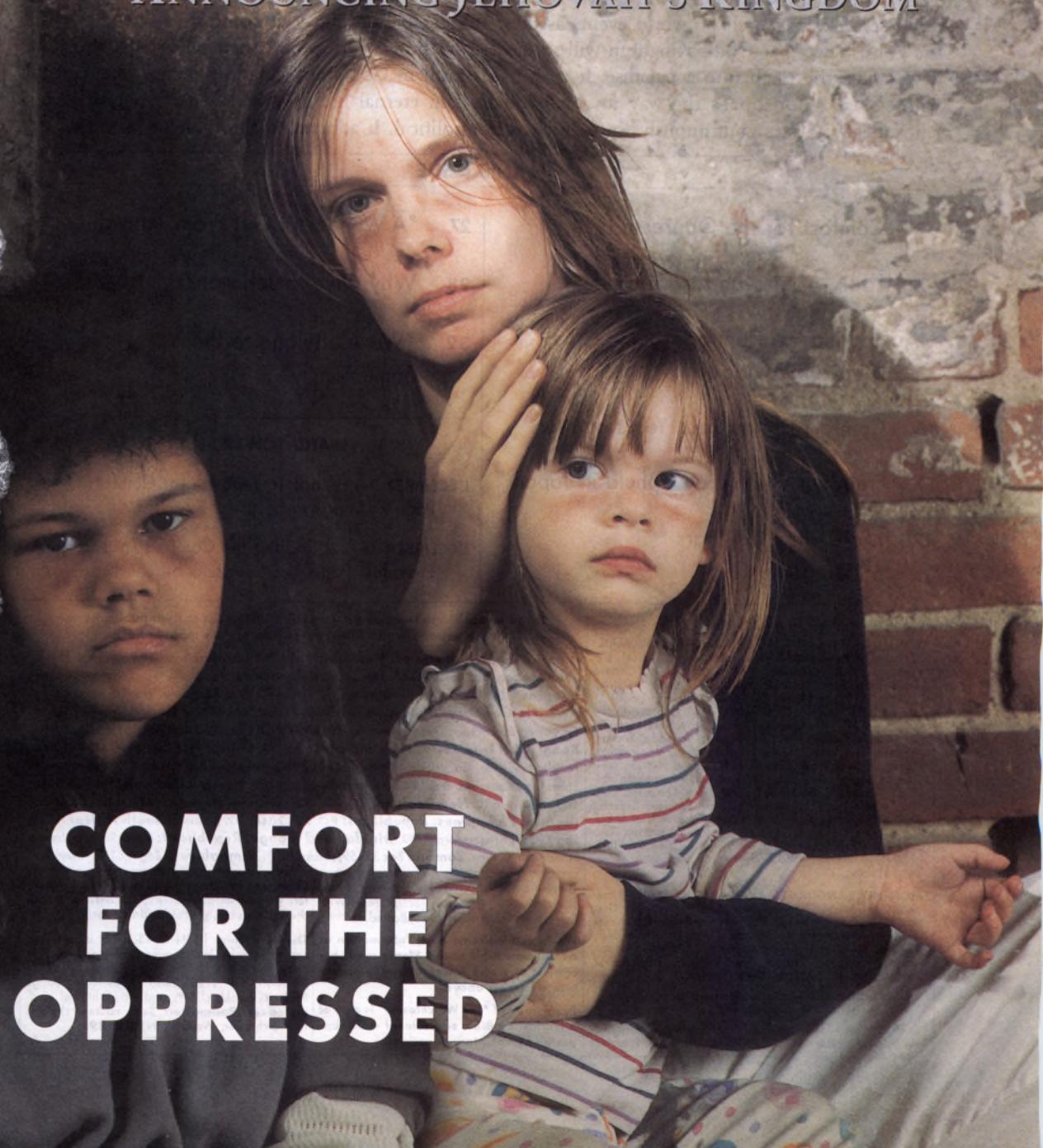


NOVEMBER 1, 1996

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**COMFORT
FOR THE
OPPRESSED**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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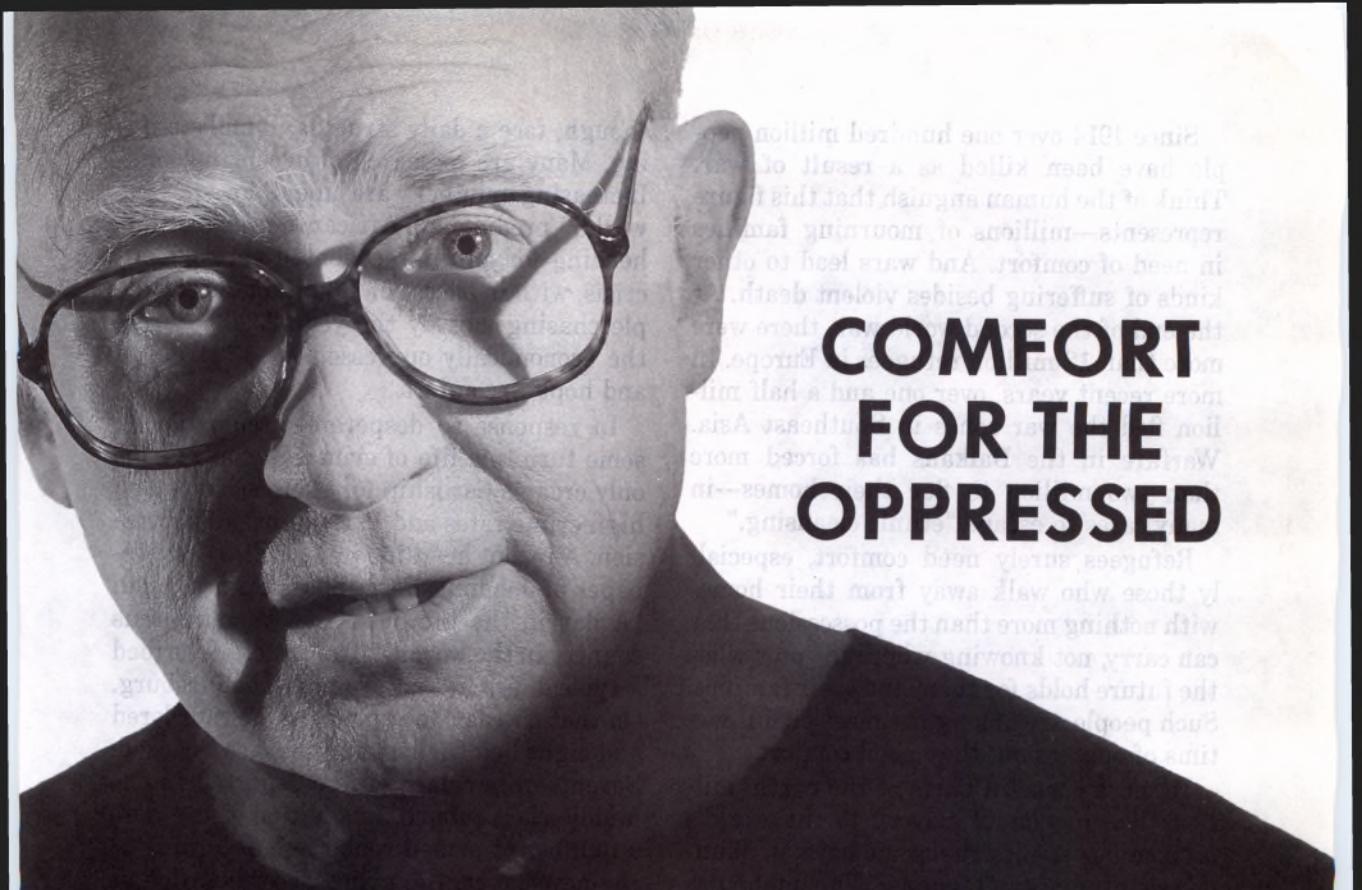
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COMFORT FOR THE OPPRESSED

HAVE you noticed that throughout your lifetime certain words have been repeated over and over in the headlines? Are you tired of reading such words as war, crime, disaster, hunger, and suffering? One word, though, has been conspicuously absent from the news reports. Yet, it is a word representing something that mankind greatly needs. The word is "comfort."

"To comfort" means "to give strength and hope to" and "to ease the grief or trouble of" someone. With all the turmoil the world has passed through in the 20th century, hope and an easing of grief are sorely needed. True, some of

us today enjoy more *creature comforts* than our ancestors ever imagined possible. This is largely thanks to scientific progress. But science and technology have not comforted us in the sense of removing all the causes of suffering from mankind. What are these causes?

Many centuries ago the wise man Solomon spoke of one basic cause of suffering when he said: "Man has dominated man to his injury." (Ecclesiastes 8:9) Science and technology have not been able to change the tendency of man to want to dominate his fellowman. In the 20th century, this has led to oppressive dictatorships within countries and to horrendous wars between countries.

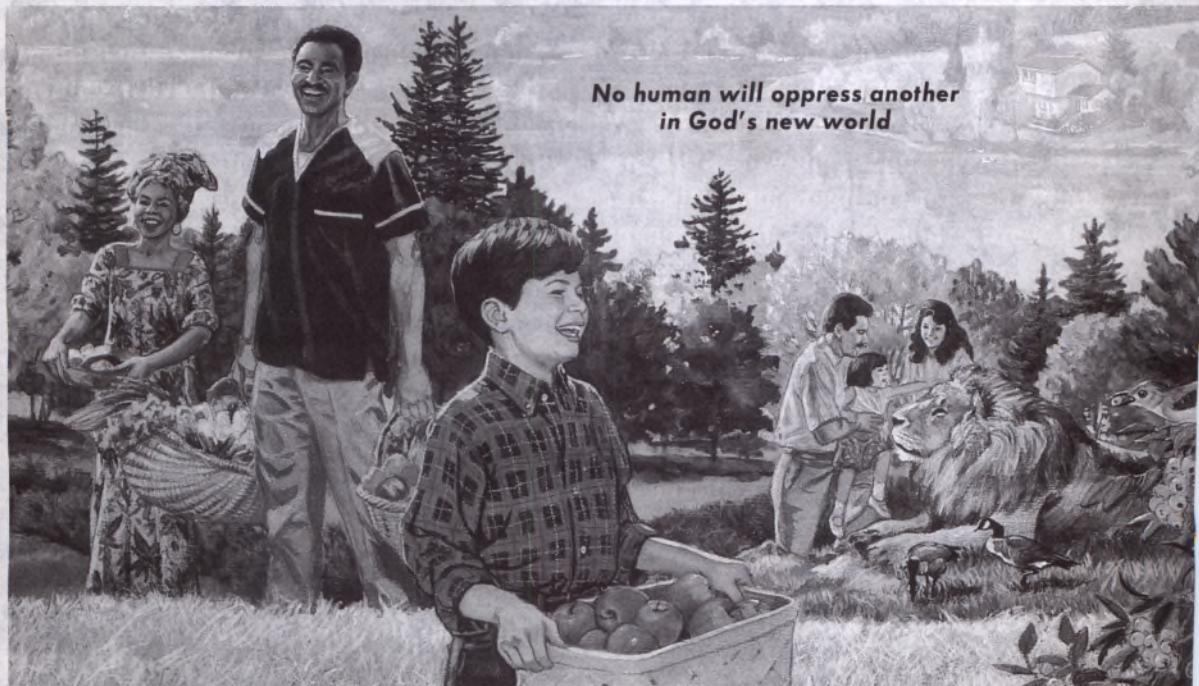
Since 1914 over one hundred million people have been killed as a result of war. Think of the human anguish that this figure represents—millions of mourning families in need of comfort. And wars lead to other kinds of suffering besides violent death. At the end of the second world war, there were more than 12 million refugees in Europe. In more recent years, over one and a half million fled the war zones in Southeast Asia. Warfare in the Balkans has forced more than two million to flee their homes—in many cases to escape “ethnic cleansing.”

