

Awake!

APRIL 22, 2004

hope

Where Can You
Find It?

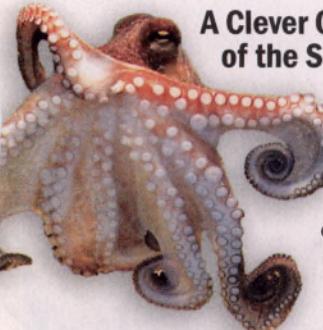


Awake!

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In this troubled world, hope seems in short supply. Do we really need it? Is there a way to bring more of it into your life?

HE WAS only ten years old, but Daniel had been battling cancer for a year. His doctors had given up hope, as had others close to the boy. But Daniel held on to hope. He believed that he would grow up to be a researcher and help to find a cure for cancer someday. He was especially hopeful regarding the upcoming visit of a doctor who specialized in treating his particular form of cancer. When the day arrived, though, the specialist was forced to cancel his visit because of bad weather. Daniel's spirits sank. For the first time, he became listless. He died within a few days.

hope Does It Really Make a Difference?

Daniel's account was related by a health-care worker who studied the role that hope and hopelessness play in relation to health. You may have heard similar stories. An elderly person, for example, lies near death but is eager to reach some long-anticipated milestone—whether the visit of a loved one or simply an anniversary. When the event has come and gone, death quickly ensues. What is at work in such cases? Can hope really be as potent a force as some believe?

A growing number of medical researchers suggest that optimism, hope, and other positive emotions indeed have a powerful effect on a person's life and health. But such views are hardly unanimous. Some researchers dismiss all such claims as a lot of unscientific folklore. They prefer to think that physical ailments have strictly physical causes.

Of course, skepticism about the importance of hope is not new. Thousands of years ago, the Greek philosopher Aristotle was asked to define hope and replied: "It is a waking dream." And more recently, the American statesman Benjamin Franklin observed tartly: "He that lives upon hope will die fasting."

What, then, is the truth about hope? Is it always mere wishful thinking, a way for people to seek comfort in empty dreams? Or is there valid reason to see hope as something more—something that all of us need for the sake of health and happiness, something with real basis and real benefits?

Why Do We Need Hope?

WHAT if Daniel, the young cancer victim described at the outset of the preceding article, had maintained his high hopes? Would he have beaten cancer? Would he be alive today? Even the most ardent proponents of hope would probably stop short of making such claims. And therein lies an important point. Hope should not be oversold. It is no cure-all, no panacea.

In an interview with CBS News, Dr. Nathan Cherney warned about the danger of overplaying the power of hope when dealing with very sick patients: "We've had situations of husbands berating their wives that they haven't been doing enough meditation, that they haven't been thinking positively enough." Dr. Cherney added: "This whole school of thought created an illusion of control, and when people do poorly, it's as if to say they haven't managed to control their tumor well enough, and that's not fair."

In truth, those combating a terminal illness are engaged in an exhausting, consuming battle. Adding guilt to their already heavy burden is surely the last thing that their loved ones would want to do. Should we conclude, then, that hope is without value?

Not at all. The same doctor, for instance, specializes in palliative care—that is, treatments focusing, not on fighting disease directly or even on prolonging life, but on making the patient's life more comfortable and pleasant as long as the fight lasts. Such doctors believe firmly in the value of treatments that lead to a happier state of mind, even in the very sick. There is

considerable evidence that hope can do that—and more.

The Value of Hope

"Hope is powerful therapy," asserts medical journalist Dr. W. Gifford-Jones. He reviewed various studies carried out to determine the

*Hope can do
a great deal of good*



Awake!®

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

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value of emotional support given to terminally ill patients. Presumably, this type of support helps people to maintain a more hopeful and positive outlook. One 1989 study found that patients who received such support survived longer, whereas recent research has been less conclusive on that score. However, studies have confirmed that patients who receive emotional support suffer less depression and less pain than do those without it.



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Consider another study that focused on the role of optimism and pessimism in coronary heart disease (CHD). A group of over 1,300 men were carefully evaluated as to whether they had an optimistic or a pessimistic way of looking at life. A follow-up ten years later found that over 12 percent of those men had suffered some form of CHD. Among them, the pessimists outnumbered the optimists by nearly 2 to 1. Laura Kubzansky, assistant professor of health and social behavior at the Harvard School of Public Health, comments: "Most of the evidence for the notion that 'thinking positively' is good for your health has been anecdotal—this study provides some of the first hard medical evidence for this idea in the arena of heart disease."

Some studies have found that those who rate their own health as poor actually fare worse in the wake of surgery than do those who rate their health as optimal. Even longevity has been linked with optimism. One study looked at how the elderly are affected by positive and negative views of aging. When older people were exposed to fleeting messages linking the aging process with increased wisdom and experience, they were thereafter found to walk with increased strength and energy. In fact, the improvement was equivalent to the results of a 12-week exercise program!

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Would you welcome more information? Write Jehovah's Witnesses at the appropriate address: **America, United States of:** Wallkill, NY 12589. **Australia:** Box 280, Ingleburn, NSW 1890. **Britain:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Canada:** Box 4100, Halton Hills (Georgetown), Ontario L7G 4Y4. **Ghana:** P. O. Box GP 760, Accra. **Jamaica:** P. O. Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. **New Zealand:** P. O. Box 75-142, Manurewa. **Nigeria:** P.M.B. 1090, Benin City 300001, Edo State. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Zambia:** Box 33459, Lusaka 10101. **Zimbabwe:** Private Bag WG-5001, Westgate.



Why do such emotions as hope, optimism, and a positive outlook seem to benefit health? Perhaps scientists and doctors do not yet understand the human mind and body well enough to provide definitive answers. Still, experts who study the subject can make educated guesses. For instance, one professor of neurology suggests: "It feels good to be happy and hopeful. It's an enjoyable state that produces very little stress, and the body thrives in those conditions. It's one more thing that people can do for themselves to try to stay healthy."

This notion may strike some doctors, psychologists, and scientists as ground breaking, but it is hardly new to students of the Bible. Nearly 3,000 years ago, wise King Solomon was inspired to put this thought in writing: "A heart that is joyful does good as a curer, but a spirit that is stricken makes the bones dry." (Proverbs 17:22) Note the balance reflected here. This verse does not say that a joyful heart will cure any ailment but simply that it "does good as a curer."

In fact, it might be fair to ask, If hope were a medicine, what doctor would *not* prescribe it? Moreover, hope has benefits that extend far beyond the realm of health.

Optimism, Pessimism, and Your Life

Researchers have found that optimists benefit in many ways from their positive outlook. They tend to perform better in school, at work, and even on the athletic field. For example, a study was made of a women's track team. The coaches provided a thorough assessment of the women's pure athletic abilities. At the same time, the women themselves were surveyed and their level of hope carefully assessed. As it turned out, the women's measure of hope was a far more accurate predictor of their performance than were all the statistics evaluated by their coaches. Why does hope have such a powerful influence?

Much has been learned by studying the opposite of optimism—pessimism. During the

1960's, experiments yielded an unexpected finding regarding animal behavior, leading researchers to coin the phrase "learned helplessness." They found that humans too can suffer from a form of this syndrome. For example, human test subjects were exposed to an unpleasant noise and told that they could learn to stop it by pressing a sequence of buttons. They succeeded in stopping the noise.

A second group was told the same thing—but pressing the buttons had no effect. As you can imagine, many among that second group developed feelings of helplessness. In later tests, they were hesitant to take any action at all. They were convinced that nothing they did would make any difference. Even in that second group, though, the optimists refused to give in to such a helpless frame of mind.

Dr. Martin Seligman, who helped to design some of those early experiments, was moved to make a career of studying optimism and pessimism. He delved into the kind of thinking exhibited by people who were prone to view themselves as helpless. Such pessimistic thinking, he concluded, hampers people in many of life's endeavors or even paralyzes them into inaction. Seligman summarizes pessimistic thinking and its effects this way: "Twenty-five years of study has convinced me that if we *habitually* believe, as does the pessimist, that misfortune is our fault, is enduring, and will undermine everything we do, more of it will befall us than if we believe otherwise."

Again, such conclusions may seem new to some today, but they have a ring of familiarity to students of the Bible. Note this proverb: "Have you shown yourself discouraged in the day of distress? Your power will be scanty." (Proverbs 24:10) Yes, the Bible clearly explains that discouragement, with its negative thoughts, will sap you of power to act. What, though, can you do to fight pessimism and bring more optimism and hope into your life?

You Can Fight Pessimism

HOW do you view the setbacks you experience? Many experts now believe that the answer to that question says a great deal about whether you are an optimist or a pessimist. We all suffer various hard trials in life, some of us more than others. Why, though, do some people seem to bounce back from hardships, ready to try again, whereas others seem to give up after even relatively minor difficulties?

For instance, imagine that you are looking for a job. You go to an interview and get turned down. How do you think about this event afterward? You might take it very personally and view it as a permanent problem, telling yourself, ‘No one would hire someone like me. I’ll never get a job.’

Or, worse, you could let this single setback color your view of every aspect of your life, thinking, ‘I’m a total failure. I’m no use to anybody.’ In each case, such thinking is the essence of pessimism.

