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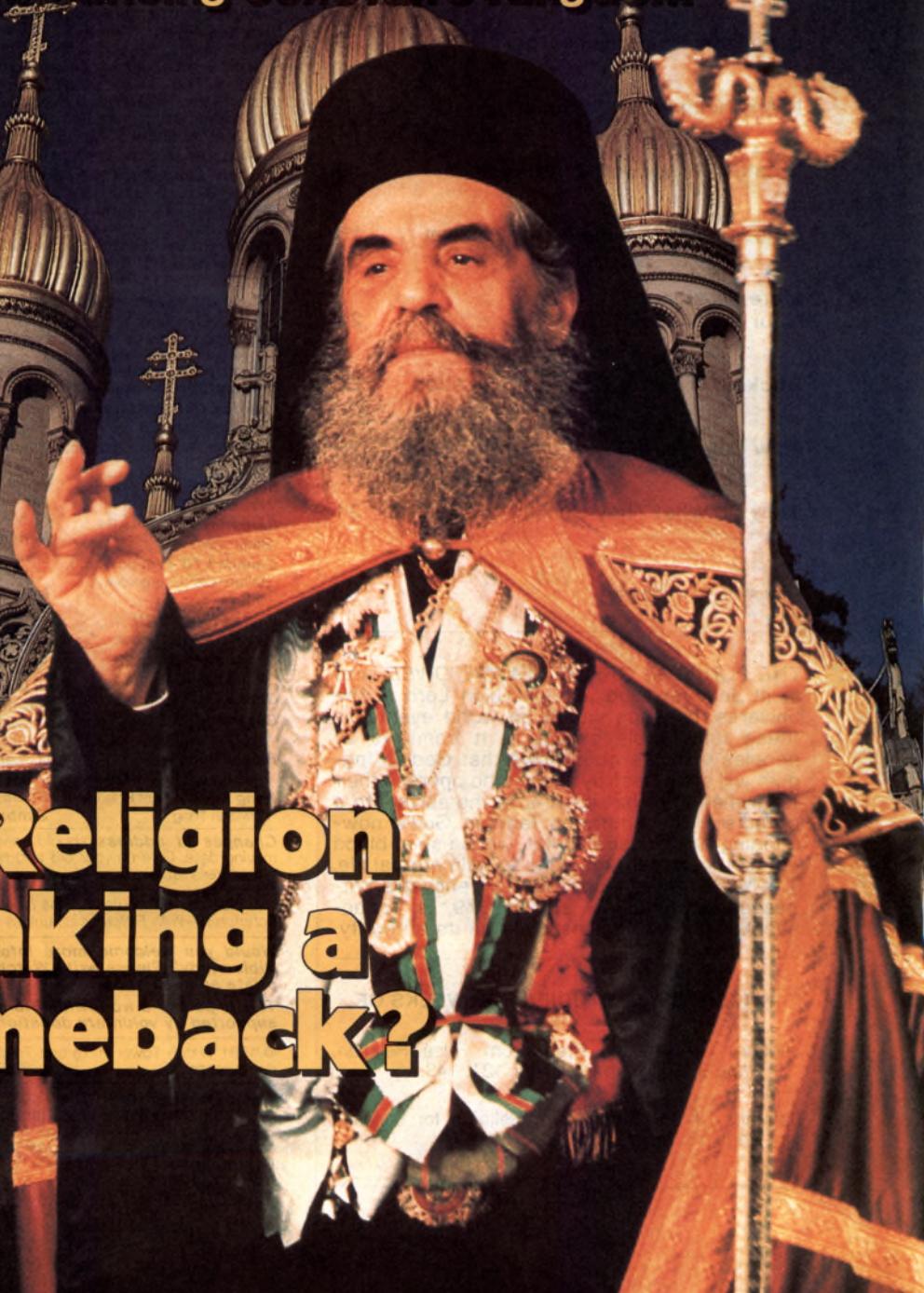
The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



A large, ornate Orthodox church with golden domes and crosses in the background.

**Is Religion
Making a
Comeback?**



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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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Is Religion Really Necessary?