Refugees surely need comfort, especially those who walk away from their homes with nothing more than the possessions they can carry, not knowing where to go or what the future holds for them and their families. Such people are among the most pitiful victims of oppression; they need comfort.

In more peaceful parts of the earth, millions live in virtual slavery to the world’s economic system. True, some have an abundance of material goods. The majority,

though, face a daily struggle to make a living. Many are in search of decent housing. Increasing numbers are unemployed. “The world,” predicts an African newspaper, “is heading for an unprecedented employment crisis, with in excess of 1.3 billion more people chasing jobs by the year 2020.” Surely the economically oppressed need “strength and hope”—comfort.

In response to desperate circumstances, some turn to a life of crime. Of course, this only creates hardship for their victims, and high crime rates add to the sense of oppression. A recent headline in *The Star*, a newspaper of Johannesburg, South Africa, read: “A day in the life of ‘the most murderous country in the world.’” The article described a typical day in and around Johannesburg. On that one day, four people were murdered and eight had their motor vehicles hijacked. Seventeen burglaries were reported in one middle-class suburb. In addition, there were a number of armed robberies. According to the newspaper, the police described this as



a "relatively quiet" day. Understandably, relatives of murder victims and those subjected to housebreaking and car hijacking feel sorely oppressed. They need assurance and hope—comfort.

In some lands, there are parents who sell their children into prostitution. One Asian country to which tourists stream on "sex tours" is reported to have two million prostitutes, many of whom were bought or kidnapped as children. Are any individuals more oppressed than these pitiful victims? Discussing this sordid trade, *Time* magazine reported on a 1991 conference of Southeast Asian women's organizations. There, it was estimated that "30 million women had been sold worldwide since the mid-1970s."

Of course, children do not have to be sold into prostitution to be victimized. A growing number are physically abused or even raped in their own homes by parents and relatives. Such children may carry emotional scars for a long time. Certainly, as tragic victims of oppression, they need comfort.

An Ancient Student of Oppression

King Solomon was appalled at the extent of human oppression. He wrote: "I myself returned that I might see all the acts of oppression that are being done under the sun, and, look! the tears of those being oppressed, but they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, so that they had no comforter."—Ecclesiastes 4:1.

If the wise king realized 3,000 years ago that the oppressed were in desperate need of a comforter, what would he say today? Nevertheless, Solomon knew that no imperfect human, himself included, could provide the comfort needed by mankind. Someone greater was needed to break the power of the oppressors. Is there such a person?

In the Bible, Psalm 72 speaks of a grand comforter for all people. The psalm was written by Solomon's father, King David. Its superscription reads: "Regarding Solomon." Evidently, it was written by aged



King David respecting One who would inherit his throne. This One, according to the psalm, would bring permanent relief from oppression. "In his days the righteous one will sprout, and the abundance of peace until the moon is no more. And he will have subjects from sea to sea and . . . to the ends of the earth."—Psalm 72:7, 8.

Likely, when David wrote these words, he was thinking of his son Solomon. But Solomon realized that it was beyond his power to serve mankind in the way described in the psalm. He could fulfill the words of the psalm only in a minor way and in behalf of the nation of Israel, not for the benefit of the whole earth. Evidently, this inspired prophetic psalm pointed to someone much greater than Solomon. Who was that? It could only be Jesus Christ.

When an angel announced Jesus' birth, he said: "Jehovah God will give him the throne of David his father." (Luke 1:32) Moreover, Jesus referred to himself as "something more than Solomon." (Luke 11:31) Since Jesus' resurrection to God's right hand, he has been in heaven, in the location from which he can fulfill the words of Psalm 72. Furthermore, he has received the power and authority from God to break the yoke of human oppressors. (Psalm 2:7-9; Daniel 2:44) So Jesus is the one to fulfill the words of Psalm 72.

Oppression Soon to End

What does this mean? It means that freedom from all forms of human oppression will soon be a reality. The unprecedented suffering and oppression witnessed during this 20th century were foretold by Jesus as part of the sign that would mark "the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 24:3) Among other things, he foretold: "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom." (Matthew 24:7) That feature of the prophecy be-

gan its fulfillment about the time that the first world war broke out in 1914. "Because of the increasing of lawlessness," Jesus added, "the love of the greater number will cool off." (Matthew 24:12) Lawlessness and lovelessness have produced a wicked and oppressive generation. Hence, the time must be near for Jesus Christ to intervene as earth's new King. (Matthew 24:32-34) What will that mean for oppressed humans who have faith in Jesus Christ and who look to him as the divinely appointed Comforter of mankind?

For an answer to that question, let us read some additional words of Psalm 72 that are fulfilled in Christ Jesus: "He will deliver the poor one crying for help, also the afflicted one and whoever has no helper. He will feel sorry for the lowly one and the poor one, and the souls of the poor ones he will save. From oppression and from violence he will redeem their soul, and their blood will be precious in his eyes." (Psalm 72:12-14) Thus God's appointed King, Jesus Christ, will see to it that no one has to suffer because of oppression. He has the power to end all forms of injustice.

"That sounds wonderful," someone might say, "but what about now? What comfort is there for those suffering right now?" In fact, there does exist comfort for the oppressed. The following two articles in this magazine will show how millions are already experiencing comfort through cultivating a close relationship with the true God, Jehovah, and with his beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Such a relationship can comfort us during these oppressive times and can lead a person to everlasting life free from oppression. Jesus said in prayer to God: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ."—John 17:3.

LOOK TO JEHOVAH FOR COMFORT

"May the God who supplies endurance and comfort grant you to have among yourselves the same mental attitude that Christ Jesus had." —ROMANS 15:5.

ACH passing day brings with it an increasing need for comfort. As a Bible writer observed over 1,900 years ago, "all creation keeps on groaning together and being in pain together until now." (Romans 8:22) In our time "groaning" and "pain" have been greater than ever. Since World War I, mankind has suffered one crisis after another in the form of wars, crime, and natural disasters that often are linked to man's mismanagement of the earth.

—Revelation 11:18.

2 Why has there been so much suffering in our time? Describing the casting of Satan from the heavens following the Kingdom's birth in 1914, the Bible answers: "Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." (Revelation 12:12) The clear evidence of the fulfillment of that prophecy means that we have almost reached the end of Satan's wicked rule. How comforting to know that life on earth will soon return to the peaceful state that existed before Satan led our first parents into rebellion!

3 In the beginning, man's Creator provided a beautiful park as a home for the first

1. Why does each day bring a greater need for comfort?
2. (a) Who is most to blame for mankind's present woes? (b) What fact gives us a basis for comfort?
3. When were humans not in need of comfort?

human couple. It was situated in an area called Eden, meaning "Delight" or "Pleasure." (Genesis 2:8, footnote) Furthermore, Adam and Eve enjoyed perfect health, with the prospect of never dying. Just think of the many areas in which they could have developed their abilities—gardening, art, construction, music. Think, too, of all the works of creation they could have studied as they fulfilled their commission to subdue the earth and make it a paradise. (Genesis 1:28) Indeed, the lives of Adam and Eve would have been filled, not with groaning and pain, but with pleasure and delight. Clearly, they would not have been in need of comfort.

- 4 What Adam and Eve did need, however, was to cultivate a deep love and appreciation for their kind heavenly Father. Such love would have motivated them to obey God under all circumstances. (Compare John 14:31.) Sadly, both of our original parents failed to obey their rightful Sovereign, Jehovah. Instead, they allowed themselves to come under the wicked rule of a fallen angel, Satan the Devil. It was Satan who tempted Eve to sin and eat of the forbidden fruit. Then Adam sinned when he too ate of the fruit of the tree concerning which God had clearly warned: "In the day you
- 4, 5. (a) Why did Adam and Eve fail the test of obedience? (b) How did mankind come to be in need of comfort?

eat from it you will positively die."—Genesis 2:17.

⁵ In this way, the sinful couple began to die. When passing the death sentence, God also stated to Adam: "Cursed is the ground on your account. In pain you will eat its produce all the days of your life. And thorns and thistles it will grow for you, and you must eat the vegetation of the field." (Genesis 3:17, 18) Thus Adam and Eve lost the prospect of making the uncultivated earth into a paradise. Expelled from Eden, they had to concentrate their energies on wresting food from ground that had been cursed. Their descendants, having inherited this sinful, dying condition, came to be in great need of comfort.—Romans 5:12.

A Comforting Promise Fulfilled

⁶ When sentencing the instigator of man's rebellion, Jehovah proved to be 'the God who supplies comfort.' (Romans 15:5) He did so by promising to send a "seed" who would eventually deliver Adam's offspring from the disastrous effects of Adam's rebellion. (Genesis 3:15) In time, God also provided foregleams of this deliverance. For example, he inspired Lamech, a distant descendant of Adam through his son Seth, to prophesy about what Lamech's son would do: "This one will bring us comfort from our work and from the pain of our hands resulting from the ground which Jehovah has cursed." (Genesis 5:29) In harmony with this promise, the boy was named Noah, which is understood to mean "Rest" or "Consolation."

⁷ Meanwhile, Satan was gaining followers among some of the heavenly angels. These

6. (a) What comforting promise did God make after mankind's fall into sin? (b) What prophecy regarding comfort did Lamech utter?

7, 8. (a) What situation led Jehovah to feel regrets about having created man, and what did He purpose to do in response? (b) How did Noah live up to the meaning of his name?

materialized as humans and took attractive female descendants of Adam as wives. Such unnatural unions further corrupted human society and produced a godless race of Nephilim, "fellers," who filled the earth with violence. (Genesis 6:1, 2, 4, 11; Jude 6) "Consequently Jehovah saw that the badness of man was abundant in the earth . . . And Jehovah felt regrets that he had made men in the earth, and he felt hurt at his heart."—Genesis 6:5, 6.

⁸ Jehovah purposed to destroy that wicked world through a global flood, but first he had Noah build an ark to preserve life. Thus, the human race and the animal kinds were saved. How relieved Noah and his family must have felt after the Flood as they came out of the ark onto a cleansed earth! How comforting to find that the curse on the ground had been lifted, making agricultural activity so much easier! Indeed, Lamech's prophecy proved true, and Noah lived up to the meaning of his name. (Genesis 8:21) As a faithful servant of God, Noah was instrumental in bringing a measure of "comfort" to mankind. However, the wicked influence of Satan and his demon angels did not end with the Flood, and mankind continues to groan under the burden of sin, sickness, and death.