Battling Pessimism

How can you fight back? Learning to recognize such negative thoughts is a vital first step. The next step is to fight against them. Look for reasonable alternative explanations. For example, is it really true that you were turned down because no one would hire you? Or is it possible that the employer was simply looking for someone with other qualifications?

Using specific facts, expose those pessimistic thoughts that are overreactions. Does one rejection really mean that you are a total failure, or can you think of other areas in your life—such as your spiritual pursuits, family relationships, or friendships—where you have a measure of success? Learn to dismiss your more dire predictions as mere “catastrophizing.” After all, can you really *know* that you will *never* find a job? There is more you can do to push aside negative thinking.

Positive, Goal-Oriented Thinking

In recent years researchers have developed an intriguing, if rather narrow, definition of hope. They say that hope involves

If rejected for a job you wanted, do you assume that you will never get a job?

the belief that you will be able to meet your goals. As the next article will show, hope actually involves much more, but this definition seems useful in a number of ways. Focusing on this aspect of personal hope can help us to develop more positive, goal-oriented thinking.

If we are to believe that we can meet our future goals, we need to build up a record of setting goals and meeting them. If you feel that you do not have such a record, it may be worthwhile to think seriously about the goals that you set for yourself. First, do you have any? It is all too easy to get caught up in the routine and bustle of life without stopping to think about what we *really* want out of life, what matters most to us. Regarding this practical principle of establishing clear priorities, we again find that long ago the Bible said it well: "Make sure of the more important things."—Philippians 1:10.

Once we set our priorities, it becomes easier to pick some key goals in various areas, such as in our spiritual life, our family life, our secular life. It is essential, though, that we do not set too many goals at first and that we make each goal one that we know we can readily reach. If a goal is too difficult to reach, it may daunt us, and we might give up. Hence, it is often best to break down larger, long-term goals into smaller, short-term ones.

"Where there's a will there's a way." Thus runs an old adage, and there seems to be some truth in it. Once we have key goals in mind, we need the willpower—the desire and the determination—to strive to reach them. We may strengthen that determination by contemplating the value of our goals and the rewards that will come to us by reaching them. Of course, obstacles will arise, but we need to view them as challenges instead of dead ends.

However, we also need to think of practical ways to meet our goals. Author C. R. Snyder, who has made an extensive study of the value of hope, suggests thinking of multiple ways to reach any given goal. Thus, when one way does not work out, we may resort to a second, a third, and so on.

Snyder also recommends learning when to trade in one goal for another. If we are truly blocked from reaching a goal, brooding on it will only discourage us. On the other hand, replacing it with a more realistic goal will give us something else to hope for.

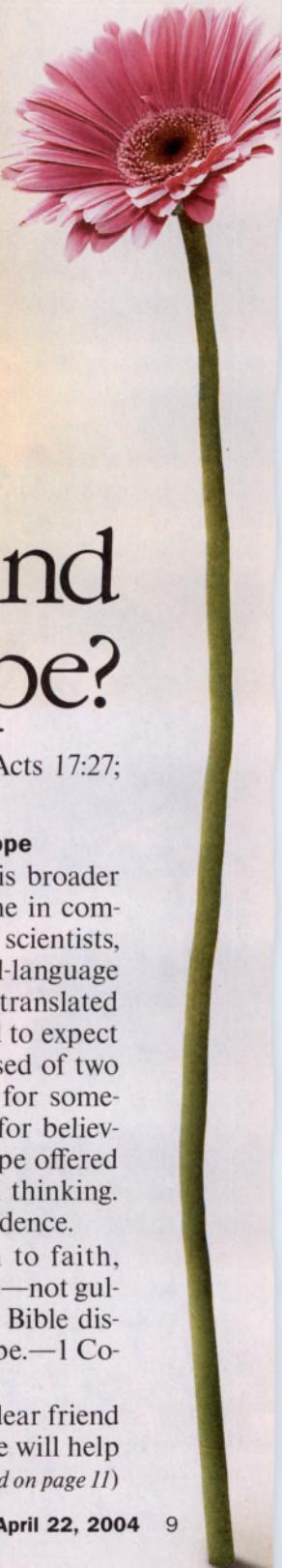
The Bible contains an illuminating example in this regard. King David cherished the goal of building a temple for his God, Jehovah. But God told David that his son Solomon was to have that privilege instead. Rather than sulking or trying to persist in the face of this disappointing development, David changed his goals. He threw his energies into collecting the funds and materials that his son would need in order to complete the project.—1 Kings 8:17-19; 1 Chronicles 29:3-7.

Even if we succeed in building up our personal level of hope by fighting pessimism and by developing positive, goal-oriented thinking, we may still have a profound deficit when it comes to hope. How so? Well, much of the hopelessness that we face in this world comes from factors completely beyond our control. When we contemplate the overwhelming problems that afflict mankind—the poverty,

the wars, the injustices, the ever-looming threats of sickness and death—how can we maintain a hopeful outlook?



King David showed flexibility when it came to goals



Where Can You Find Real Hope?

YOUR watch has stopped and appears to be broken. When it comes to getting it fixed, you face a profusion of choices. Advertisements for watch repair abound, all of them making confident claims, some of them contradictory. But what if you find out that a neighbor of yours is the ingenious man who designed that particular watch years ago? What is more, you learn that he is willing to help you, free of charge. Your choice would seem clear, wouldn't it?

Now compare that watch to your own ability to hope. If you find that you are losing hope—as many are in these troubled times—where will you turn for help? Any number of people claim to be able to fix the problem, but the countless suggestions can be confusing and contradictory. So why not go to the One who designed mankind with the capacity for hope in the first place? The Bible says that “he is not far off from each one of us” and that he

is more than willing to help.—Acts 17:27; 1 Peter 5:7.

A Deeper Definition of Hope

The Bible’s concept of hope is broader and more profound than the one in common use among today’s doctors, scientists, and psychologists. The original-language words used in the Bible that are translated “hope” mean to wait eagerly and to expect good. Basically, hope is composed of two elements. It involves the *desire* for something good as well as the *basis* for believing that good will come. The hope offered in the Bible is not mere wishful thinking. It has a solid basis in fact and evidence.

In this regard, hope is akin to faith, which must be based on evidence—not gullibility. (Hebrews 11:1) Still, the Bible distinguishes between faith and hope.—1 Corinthians 13:13.

To illustrate: When you ask a dear friend for a favor, you may hope that he will help

(Continued on page II)



Reasons for Hope

These Scriptural thoughts can help you build up your hope:

■ ***God promises a happy future.***

His Word says that the earth will become a global paradise inhabited by a happy, united human family.—Psalm 37:11, 29; Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 21:3, 4.

■ ***God cannot lie.***

He detests lying in all its forms. Jehovah is infinitely holy or pure, so lying is impossible for him.—Proverbs 6:16-19; Isaiah 6:2, 3; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18.

■ ***God has unlimited power.***

Jehovah alone is almighty. Nothing in the universe can prevent him from fulfilling his promises.—Exodus 15:11; Isaiah 40:25, 26.

■ ***God wants you to live forever.***

—John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4.

■ ***God looks at us with hope.***

He chooses to focus, not on our faults and failings, but on our good qualities and efforts. (Psalm 103:12-14; 130:3; Hebrews 6:10) He hopes that we will do what is right and is pleased when we do.—Proverbs 27:11.

■ ***God promises to help you meet godly goals.***

His servants need never feel helpless. God gives generously of his holy spirit, the strongest force there is, to help us.
—Philippians 4:13.

■ ***Hope in God is never misplaced.***

Completely reliable and trustworthy, he will never let you down.—Psalm 25:3.

(Continued from page 9)

you out. Your hope is not without basis because you have faith in your friend—you know him well, and you have seen him act with kindness and generosity in the past. Your faith and your hope are closely related, even interdependent, but they are distinct. How can you have such hope in God?

The Basis for Hope

God is the source of true hope. In Bible times Jehovah was called “the hope of Israel.” (Jeremiah 14:8) Any reliable hope that his people had came from him; thus, he was their hope. Such hope did not amount to mere wishing. God gave them a solid basis for hope. In dealing with them over the centuries, he built up a record of promises made and promises kept. Their leader Joshua said to Israel: “You well know . . . that not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed.”—Joshua 23:14.

Thousands of years later, that record still stands. The Bible is full of God’s remarkable promises as well as the accurate historical record of their fulfillment. His prophetic promises are so reliable that they are sometimes recorded as if they were already fulfilled at the time they were made.

That is why we may speak of the Bible as the book of hope. As you study the record of God’s dealings with humans, your reasons for putting your hope in him will only grow stronger. The apostle Paul wrote: “All the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction, that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope.”—Romans 15:4.

What Hope Does God Give Us?

When do we feel the greatest need for hope? Is it not when we face death? For many, though, it is at just such a moment—when death takes a loved one, for example—that hope seems the most elusive. After all, what could be more hopeless than death? It relent-

lessly pursues each one of us. We can avoid it only for so long, and we are powerless to reverse it. Fittingly, the Bible calls death “the last enemy.”—1 Corinthians 15:26.

How, then, can we find hope in the face of death? Well, the Bible verse that calls death the last enemy also says that this foe will be “brought to nothing.” Jehovah God is stronger than death. He has proved it on numerous occasions. How? By resurrecting the dead. The Bible describes nine different occasions when God used his power to bring dead individuals back to life.