IS RELIGION important to you? Are you, perhaps, a member of a religious group or church? If so, you have much in common with people who lived back in 1844, the year when the German philosopher Karl Marx wrote: "Religion . . . is the opium of the people." In those days almost everyone went to church and religion had a strong influence on every level of society. Today, that has changed drastically, and religion plays little or no part in the lives of hundreds of millions of people. If you go to church, you are likely in a minority in your community.

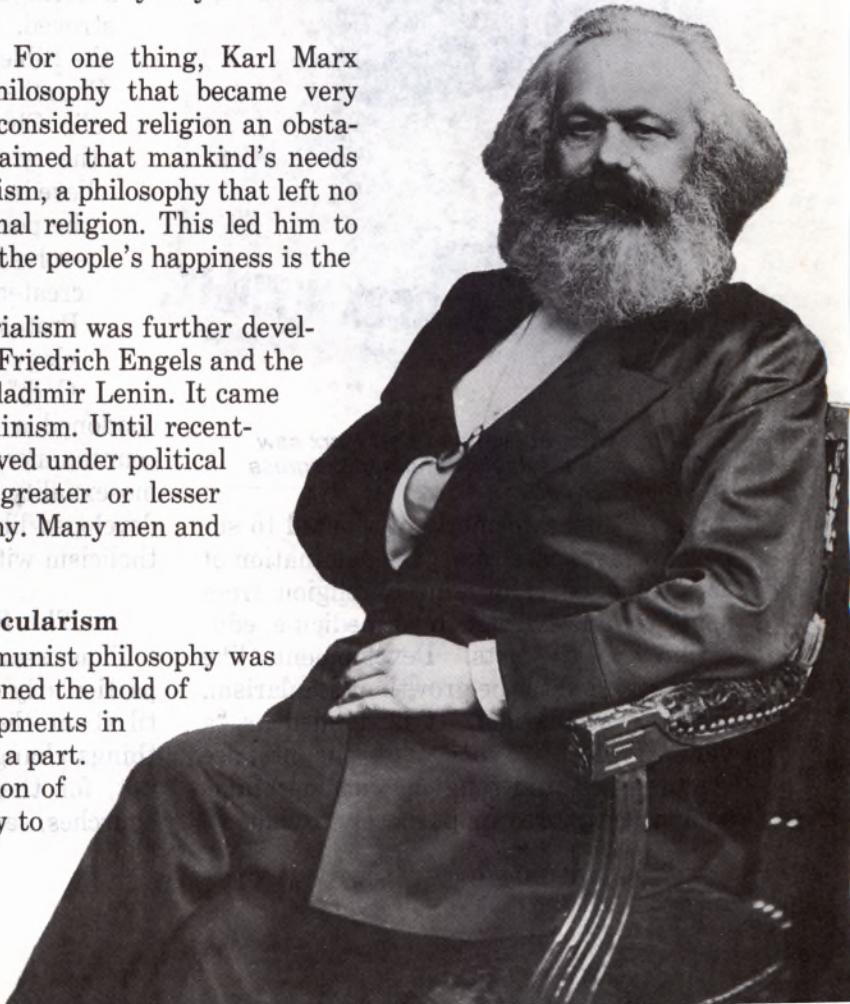
What caused the change? For one thing, Karl Marx developed an antireligion philosophy that became very influential. Marx apparently considered religion an obstacle to human progress. He claimed that mankind's needs could best be met by materialism, a philosophy that left no room for God or for traditional religion. This led him to state: "The first requisite for the people's happiness is the abolition of religion."

Marx's philosophy of materialism was further developed by the German socialist Friedrich Engels and the Russian Communist leader Vladimir Lenin. It came to be known as Marxism-Leninism. Until recently, over a third of mankind lived under political regimes that followed to a greater or lesser degree this atheistic philosophy. Many men and women still do.

The Growth of Secularism

But the spread of the Communist philosophy was not the only thing that weakened the hold of religion on mankind. Developments in the field of science also played a part. For example, the popularization of the evolution theory led many to

"Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless condition. It is the opium of the people"



question the existence of a Creator. And there were other factors.

The *Encyclopædia Britannica* mentions "the discovery of scientific explanations

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Secularism is influential in Communist and non-Communist lands.

But secularism and Marxism-Leninism were not alone in weakening the influence of religion. The churches of Christendom must share the blame. Why? Because for centuries they had abused their authority. And they had taught doctrines based on unscriptural traditions and human philosophies rather than the Bible. Hence, many in their flocks were too weakened spiritually to withstand the onslaught of secularism.