Someone Greater Than Noah

⁹ Eventually, at the end of about 4,000 years of human history, the promised Seed arrived. Moved by great love for mankind, Jehovah God sent his only-begotten Son to earth to die as a ransom for sinful mankind. (John 3:16) Jesus Christ brings great relief to repentant sinners who exercise faith in his sacrificial death. All who dedicate their lives to Jehovah and become baptized disciples of his Son experience lasting

9. How has Jesus Christ proved to be a helper and comforter for repentant humans?

refreshment and comfort. (Matthew 11:28-30; 16:24) In spite of their imperfection, they find deep joy in serving God with a clean conscience. How comforting for them to know that if they continue to exercise faith in Jesus, they will be rewarded with everlasting life! (John 3:36; Hebrews 5:9) If because of weakness they commit a serious sin, then they have a helper, or comforter, in the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. (1 John 2:1, 2) By confessing such sin and by taking Scriptural steps to avoid being practitioners of sin, they gain relief, knowing that 'God is faithful and righteous so as to forgive their sin.'—1 John 1:9; 3:6; Proverbs 28:13.

¹⁰ While on earth, Jesus also brought refreshment by freeing the demon-possessed, by healing every sort of sickness, and by raising dead loved ones back to life. True, such miracles were of only temporary benefit, since those thus blessed afterward grew old and died. Nonetheless, Jesus thereby pointed to the permanent future blessings that he will pour out on all mankind. Now a mighty heavenly King, he will soon do far more than merely expel the demons. He will abyss them along with their leader, Satan, in a state of inactivity. Then the glorious Thousand Year Reign of Christ will commence.—Luke 8:30, 31; Revelation 20:1, 2, 6.

¹¹ Jesus said that he was "Lord of the sabbath," and many of his cures were performed on the Sabbath day. (Matthew 12:8-13; Luke 13:14-17; John 5:15, 16; 9:14) Why was this? Well, the Sabbath was part of God's Law to Israel and thus served as "a shadow of the good things to come." (Hebrews 10:1) The six weekdays of work remind us of man's past 6,000 years of slav-

10. What do we learn from the miracles Jesus performed when he was on earth?

11. Why did Jesus call himself "Lord of the sabbath"?

ery to Satan's oppressive rule. The Sabbath day at the end of the week brings to mind the comforting rest mankind will experience during the Thousand Year Reign of the Greater Noah, Jesus Christ.—Compare 2 Peter 3:8.

¹² What relief earthly subjects of Christ's rule will feel when, at last, they find themselves totally free from Satan's wicked influence! Further comfort will come as they experience healing of their physical, emotional, and mental ailments. (Isaiah 65:17) Then, just think of their ecstasy as they start welcoming loved ones back from the dead! In these ways God "will wipe out every tear from their eyes." (Revelation 21:4) As the benefits of Jesus' ransom sacrifice are progressively applied, the obedient subjects of God's Kingdom will grow to perfection, becoming totally free from all the bad effects of Adam's sin. (Revelation 22:1-5) Then Satan will be released "for a little while." (Revelation 20:3, 7) All humans who faithfully uphold Jehovah's rightful sovereignty will be rewarded with everlasting life. Imagine the unspeakable joy and relief of being completely "set free from enslavement to corruption"! Thus obedient mankind will enjoy "the glorious freedom of the children of God."—Romans 8:21.

¹³ Meanwhile, we continue to be subject to the groaning and pain common to all who live amid Satan's wicked system. The increase of physical sickness and emotional disorders affects all sorts of people, including faithful Christians. (Philippians 2:25-27; 1 Thessalonians 5:14) In addition, as Christians we often suffer the unjust ridicule and persecution that Satan heaps upon us for 'obeying God as ruler rather than

12. To what comforting experiences can we look forward?

13. Why do all true Christians need the comfort that God supplies?

men.' (Acts 5:29) Thus, if we are to endure in doing God's will right to the end of Satan's world, we need the comfort, help, and strength that He supplies.

Where to Find Comfort

¹⁴ On the night before his death, Jesus made it clear to his faithful apostles that he would soon be leaving them and returning to his Father. This troubled and grieved them. (John 13:33, 36; 14:27-31) Recognizing their need for continued comfort, Jesus promised: "I will request the Father and he will give you another comforter to be with you forever." (John 14:16, footnote) Jesus here referred to God's holy spirit, which was poured out upon his disciples 50 days after his resurrection.* Among other things, God's spirit comforted them during their trials and strengthened them to continue doing God's will. (Acts 4:31) However, such help should not be viewed as something automatic. To benefit from it fully, each Christian must continue praying for the comforting help that God provides through his holy spirit.—Luke 11:13.

* One of the main operations of God's spirit upon first-century Christians was to anoint them as adopted spiritual sons of God and brothers of Jesus. (2 Corinthians 1:21, 22) This is reserved for only 144,000 disciples of Christ. (Revelation 14:1, 3) Today the vast majority of Christians have kindly been given the hope of everlasting life on a paradise earth. Though not anointed, they too receive the help and comfort of God's holy spirit.

14. (a) What promise did Jesus make on the night before his death? (b) What is necessary if we are to benefit fully from the comfort of God's holy spirit?



Paul experienced great comfort through Titus' report about the Corinthians

¹⁵ Another way in which God provides comfort is through his Word, the Bible. 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) This shows the need for us regularly to study and to meditate on the things written in the Bible and Bible-based publications. We also need to be regular in attendance at Christian meetings, where comforting thoughts are shared.

15. What are some of the ways that Jehovah supplies us with comfort?

from God's Word. One of the main purposes of such gatherings is to encourage one another.—Hebrews 10:25.

¹⁶ Paul's letter to the Romans goes on to show the good results we receive from making use of God's comforting provisions. "May the God who supplies endurance and comfort," Paul wrote, "grant you to have among yourselves the same mental attitude that Christ Jesus had, that with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 15:5, 6) Yes, by taking full advantage of God's comforting provisions, we will become more like our courageous Leader, Jesus Christ. This will motivate us to keep using our mouths to glorify God in our witnessing work, at our meetings, in private conversation with fellow believers, and in our prayers.

In Times of Severe Trial

¹⁷ Jesus became "sorely troubled" and "deeply grieved" on the night before his agonizing death. (Matthew 26:37, 38) So he withdrew a little distance from his disciples and prayed to his Father for help. "He was favorably heard for his godly fear." (Hebrews 5:7) The Bible reports that "an angel from heaven appeared to [Jesus] and strengthened him." (Luke 22:43) The courageous and manly way in which Jesus went on to face his opposers is evidence that God's way of comforting his Son was most effective.—John 18:3-8, 33-38.

¹⁸ The apostle Paul too went through periods of severe trial. For example, his ministry in Ephesus was marked by "tears and trials that befell [him] by the plots of

16. What should God's comforting provisions motivate us to do?

17. How did Jehovah comfort his Son, and with what result?

18. (a) What period in the apostle Paul's life was particularly trialsome? (b) How can we be of comfort to hardworking, compassionate elders?

the Jews." (Acts 20:17-20) Finally, Paul left Ephesus after supporters of the goddess Artemis had got the city in an uproar over his preaching activity. (Acts 19:23-29; 20:1) As Paul headed north to the city of Troas, something else weighed heavily on his mind. Sometime before the uproar in Ephesus, he had received a disturbing report. The young congregation in Corinth was plagued by division, and it was tolerating fornication. So from Ephesus, Paul had written a letter of strong reproof in hopes of correcting the situation. This was not an easy thing for him to do. "Out of much tribulation and anguish of heart I wrote you with many tears," he later revealed in a second letter. (2 Corinthians 2:4) Like Paul, compassionate elders do not find it easy to give corrective counsel and reproof, in part because they are only too aware of their own weaknesses. (Galatians 6:1) May we, then, be of comfort to those taking the lead among us by readily responding to loving, Bible-based counsel.—Hebrews 13:17.

¹⁹ While in Ephesus, not only did Paul write the brothers in Corinth but he also sent Titus to assist them, commissioning him to report back on their response to the letter. Paul hoped to intercept Titus

19. Why did Paul move on from Troas to Macedonia, and how did he eventually gain relief?

Can You Answer?

- How did mankind come to be in need of comfort?
- How has Jesus proved to be greater than Noah?
- Why did Jesus call himself "Lord of the sabbath"?
- How does God supply comfort today?

at Troas. There Paul was blessed with fine opportunities to make disciples. But this failed to relieve his anxiety because Titus had not yet arrived. (2 Corinthians 2:12, 13) So he journeyed on to Macedonia, hoping to meet up with Titus there. Paul's anxious state was aggravated by intense opposition to his ministry. "When we arrived in Macedonia," he explains, "our flesh got no relief, but we continued to be afflicted in every manner—there were fights without, fears within. Nevertheless God, who comforts those laid low, comforted us by the presence of Titus." (2 Corinthians 7:5, 6) What relief when Titus finally arrived to tell Paul about the positive response of the Corinthians to his letter!

²⁰ Paul's experience is comforting to God's servants today, many of whom also face trials that cause them to be "laid low," or "depressed." (Phillips) Yes, 'the God who supplies comfort' knows our individual needs and can use us to be of comfort to one another, just as Paul gained comfort through Titus' report of the repentant attitude of the Corinthians. (2 Corinthians 7: 11-13) In our next article, we will consider Paul's warm response to the Corinthians and how it can help us to be effective sharers of God's comfort today.

20. (a) As in the case of Paul, what is another important way in which Jehovah supplies comfort? (b) What will be considered in the next article?

SHARING THE COMFORT THAT JEHOVAH PROVIDES

"Our hope for you is unwavering, knowing as we do that, just as you are sharers of the sufferings, in the same way you will also share the comfort."

—2 CORINTHIANS 1:7.

MANY current readers of *The Watchtower* grew up without a knowledge of God's truth. Perhaps that is true of you. If so, recall how you felt as your eyes of understanding began to open. For example, when you first understood that the dead are not suffering but are unconscious, were you not relieved? And when you learned of the hope for the dead, that billions will be resurrected to life in

1, 2. What has been the experience of many who have become Christians today?

God's new world, were you not comforted?
—Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; John 5:28, 29.

? What about God's promise to end wickedness and to transform this earth into a paradise? When you learned about this, did it not comfort you and fill you with eager anticipation? How did you feel when you first learned of the possibility of never dying but of surviving into that coming earthly Paradise? No doubt you were thrilled. Yes, you had become a recipient of God's comforting message now being preached world-

wide by Jehovah's Witnesses.—Psalm 37:9-11, 29; John 11:26; Revelation 21:3-5.

³ However, when you tried to share the Bible's message with others, you also came to realize that "faith is not a possession of all people." (2 Thessalonians 3:2) Perhaps some of your former friends ridiculed you for expressing faith in the Bible's promises. You might even have suffered persecution for continuing to study the Bible in association with Jehovah's Witnesses. The opposition may have intensified as you began making changes to bring your life into harmony with Bible principles. You began to experience the tribulation that Satan and his world bring upon all who accept God's comfort.

⁴ Sadly, as Jesus foretold, tribulation causes some to stumble and cease their association with the Christian congregation. (Matthew 13:5, 6, 20, 21) Others endure tribulation by keeping their minds fixed on the comforting promises that they are learning. Eventually they dedicate their lives to Jehovah and get baptized as disciples of his Son, Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 8:34) Of course, tribulation does not stop once a Christian gets baptized. For example, keeping chaste can be a hard struggle for a person who has had an immoral background. Others have to contend with constant opposition from unbelieving family members. Whatever the tribulation, all who faithfully pursue a life of dedication to God can be sure of one thing. In a very personal way, they will experience God's comfort and help.