In an outstanding instance, Jehovah empowered his Son, Jesus, to resurrect his dear friend named Lazarus, who had been dead for four days. Jesus did this, not in secret, but openly, in front of a crowd of onlookers.—John 11:38-48, 53; 12:9, 10.

You might wonder, ‘Why were people resurrected? Did they not grow old and eventually die again anyway?’ They did. Yet, because of reliable resurrection accounts such as this one, we can have more than a mere *desire* that our dead loved ones will live again; we have *reason* to believe that they will. In other words, we have genuine hope.

Jesus said: “I am the resurrection and the life.” (John 11:25) He is the One whom Jehovah will empower to perform resurrections on a global scale. Jesus said: “The hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear [Christ’s] voice and come out.” (John 5:28, 29) Yes, all those sleeping in the grave have the prospect of being

In Our Next Issue

- **Victimized at Work
—What Can You Do?**
- **Why View Marriage as Sacred?**
- **Danger—Killer Plants!**

**As a helmet protects the head,
so hope protects the mind**

resurrected to life on a paradise earth.

The prophet Isaiah painted this touching picture of the resurrection: "Thy dead live, their bodies will rise again. They that sleep in the earth will awake and shout for joy; for thy dew is a dew of sparkling light, and the earth will bring those long dead to birth again." —Isaiah 26:19, *The New English Bible*.

Is that not comforting? The dead are in the safest situation imaginable, like an infant protected within its mother's womb. Indeed, those resting in the grave are perfectly preserved within the limitless memory of Almighty God. (Luke 20:37, 38) And soon they will be brought back to life, entering a happy, welcoming world much the way a newborn is greeted by a loving, waiting family! So, there is hope even in the face of death.

What Hope Can Do for You

Paul teaches us much about the value of hope. He spoke of hope as a vital part of a spiritual suit of armor—the helmet. (1 Thessalonians 5:8) What did he mean by that? Well, in Bible times a soldier wore a metal helmet into battle, often over a felt or leather cap. Thanks to the helmet, most blows to the head would glance off instead of doing fatal damage. Paul's point? As a helmet protects the head, so hope protects the mind, the thinking faculties. If you have a solid hope in line with God's purposes, your peace of mind need not be shattered by panic or despair when you face hardships. Who of us does not need such a helmet?

Paul used another vivid illustration for hope linked to God's will. He wrote: "This hope we have as an anchor for the soul, both sure and firm." (Hebrews 6:19) A survivor of more than one shipwreck, Paul well



knew the value of an anchor. When beset by a storm, sailors would lower the ship's anchor. If it caught on the seabed and held tight, the ship would have a chance of riding out the storm in relative safety instead of being blown toward shore to crash on the rocks.

Likewise, if God's promises are for us a "sure and firm" hope, that hope can help us to weather the turmoil of these stormy times. Jehovah promises that a time will soon come when mankind will no longer be plagued by wars, crime, sorrow, or even death. (See the box on page 10.) Clinging to that hope can help us to steer clear of disaster, giving us the incentive we need to live by God's standards instead of giving in to the chaotic, immoral spirit so prevalent in the world today.

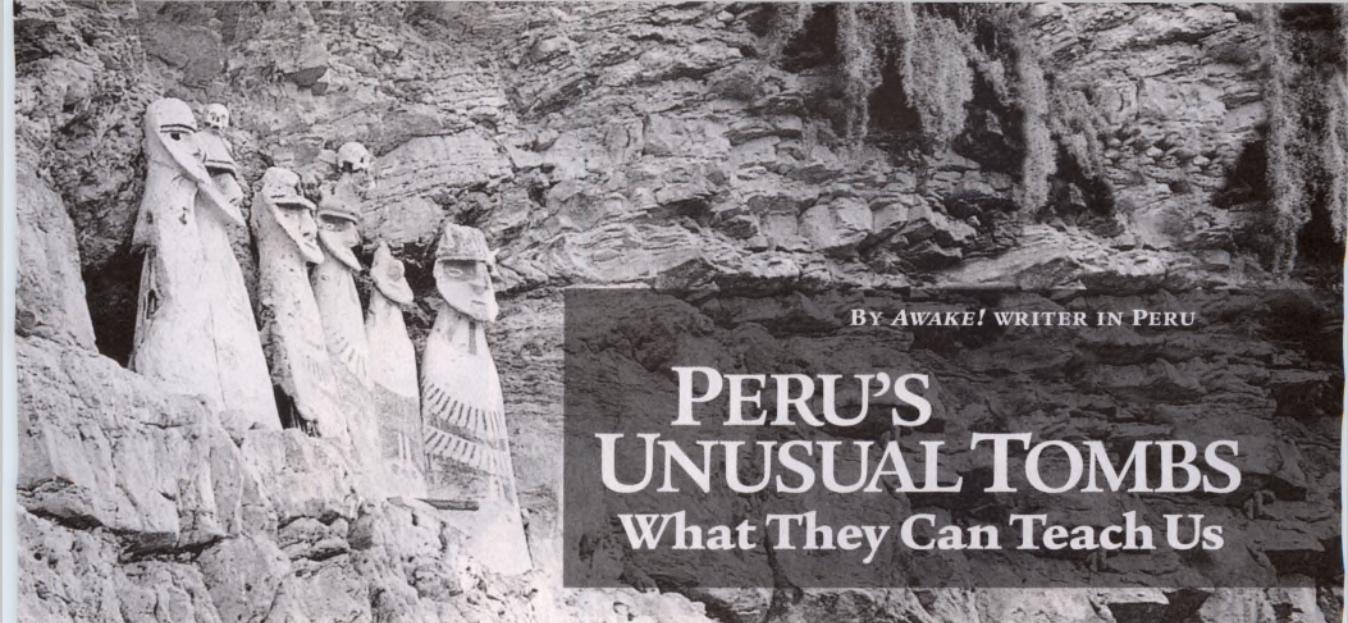
The hope that Jehovah offers also involves you personally. He wants you to experience life as he meant for you to live it. His desire is that "all sorts of men should be saved." How? First, each one must "come to an accurate knowledge of truth." (1 Timothy 2:4) The publishers of this journal urge you to take in that life-giving knowledge regarding the truth of God's Word. The hope that God will thereby give you is far superior to any hope you can find in this world.

With such hope, you need never feel helpless, for God can give you the strength you need to meet any goals you may have that are in harmony with his will. (2 Corinthians 4:7; Philippians 4:13) Is that not the kind of hope you need? So if you are in need of hope, if you have been searching for it, take courage. Hope is at hand. You can find it!

*Like an anchor,
a solidly founded hope
can provide stability*



Courtesy René Seindal/Su concessione del Museo Archeologico Regionale A. Salinas di Palermo



BY AWAKE! WRITER IN PERU

PERU'S UNUSUAL TOMBS

What They Can Teach Us

YOU can learn a lot about a people from the way they treat their dead. This truth is particularly evident in Peru, a land where many cultures have left their mark—among them the Moche, the Chimu, the Nazca, the Chachapoya, the Colla, and the Inca. Each culture had its own set of burial practices, reflecting distinctive beliefs regarding the afterlife.

Scientists as well as grave robbers have excavated thousands of burial places and discovered well-preserved remains wrapped in yards of woven fabric or unwoven cotton. Some of the material has been beautifully worked in varied designs. The hot, dry desert sands that cover most of Peru's Pacific Coast have yielded thousands of well-preserved mummified bodies.

Tombs of the Mighty

Excavations of Moche tombs have unearthed people of royal heritage who were buried with fabulous wealth and with swords and emblems of royalty. Other people were also buried with them. Evidently, servants were sacrificed to accompany their chieftains into the afterlife. Some even had their feet cut off. Why? One theory is that the intent was to

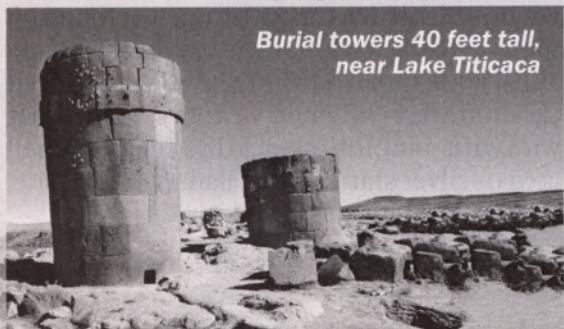
render these attendants unable to flee their posts in the netherworld.