Further, the churches themselves for the most part finally gave in to secularism. In the 19th century, religious scholars in Christendom came up with a form of higher criticism that destroyed, for many, the credibility of the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, accepted the evolution theory. Yes, they still claimed to believe in creation. But they allowed for the possibility that the body of man evolved, while only the soul was created by God. During the 1960's, Protestantism came up with a theology that proclaimed the "death of God." Many Protestant clergymen condoned a materialistic life-style. They countenanced premarital sex and even homosexuality. Some Catholic theologians developed liberation theology, mixing Catholicism with revolutionary Marxism.



Vladimir Lenin (above) and Karl Marx saw religion as an obstacle to human progress

for phenomena formerly attributed to supernatural causes" and "the elimination of the influence of organized religion from spheres of activity such as medicine, education and the arts." Developments like these have led to the growth of secularism. What is secularism? It is defined as "a view of life . . . based on the premise that religion and religious considerations should be ignored or purposely excluded."

The Retreat of Secularism

Thus, secularism came to predominate, particularly during the 1960's and up until about the middle of the 1970's. Then things changed again. Religion, although not, for the most part, the mainstream churches, seemed to make a comeback. All

around the world, the late 1970's and the 1980's witnessed a proliferation of new religious groups.

Why the resurgence of religion? French sociologist Gilles Kepel stated that "secularly educated lay people . . . maintain that secular culture has led them to a dead end and that by asserting their liberation from God, men are reaping what they have sown by their pride and vanity, namely, delinquency, divorce, AIDS, drug abuse, [and] suicide."

The retreat of secularism has gathered fresh momentum since the recent apparent collapse of Marxism-Leninism. For many people this atheistic philosophy had become a veritable religion. Imagine, then, the bewilderment of those who put their trust in it! A *Washington Post* dispatch from Moscow quoted a former rector of the Communist Party Higher School who said: "A country lives not only on its economy and institutions, but also on its mythology and founding fathers. It's a devastating thing for any society to discover that their greatest myths are based not on truth but propaganda and fantasy. But that is what we are experiencing now in the case of Lenin and the revolution."

Speaking of both Communist and capitalist worlds, the French sociologist and philosopher Edgar Morin admitted: "Not only have we seen the collapse of the brilliant future held out to the proletariat but we have also seen the collapse of the automatic and natural progress of secular society, wherein science, reason, and democracy were supposed to advance automatically. . . . No progress is now assured. The future we had hoped for has collapsed." Such is the empty feeling of many who put their faith in man's efforts to create a better world without God.

Renewed Interest in Religion

This worldwide sense of disillusionment is causing a number of sincere individuals to recognize the need for a spiritual side to their lives. They see the need for religion. But they are dissatisfied with the mainstream churches, and some also have doubts about the new religions—including healing cults, charismatic groups, esoteric

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The Marxist-Leninist ideology had raised high hopes in the hearts of millions of people

sects, and even groups of Satan worshippers. Religious fanaticism is also rearing its ugly head. So, yes, religion is making a comeback of sorts. But is such a return to religion a good thing for humanity? Indeed, does *any* religion really answer the spiritual needs of mankind?

Is Any Religion Good Enough?

"The fate of our times is tragic. We need a religion, but nowhere do we find a God to fit it."

—Lucian Blaga,
Romanian poet
and philosopher

"Religion and the clergy have been, and will perhaps remain for a long time, among the greatest enemies of progress and freedom."

—Khristo Botev,
Bulgarian poet



THE accompanying quotations echo the dilemma in which many sincere people find themselves. Deep down they feel the need for religion, but the mysterious God that the clergy teach is not a God they can understand and love. Moreover, they realize that the clergy and their religions have done much to hinder human progress and freedom. Yes, while the need for religion is increasingly recognized, honest people will not settle for just *any* religion.

An Important Distinction

Religion plays a key role in mankind's makeup and history. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* speaks of religion "as a fact in human experience, culture, and history" and adds: "Evidences of religious attitudes and loyalties exist in every sector of human life." But history shows that none of the world's major religions have been a blessing for mankind.