"The God of All Comfort"

⁵ One who deeply appreciated the comfort

3. Why do those who share God's comforting message with others also suffer tribulation?

4. In what different ways may newly interested ones react to tribulation?

5. Along with the many trials Paul suffered, what did he also experience?

that God supplies was the apostle Paul. After a particularly trialsome time in Asia and Macedonia, he experienced great relief on hearing that the Corinthian congregation had responded well to his letter of reproof. This moved him to write them a second letter, which contains the following expression of praise: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation."—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

⁶ These inspired words speak volumes. Let us analyze them. When Paul expresses praise or thanks to God or makes a request of him in his letters, we usually find that he also includes deep appreciation for Jesus, the Head of the Christian congregation. (Romans 1:8; 7:25; Ephesians 1:3; Hebrews 13:20, 21) Hence, Paul addresses this expression of praise to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then, for the first time in his writings, he uses a Greek noun translated "tender mercies." This noun comes from a word used to express sorrow at the suffering of another. Thus Paul describes God's tender feelings for any of His faithful servants who are suffering tribulation—tender feelings that move God to act mercifully in their behalf. Finally, Paul looked to Jehovah as the source of this desirable quality by calling him "*the Father of tender mercies*."

⁷ God's "tender mercies" result in relief to the one suffering tribulation. So Paul goes on to describe Jehovah as "the God of all comfort." Thus, whatever comfort we may experience from the kindness of fellow believers, we can look to Jehovah as the source. There is no real, lasting comfort

6. What do we learn from Paul's words found at 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4?

7. Why can it be said that Jehovah is "the God of all comfort"?

that does not originate with God. Further, it is he who created man in his image, thus enabling us to be comforters. And it is God's holy spirit that motivates his servants to show tender mercy toward those in need of comfort.

Trained to Be Comforters

⁸ While Jehovah God permits the various trials that come upon his faithful servants, he is never the source of such trials. (James 1:13) However, the comfort he provides when we endure tribulation can train us to be more sensitive to the needs of others. With what result? "That we may be able to comfort those in any sort of tribulation through the comfort with which we ourselves are being comforted by God." (2 Corinthians 1:4) Thus Jehovah trains us to be effective sharers of his comfort with fellow believers and with those whom we meet in our ministry as we imitate Christ and "comfort all the mourning ones."—Isaiah 61:2; Matthew 5:4.

⁹ Paul endured his many sufferings thanks to the abundant comfort he received from God through Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:5) We too can experience an abundance of comfort by meditating on God's precious promises, by praying for the support of his holy spirit, and by experiencing God's answers to our prayers. Thus we will be strengthened to continue upholding Jehovah's sovereignty and proving the Devil to be a liar. (Job 2:4; Proverbs 27:11) When we have faithfully endured any form of tribulation, we should, like Paul, give all the credit to Jehovah, whose comfort enables Christians to remain faithful under trial.

8. Though God is not the source of our trials, what beneficial effect can our endurance of tribulation have on us?

9. (a) What will help us to endure suffering? (b) How are others comforted when we faithfully endure tribulation?

The endurance of faithful Christians has a comforting effect on the brotherhood, making others determined to "endure the same sufferings."—2 Corinthians 1:6.

¹⁰ The Corinthians had their share of the sufferings that come upon all true Christians. In addition, they needed counsel to disfellowship an unrepentant fornicator. (1 Corinthians 5:1, 2, 11, 13) Failure to take this action and to bring an end to strife and divisions had brought disgrace upon the congregation. But they finally applied Paul's counsel and displayed genuine repentance. Hence, he warmly commended them and stated that their fine response to his letter had comforted him. (2 Corinthians 7:8, 10, 11, 13) Apparently, the disfellowshipped one had also repented. So Paul advised them to 'forgive and comfort him, that somehow such a man might not be swallowed up by his being overly sad.'—2 Corinthians 2:7.

¹¹ Paul's second letter must surely have comforted the Corinthian congregation. And this was one of his intentions. He explained: "Our hope for you is unwavering, knowing as we do that, just as you are sharers of the sufferings, in the same way you will also share the comfort." (2 Corinthians 1:7) At the conclusion of his letter, Paul urged: "Continue . . . to be comforted, . . . and the God of love and of peace will be with you."—2 Corinthians 13:11.

¹² What an important lesson we can learn from this! All members of the Christian congregation need to "share the comfort" that God provides through his Word, his holy spirit, and his earthly organization. Even disfellowshipped ones may be in need of comfort if they have repented and corrected their wrong course. Thus, "the faithful

- 10, 11. (a) What are some things that caused suffering to the congregation of ancient Corinth? (b) How did Paul comfort the Corinthian congregation, and what hope did he express?
12. What need do all Christians have?

COMFORT DURING FOUR YEARS OF WAR

DURING the four years of war in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, many people suffered hardships and severe shortages. Included among them were hundreds of Jehovah's Witnesses, who faithfully continued to worship "the God of all comfort." —2 Corinthians 1:3.

In Sarajevo, people suffered the added hardship of living in a large city that was under siege throughout the war. There were shortages of electricity, water, firewood, and food. How did the Sarajevo Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses function under these extreme conditions? Christians from neighboring lands risked their lives to bring in a large quantity of relief supplies. (See *The Watchtower*, November 1, 1994, pages 23-7.) Also, the brothers in Sarajevo shared what they had with one another, placing the prime emphasis on sharing spiritual things. During the siege a Christian overseer from that city gave the following report:

"We value our meetings very much. My wife and I, together with another 30 persons, walk 15 kilometers [9 miles] each way to the meetings. Sometimes it was announced that water would be supplied during the times when meetings were held. What would the brothers do? Would they stay home or attend the meetings? Our brothers preferred to attend the meetings. The brothers always help one another; whatever they have, they share. One sister in our congregation lives on the outskirts of the city, near the forest; so it is a little easier for her to get some firewood. She also works in a bakery, and her salary is paid in flour. When possible, she bakes a large

loaf of bread and brings it to the meeting. After the meeting, on the way out, she gives everyone a piece.

"It is important that none of the brothers or sisters ever feel abandoned. Nobody knows who of us will next need help in an unpleasant situation. When we had icy roads and one sister was ill, young, strong brothers pulled her to the meetings on a sleigh.

"All of us share in the preaching work, and Jehovah has blessed our efforts. He has seen our dire situation in Bosnia, but he has blessed us with increase—increase we had not seen before the war."

Likewise, in other war-torn parts of the former Yugoslavia, Jehovah's Witnesses have enjoyed increases despite severe hardships. From the Croatia office of Jehovah's Witnesses comes this report about a group of Witnesses: "The brothers living in Velika Kladuša had extremely hard times to deal with. The town was attacked on several occasions. The brothers had to explain their neutrality to Croatian, Serbian, and various Muslim armies. For sure, they had to endure much—imprisonment, beatings, hunger, danger of death. Still, all of them remained faithful and have the outstanding privilege of seeing Jehovah's blessing on their activities."

In spite of these hardships, Jehovah's Witnesses in Velika Kladuša and neighboring Bihać continue to enjoy increases as they zealously share God's message of comfort with their neighbors. A total of 26 Kingdom publishers from these two places are conducting 39 home Bible studies!

and discreet slave" has instituted a merciful provision to assist them. Once a year two elders may visit certain disfellowshipped ones. These may no longer show a rebellious attitude or be engaged in gross sin and may need help to take the necessary steps to get reinstated.—Matthew 24:45; Ezekiel 34:16.

Paul's Tribulation in Asia

¹³ The kind of suffering that the Corinthian congregation had experienced up to this point could not be compared with the many tribulations that Paul had to endure. Thus, he could remind them: "We do not wish you to be ignorant, brothers, about the tribulation that happened to us in the district of Asia, that we were under extreme pressure beyond our strength, so that we were very uncertain even of our lives. In fact, we felt within ourselves that we had received the sentence of death. This was that we might have our trust, not in ourselves, but in the God who raises up the dead. From such a great thing as death he did rescue us and will rescue us; and our hope is in him that he will also rescue us further."—2 Corinthians 1:8-10.

¹⁴ Some Bible scholars believe that Paul was referring to the riot in Ephesus, which could have cost Paul as well as his two Macedonian traveling companions, Gaius and Aristarchus, their lives. These two Christians were forcibly taken into a theater that was packed with a mob who "shouted for about two hours: 'Great is Artemis [the goddess] of the Ephesians!'" Eventually, a city official succeeded in quieting the crowd. This threat to the lives of Gaius and Aristarchus must have greatly distressed Paul. In fact, he wanted to go in and reason with the fa-

- 13, 14. (a) How did Paul describe a time of severe tribulation that he experienced in Asia? (b) What incident may Paul have had in mind?

natic mob, but he was prevented from risking his life in this way.—Acts 19:26-41.

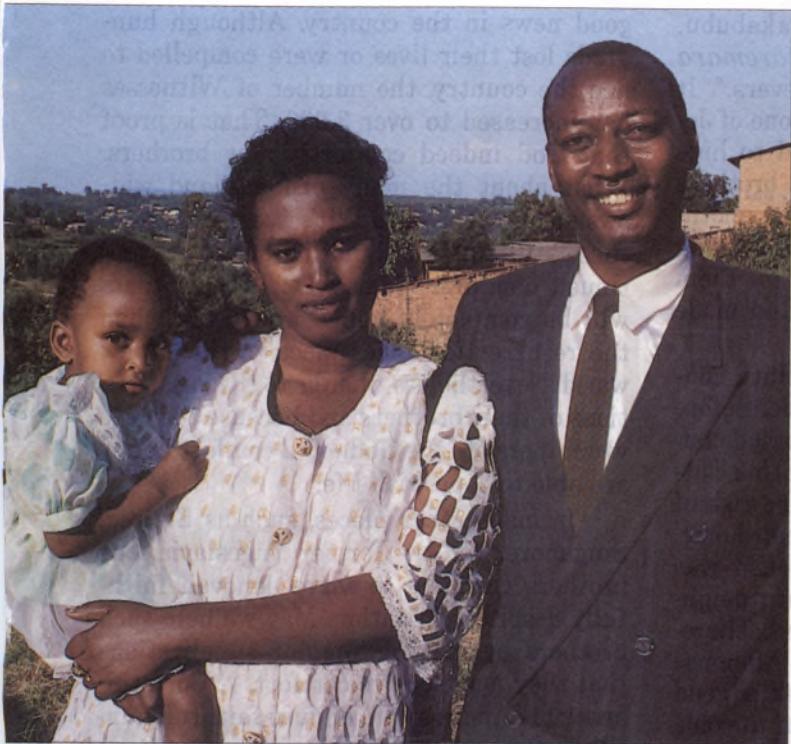
¹⁵ However, Paul may have been describing a situation far more extreme than the foregoing incident. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul asked: "If, like men, I have fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, of what good is it to me?" (1 Corinthians 15:32) This may mean that Paul's life was threatened not just by beastly men but by literal wild animals in the stadium of Ephesus. Criminals were sometimes punished by being forced to fight wild beasts while blood-thirsty crowds looked on. If Paul meant that he had faced literal wild beasts, he must at the last moment have been miraculously spared from a cruel death, just as Daniel was saved from the mouth of literal lions.