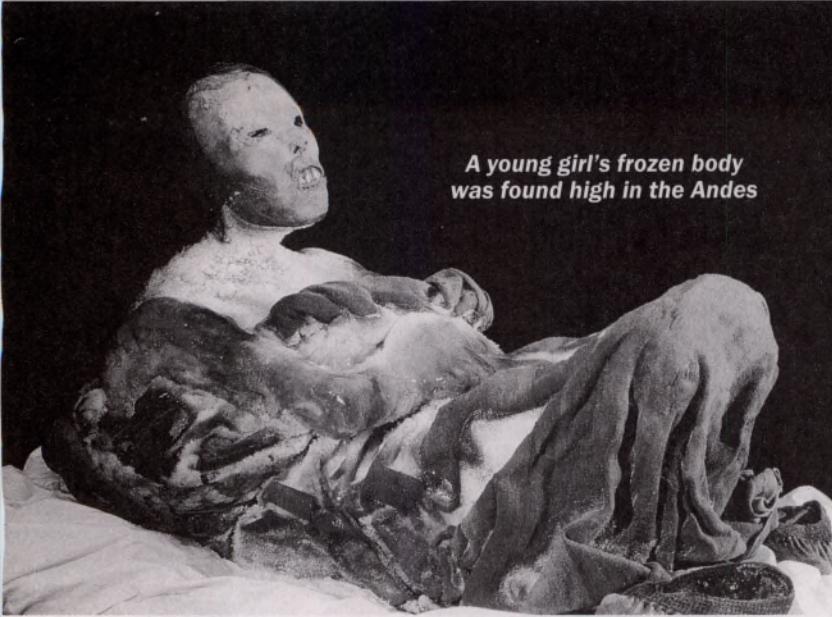
Near Lake Titicaca, at an altitude of 12,500 feet, are imposing burial tombs called chullpas, stone towers that are up to 40 feet tall and wider at the top than at the base. These evidently housed the remains of the nobility of the Colla people, who were conquered by the Inca. Some of the tombs bear engravings of serpents, cats, and monkeys. These creatures were worshiped as guardians of the underworld.

At Karajia, near the town of Chachapoyas, there are tombs that stir the imagination. Six-foot-tall sarcophagi made of hardened clay, some of them still bearing traces of the original paint from centuries ago, stand on ledges in the face of a cliff. The faces appear to be frowning majestically as they look out over a green valley, lording it over all that meets their unseeing eyes.

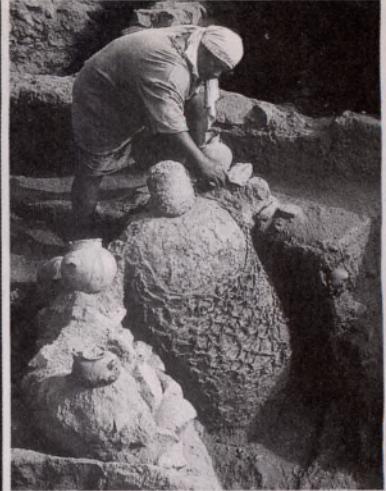
Sarcophagi at Karajia (above)

**Burial towers 40 feet tall,
near Lake Titicaca**





*A young girl's frozen body
was found high in the Andes*



*Archaeologists have uncovered
about 2,200 mummies
near Lima*

Evidence of Tragic Endings

In a suburb of Lima, archaeologists recently uncovered deep graves containing about 2,200 mummies wrapped in bundles. Evidently Inca in origin, the bundles were in excellent condition. One of them was massive, weighing 528 pounds and standing five feet nine inches high. It was found to contain two bodies—that of an Inca nobleman wrapped in 300 pounds of raw cotton and, next to the main bundle, the body of a child who may have been related to the adult. One can only wonder about the circumstances that led to those deaths so long ago.

Less mysterious—but no less tragic—are the bodies of children who were sacrificed as offerings to the Andes mountain gods. It may be that the parents of such young ones considered it a privilege to send their children off into the “next world,” perhaps as emissaries to the gods. The children were usually buried at or near a mountain peak. The body of one young girl, hidden for centuries, was found on snow-covered Sara Sara in Ayacucho, at an altitude of some 16,000 feet. Such sacrificed children were wrapped in robes, sometimes with gifts and tokens nearby, such as small gold or silver statuettes of llamas.

Hopes for the Dead—What Was the Basis?

These past civilizations in Peru are not the only ones with burial rituals based on the belief that there is a mystical afterlife. In various ways even modern cultures express a preoccupation with life after death.

Beliefs about the afterlife vary widely today. For instance, reincarnation, the transmigration of souls, purgatory, hellfire, and the concept of communicating with the dead are widely cherished notions. Such doctrines are all based on a common teaching—that at death only the body dies, survived by something immortal that lives on. The Bible does not support any of these ideas.—Ecclesiastes 3:18-20; 9:5, 10; Ezekiel 18:4.

Rather, the Bible teaches that man himself is a soul, a living mortal creature. (Genesis 2:7) However, the Word of God also offers a wonderful hope for the dead. It teaches that there will be “a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.” (Acts 24:15) The Bible does more than merely assert such a hope. It contains the written, eyewitness accounts of a number of resurrections. (John 11:17-47; 1 Corinthians 15:3-6) How wonderful, then, are the prospects for the millions who have lived and died through the ages!

A Clever Chameleon OF THE Sea

*"The octopus, O horror! inhales a man.
It draws him to itself, and into itself; and, bound,
immobile, he feels himself slowly ingested
by that incredible being which is the monster."*

—TOILERS OF THE SEA, BY VICTOR HUGO.

THE octopus has been the target of much bad publicity. Ancient myths and fanciful tales—like the one quoted above—have unfairly stigmatized the creature.

In reality, though, even the giant Pacific octopus, which may reach a length of some 20 feet and weigh up to 110 pounds, does not generally pose a danger to humans. In recent years fabulous legends regarding this eight-legged “monster” have been replaced by facts. Divers and marine biologists have learned much about the many varieties of octopus.

Capturing Prey and Avoiding Enemies

Rather than devouring humans, octopuses feed chiefly on crustaceans, employing their eight arms and as many as 1,600 muscular suckers to capture prey. Using these suckers, a small octopus is capable of dragging an object that is 20 times its own weight! Some octopuses also spray venom, which paralyzes their prey almost instantly.* The octopus then eats by pulling the food through its beaklike jaws.

What if the octopus finds itself the intended meal of another creature? It has a surprising disadvantage. Its pale blue blood, which relies on hemocyanin instead of hemoglobin, carries little oxygen. As a result, the octopus tires quickly. Yet, it has special skills to protect itself from seals, whales, and other predators.

* Only the blue-ringed octopus, native to Australia, is considered lethal to humans. Its bite can cause respiratory failure.



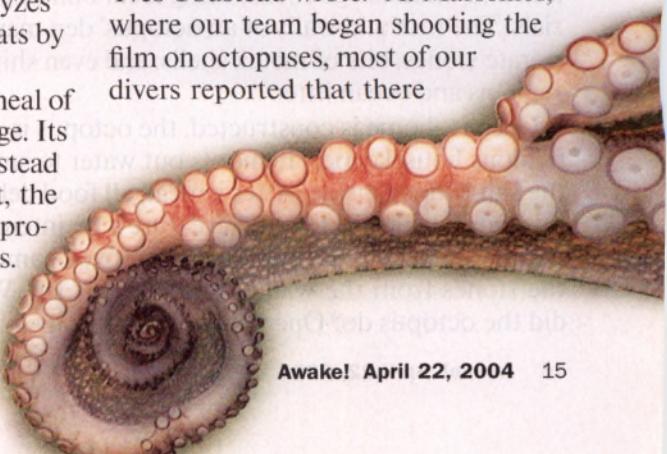
A blue-ringed octopus

© Jeffrey Rosenfeld

One such skill is propulsion. When threatened, the octopus propels itself backward by expelling water from its thick mantle. This sly creature has another escape tactic. It may discharge an ink cloud, which contains a pigment that does not dilute in seawater. Thus hidden, the octopus can change direction and flee to safety before the cloud dissipates.

A Master of Disguise

Of course, the octopus prefers not to be pursued in the first place. How does it hide from predators? Famed underwater explorer Jacques-Yves Cousteau wrote: “At Marseilles, where our team began shooting the film on octopuses, most of our divers reported that there





A Pacific reef octopus in perfect camouflage, directly below the mouth of a predatory fish. Can you see the octopus?

were no octopuses in the area; or, that if there had been some, they were no longer there. In fact, the divers were swimming right past the octopuses, who were so well camouflaged as to be practically invisible." How did the octopuses manage this feat?

An adult octopus has up to two million chromatophores, or color cells—as many as 130,000 per square inch—in its skin. Each color cell contains a red, yellow, or black pigment. By contracting or relaxing the muscles around the cells, the octopus can flash a solid color or even colored patterns within a few seconds.

Ironically, it appears that the octopus does not have color vision. Yet, its range of skin colors goes far beyond three pigments. Iridocytes, cells containing mirrored plates, refract light to match the color of the octopus' surroundings. That is not all. When hiding on a coral reef, an octopus can change texture by puckering its otherwise smooth skin into prickles, blending in with a similarly rough surface.

Dutiful Builder and Housekeeper

Not surprisingly, the home of an octopus can be hard to find. They tend to build their dens in crevices and under large rocks, using local building materials. The roof and walls of an octopus' den may incorporate stones, bits of metal, shells, and even shipwreck remains and ocean litter.

Once its home is constructed, the octopus is a meticulous housekeeper. It shoots out water to smooth the sandy floor inside. After a meal, all food debris is pushed outside. To test the creature's maintenance skills, Cousteau's team of divers removed some of the stones from the wall of an octopus' den. What did the octopus do? One pebble at a time, it slowly re-

constructed the wall! Cousteau wrote: "The process continued until the wall was entirely rebuilt; and it was identical in every respect with that which the divers had demolished." The octopus' reputation for keeping its home neat and orderly is well-known. When divers see a den with accumulated sand or debris inside, they know it is vacant.