Indian statesman Jawaharlal Nehru once commented: "The spectacle of what is called religion, or at any rate organized religion, in India and elsewhere, has filled us with horror." Considering the wars that have been waged and the crimes committed in the name of religion, can you honestly disagree with him?

In the 18th century, the French philosopher Voltaire made an interesting distinction. He wrote: "Religion, you say, has produced innumerable infamous deeds. You should rather say superstition, the superstition that is reigning over our sad globe. Superstition is the cruellest enemy of the pure worship that we owe to the Supreme Being." Voltaire fought the religious intolerance of his day, but he maintained his belief in God as Creator of the universe. He saw a distinction between true religion and false.

The Need to Choose

Not all agree with Voltaire. Some claim to see good in all religions; hence, they feel no real need to seek out the true

religion. Such individuals should heed the warning given by the prophet Isaiah, who wrote: "Woe to those who are saying that good is bad and bad is good, those who are putting darkness for light and light for darkness, those who are putting bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20) False religion has produced what is bad for humanity. It has resulted in spiritual darkness and has left a bitter taste in the mouths of honesthearted people.

The choice, therefore, is not between being an atheist and believing in *any* religion. It is not as simple as that. Once someone has recognized the need for God, that one must seek out the true religion. As researcher Émile Poulat nicely put it in *Le Grand Atlas des Religions* (The Large Atlas of Religions): "The things [religions] teach and demand are so greatly varied that it is impossible to believe them all." In agreement with this, the French *Encyclopædia Universalis* (Universal Encyclopedia) says: "If the 21st century does return to religion, . . . man will have to decide whether the sacred things he is offered are true or false."

How to Choose the Right Religion

What will guide us in choosing the right religion? The *Encyclopædia Universalis* is correct when it highlights the importance of truth. A religion that teaches lies cannot be true. The greatest prophet that ever walked on earth stated: "God is a Spirit, and those worshiping him must worship with spirit and truth."—John 4:24.

That prophet was Jesus Christ, and he also declared: "Be on your guard against false religious teachers, who come to you dressed up as sheep but are really greedy wolves. You can tell them by their fruits.

. . . Every good tree produces sound fruit, but a rotten tree produces bad fruit." (Matthew 7:15-17, *Phillips*) Seeing the bad fruit of the world's "great" religions, and even of the sects and cults that have sprung up, many sincere people are coming to view them all as 'rotten trees,' simply not good enough. But how can they find the true religion?

Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris



The Crusades were part of false religion's bad fruitage

Obviously it would be impossible to study all the thousands of religions inside and outside Christendom before making a choice. However, if—as Jesus said—we use truth and fruitage as touchstones, it is possible to identify true religion.

Truth and Fruitage

Jesus mentioned truth. As for this, what group of believers reject the religious lies derived from ancient mythology and Greek philosophy that permeate most religions? One such lie is the teaching

that the human soul is inherently immortal.* This teaching has given rise to the God-dishonoring doctrine of hellfire.

Jesus also mentioned fruitage. As for this, do you know a religion that has produced a genuine international fellowship where racial, linguistic, and



True religion produces good fruitage

nationalistic barriers are overcome by love and mutual understanding? Do you know a worldwide religious community whose members would rather be persecuted than allow politicians or religious leaders to incite them to hate their brothers and sisters and kill them in the name of

* For well-documented proof of the mythical origin of this belief, see the book *Mankind's Search for God*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., pages 52-7.