—Daniel 6:22.

Modern-Day Examples

¹⁶ Many present-day Christians can relate to the tribulations suffered by Paul. (2 Corinthians 11:23-27) Today, too, Christians have been "under extreme pressure beyond [their] strength," and many have faced situations in which they 'were very uncertain of their lives.' (2 Corinthians 1:8) Some have died at the hands of mass murderers and cruel persecutors. We can be sure that God's comforting power enabled them to endure and that they died with hearts and minds firmly fixed on the fulfillment of their hope, be that a heavenly hope or an earthly one. (1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 4:13; Revelation 2:10) In other cases, Jehovah has maneuvered mat-

15. What extreme situation may be described at 1 Corinthians 15:32?
16. (a) Why can many of Jehovah's Witnesses identify with the tribulations suffered by Paul? (b) Of what can we be sure regarding those who died because of their faith? (c) What good effect has come when Christians experience narrow escapes from death?

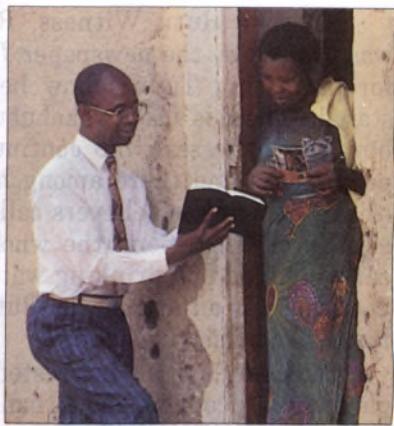


Jean and Chantal, though being Tutsi Witnesses, were hidden in separate locations by Hutu Witnesses during the genocide in Rwanda

ters, and our brothers have been rescued from death. No doubt those who have undergone such a rescue have developed increased trust "in the God who raises up the dead." (2 Corinthians 1:9) Afterward, they could speak with even greater conviction as they shared God's comforting message with others.—Matthew 24:14.

¹⁷ Recently our dear brothers in Rwanda went through an experience similar to that of Paul and his companions. Many lost their lives, but Satan's efforts failed to destroy their faith. Rather, our brothers in

17-19. What experiences show that our brothers in Rwanda have been sharers in God's comfort?



Jehovah's Witnesses continue to share God's comforting message with their neighbors in Rwanda

this land have experienced God's comfort in many personal ways. During the genocide of Tutsi and Hutu living in Rwanda, there were Hutu who risked their lives to protect Tutsi and Tutsi who protected Hutu. Some were killed by extremists for protecting their fellow believers. For example, a Hutu Witness named Gahizi was killed after hiding a Tutsi sister named Chantal. Chantal's Tutsi husband, Jean, was hidden in another location by a Hutu sister named Charlotte. For 40 days Jean and another Tutsi brother remained hidden in a large chimney, only coming out for brief periods during the night. All this time, Charlotte provided them with food and protection, although living close to a Hutu army camp. On this page, you can see a picture of a re-united Jean and Chantal, who are thankful that their Hutu fellow worshipers 'risked their necks' for them, just as Prisca and Aquila did for the apostle Paul.—Romans 16:3, 4.

¹⁸ Another Hutu Witness, Rwakabubu, was praised by the newspaper *Intaremara* for protecting Tutsi fellow believers.* It stated: "There is also Rwakabubu, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, who continued to hide people here and there among his brothers (that's how fellow believers call one another). He used to spend the whole day long carrying food and drinking water for them though he is an asthmatic. But God made him extraordinarily strong."

¹⁹ Consider, too, an interested Hutu couple named Nicodeme and Athanasie. Before the outbreak of genocide, this married couple had been studying the Bible with a Tutsi Witness named Alphonse. At the risk of their lives, they hid Alphonse in their home. Later they realized that the house was not a safe place because their Hutu neighbors knew about their Tutsi friend. Therefore, Nicodeme and Athanasie hid Alphonse in a hole in their yard. This was a good move because the neighbors began to come searching for Alphonse almost every day. While lying in this hole for 28 days, Alphonse meditated on Bible accounts such as the one about Rahab, who hid two Israelites on the roof of her house in Jericho. (Joshua 6:17) Today Alphonse continues his service in Rwanda as a preacher of the good news, thankful that his Hutu Bible students risked their lives for him. And what about Nicodeme and Athanasie? They are now baptized Witnesses of Jehovah and conduct over 20 Bible studies with interested persons.

²⁰ At the time the genocide in Rwanda started, there were 2,500 proclaimers of the

* *The Watchtower*, January 1, 1995, page 26, related the experience of Rwakabubu's daughter, Deborah, whose prayer touched a band of Hutu soldiers and saved the family from being murdered.

20. In what way has Jehovah comforted our brothers in Rwanda, but what continued need do many of them have?

good news in the country. Although hundreds lost their lives or were compelled to flee the country, the number of Witnesses has increased to over 3,000. That is proof that God indeed comforted our brothers. What about the many orphans and widows among Jehovah's Witnesses? Naturally, these still suffer tribulation and need continued comfort. (James 1:27) Their tears will be completely wiped away only when the resurrection takes place in God's new world. Nevertheless, thanks to the ministrations of their brothers and because they are worshipers of "the God of all comfort," they are able to cope with life.

²¹ In many other places, such as Eritrea, Singapore, and the former Yugoslavia, our brothers continue to serve Jehovah faithfully despite tribulation. May we help such brothers by making regular supplications that they may receive comfort. (2 Corinthians 1:11) And may we endure faithfully until the time when God through Jesus Christ "will wipe out every tear from [our] eyes" in the fullest sense. Then we will experience to a complete degree the comfort Jehovah will supply in his new world of righteousness.—Revelation 7:17; 21:4; 2 Peter 3:13.

21. (a) Where else have our brothers been in dire need of God's comfort, and what is one way in which all of us can help? (See box "Comfort During Four Years of War.") (b) When will our need for comfort be completely satisfied?

Do You Know?

- Why is Jehovah called "the God of all comfort"?
- How should we view tribulations?
- With whom can we share comfort?
- How will our need for comfort be completely satisfied?

Freedom of Religion Upheld in Japan

FOR many years in Japan, young students who are Jehovah's Witnesses have faced a dilemma: Should they follow their Bible-trained conscience, or should they follow a school curriculum that violates their conscience. Why the dilemma? Because martial arts drills are part of the physical education course in their schools. The young Witnesses felt that such drills did not harmonize with Bible principles, such as the one found at Isaiah chapter 2, verse 4. This reads: "They will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore."

Not wanting to learn warlike skills, which involve harming another person, young Christian Witnesses explained to their teachers that they could not conscientiously participate in the martial arts. After trying to persuade these students to accept the school curriculum, many understanding teachers eventually agreed to respect the consciences of the students and provide alternative activities.

However, some teachers became emotional, and some schools denied the young Witnesses credits for physical education. In 1993, at least nine Witnesses were denied scholastic advancement and were forced to quit school or be expelled for not participating in martial arts.

Clearly, it was time to defend the right of young Christians to receive an education without having to compromise their conscience. Five students who were denied promotion to the second grade at the Kobe Municipal Industrial Technical College (called Kobe Tech for short) decided to take legal action.

What Was at Issue?

In the spring of 1990 when the five students entered Kobe Tech, they explained to the teachers that they could not participate in kendo (Japanese swordsmanship) drills because of their Bible-based views. The physical education faculty were strongly opposed and denied them any alternative means to earn the credit for physical education. Eventually, the students failed the physical education class and as a result had to repeat the first grade (first year college course). In April 1991 they filed a lawsuit at the Kobe District Court, claiming that the school's action went against the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion.*

The school claimed that providing alternative activities would be tantamount to showing favor to a particular religion and thus would infringe on the neutrality of public education. Besides, they claimed that they had neither the facilities nor the manpower to provide an alternative physical education program.

District Court Decision Stirs the Informed

While the case was being heard, two of the five students again failed the passing grade for physical education, while three others barely passed and made it to the next grade. The school rules stated that students whose scholastic achievements were poor and who repeated the same grade for any two consecutive years could be expelled. In view of this, one of the two students decided to quit school

* For details, please see pages 10 to 14 of the October 8, 1995, issue of *Awake!*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.



Left: Kunihito's home after the earthquake
Below: Kunihito today



before being expelled, but the other, Kunihito Kobayashi, refused to quit. So he was expelled. Interestingly, Kunihito's average for all subjects including physical education, which he failed with a score of 48 points, was 90.2 points out of 100. He was first in his class of 42 students.

On February 22, 1993, the Kobe District Court ruled in favor of Kobe Tech and said: "The actions taken by the school did not violate the constitution," although it recognized that "it cannot be denied that the plaintiffs' freedom of worship was somewhat restricted by the school's requirement to participate in kendo drills."

Like the apostle Paul in the first century, the plaintiffs decided to appeal to higher legal authorities. (Acts 25:11, 12) The case went to the Osaka High Court.

Unselfish Attitude of the Plaintiffs

A noted scholar, Professor Tetsuo Shimomura of Tsukuba University, agreed to give testimony as an expert witness in the Osaka High Court. As a specialist in education and law, he stressed how inconsiderate the school's actions were in dealing with the students. Kunihito Kobayashi expressed his feelings in the court, and his sincere attitude moved the hearts of those in the courtroom. Further, on February 22, 1994, the Kobe Bar Association, declaring that the school's actions infringed upon Kunihito's freedom of worship and his right to receive an education, recommended that the school reinstate him.

As the time approached for the decision to be handed down at the Osaka High Court, all the young Christians involved were eager to be part of the struggle till the end. They felt they were fighting a legal battle in behalf of thousands of young Witnesses who face the same issue in schools throughout Japan. But since they were not expelled from the school, it was highly probable that the court would dismiss their case. And they could see

that if they retracted their plea, the school's unreasonableness in expelling Kunihito would be highlighted. Thus, all the students except Kunihito decided to drop the case.

On December 22, 1994, Chief Judge Reisuke Shimada of the Osaka High Court handed down a decision that reversed the Kobe District Court ruling. The court found that Kunihito's reason for refusing kendo drills was sincere and that the disadvantage to him for his action based on his religious belief was extremely great. The school, said Chief Judge Shimada, should have provided alternative activities. This fine decision touched a responsive chord in the hearts of those who were concerned about human rights. The school, however, appealed the case to the Supreme Court of Japan, depriving Kunihito of education for more than another year.

To the Supreme Court

An editorial in the newspaper Kobe Shimbun later stated: "The Kobe City School Board and the school should have accepted Mr. Kobayashi back to school at that point [after the decision of the Osaka High Court]. . . . Their unnecessarily confrontational attitude has deprived a man of an important period of his youth." Still,

Kobe Tech took a strong stand in this case. As a result, it became a topic of nationwide news reports. Teachers and school authorities throughout the country took notice, and a decision from the highest court in the country would stand as a stronger legal precedent for similar cases in the future.