Her Last Home

In general, the last and most important home a female octopus will



inhabit is her nesting den. After successfully receiving a sperm package from her mate and storing it until her eggs are released, she may spend several weeks looking for a suitable home. Next, she fortifies her nesting den and glues thousands of eggs, in clusters, to the roof. The blue-ringed octopus, however, builds no such den. Since her bright colors warn predators to stay away, she prefers to care

for her young in the open sea, where she can advertise her venomous bite.

The octopus is a dutiful mother. After laying her eggs, she will likely refuse to eat. Instead, she protects her eggs, cleans and aerates them, fortifies her den, and takes on a defensive posture to ward off predators. Though the female octopus will die after her offspring are hatched, she cares for them right until the end. Cousteau said: "No one has ever reported that a female octopus left her eggs unprotected."

In most species of octopus, tiny newborn hatchlings rise to the water's surface as plankton. Many are eaten by other marine animals. After several weeks, though, the survivors return to the bottom of the sea and mature into full-grown octopuses, living up to three years.

How Clever Are They?

Some suggest that when used in connection with animals, the word "intelligence" involves the ability to learn from experience and solve problems. In that regard, consider this comment by Cousteau: "The octopus' timidity is a reasoned reaction, one that is based primarily on prudence and caution. . . . If a diver is able to demonstrate that he means no harm, the octopus quickly loses its timidity —more quickly than any 'wild' animal."

Octopuses have the most highly developed brain and eyes among invertebrates. Their eyes, like ours, can be finely focused and can adapt

to changes in light. The optic lobe interprets information received from the eyes and this, along with an acute sense of touch, enables an octopus to make surprisingly clever decisions.

Several scientists report seeing an octopus learn to remove a stopper from a bottle in order to reach a crustacean inside. Others have reported that an octopus can figure out how to unscrew the lid on a jar in order to get at the food within. In Canada's Vancouver Aquarium, an octopus disappeared nightly up a drainpipe to eat the fish in the neighboring tank.

Regarding the cleverness of the octopus, the book *Exploring the Secrets of Nature* concludes: "We are inclined to credit primates with the highest levels of intelligence, but there is proof that octopuses, too, are among the most intelligent of animals."

The cleverness of octopus behavior may remind us of creatures that the Bible describes as "instinctively wise." (Proverbs 30:24) They truly are a marvel of creation. Among scientists and divers alike, the "horror" of Victor Hugo's imagination no longer taints the octopus. Those who study this creature are left with profound awe for this clever chameleon of the sea.

**Octopuses come
in many varieties
and colors**

**Tiny hatchlings head
for the surface**

© Fred Bavendam



Why Do They Kiss the Blarney Stone?

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN IRELAND

THE legend runs thus: A man stood trembling before Queen Elizabeth I of England. He had just delivered bad news from an Irish chieftain and was anticipating her wrath. Unexpectedly, the queen burst out laughing and exclaimed: "This is all Blarney. What he says he never means!" All at once, the tension lifted.

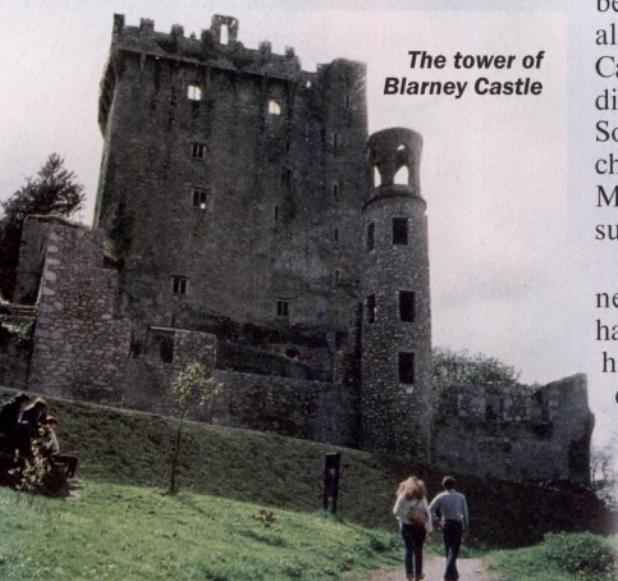
The queen, who reigned from 1558 to 1603, would likely not have expected such remarks to contribute to a unique tradition in Ireland—kissing what is called the Blarney Stone. Every year, thousands of people come to the small town of Blarney, situated a few miles north of the city of Cork, to carry out this odd ritual. They kiss the stone because doing so is supposed to bring them a gift—the gift of eloquent speech.

What is the background of the legend? And how did the practice of kissing this stone begin? To find the answers, we need to look back almost ten centuries.

A Castle With a Long History

Blarney Castle started out in the tenth cen-

*The tower of
Blarney Castle*



tury C.E. as only a small wooden fortification. In time, it was replaced by a more substantial stone building. By the middle of the 15th century, the MacCarthy family had developed the castle into a small fortified town. At the time, it was the strongest castle in that part of Ireland. Many of the stone walls were 18 feet thick.

The chieftain of the family, Cormac MacCarthy, who lived from 1411 to 1494, wanted to leave a permanent memorial of himself. So he selected a large block of limestone and had an inscription in Latin engraved on it, which is translated: "Cormac MacCarthy the Strong caused me to be built in the year of our Lord 1446." Masons set this stone high up in the large tower of Blarney Castle. To begin with, it served only as a simple memorial plaque. Its association with smooth, eloquent speech did not begin until over a century later.

Blarney and Smooth-Talking

While the legend mentioned at the outset may be more blarney than history, it does fit within the context of the times. Queen Elizabeth wanted the Irish chieftains to give their allegiance to the English crown. The MacCarthy family had organized a thousand soldiers to fight at least one battle in her behalf. So the queen was confident that the reigning chieftain of the MacCarthy family, Cormac McDermot MacCarthy, could easily be persuaded to give her his absolute loyalty.

Since Queen Elizabeth could not conduct negotiations herself, she would naturally have appointed a deputy to speak on her behalf. When the deputy sent officers to try to convince MacCarthy to swear allegiance to the queen, they were greeted, according to



the story as related in the book *The Blarney Stone*, with “long, eloquent, cajoling speeches, promising much but delivering little.”

Eventually, the story goes, Queen Elizabeth’s deputy himself went to talk with MacCarthy. Afterward, he traveled to England to report personally to the queen. He knew that she would not want to hear his news—that MacCarthy had once again “begged more time” to allow him to seek further counsel from advisers.

After the queen’s initial reaction, described at the beginning of this article, she made a proposal regarding the novel expression she had used. “We should give that word [blarney] to Master Shakespeare! It is truly made for him,” she said.* If the legend is true, Queen Elizabeth thereby initiated the use of the word “blarney” for “smoothly flattering or cajoling talk.” One reference says that “blarney” refers to “telling lies with unblushing effrontery.”

At any rate, by 1789, kissing the Blarney Stone had already become an established practice for those who dared to do it. The position of the stone on the castle wall made it dangerous for any visitor to attempt to kiss it. So when the castle was renovated, the stone was relocated to its present, more accessible position. In time, owners of the castle replaced MacCarthy’s stone with one bearing their own inscription.

Visiting the Castle

Recently we visited the castle. The large tower containing the now-popular Blarney Stone dominates the view. We entered the tower and climbed the well-worn stone steps of the spiral stairway, eventually emerging through a small, narrow doorway. The Blarney Stone is located on a far wall.

We moved closer to watch a woman kiss the stone. She had to lie on her back with her head and shoulders over an opening that is about ten feet long and two feet wide. “You’re

quite safe,” said the attendant. “You cannot fall through the gap because there are safety bars securely fitted across these openings. Anyway, I have a good hold on you!”

The woman reached out over her head and grasped two iron bars that had been fixed on the wall above the stone. Then, her head seemed to disappear as she leaned back still farther and lowered herself, headfirst, into the gap. She inched herself closer in order to kiss the stone. As we watched, we could see past her shoulders to the ground almost 90 feet below!

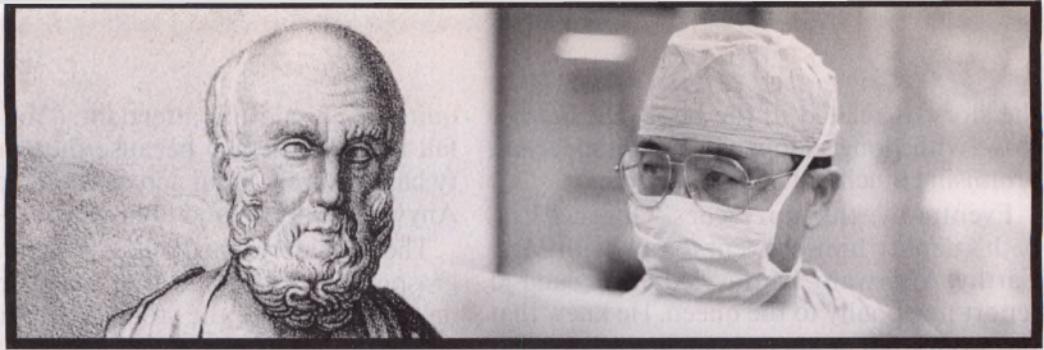
She kissed the stone as quickly as possible and then began to pull herself up using the iron bars. With some assistance from the attendant, she managed to haul herself back into a sitting position and was then able to stand up. It was time for the next adventurer to perform the same contortions!