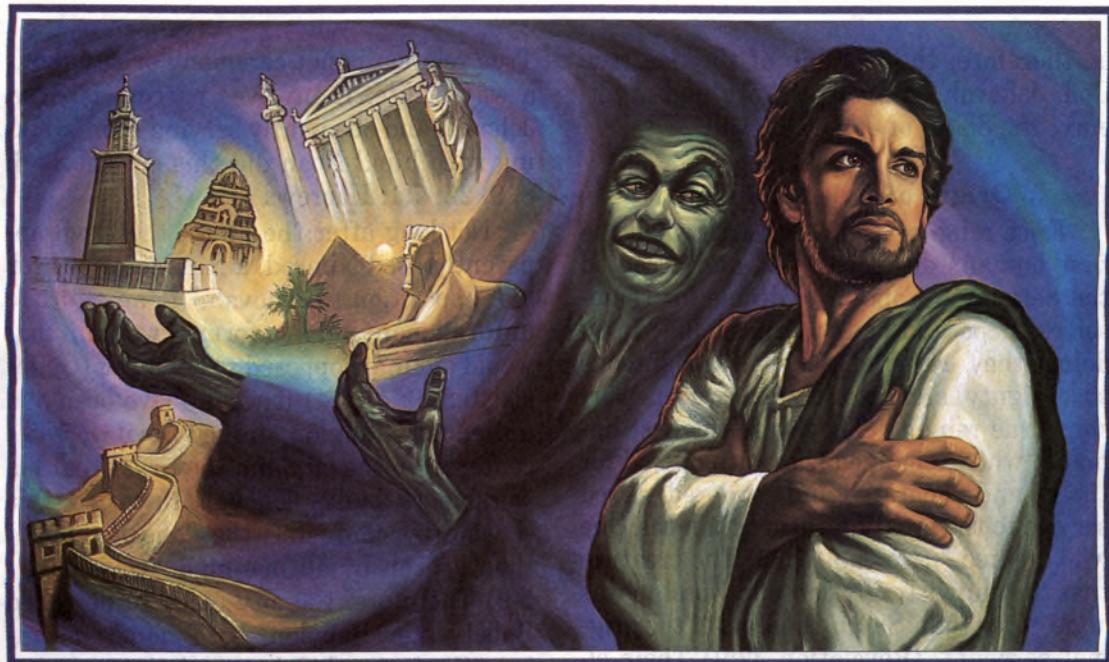
nationalism or religion? A religion that rejected such religious lies and produced such fruitage would give powerful evidence of being the true one, would it not?

True Religion Is Being Practiced Today

Is there such a religion? Yes, there is. But you must admit that it is not one of the major religions of the world. Should this surprise us? No. In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus stated: "Go in through the narrow gate; because broad and spacious is the road leading off into destruction, and many are the ones going in through it; whereas narrow is the gate and cramped the road leading off into life, and few are the ones finding it."—Matthew 7:13, 14.

So where is true religion to be found? In all humility and honesty, we must say that Jehovah's Witnesses form an international community walking along this 'narrow and cramped road.' True, mainstream religions scornfully call Jehovah's Witnesses a sect. But that is exactly what the apostate religious leaders in the first century C.E. called the early Christians.—Acts 24:1-14.

Why are Jehovah's Witnesses confident that they have the true religion? Well, they make up an international brotherhood that reaches into more than 200 lands and that is overcoming the divisions of nationality, race, language, and social class. And they refuse to believe doctrines—however ancient—that clearly contradict what the Bible says. But how did they come into such an enviable situation? And what does the practice of true religion involve? This and other questions about religion will be discussed in the next two articles.



BREAKING FREE FROM FALSE RELIGION

"Get out from among them, . . ." says Jehovah, "and quit touching the unclean thing" . . . , "and I will take you in." —2 CORINTHIANS 6:17.

ALL these things I will give you if you fall down and do an act of worship to me." Although this offer was made thousands of years after the beginning of false religion, it provides the key to understanding who is behind false worship and what its purpose is. Late in the year 29 C.E., the Devil offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for an act of worship. This episode tells us two

things: that the kingdoms of this world were Satan's to give and that the ultimate object of false religion is Devil worship. —Matthew 4:8, 9.

² By his reply, not only did Jesus reject false religion but he also showed what true religion involves. He declared: "Go away, Satan! For it is written, 'It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.'" (Matthew 4:10) The object of true religion

1. What transaction did Satan try to make with Jesus, and what two things does his making this offer teach us?

2. What do we learn from Jesus' words at Matthew 4:10?

is, therefore, the worship of the one true God, Jehovah. It involves faith and obedience, the doing of Jehovah's will.