On January 17, 1995, about a week after the school appealed the case to the Supreme Court, the Kobe earthquake hit Ashiya City where Kunihito and his family lived. At about half past five that morning, a few minutes before the quake hit the area, Kunihito left his house for his part-time job. He was cycling along the road underneath the Hanshin Expressway, and when the quake struck, he was just approaching the portion that collapsed. Immediately he went back home and found the first floor of his house completely smashed. Kunihito saw that he could easily have lost his life in the quake and thanked Jehovah for permitting him to survive. If he had died, it is likely that the kendo case would have ended without the Supreme Court decision.

The Supreme Court in Japan usually examines appeals on paper only and judges whether or not the lower-court decisions were correct. Unless there is a serious reason to reverse the lower-court decision, no hearings take place. The court does not notify the parties concerned when the opinion is to be given. So Kunihito was taken by surprise on the morning of March 8, 1996, when he was told that the decision would be handed down that morning. To his joy and delight, he learned that the Supreme Court had upheld the Osaka High Court decision.

Four judges, with Judge Shinichi Kawai presiding, ruled unanimously that "the actions in question should be regarded as exceedingly improper from the socially accepted norms, deviating from the realm of discretionary rights, and hence illegal." The court acknowledged

the sincerity of Kunihito's refusal to do kendo drills and said: "The reason for the appellee to refuse participation in kendo drills was earnest and closely related to the very core of his faith." The Supreme Court judged that the school could have and should have provided alternative means so that the appellee's religious belief might be respected.

Far-Reaching Effect

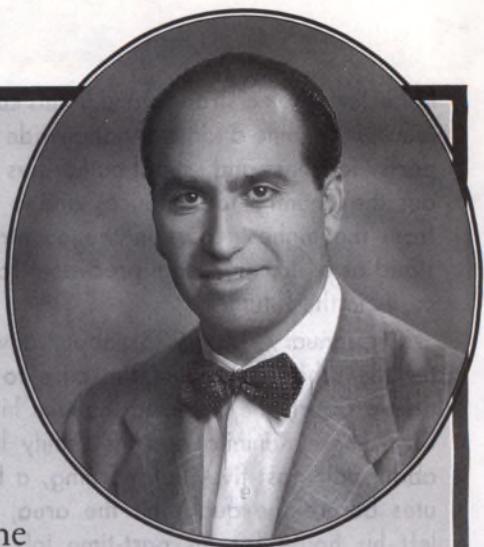
This decision will no doubt set a fine precedent in favor of freedom of worship in schools. *The Japan Times* said: "The ruling is the first by the Supreme Court on the issue of education and the freedom of religion." The decision, however, does not remove the responsibility of each young student to take his own conscientious stand when facing trials of faith.

Professor Masayuki Uchino of Tsukuba University commented that one of the factors that moved the judges to grant a victory to Kunihito was that he was "a sincere student whose academic achievement was outstanding." The Bible gives this counsel to Christians who face tests of their faith: "Maintain your conduct fine among the nations, that, in the thing in which they are speaking against you as evildoers, they may as a result of your fine works of which they are eyewitnesses glorify God in the day for his inspection." (1 Peter 2:12) Faithful young Christians can show that their Biblical position is worthy of people's respect by living their whole life according to Bible standards.

After the Supreme Court decision, Kunihito Kobayashi was readmitted to Kobe Tech. Most of the students who entered school with Kunihito had already graduated. Kunihito is now studying with students who are five years younger than he is. In the eyes of many people of the world, five precious years of his youth seem to have been wasted. However, Kunihito's integrity is precious in Jehovah God's eyes, and his sacrifice is certainly not in vain.

MORE THAN 50 YEARS OF 'STEPPING OVER'

AS TOLD BY EMMANUEL PATERAKIS



Nineteen centuries ago the apostle Paul received a singular invitation: "Step over into Macedonia and help us." Paul willingly accepted this new opportunity to "declare the good news." (Acts 16:9, 10) While the invitation I received does not go back that far, it was nevertheless over 50 years ago that I agreed to "step over" into new territories in the spirit of Isaiah 6:8: "Here I am! Send me." My numerous travels earned me the nickname Perpetual Tourist, but my activities bore little resemblance to tourism. More than once, on reaching my hotel room, I sank to my knees and thanked Jehovah for his protection.

I WAS born on January 16, 1916, in Híerápetra, in Crete, into a deeply religious Orthodox family. From the time I was an infant, Mama would take me and my three sisters to church on Sunday. As for my father, he preferred to stay at home and read the Bible. I adored my father—an honest, good, and forgiving man—and his death, when I was nine years old, deeply marked me.

I remember that when I was five, I read a text at school that said: "Everything around us proclaims the existence of God." As I

grew up, I was absolutely convinced of this. Thus, at the age of 11, I chose to write an essay with Psalm 104:24 as its theme: "How many your works are, O Jehovah! All of them in wisdom you have made. The earth is full of your productions." I was fascinated by the marvels of nature, even by things as simple as seeds equipped with little wings so that they would be borne by the wind away from the shade of the parent tree. The week after I submitted my essay, my teacher read it to the entire class, and then to the whole school. At the time, the teachers were

fighting against Communist ideas and were glad to hear my defense of God's existence. As for me, I was just glad to express my belief in the Creator.

Answers to My Questions

My first encounter with Jehovah's Witnesses in the early 1930's is still vivid in my memory. Emmanuel Lionoudakis had been preaching in all the towns and villages of Crete. I accepted several booklets from him, but it was the one entitled *Where Are the Dead?* that really caught my eye. I had such a morbid fear of death that I would not even enter the room in which my father had died. As I read this booklet over and over again and learned what the Bible teaches about the condition of the dead, I felt my superstitious fear disappear.

Once a year during the summer, the Witnesses visited our town and brought me more literature to read. Little by little my understanding of the Scriptures increased, but I continued to attend the Orthodox Church. The book *Deliverance*, however, marked a turning point. It clearly showed the difference between Jehovah's organization and that of Satan. From this point on, I began more regularly to study the Bible and any of the Watch Tower Society's literature that I could lay my hands on. Since Jehovah's Witnesses were under ban in Greece, I studied secretly at night. Still, I was so enthusiastic about what I was learning that I could not restrain myself from talking to everyone about it. It was not long before the police began to take an interest in me, paying me regular visits at all hours of the day and night to search for literature.

In 1936, I attended a meeting for the first time, 75 miles away in Iráklion. I was so happy to meet the Witnesses. The majority of them were simple men, farmers for the most part, but they helped confirm for me

that this is the truth. My dedication to Jehovah was made then and there.

My baptism is an event that I shall never forget. One night in 1938, two of my Bible students and I were taken by Brother Lionoudakis in pitch darkness to the beach. After saying a prayer, he plunged us into the water.

Under Arrest

The very first time that I went out to preach was eventful, to say the least. I met an old school friend who had become a priest, and we had an excellent discussion together. But afterward he explained that in line with the bishop's order, he had to have me arrested. While we waited in the mayor's office for the arrival of the police from the neighboring village, a crowd gathered outside. So I took a Greek New Testament that was in the office and began to give them a talk based on Matthew chapter 24. At first the people did not want to listen, but the priest intervened. "Let him speak," he said. "It's our Bible." I was able to speak for an hour and a half. Thus, my first day in the ministry was also the occasion for my first public talk. Since the police had not arrived when I finished, the mayor and the priest decided to have a group of men run me out of town. At the first bend in the road, I began to run as fast as I could to avoid the stones they threw.

The next day two policemen, accompanied by the bishop, arrested me at work. At the police station, I was able to witness to them from the Bible, but since my Bible literature did not have the bishop's stamp required by law, I was charged with proselytism and distributing unauthorized literature. I was released pending trial.

My trial took place one month later. In my defense I pointed out that I was doing no more than obeying Christ's command to

preach. (Matthew 28:19, 20) The judge replied sarcastically: "My child, the One who gave that commandment was crucified. Unfortunately, I do not have the authority to inflict a similar punishment on you." However, a young lawyer whom I did not know stood up in my defense, saying that with so much Communism and atheism about, the court should be proud that there were young men prepared to defend the Word of God. He then came up and congratulated me warmly on my written defense, which was in my file. Impressed that I was so young, he offered to defend me free of charge. Instead of the minimum three months, I was condemned to just ten days in prison and a 300-drachma fine. Such opposition only strengthened my resolve to serve Jehovah and defend the truth.

On another occasion when I was arrested, the judge noted the ease with which I cited the Bible. He asked the bishop to leave his office, saying: "You've done your job. I'll take care of him." He then took out his Bible, and we talked about God's Kingdom all afternoon. Such incidents encouraged me to carry on in spite of difficulties.

The Death Sentence

In 1940, I was called up for military service and wrote a letter explaining why I could not agree to be inducted. Two days later I was arrested and was severely beaten by the police. I was then sent to the front in Albania, where I was court-martialed because I refused to fight. The military authorities told me that they were less interested in knowing whether I was right or wrong than in the impression my example might have on the soldiers. I was condemned to death, but because of a legal flaw, to my great relief, this sentence was commuted to ten years at hard labor. I spent the next few months of my life in a military prison in

Greece under very difficult conditions, from which I still suffer the physical effects.

Prison, though, did not stop me from preaching. Far from it! Conversations were easy to start, as many wondered why a civilian was in a military prison. One of these discussions with a sincere young man led to a Bible study in the prison courtyard. Thirty-eight years later I met this man again at an assembly. He had accepted the truth and was serving as a congregation overseer on the island of Lefkás.

When Hitler's armies invaded Yugoslavia in 1941, we were transferred farther south to a prison in Preveza. During the journey, our convoy came under attack from German bombers, and we prisoners were given no food. When the little bread that I had was finished, I prayed to God: "If it is your will for me to die of hunger after you have saved me from the death sentence, then let your will be done."

The following day an officer called me aside during roll call and, after learning where I was from, who my parents were, and why I was in prison, told me to follow him. He took me to the officers' mess in town, directed me to a table of bread, cheese, and roast lamb, and told me to help myself. But I explained that since the other 60 prisoners had nothing, my conscience would not let me eat. The officer replied: "I can't feed everyone! Your father was very generous to mine. I have a moral obligation to you but not to the others." "In that case I'll just go back," I answered. He thought for a moment and then gave me a big bag to put as much food in as I could.

On returning to the prison, I put the bag down and said: "Gentlemen, this is for you." Coincidentally, the evening before, I had been accused of being responsible for the plight of the other prisoners because I would not join in their prayers to the Virgin Mary.



With my wife, Annie, today

However, a Communist had come to my defense. Now on seeing the food, he said to the others: "Where is your 'Virgin Mary'? You said that we would die because of this man, yet he is the one who brings us food." Then he turned to me and said: "Emmanuel! Come and say grace."

Shortly thereafter, the advance of the German army caused the prison guards to flee, opening up the doors of captivity. I made my way to Patras in order to find other Witnesses before heading to Athens at the end of May 1941. There I was able to get some clothes and shoes and to have my first bath in more than a year. Until the end of the occupation, the Germans regularly stopped me while I was preaching, but they never arrested me. One of them said: "In Germany we shoot Jehovah's Witnesses. But here we wish that all our enemies were Witnesses!"

