznan

Over 166,000 persons had been eyewitnesses of theocratic history being made in Poland. Before Satan's wicked system crashes into final destruction, much more history will be made—exciting, breathtaking, spine-tingling history that will be climaxed by the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty. And if you choose, you can survive as a part of that history. Will you?





From an old engraving, by H. Bricher sc.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

A FOREGLEAM OF THINGS TO COME

The French Revolution took place 200 years ago, in 1789. What were its causes? What example of things to come did it leave?

By *Awake!* correspondent in France

IS IT a revolt?" asked the king.
"No, Sire, it is a revolution."
French king Louis XVI asked that question on July 14, 1789, the day the Bastille was stormed in Paris. He showed that

French royalty was unable to recognize events that would bring about lasting changes in France and that would provide a foregleam of things to come.

During the 18th century, hunger had already

caused many revolts in France. On the eve of the revolution, about 10 million out of a population of 25 million depended on charity for survival. In addition, royal power was decaying, the administration was apathetic about reforms, and intellectuals questioned whether the king's authority should be superior to national interests.

The States-General

In 1788 the regime was faced with a financial crisis, largely due to French support for the Americans in their War of Independence against Britain. The king was obliged to assemble what was called the States-General. This was made up of representatives from the three classes of the nation: the clergy (the first estate); the nobility (the second estate); and the common people (the third estate).

The clergy represented only 150,000 people, the nobility about 500,000, and the third estate over 24,500,000. Each of the three classes had one vote. This meant that the common people (with one vote) could not bring about any reforms unless the clergy and the nobility (with two votes) agreed. So the clergy and the nobility—about 3 percent of the population—could outvote the other 97 percent! Furthermore, the clergy and the nobility owned about 36 percent of the land and did not have to pay land taxes.

When so many people were hungry, the representatives of the common people denounced the despotism of the government, the unfair tax and voting systems, and the injustices and opulence of the Catholic hierarchy as well as the nobility. However, the king seemed secure, since he was thought to rule by divine right. And people still had faith in the Catholic religion. Yet, in less than four years, the monarchy was overthrown, and a process of dechristianization was launched.

In the spring of 1789, the revolutionary process began. Because some of the nobility refused to accept a change in election procedure, the deputies of the third estate declared themselves the National Assembly. This marked the triumph of the bourgeois revolution and the end of absolute monarchy.

The peasants, however, feared a conspiracy by the king and the aristocracy to overthrow the third estate. This drove the people to pillage castles and manors, which degenerated into mass revolt. On the night of August 4, 1789, to keep order, the Assembly decided to eliminate the privileges of the nobility and abolish the feudal regime. Thus, in just a few days, the foundations of the old regime were shattered.

The Rights of Man

The Assembly then introduced the Declaration of the Rights of Man. The ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity were proclaimed. But the Assembly had to overcome the opposition of the clergy before inserting articles 10 and 11, which recognized the rights of freedom of religion and of expression.

Many believed that they had found the perfect government. They were due for a disappointment, however, because the church, represented by Pope Pius VI, condemned the Declaration. Many revolutionaries also spurned the Declaration, giving in to an insatiable thirst for blood.

More than 150 years later, in 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, inspired by the French text of 1789. But today, as in the past, many who pay lip service to such rights show utter disregard for the principles set forth. How true are the words of Ecclesiastes 8:9: "Some men have power and others have to suffer under them."—*Today's English Version*.

The Church Divided

In August 1789 certain deputies submitted the idea of nationalizing church property. The proposition became law, and the state seized church property. Additionally, the Assembly obliged priests to swear loyalty to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy that it had drawn up.

The church became divided. There were the state priests (60 percent of the clergy), who accepted the oath, and the priests who refused to swear loyalty, remaining loyal to Rome. This division gave rise to many conflicts. The priests



Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Inside Notre Dame Cathedral, an idolatrous festival for the goddess Reason

who refused the oath were often considered to be enemies of the revolution and of the country.

Terror and Bloodshed

Outside perils also threatened the revolution. Foreign monarchies were considering intervening in French affairs to put the king back on the throne. As for the common people, they lost confidence in Louis XVI when, on June 21, 1791, he tried to flee the country.