We looked down at the stone and noticed how discolored it was. “The stone looks like that,” explained the attendant, “because of all the people who have kissed it over the years. But don’t worry about that,” he added, “we keep it clean by washing the stone four or five times every day!”

Already there were others lining up to take their turn. We had no intention of trying it ourselves—the tradition seemed too steeped in superstition, lying and, perhaps, even spiritism. Interestingly, another legend has it that the whole tradition began when an old woman cast a spell of eloquence on a king who saved her from drowning. So instead of participating, we turned to the visitor who had just kissed the stone and asked if she really believed that she had now acquired the gift of smoothly flattering or eloquent speech.

“Not at all!” she said. She had only done it for fun, evidently with little thought to the meaning of the act. Like so many visitors to this historic site, she simply wanted to be able to tell her friends that she had kissed the Blarney Stone!

* She was referring to her famous contemporary the English playwright William Shakespeare.

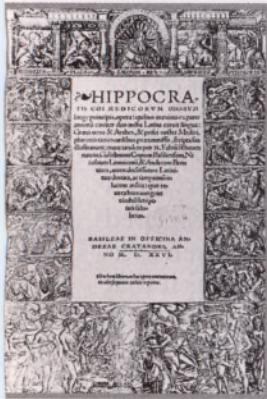


AN ANCIENT OATH WITH MODERN SIGNIFICANCE

ABOUT 400 B.C.E., Hippocrates, a Greek physician commonly known as the father of medicine, wrote the Hippocratic oath. That noble ethical creed still guides the medical profession. Is that what you have been taught? If so, you are not alone. But is it strictly true?

The facts suggest that Hippocrates may not have been the author of the oath that bears his name. Furthermore, the medical profession today does not always subscribe to that creed as it was originally written.

Do we know who really wrote this ancient oath? And even if we do, does this oath have any significance for us today?



A page from
the Hippocratic
collection

Did Hippocrates Write the Oath?

There are a number of reasons for questioning whether Hippocrates wrote the oath. One is that the oath commences with an invocation to a number of deities. Yet, Hippocrates is viewed as the first individual to separate medicine from religion and to look to physical rather than supernatural causes for illness.

Furthermore, several of the things that are prohibited in the oath were not at odds with the way medicine was practiced in Hippocrates' day. (See the box on page 21.) For example, abortion and suicide were not censured by law or by most religious standards during the time of Hippocrates. Also, the adherent to the oath promises to leave surgery to surgeons. Yet,

surgical techniques form part of the Hippocratic collection, the body of medical literature often attributed to Hippocrates and other ancient writers.

So although the question is still a subject of scholarly debate, it seems quite possible that the Hippocratic oath was not actually written by Hippocrates. The philosophy expressed in the oath appears to accord best with the Pythagoreans of the fourth century B.C.E., who espoused ideals regarding the sacredness of life and were averse to surgical procedures.

Fall and Resurgence

Regardless of who the author of the oath really was, what cannot be

THE HIPPOCRATIC OATH

AS TRANSLATED BY LUDWIG EDELSTEIN

I swear by Apollo Physician and Asclepius and Hygieia and Panacea and all the gods and goddesses, making them my witnesses, that I will fulfil according to my ability and judgment this oath and this covenant:

To hold him who has taught me this art as equal to my parents and to live my life in partnership with him, and if he is in need of money to give him a share of mine, and to regard his offspring as equal to my brothers in male lineage and to teach them this art—if they desire to learn it—with-out fee and covenant; to give a share of precepts and oral instruction and all the other learning to my sons and to the sons of him who has instructed me and to pupils who have

signed the covenant and have taken an oath according to the medical law, but to no one else.

I will apply dietetic measures for the benefit of the sick according to my ability and judgment; I will keep them from harm and injustice.

I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody if asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect. Similarly I will not give to a woman an abortive remedy. In purity and holiness I will guard my life and my art.

I will not use the knife, not even on sufferers from stone, but will withdraw in favor of such men as are engaged in this work.

Whatever houses I may visit, I will come for the benefit of the sick, remaining free of all intentional injustice, of all mischief and in particular of sexual relations with both female and male persons, be they free or slaves.

What I may see or hear in the course of the treatment or even outside of the treatment in regard to the life of men, which on no account one must spread abroad, I will keep to myself holding such things shameful to be spoken about.

If I fulfil this oath and do not violate it, may it be granted to me to enjoy life and art, being honored with fame among all men for all time to come; if I transgress it and swear falsely, may the opposite of all this be my lot.

questioned is the significant impact the oath has had on Western medicine and, in particular, on the field of ethics. The oath has been called “the apex of the development of strict ethical concepts in medicine,” “the basis of the patient-physician relationship in the developed world,” and “the high-water mark of professional morality.” Back in 1913, Sir William Osler, a noted Canadian doctor, said: “It is of small matter whether this is of hippocratic date or not . . . For

twenty-five centuries it has been the ‘credo’ of the profession, and in many universities it is still the formula with which men are admitted to the doctorate.”

However, the oath went through a period of disfavor in the early 20th century, possibly because of the scientific advancements then taking place. In the growing climate of rationalism, the oath may have seemed outdated and irrelevant. But even with the advances of science, there is a continuing need for ethical guidelines. Maybe that is why the oath has returned to favor in recent decades.

Oath-taking has again become an important part of many doctors' entry into medical school or graduation from it. A 1993 survey of U.S. and Canadian medical schools indicated that 98 percent of the schools surveyed administered some sort of oath. Only 24 percent did so back in 1928. In the United Kingdom, a similar survey showed that about 50 percent of schools currently use an oath or declaration. In Australia and New Zealand, the figure is also about 50 percent.

Changing With the Times

But the Hippocratic oath is not immutable; over the centuries it was altered to reflect

the beliefs prevalent in Christendom. Sometimes changes were made to address other issues, such as dealing with plague victims. More recently, it has been altered to accord with modern thought.

In many versions of the oath, concepts no longer reflective of the practice of modern medicine have been deleted, while other ideals important to contemporary society have been inserted. For example, the principle of patient autonomy may be

central to the practice of medicine today, but it had no equivalent in ancient Greek medicine and was no part of the Hippocratic oath. The concept of patients' rights forms an important part of many declarations currently in use.

In addition, the doctor-patient relationship has changed, with concepts such as informed consent becoming increasingly important. So it is understandable that only a small number of medical schools still administer the Hippocratic oath in its earlier form.

Other changes to the oath are perhaps more surprising. In 1993, only 43 percent of the oaths administered in the United States

and Canada incorporated a vow that doctors be accountable for their actions, with most modern versions of the oath including no penalty for breach of its terms. Forswearing euthanasia and abortion and invoking a deity were even less common, and vowing to have no sexual contact with patients formed part of only 3 percent of the declarations used by the schools surveyed.

The Value of an Oath

Despite the many changes to the Hippocratic oath, the use of oaths is often seen as important to a profession committed to fundamentally noble and moral ideals. The 1993 survey referred to above found that most oaths in use focus on the commitment physicians make to their patients, requiring prospective doctors to promise to do their best in caring for their patients. Making such a declaration centers attention upon the worthy moral precepts underlying the medical profession.

In an editorial published in *The Medical Journal of Australia*, Professor Edmund Pellegrino wrote: "Perhaps for many the medical oath is today a shard of a fractured ancient image. But enough of that image remains in the consciousness of the profession to remind us that to forget it entirely would be to make medicine a commercial, industrial or proletarian enterprise."

Whether the Hippocratic oath or the modern declarations that it has fathered are relevant today will probably continue to be a point of academic debate. But whatever the result, doctors' commitment to caring for the sick remains worthy of appreciation.





Just Keeping Up Appearances?

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN SPAIN

HAVE you ever noticed that birds seem to spend a lot of time preening themselves? They spend hours every day apparently doing nothing more than ruffling up their feathers. Whether they are parrots or pelicans, sparrows or flamingos, they all go through this daily ritual. Why? Are they merely trying to look their best?

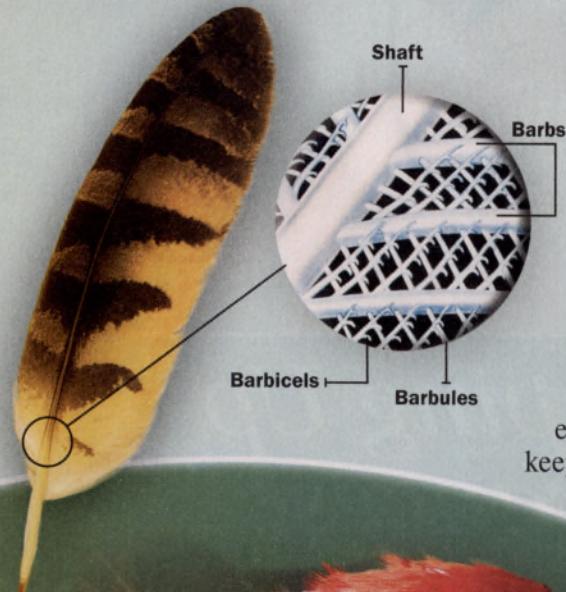
The real reason is far more substantial than that. Birds need these preening sessions just as much as aircraft need an overhaul. In fact, maintaining plumage in good trim is a matter of life and death to birds. Their feathers suffer a lot of wear and tear, and preening not only keeps them clean and free of parasites but also maintains their aerodynamic functions.