Postwar Activities

As if Greece had not had enough fighting, it was further torn apart by civil war from 1946 to 1949, causing thousands of deaths. The brothers needed much encouragement to stay strong at a time when just attending meetings could lead to arrest. Several brothers were condemned to death for their

neutral stand. But in spite of this, many people responded to the Kingdom message, and we had one or two baptisms every week. As of 1947, I began working at the Society's offices in Athens by day and visiting the congregations as a traveling overseer by night.

In 1948, I had the joy of being invited to attend the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead, in the United States. But there was a problem. Because of my previous convictions, I was unable to obtain a passport. However, one of my Bible students was on friendly terms with a general. Thanks to this student, in just a few weeks, I had my passport. But I was worried when, not long before I was to leave, I was arrested for distributing *The Watchtower*. A policeman took me to the head of the State Security Police in Athens. To my complete surprise, he was one of my neighbors! The policeman explained why I had been arrested and gave him the package of magazines. My neighbor took out a pile of *Watchtower* magazines from his desk and said to me: "I don't have the latest issue. May I take a copy?" How relieved I was to see the hand of Jehovah in such matters!

The 16th class of Gilead, in 1950, was an enriching experience. At the end of it, I was assigned to Cyprus, where I soon discovered that clergy opposition was as fierce as in Greece. We often had to face crowds of religious fanatics whipped up to a frenzy by Orthodox priests. In 1953 my visa for Cyprus was not renewed, and I was reassigned to Istanbul, Turkey. Here again, my stay was short. Political tensions between Turkey and Greece meant that, despite good results in the preaching work, I had to leave for another assignment—Egypt.

While I was in prison, Psalm 55:6, 7 would come to mind. David there expressed a longing to flee to the desert. I never imagined that one day that is exactly where I would

be. In 1954, after a tiring journey of several days by train and Nile riverboat, I finally reached my destination—Khartoum, in Sudan. All I wanted to do was take a shower and go to bed. But I forgot that it was midday. The water, stored in a tank on the roof, scalded me, obliging me to wear a pith helmet for several months until my scalp healed.

I often felt isolated there, alone in the middle of the Sahara, a thousand miles away from the nearest congregation, but Jehovah sustained me and gave me the strength to continue. Encouragement sometimes came from the most unexpected sources. One day I met the director of the Museum of Khartoum. He was open-minded, and we had a fine discussion. On learning that I was of Greek extraction, he asked me if I would oblige him by going to the museum to translate some inscriptions on artifacts found in a sixth-century church. After five hours in a stuffy basement, I found a saucer bearing Jehovah's name, the Tetragrammaton. Imagine my joy! In Europe it is not rare to come across the divine name in churches, but it is most unusual in the middle of the Sahara!

After the international assembly in 1958, I was assigned as zone overseer to visit the brothers in 26 countries and territories in the Middle and Near East and around the Mediterranean. Often I did not know how I would get out of an awkward situation, but Jehovah always furnished a way out.

I was always impressed by the care that Jehovah's organization shows for Witnesses who are isolated in certain countries. On one occasion, I met an Indian brother working in an oil field. Apparently he was the only Witness in the country. In his locker he had publications in 18 different languages, which he gave to his workmates. Even here where all foreign religions were strictly forbidden, our brother did not forget his re-

sponsibility to preach the good news. His colleagues were impressed to see that a representative of his religion had been sent to visit him.

The year 1959 saw me visiting Spain and Portugal. Both were under military dictatorships at the time, with the work of Jehovah's Witnesses under strict ban. In one month I was able to conduct more than a hundred meetings, encouraging the brothers not to give up in spite of the difficulties.

No Longer Alone

For over 20 years, I had been serving Jehovah in full-time service as a single man, but I suddenly felt tired of my constant voyages without any fixed abode. It was about this time that I met Annie Bianucci, a special pioneer in Tunisia. We were married in 1963. Her love for Jehovah and the truth, her devotion to the ministry combined with her art of teaching, and her knowledge of languages proved to be a real blessing in our missionary and circuit work in northern and western Africa and in Italy.

In August 1965 my wife and I were assigned to Dakar, Senegal, where I had the privilege of organizing the local branch office. Senegal was a country remarkable for its religious tolerance, no doubt due to its president, Leopold Senghor, one of the few African heads of State to write to Malawi's President Banda in support of Jehovah's Witnesses during the terrible persecution that took place in Malawi in the 1970's.

Jehovah's Rich Blessing

In 1951, when I left Gilead for Cyprus, I traveled with seven suitcases. On leaving for Turkey, I was down to five. But traveling so much, I had to get used to the 20-kilogram (44-pound) baggage limit, which included my files and my "baby" typewriter. One day I said to Brother Knorr, then president of the Watch Tower Soci-

ety: "You protect me from materialism. You make me live with 20 kilograms, and I'm doing just fine." I never felt deprived because of not having many things.

My main problem during my travels was getting in and out of countries. One day, in a land where the work was banned, a customs officer started rummaging through my files. This posed a risk to the Witnesses in the country, so I took out of my jacket a letter from my wife and said to the customs officer: "I see that you like reading mail. Would you also like to read this letter from my wife, which is not in the files?" Embarrassed, he excused himself and let me through.

Since 1982 my wife and I have been serving as missionaries in Nice, in the south of France. Because of failing health, I can no longer do quite as much as I used to. But that does not mean that our joy has diminished. We have seen that 'our labor is not in vain.' (1 Corinthians 15:58) I have the joy of seeing numerous people with whom I have had the privilege of studying over the years

as well as more than 40 members of my family faithfully serving Jehovah.

In no way do I regret the sacrifices that my life of 'stepping over' has entailed. After all, none of the sacrifices we make can compare to what Jehovah and his Son, Christ Jesus, have done for us. When I think back over the past 60 years that I have known the truth, I can say that Jehovah has blessed me abundantly. As Proverbs 10:22 says, "the blessing of Jehovah—that is what makes rich."

Without a doubt, Jehovah's "loving-kindness is better than life." (Psalm 63:3) As the inconveniences of old age keep multiplying, the words of the inspired psalmist often figure in my prayers: "In you, O Jehovah, I have taken refuge. O may I never be ashamed. For you are my hope, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah, my confidence from my youth. O God, you have taught me from my youth on, and until now I keep telling about your wonderful works. And even until old age and gray-headedness, O God, do not leave me."—Psalm 71:1, 5, 17, 18.

"A Wonderful Gift From Jehovah"

THE May 1, 1996, issue of *The Watchtower* contained an in-depth discussion of Christian neutrality and how to balance our responsibilities to Jehovah and to "Caesar." (Matthew 22:21) Many expressions of appreciation have been heard for the new information provided. Among them is the following letter, written by a Witness in Greece and addressed to the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses:

"I want to express my deepest gratitude to all you dear brothers for taking such good care of us spiritually. Having spent some nine years in prison because of my Christian faith, I truly appreciate the wonderful thoughts in the May 1, 1996, issue of *The Watchtower*. (Isaiah 2:4) This was a wonderful gift from Jehovah.—James 1:17.

"While I was enjoying these articles, I remembered a comment in an earlier *Watchtower* (August 1, 1994, page 14): 'Clearly, reasonableness is a precious quality, one that moves us to love Jehovah all the more.' Yes, brothers, I thank Jehovah that I am a part of his kind and loving organization, which clearly reflects his wisdom.—James 3:17.

"The increased light in the May 1 *Watchtower* has been well received here in Greece, especially by those who spent several years in prison or who are still in prison because of their faith. Thank you once again. May Jehovah strengthen you with his spirit to continue to provide us with valuable spiritual food in these troublesome times."

Why Give to Jehovah?

AS THE sun blazed down on the small Sidonian town of Zarephath, a widow stooped to gather up sticks. She needed to build a fire so that she could cook a meager meal—probably the last meal that she and her young son would eat. She had struggled to keep herself and her boy alive through a long drought and famine, and it had all come to this miserable end. They were starving.

A man approached. His name was Elijah, and the widow soon saw that he was a prophet of Jehovah. It seems that she had heard of this God. Jehovah was different from Baal, whose cruel, perverse worship was prevalent in her land of Sidon. So when Elijah asked her for a drink of water, she was eager to help. Perhaps she felt that doing so would gain her favor with Jehovah. (Matthew 10:41, 42) But then Elijah asked for more—a bit of food. She explained that she had only enough food for one last meal. Yet, Elijah persisted, assuring her that Jehovah would provide food miraculously for her until the drought was over. What did she do? The Bible says: “So she went and did according to Elijah’s word.” (1 Kings 17:10-15) These simple words describe a deed of great faith—so great, in fact, that Jesus Christ praised that widow almost a thousand years later!—Luke 4:25, 26.

Even so, it may seem odd that Jehovah would ask so much from a woman who had so little. This is particularly so when we consider a prayer once offered by a very prominent man. King David’s collecting of contributions for his son Solomon to use in the construction of the temple prompted great generosity. In modern terms, the gifts contributed were worth billions of dol-

lars! David, though, said in prayer to Jehovah: “Who am I and who are my people, that we should retain power to make voluntary offerings like this? For everything is from you, and out of your own hand we have given to you.” (1 Chronicles 29:14) As David said, everything belongs to Jehovah. So whenever we give in order to advance pure worship, we are simply rendering to Jehovah what is already his. (Psalm 50:10) Thus, the question arises, Why does Jehovah want us to give in the first place?

A Vital Part of True Worship

The simplest answer is that from early times Jehovah has made giving a vital part of pure worship. The faithful man Abel sacrificed some of his precious livestock to Jehovah. The patriarchs Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Job made similar offerings.—Genesis 4:4; 8:20; 12:7; 26:25; 31:54; Job 1:5.

The Mosaic Law mandated and even regulated the giving of contributions to Jehovah. For example, all Israelites were commanded to tithe, or donate a tenth part of the land’s produce and of the increase in their livestock. (Numbers 18:25-28) Other contributions were not so closely regulated. For instance, each Israelite was required to give Jehovah the firstfruits of his livestock and produce. (Exodus 22:29, 30; 23:19) Yet, the Law left it to each individual to determine how much of his firstfruits to give, as long as he gave of the best. The Law also provided for thanksgiving and vow offerings, which were entirely voluntary. (Leviticus 7:15, 16) Jehovah encouraged his people to give in proportion to the way he had blessed them. (Deuteronomy 16:17) As it

had been with the building of the tabernacle and later the temple, each one gave what his heart impelled him to give. (Exodus 35:21; 1 Chronicles 29:9) Surely such voluntary contributions were most pleasing to Jehovah!

Under "the law of the Christ," *all* giving was to be voluntary. (Galatians 6:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7) That did not mean that followers of Christ stopped giving or that they gave less. On the contrary! As Jesus and his apostles preached in Israel, a group of women followed them and ministered to them out of their own belongings. (Luke 8: 1-3) The apostle Paul likewise received gifts that supported his missionary work, and he in turn encouraged some congregations to give funds to others in cases of need. (2 Corinthians 8:14; Philippians 1:3-5) The governing body in Jerusalem assigned responsible men to make sure that contributed resources were distributed to the needy. (Acts 6:2-4) Clearly, the early Christians saw it as a privilege to support pure worship in such ways.