Origin of False Religion

³ False religion began on earth when the first humans disobeyed God and accepted the Serpent's proposal to decide for themselves "good and bad." (Genesis 3:5) In so doing they rejected Jehovah's righteous sovereignty and abandoned proper worship, true religion. They were the first humans "who exchanged the truth of God for the lie and venerated and rendered sacred service to the creation rather than the One who created." (Romans 1:25) The creature that they unwittingly chose to worship was none other than Satan the Devil, "the original serpent." (Revelation 12:9) Their eldest son, Cain, refused to follow Jehovah's kindly counsel and thus rebelled against His sovereignty. Knowingly or not, Cain became "a child of the evil one," Satan, and a practitioner of Devil worship. He killed his younger brother Abel, who practiced true worship, true religion. (1 John 3:12, *Revised English Bible*; Genesis 4:3-8; Hebrews 11:4) Abel's blood was the first blood shed because of religious intolerance. Sad to say, false religion has continued shedding innocent blood right up until the present day.—See Matthew 23:29-35; 24:3, 9.

⁴ Before the Flood, Satan succeeded in turning the majority of mankind away from the true religion. Noah, however, "found favor in the eyes of Jehovah." Why? Because he "walked with the true God." In other words, he practiced true worship.

3. (a) When and how did false religion begin on earth? (b) What is the first recorded act of religious intolerance, and how has religious persecution continued since then?

4. In the case of Noah, what scriptures illustrate the nature of true religion?

True religion is not ceremony or ritual but a way of life. It involves putting faith in Jehovah and obediently serving him, 'walking with him.' Noah did this.—Genesis 6:8, 9, 22; 7:1; Hebrews 11:6, 7.

⁵ Not long after the Flood, the Devil apparently used Nimrod, a man notorious for his "opposition to Jehovah," in an effort to unite all mankind in a form of worship that would again be opposed to Jehovah. (Genesis 10:8, 9; 11:2-4) It would have been one united false religion, unified Devil worship, centered on the city and the tower that his worshipers built. Jehovah thwarted this scheme by confusing the "one language" then spoken by all mankind. (Genesis 11:5-9) Therefore, the city came to be called Babel, later Babylon, both names meaning "Confusion." This linguistic confusion brought about the dispersal of humankind over the earth.

⁶ It would appear, however, on the basis of the history of mythology and religion, that before this dispersal of mankind by Jehovah, Satan had instilled into the minds of his worshipers certain fundamentals of false religion. These included the religious concepts of survival of a soul after death, fear of the dead, and existence of an infernal underworld, together with the worship of innumerable gods and goddesses, some of whom were grouped into triads. Such beliefs were carried to the ends of the earth by the various linguistic groups. With the passage of time, these basic ideas under-

5. (a) What did the Devil try to establish after the Flood, and how? (b) How did Jehovah thwart the Devil's plan, and what was the result?

6. (a) What religious ideas were instilled in Satan's worshipers in Babylon before their dispersal? (b) Why do religions around the world have similar beliefs? (c) What satanic purpose did Babylon serve, and of what did that ancient city become the symbol?



False doctrines believed all around the world have their origin in Babylon:

- Trinities, or triads, of gods*
- The human soul survives death*
- Spiritism—talking with the “dead”*
- Use of images in worship*
- Use of spells to placate demons*
- Rule by a powerful clergy*

went variations. But by and large, they form the fabric of false religion in all parts of the world. Although thwarted in his attempt to create one united false religion with its world capital in Babylon, Satan settled for diverse forms of false worship, which were of Babylonian inspiration and designed to divert worship from Jehovah to himself. Babylon continued for centuries to be an influential center of idolatry, magic, sorcery, and astrology—all essential components of false religion. Not surprisingly, the book of Revelation symbolizes the world empire of false religion as a filthy harlot named Babylon the Great.—Revelation 17: 1-5.

True Religion

⁷ Obviously, true religion remained unaffected by Jehovah's confusing mankind's means of expression at Babel. True worship had been practiced before the Flood by faithful men and women such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Noah's wife, and Noah's sons and

7. (a) Why was true religion not affected by the confusion of language? (b) Who came to be known as “the father of all those having faith,” and why?

daughters-in-law. After the Flood true worship was preserved in the line of Noah's son Shem. Abraham, a descendant of Shem, practiced the true religion and became known as “the father of all those having faith.” (Romans 4:11) His faith was backed up by

works. (James 2:21-23) His religion was a way of life.