The daily grooming routine involves "zipping up" any barbs of a bird's feathers that may have come apart. When the barbs are properly hooked together,

the feather is more efficient in giving the bird lift. "Two groups of feathers need special attention," explains the *Book of British Birds*, "the flight feathers of the wings and the 'steering' feathers of the tail."

Birds also have a constant battle to keep parasites at bay. In addition to posing a health hazard to the bird, the tiny parasites actually eat the feathers. Naturalists have noticed that birds with damaged bills cannot preen themselves properly and, as a result, harbor many more feather parasites than do normal birds. To facilitate the removal of parasites, some bird species even cover themselves with ants, whose formic acid apparently acts as an effective insecticide.

By preening, birds cause the tiny components of their feathers to hook up, thus zipping the barbs together



Finally, the feathers need to be oiled. For aquatic birds the oil on the feathers provides a waterproof coating, and all birds get better weather protection from well-oiled feathers. Where does the oil come from? A special gland known as the preen gland, located just above the tail, secretes oils and waxes, which the bird patiently transfers to its feathers. Once again, flight feathers get special attention in the process.

So we need not assume that a bird is idling away its time when preening its feathers. Granted, this process does help the bird keep up appearances, but it also keeps it healthy.

In the bird world, preening is a matter of survival.

Young People Ask . . .

What About Youth Dance Clubs?

"I had a purpose in going—to have a really good time."—Shawn.

"I have to be honest, it was fun—it was tremendous fun! A lot of dancing, dancing all night long."

—Ernest.

YOUTH dance clubs have become very popular in recent years. Many youths who are in search of a good time are regulars at such clubs.

Of course, we all like to enjoy ourselves. And the Bible says that there is a "time for joy" and even a "time for dancing." (Ecclesiastes 3:4, *Today's English Version*) However, does a youth dance club offer wholesome recreation? Or is there good reason to think twice before going to one?

Wild Parties

While the Bible does not condemn modest social gatherings, it does warn against "rev-

elries," or "wild parties." (Galatians 5:19-21; *Byington*) In Bible times, revelries often gave birth to out-of-control behavior. The prophet Isaiah wrote: "Woe to those who are getting up early in the morning that they may seek just intoxicating liquor, who are lingering till late in the evening darkness so that wine itself inflames them! And there must prove to be harp and stringed instrument, tambourine and flute, and wine at their feasts; but the activity of Jehovah they do not look at."—Isaiah 5:11, 12.

These gatherings featured the use of "intoxicating liquor" and wild music. They started early and lasted well into the evening. Note, too, the attitudes of the revelers—they behaved as if God did not exist! Little wonder, then, that God condemned such gatherings. How, though, does God feel about what takes place in many youth dance clubs today?

Consider the facts. For one thing, some clubs continue to feature "crowd surfing"

and frenzied dancing called moshing. One source states that moshing "developed in the mid-Eighties in post-punk clubs in the US. It grew... from 'slam-dancing' in which participants slam into each other." Moshing often involves jumping up and down, violent head shaking, and mock head butting, as well as crashing into other dancers. Broken limbs and cuts are commonplace, and there have also been spinal and head injuries. Death has even resulted. In crowd surfing, a person is lifted overhead by a crowd and rides along on their upraised hands. Many a crowd surfer has been dropped, resulting in injury. It is not uncommon for girls to be groped and touched in inappropriate ways.

Without question, God disapproves of such behavior. After all, his Word commands Christians "to repudiate ungodliness and worldly desires and to live with soundness of mind."—Titus 2:12.

Music and Drugs

Consider, too, the type of music that is featured at most dance clubs. Some specialize in forms of hard rock or heavy metal, music that is characterized by a pulsating beat and obscene lyrics. But in many clubs rap, or hip-hop, is the music of choice. It is music that is similarly driven by sex, violence, and rebellion. Could exposing yourself to such music in an unwholesome environment affect you? David Hollingsworth, a nightclub consultant, said: "Music has a tremendous psychological impact on people. When you put them in large numbers, it can encourage attitudes of an aggressive nature." Not surprisingly, there has been a spate of violence at dance clubs in a number of U.S. cities. Many people feel it is the direct result of a music scene

that glorifies vulgar activity and brutal conduct.*

In recent years drug use has also been a part of the dance-club scene. One researcher stated that "the availability, range and consumption of illicit drugs... has been linked to the popularity of dance/club cultures." In fact, there are drugs popularly called dance drugs. Some who frequent dance clubs even use combinations of drugs. Among the drugs most commonly combined is *ketamine* (also called special K), which can cause dissociation, delirium, breathing trouble, and neurological damage. Methamphetamine can bring about memory loss, aggression, violence, and possible heart and neurological damage. Particularly popular is the amphetamine-based drug known as *ecstasy*. It can induce confusion, anxiety, high pulse rate, high blood pressure, and hyperthermia. Some *ecstasy* users have even died.

The use of illegal drugs goes contrary to the Bible's command to "cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit." (2 Corinthians 7:1) Is it wise to place yourself in an environment where drug use is prevalent?

* See the article "Why Music Affects Us," in the October 8, 1999, issue of *Awake!*

Some youths have found themselves in awkward situations at dance clubs



Bad Association

Remember the oft-quoted warning: “Bad associations spoil useful habits.” (1 Corinthians 15:33) Like the revelers in Bible times, most youths who frequent dance clubs do not seem to be concerned about pleasing God. In fact, most could be described as “lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God.” (2 Timothy 3:4) Do you really want to have close association with such a crowd?

Some may reason that going to a dance club with other Christian youths minimizes the dangers. However, Christian youths who are truly “an example to the faithful ones . . . in conduct” will not likely be willing to go. (1 Timothy 4:12) Even if a group of Christian youths went to a dance club and managed to stick together, the unwholesome music and atmosphere would still be there. They might find themselves in a tense or awkward situation if others invited them onto the dance floor. Some youths have even found themselves in the midst of a fight! The Bible’s words thus prove true: “He that is walking with wise persons will become wise, but he that is having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly.”—Proverbs 13:20.

Provocative Dancing

Then there is the dancing itself. “Freak dancing” has become very popular, particularly among teenagers in the United States. Typically the dance is done to hip-hop music with its sexually explicit lyrics. Moreover, the dance itself simulates sexual intercourse. The movements of this type of dance have thus been described as ‘sex with clothes on.’

Would a Christian youth want to be involved in this type of dancing? Not if he or she wants to please God, who commands us to “flee from fornication.” (1 Corinthians 6:18) Some may reason, ‘If everyone else is doing it, it can’t be that bad.’ However, the crowd can be wrong. (Exodus 23:2) Have the courage to stand up to your peers and maintain a good conscience toward God!—1 Peter 4:3, 4.

Making the Decision

This does not mean that all dancing is bad. The Bible tells us that King David was overcome with such joy after returning the sacred ark of the covenant to Jerusalem that he was “dancing around . . . with all his power.” (2 Samuel 6:14) In Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son, the rejoicing that occurred over the son’s return included “a music concert and dancing.”—Luke 15:25.

Some forms of dancing may likewise be acceptable among Christians in your locality. Even then, balance and good judgment are important. It is much safer to enjoy music and dancing at gatherings of Christians where there is adequate control and supervision than at teen clubs. At well supervised gatherings of Christians, young ones do not segregate themselves but enjoy wholesome association with Christians of all ages.

Granted, there may be some restaurants in your community where music and acceptable dancing are featured. But before accepting an invitation to any such establishment, you would do well to ask questions such as these: What kind of reputation does the place have? Does it cater only to youths? If so, how likely is it to have a wholesome atmosphere? What kind of music will be played? What kind of dancing is done there? How do my parents feel about my going? Asking questions like these can keep you out of harm’s way.

Shawn, quoted at the outset, sums matters up nicely. Before becoming a Christian, he used to frequent dance clubs. He recalls: “There’s a lot of loose conduct in nightclubs. The music is usually debasing, the dancing is usually highly immoral, and a great majority of the people who go there have a motive—they want to leave the club with someone to have sexual relations.” Shawn gave up the club scene after studying the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses. He offers his opinion, based on painful experience: “Those clubs are not the place for Christians.”

Watching the World

Music Lessons and Memory

New research reveals that "children with music training develop a far better memory and vocabulary than children without such training," reports the *Globe and Mail* newspaper of Canada. According to Dr. Agnes Chan of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, studying music stimulates the left side of the brain, improving overall brain function and permitting the brain to do better at other tasks—such as verbal learning. Verbal and visual memory tests were conducted on 90 students between the ages of 6 and 15. Those who had musical training could recall significantly more words than untrained students. The longer they continued musical training, the better their verbal learning performance was. "It's like cross-training for the brain," said Chan. She believes that those who study music "will probably find it easier to learn in school."

How Many Stars?