Still, we may wonder just why Jehovah makes giving a part of his worship. Consider four reasons.

Why We Give

First, Jehovah makes giving a part of true worship because *doing so is good for us*. It underlines our appreciation of God's goodness. For example, if a child buys or makes a gift for a parent, why does the parent beam with pleasure? Does the gift meet some dire need that the parent could not have met otherwise? Probably not. Rather, the parent is delighted to see the child develop an appreciative and giving spirit. For similar reasons Jehovah encourages us to give and is delighted when we do. This is how we show him that we really appreciate all his boundless kindness and his generosity to us. He is

the giver of "every good gift and every perfect present," so we will never run out of reasons to thank him. (James 1:17) Above all, Jehovah gave his own beloved Son, allowing him to die so that we might live forever. (John 3:16) Could we ever thank him enough?

Second, if we make a habit of giving, we thereby *learn to imitate Jehovah and his Son, Jesus Christ*, in a most important respect. Jehovah is consistently giving, constantly generous. As the Bible says, he bestows upon us "life and breath and all things." (Acts 17:25) We may rightly thank him for every breath we draw, every bite of food we enjoy, every happy and fulfilling moment in life. (Acts 14:17) Jesus, like his Father, showed a giving spirit. He gave unstintingly of himself. Did you know that when Jesus performed miracles, he did so at a cost to himself? More than once the Scriptures tell us that when he cured sick people, power 'went out of him.' (Luke 6:19; 8: 45, 46) Jesus was so generous that he even poured out his own soul, his life, to the very death.—Isaiah 53:12.

So when we give, whether of our time, our energy, or our possessions, we imitate Jehovah and make his heart rejoice. (Proverbs 27:11; Ephesians 5:1) We also follow the perfect model for human conduct that was left for us by Jesus Christ.—1 Peter 2:21.

Third, giving *meets real and important needs*. True, Jehovah could easily meet the needs of Kingdom interests without our help, just as he could arrange to have the stones cry out instead of using us to preach the word. (Luke 19:40) But he has chosen to dignify us with these privileges. So when we give of our resources to advance Kingdom interests, we have the great satisfaction of knowing that we are playing a real part in the most important work going on in this world.—Matthew 24:14.

It hardly needs to be said that money is required to finance the worldwide work of Jehovah's Witnesses. During the 1995 service year, the Society spent nearly \$60 million just on caring for special pioneers, missionaries, and traveling overseers in their field service assignments. However, that is a relatively small expense compared with the construction and operation of branch offices and printing facilities around the world. Yet, all of it is made possible by voluntary contributions!

Jehovah's people do not generally assume that if they are not well-off themselves, they may simply let others carry the load. Such an attitude could lead us to miss out on this aspect of our worship. According to the apostle Paul, the Christians in Macedonia were suffering from "deep poverty." Still, they *begged* for the privilege of giving. And what they gave, Paul testified, was "beyond their actual ability!"—2 Corinthians 8:1-4.

Fourth, Jehovah has made giving a part of true worship because *giving will help us to be happy*. Jesus himself said: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) That is how Jehovah designed us. It is yet another reason why we may feel that no matter how much we give to him, we could never match the appreciation we feel for him in our hearts. Happily, though, Jehovah does not expect more of us than we can give. We can be confident that he is delighted when we joyously give what we can!—2 Corinthians 8:12; 9:7.

Blessings Result From Showing a Giving Spirit

To return to our earlier example, imagine that the widow of Zarephath had rationalized that someone else could take care of Elijah's need for a meal. What a blessing she would then have missed!

There is no question that Jehovah blesses those who show a giving spirit. (Proverbs 11:25) The widow of Zarephath did not have to suffer for giving up what she thought was her last meal. Jehovah rewarded her with a miracle. As Elijah had promised, her containers of flour and of oil were not exhausted until the drought had passed. But she received an even greater reward. When her son fell sick and died, Elijah, the man of the true God, restored him to her. How that must have built her up spiritually!—1 Kings 17:16-24.

Today we do not expect to be blessed with miracles. (1 Corinthians 13:8) But Jehovah does assure us that he will sustain those who serve him whole-souled. (Matthew 6:33) So we can be like the widow of Zarephath in that respect, giving freely, confident that Jehovah will care for us. Likewise, we can enjoy great spiritual rewards. If our giving is part of a regular routine, rather than a sporadic, spur-of-the-moment affair, it will help us to keep our eye simple and focused on Kingdom interests, as Jesus recommended. (Luke 11:34; compare 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2.) It will also help us to feel closer to Jehovah and Jesus as their fellow workers. (1 Corinthians 3:9) And it will add to the generous, giving spirit that already marks Jehovah's worshipers worldwide.

In Our Next Issue

Does God Require Fasting?

Traveling Overseers—Gifts in Men

Would You Have Recognized the Messiah?

WAYS IN WHICH SOME CHOOSE TO GIVE

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WORLDWIDE WORK

Many set aside or budget an amount that they place in the contribution boxes labeled: "Contributions for the Society's Worldwide Work—Matthew 24:14." Each month congregations forward these amounts either to the world headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, or to the local branch office.

Voluntary donations of money may also be sent directly to the Treasurer's Office, Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, New York

11201-2483, or to the Society's office that serves your country. Jewelry or other valuables may be donated as well. A brief letter stating that such is an outright gift should accompany these contributions.

CONDITIONAL-DONATION ARRANGEMENT

Money may be given to the Watch Tower Society to be held in trust until the donor's death, with the provision that in the case of personal need, it will be returned to the donor. For more information, please contact the Treasurer's Office at the address noted above.

PLANNED GIVING

In addition to outright gifts of money and conditional donations of money, there are other methods of giving to benefit Kingdom service worldwide. These include:

Insurance: The Watch Tower Society may be named as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy or in a retirement/pension plan. The Society should be informed of any such arrangement.

Bank Accounts: Bank accounts, certificates of deposit, or individual retirement accounts may be placed in trust for or made payable on death to the Watch Tower Society, in accord with local bank requirements. The Society should be informed of any such arrangements.

Stocks and Bonds: Stocks and bonds may be donated to the Watch Tower Society either as an outright gift or under an arrangement whereby the income continues to be paid to the donor.

Real Estate: Salable real estate may be donated to the Watch Tower Society either by making an outright gift or by reserving a life estate to the donor, who can continue to live therein during his or her lifetime. One should contact the Society before deeding any real estate to the Society.

Wills and Trusts: Property or money may be bequeathed to the Watch Tower Society by means of a legally executed will, or the Society may be

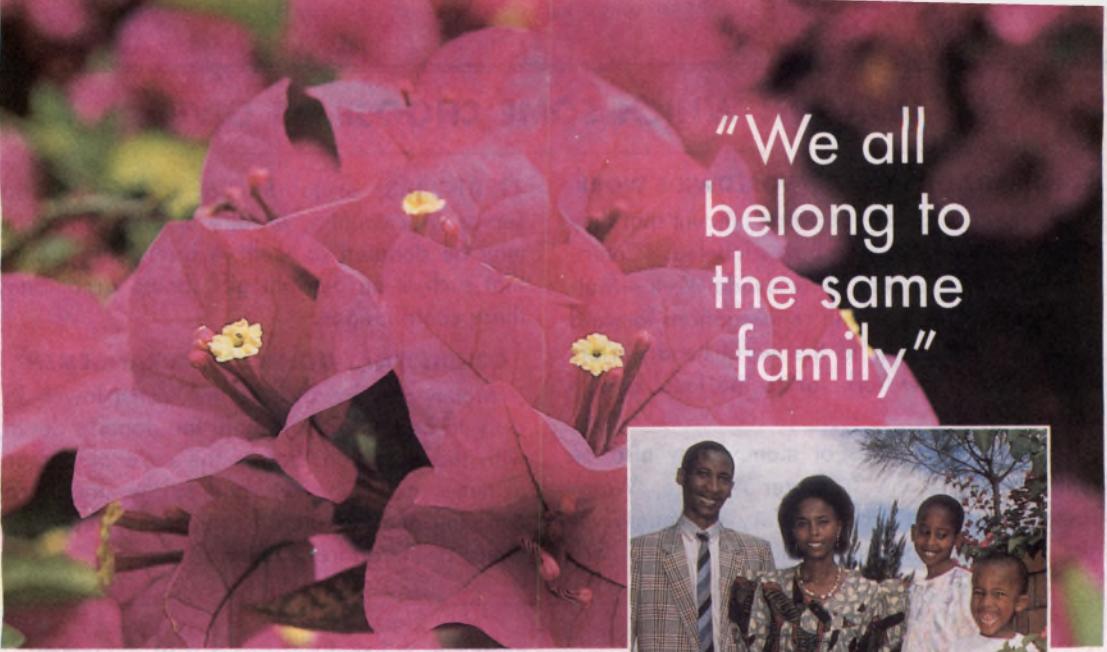
named as a beneficiary of a trust agreement. A trust benefiting a religious organization may provide certain tax advantages. A copy of the will or trust agreement should be sent to the Society.

Those interested in any of these planned giving arrangements should contact the Planned Giving Desk at the address listed below or the Society's office that serves your country. The Planned Giving Desk should receive a copy of relevant documents pertaining to any of these arrangements.

The Society has prepared an English-language brochure entitled *Planned Giving*. Those in the United States who are planning to make a special gift to the Society now or to leave a bequest at death may find this information helpful. That is especially true if they wish to accomplish some family goal or estate-planning objective while using tax benefits to minimize the cost of the gift or bequest. The brochure is available upon request, whether in writing or by telephone.

PLANNED GIVING DESK

**Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society
of Pennsylvania**
**100 Watchtower Drive, Patterson,
New York 12563-9204**
Telephone: (914) 878-7000



"We all belong to the same family"



In RECENT years religious prejudice and racism have spread around the earth. Ethnic differences have sparked killings, torture, and other shameful atrocities. According to a report by Amnesty International, human rights violations forced over 23 million people worldwide to flee from their homes in 1994.

In Rwanda alone, some 500,000 people were slaughtered and more than 2,000,000 others became refugees after violence erupted between the Tutsi and the Hutu. "Jehovah's Witnesses were especially persecuted," reports the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir*, "for their refusal to carry arms." Jehovah's Witnesses do not engage in armed conflicts. Nevertheless, hundreds of them were killed in the violence. This reminds us of Jesus' words to his disciples: "Because you are no part of the world, . . . the world hates you."

—John 15:19.

One Witness family—Eugène Ntabana, his wife, and two children—lived in the capital, Ki-

gali. When explaining Christian neutrality to his neighbors, Eugène often spoke of the bougainvillea, a climbing vine that thrives in warm climates.

—Matthew 22:21.

"Here in Kigali," Eugène would explain, "the bougainvillea produces red, pink, and sometimes white flowers. Yet, they all belong to the same family. It is the same with humans. Although we may be of different races, skin color, or ethnic background, we all belong to the same family, the family of mankind."

Tragically, despite their peaceful nature and neutral stand, the Ntabana family was murdered by a bloodthirsty mob. Still, they died faithful. We can be sure that Jehovah God will fulfill his promise to such ones, and they will be resurrected to inherit a world where prejudice will be no more. (Acts 24:15) Then, the Ntabana family, along with others, will "find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace."—Psalm 37:11.