In the spring of 1792, in view of mounting opposition to the revolution in other European countries, France declared war on the king of Bohemia and Hungary. The war spread to all of Europe and continued until 1799, with over 500,000 French victims.

In August and September 1792, the revolution turned radical. The king was deposed, condemned to death, and a republic was proclaimed. The king was executed on January 21, 1793, and the queen, Marie Antoinette, was executed on October 16, 1793. Many uncooperative priests were deported. The revolutionaries felt they had to liberate other peoples who were still under tyrannical monarchies. But the liberators often ended up despots themselves.

Nothing, however, brought relief from the difficulties that had been worsened by the war. Following a decree to draft 300,000 men, trouble broke out in the country. In western France, a royalist Catholic army was formed under the

emblem of the cross and the sacred heart. It took control of towns in four areas and massacred the republicans there.

The central government took advantage of these problems to give itself dictatorial powers in the hands of a "Committee of Public Safety," with Robespierre as a dominant member. Terror became a principle of government. Often, the rights laid down in the 1789 Declaration were trampled on. The revolutionary tribunals passed more and more death sentences, and the guillotine became notorious.

Dechristianization

From autumn 1793, the revolutionary government set up a vast plan for dechristianization. The aim was to build a "new man" who would be rid of vice. The Catholic religion was accused of trying to take advantage of the people's credulity. Some churches were destroyed, while others were turned into barracks. The clergy were forced to quit their vocation and marry. Those who refused were arrested and executed. Some fled the country.

The Catholic religion was replaced by the religion of Reason. Some viewed Reason as a goddess, the "Mother of the homeland." Then, worship of Reason was replaced by a deistic religion imposed by Robespierre. He eliminated his opponents and established a ruthless dictatorship. This frenzy for blood later cost him his own life. He was dragged screaming to the guillotine on July 28, 1794.

The politicians who survived wanted to avoid a one-man dictatorship, so they entrusted power to a directory of five members. But as the war resumed and the financial situation worsened, the placing of power in the hands of an individual, Napoleon Bonaparte, was favored. The way was open for another dictatorship.

The French Revolution sowed ideas that later grew into both democracies and dictatorships. It also showed what can happen when political powers suddenly turn against organized religion. In this, it may provide a foregleam of things to come.—Revelation 17:16; 18:1-24.

WATCHING THE WORLD

PERSECUTION CONQUERED

Even though the August 15, 1989, *Watchtower* article exposed the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Burundi, the attacks and oppression have continued without letup. Nevertheless, the most recent reports from Burundi show an increase of 8.9 percent in the number of active Witnesses in one circuit of congregations. In another circuit, where the persecution has been most violent, there has been a 4.2-percent increase. These Witnesses spend an average of from 17 to 18 hours each month in their public preaching work. Fellow believers around the world have continued to write the Burundi government to protest the ill-treatment of the Witnesses.

SOFTENING THE BLOWS

When Hurricane Hugo hurtled against the North American coast on September 21 and 22 of this year, its 135-mile-an-hour winds crushed buildings and threw boats around as if they were toys. Jehovah's Witnesses from surrounding areas mobilized quickly to bring relief to their brothers in Charleston, South Carolina, where the storm hit hard. By the morning of the 23rd, 125 volunteers were already working, clearing debris and fallen trees from the homes of fellow Witnesses and from Kingdom Halls. Supplies of water, generators, and gasoline were brought in. The following day, 14 trucks arrived in Charleston and stocked its five Kingdom Halls with food, dry ice, water, and other supplies for the local Witnesses. Within days, one group of the Witnesses had con-

tributed \$10,000 to address these immediate needs.

INTERNATIONAL PICKPOCKETS

When summer comes to London, so do the pickpockets. Some four dozen of them, known internationally to be the most professional in the world, fly into the city and steal an estimated £10 million in cash and goods in less than two months, reports *The Sunday Times*. Called *Los Chileanos*, after Chile, their country of origin, they travel first to Madrid, Spain, or Milan, Italy, where they steal passports to gain illegal entry into England. Ox-



ford Street department stores, Underground rail stations, and the lobbies of West End hotels are prime targets. They also mingle with crowds at social events and with tourists at such well-known attractions as the Tower of London and Westminster Abbey. Since they are highly skilled and clever and can easily distract their victim, police advise against carrying a lot of money in crowded places. "The simple rule is this," said one officer, "always keep a direct line of sight between you and your valuables."