The *Daily Telegraph* of London reports: "Astronomers have worked out that there are 70 thousand million million—or seven followed by 22 zeros—stars visible from the Earth" by telescope. The astronomers, from

Pitching Junk Food to Kids

A growing number of nutritionists are accusing fast-food companies of conducting "a blitzkrieg that perverts children's eating habits and sets them on a path to obesity," states an article published in Tokyo's *IHT Asahi Shimbun* newspaper.

"Television remains the most powerful medium for selling to children," says the report, but in addition, food companies are "finding every imaginable way to put their names in front of children." Movies, games, Internet sites, arithmetic books, and a wide array of dolls and toys all bear food-company advertising. Why advertise to children? "It's the largest market there is," states Texas A&M marketing professor James McNeal. However, Professor Walter Willet of the Harvard School of Public Health says: "The vast majority of what they sell is junk. How often do you see fruits and vegetables marketed?"

America, Australia, and Scotland, "counted all the galaxies in one small region of the universe close to the Earth" and estimated how many stars each contained. From that figure they then extrapolated the number of stars in the rest of the sky. "This is not the total number of stars in the universe, but it's the number within range of our telescopes," said Dr. Simon Driver of Australia, who led the team. "Even for a professional astronomer used to dealing in monster numbers, this is mind-boggling." With the naked eye, only a few thousand stars can be seen from the darkest places on earth, and only 100 from a large city.

Low Tire Pressure

"One fatal highway accident in 17 is directly related to tire condition," states a communiqué in the French magazine *Valeurs actuelles*. Studies by the Michelin tire company showed that "in 2002, 2 out of 3 vehicles had at least one tire that was constantly low on pressure." According to Pierre Menendes, director of technical communication for Michelin, "drivers wrongly think that too much pressure can make their tires burst and that this is more dangerous than too little pressure. It is the complete opposite." When tire pressure drops too far below normal, braking slows down, tires



do not grip the road as well on curves and, notes the report, "a sudden turn of the wheel can lead to a loss of control." Moreover, as pressure decreases, the tire changes shape. This causes its components to heat up, which can result in sudden tire failure.

French Faith on the Wane

In France "religious practice is wearing away," reports the French daily *Le Monde*. Although 73 percent of the French population claim to be religious, only 24 percent believe that God's existence is "certain." Another 34 percent said it is "probable," while 19 percent said "improbable" and 22 percent said his existence is "impossible." A mere 12 percent of those questioned attend a religious service at least once a week, and 25 percent pray "every day" or "often." Sociologist Régis Debray said that people are going from a religion based

on beliefs to one based on membership. "Religion is becoming an identity card," he declared.

Seashell Trumpets

"Ancient Peruvian trumpets made from *Strombus* conch shells may have been used for signalling over large distances," reports *New Scientist* magazine. Researchers have discovered 20 decorated conch-shell trumpets in Peru, each modified to provide a mouthpiece. In the laboratory the trumpets produced a sound level of 111 decibels—comparable to the level produced by a pile driver. "In the quiet Andean hills the strident sound of the trumpets would have carried at least four kilometres [2.5 miles]," says *New Scientist*.

Cashless Wedding Gifts

At traditional Turkish weddings, well-wishers festoon the bride with jewelry and

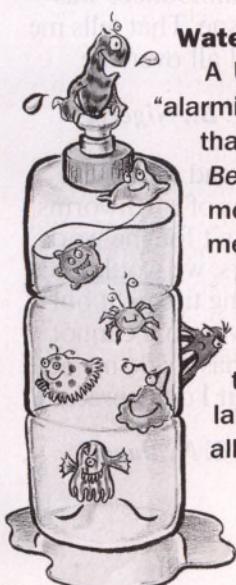
the groom with money. But in Turkey, as in many other lands, credit cards are making inroads into society. At one recent wedding in Antalya, the bridal couple brought a portable credit card reader to the festivities, reports the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Friends and relatives slid their cards through the machine to deposit money in the couple's bank account and then adorned the bride and bridegroom with the printed receipts.

Beehive Heating

To survive cold winters, honeybees generate heat "by shivering with their flight muscles," reports the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. But the temperature within a hive is not uniform. The bees' average body temperature decreases from 85 degrees Fahrenheit at the core of the hive to 55 degrees Fahrenheit or lower at the outside. Scientists at the University of Graz, Austria, have found that bees in the middle of the hive shiver a lot more than those close to the walls. In this way the bees reduce the amount of heat lost to the outside and thus lower their winter food requirements. The question remains: How do the bees in the warm, cozy core of the hive know that they must produce more heat than the bees nearer the outside?

Water-Bottle Safety

A University of Calgary, Canada, study found "alarmingly high levels of bacteria in water bottles that were reused without being cleaned," reports *Better Homes & Gardens* magazine. In the study more than 13 percent of bottles used by elementary school students exceeded safe bacteria levels. The bacteria included fecal varieties—likely because of the students' poor hand-washing habits. One researcher suggests that water bottles should be washed out regularly with hot water and soap and should be allowed to dry completely before each refill.



From Our Readers

Insect-Borne Disease I work as a teacher at a university and have been the head of the microbiology, parasitology, and biochemistry laboratories there for the past 24 years. You are able to present scientific matters in a simple manner! The series "When Insects Spread Disease" fascinated me. (May 22, 2003) Sometimes there are points in scientific textbooks that I do not understand. But when you present those points, I can understand them right away.

Thanks for all your effort.
M. R., Mexico

Cheating Thanks for the article "Young People Ask . . . What's Wrong With Cheating?" (January 22, 2003) Fellow students have offered me huge sums of money to take tests for them. My refusal to cheat for them has been misconstrued as unreasonable. The article reminded me to uphold God's standards and never to compromise.

F.A.C., Nigeria

I never did my own homework but would copy it from my classmates. This article helped me to understand that copying from someone is the same as theft. And while this point of view doesn't sit well with my schoolmates, I've taken my stand.

Y. D., Russia

Trolleybus I live and work in Italy, and I appreciate with all my heart the woman, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, who brings me your magazines in Russian. I read the article "A Trip on the World's Longest Trolleybus Line." (March 22, 2003) It spoke of the Crimean coast in Ukraine, where I used to live. Thank you for this brief but appealing visit to my home region.

Z. B., Italy

Diabetes When I read the series "Living With Diabetes" (May 8, 2003) and read that frequent urination is a symptom, I realized that I might have diabetes myself. So I went to a hospital and learned that I am

diabetic. Over a month has passed since I was examined, and I am working on lowering my blood sugar levels with medication, diet, and exercise. If I hadn't seen the magazine, I might not have discovered that I have the illness.

Y. N., Japan

I am not one of Jehovah's Witnesses, but I receive your magazines from a kind neighbor. I thoroughly enjoyed the series on diabetes. Since I am training to be a geriatric nurse, I had to write a paper on this subject. If I had received the magazine a few days earlier, it would have saved me from having to look in so many books! Your articles are very useful.

A. S., Germany

Worms I was impressed by the article "The Fascinating World of Worms." (May 8, 2003) I was listening to a local radio station when earthworms were being discussed. Immediately, I picked up my issue of *Awake!* and turned to this article. Surprisingly, the radio announcer was quoting from that issue. That tells me that *Awake!* is useful all over the world.

F. B., Nigeria

I was amazed to read that there are over 1,800 species of earthworms. I guess that if it wasn't for the work of these little farmers, we would do nothing from morning till night but dig into hard soil. Even so, I cannot say that this article has made me actually like worms, but I do appreciate their worth.

Y. N., Japan

"Remarkably Rich in Meaning"

THIS comment about the pictures in the literature of Jehovah's Witnesses was made at an international art exhibition in Kassel, Germany. Sixteen-year-old Katja relates what happened when she and her fellow students visited the exhibition and were looking at some religious works of art:

"Our guide asked the students whether they had ever looked through the magazines of Jehovah's Witnesses. When all said no, he started speaking in glowing terms about the illustrations in *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* He said that the pictures were exceptionally well painted and the photographs well chosen and that they were also 'remarkably rich in meaning.'

"He told us that we would do well to take a closer look at these interesting pictures," saying that the modern portrayal of Biblical events makes it easy to see how these apply to our time. He then urged the students to accept the magazines when they are offered, saying that they should not limit themselves to looking at the pictures but should read the very informative and interesting articles as well.



"AN ANSWER TO A PRAYER"

That is how a mother of a nine-year-old son described the release of the book *Learn From the Great Teacher* at a district convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in Ireland. "It brought tears to my eyes!" she exclaimed. "It was especially a blessing because only last week I was concerned because I didn't know quite what to study with my son.

"I had prayed to Jehovah," the woman explained, "to help me teach him meatier Bible truths in a simple way that is appealing, and I didn't know where to start. So receiving this beautiful, well-illustrated book was an answer to a prayer."

A mother of five children in California, U.S.A., wrote similarly. "On our way back to the hotel from the convention," she said, "I found my three youngest children reading, looking at, and discussing together what captivated them in the pages of *Learn From the Great Teacher*."

She noted: "The joy I felt at receiving this gift from Jehovah was simply overwhelming—like a birth, a wedding, a baptism, a privilege received from the Creator of the universe. Sometimes I am sure our tears of joy express to our loving Father, Jehovah, what mere words cannot."