RIGHT TO KNOW?

The emperor of Japan died "without knowing the nature of

his illness or even asking about it," said *The Daily Yomiuri*. He died of cancer, just as his younger brother did almost two years earlier, without knowing. Although an increasing number of Japanese say they would wish to know if they had cancer, two thirds say they would not tell a relative so afflicted. This thinking was reflected by the Japanese mass media, which, although knowing of the emperor's cancer long before he died, as a whole avoided the subject. A major newspaper that named the emperor's illness was forced by the public's immediate strong outcry to withhold any subsequent comment while the emperor was still alive.

AIDS PROTECTION?

Researchers, long puzzled over the reason AIDS spreads so readily among heterosexuals in Africa, may now have part of their answer. The magazine *Science* reports that several recent studies have shown that uncircumcised African men were from five to eight times more likely to contract the deadly virus from sexual relations than were circumcised men. *Science* suggests a possible reason: The "foreskin provides a warm, moist environment that allows a longer time for viral survival and penetration. The virus is very short-lived in a dry environment." Epidemiologist Thomas Quinn concludes: "The finding suggests that circumcision should be advocated." But prostitutes play their part in the spread of AIDS as well. In some parts of Africa, from 50 to 80 percent of them are infected with AIDS.

FROM OUR READERS

Disabilities I have been suffering from severe farsightedness since the age of six. I felt jealous of anyone having normal eyesight and almost had a complex about wearing my glasses—they have very thick lenses. The article on special needs (August 22, 1989) helped me to realize that others, like the blind and deaf girl Janice, are able to serve God in spite of having much greater difficulties than mine.

S. J., France

Bullies The “Young People Ask . . .” article on bullies (August 8, 1989) came at the right time! Last year almost the whole class bullied me because they thought I wasn’t “cool.” And they teased me. Sometimes it hurt my feelings so bad that tears would form in my eyes. Since I have a fresh start this new school year, I am going to try some of the suggestions.

Y. P., United States

Safe Food I enjoyed your articles on food preparation (June 22, 1989), but I was concerned about the advice to boil questionable water. It is true that boiling will kill bacteria, but the water in certain areas, such as the rural Midwestern United States, may be severely contaminated with nitrates. Boiling that water and using it for drinking water can be very dangerous, especially for infants. Nitrates are not boiled away, so boiling only increases the concentration of nitrates in the water. Please inform readers to have their water sources checked (where practical) for nitrate contamination before boiling it for drinking.

M. C., United States

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency told “Awake!” that it may indeed be unwise to boil drinking water that has been contaminated with nitrates from fertilizer

or sewage. Much would depend upon the degree of contamination involved. In developing lands, it may often be difficult, if not impossible, for readers to have local water sources accurately tested for nitrate content. Nevertheless, boiling questionable drinking water is still a wise precaution in lands where the dangers of bacteriological contamination outweigh those of nitrate pollution.—ED.

Courtship The April 22, 1989, article on courtship left me confused. Even a little holding hands, embracing, or kissing can increase the desire to go farther. A couple should be encouraged to leave out unnecessary touching.

K. R., United States

There is a need for balance in this matter. Previous articles have specifically dealt with the subject of remaining chaste. (See “Awake!” of November 8 and December 8, 1985.) And the article in question likewise cautioned that expressions of endearment should not be done out of selfish passion. However, appropriate displays of affection before marriage are not ruled out in the Scriptures. (Song of Solomon 1:2; 2:6; 8:5) Individuals must therefore make a personal decision on this matter, bearing in mind their own feelings and limitations, the viewpoints of others, and their obligation to remain chaste in God’s eyes.—ED.

Quitting Smoking Thank you for the article “Ten Ways to Stop Smoking.” (July 8, 1989) I am using it to help a person who has long been a smoker and has not been able to stop. I also took some enlarged copies of the article and placed them at my workplace, where many smokers pass. They were impressed with the material, and some are applying what they read.

R. L. B. S., Brazil

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