⁸ True worship continued to be practiced in the line of Abraham's descendants—Isaac, Jacob (or, Israel), and the 12 sons of Jacob, from whom sprang the 12 tribes of Israel. The close of the 16th century B.C.E. found Abraham's descendants through Isaac struggling to preserve the pure religion in a hostile, pagan environment—Egypt—where they were reduced to slavery. Jehovah used his faithful servant Moses, of the tribe of Levi, to deliver His worshipers from the yoke of Egypt, a land steeped in false religion. Through Moses, Jehovah concluded a covenant with Israel, making them His chosen people. At that time, Jehovah codified his worship, temporarily setting it within the bounds of a system of sacrifices administered by a priesthood and with a material sanctuary, first the transportable tabernacle and later the temple at Jerusalem.

8. (a) How was the true religion confronted with false religion in the 16th century B.C.E., and what was the result? (b) What new arrangement did Jehovah inaugurate with regard to his pure worship?

⁹ It should be noted, however, that these material features were not meant to become permanent components of the true religion. The Law was "a shadow of the things to come." (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 9:8-10; 10:1) Before the Mosaic Law, in patriarchal times, family heads apparently represented their households in offering sacrifices on altars they had erected. (Genesis 12:8; 26:25; 35:2, 3; Job 1:5) But there was no organized priesthood or system of sacrifices, with ceremonies and ritual. Furthermore, Jesus himself showed the temporary nature of codified worship centered at Jerusalem when he told a Samaritan woman: "The hour is coming when neither in this mountain [Gerizim, former site of a Samaritan temple] nor in Jerusalem will you people worship the Father. . . . The hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshipers will worship the Father with spirit and truth." (John 4:21-23) Jesus showed that true religion must be practiced, not with material things, but with spirit and truth.

Babylonish Captivity

¹⁰ Since the rebellion in Eden, there has been constant enmity between true religion and false religion. At times true worshipers have been, symbolically speaking, taken captive by false religion, typified since Nimrod's time by Babylon. Before Jehovah allowed his people to be carried off captive to Babylon in 617 B.C.E. and 607 B.C.E., they had already fallen victim to Babylon-

9. (a) How was true worship practiced before the Law covenant? (b) How did Jesus show that the material features of the Law were not permanent?

10. (a) Why did Jehovah allow his people to be carried off captive to Babylon? (b) In what two ways did Jehovah deliver a faithful remnant in 537 B.C.E., and what was the principal purpose of their return to Judah?

ish false religion. (Jeremiah 2:13-23; 15:2; 20:6; Ezekiel 12:10, 11) In 537 B.C.E., a faithful remnant returned to Judah. (Isaiah 10:21) They heeded the prophetic call: "Go forth, you people, out of Babylon!" (Isaiah 48:20) This was not to be a mere physical deliverance. It was also a spiritual deliverance from an environment of unclean, idolatrous false religion. This faithful remnant were therefore ordered: "Turn away, turn away, get out of there, touch nothing unclean; get out from the midst of her, keep yourselves clean, you who are carrying the utensils of Jehovah." (Isaiah 52:11) The primary purpose of their return to Judah was to reestablish pure worship, true religion.

¹¹ Interestingly, that same sixth century B.C.E. witnessed fresh ramifications of false religion within Babylon the Great. It saw the birth of Buddhism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, and Jainism, not to speak of rationalistic Greek philosophy that was later so greatly to influence the churches of Christendom. So while pure worship was being restored in Judah, God's archenemy was providing a wider choice of alternatives in false religion.

¹² By the time Jesus appeared in Israel, the majority of the Jews were practicing various forms of Judaism, a form of religion that had adopted many Babylonish religious concepts. It had attached itself to Babylon the Great. Christ condemned it and delivered his disciples from Babylonish captivity. (Matthew, chapter 23; Luke 4:18) Since false religion and Greek philosophy were rampant in the areas where he preached, the apostle Paul quoted Isaiah's

11. In addition to the restoration of pure worship in Judah, what new religious developments occurred in the sixth century B.C.E.?

12. What deliverance from Babylonish captivity took place in the first century C.E., and what warning did Paul give?

prophecy and applied it to Christians, who needed to keep free from the unclean influence of Babylon the Great. He wrote: "What agreement does God's temple have with [Babylonish] idols? For we are a temple of a living God; just as God said: 'I shall reside among them and walk among them, and I shall be their God, and they will be my people.' "Therefore get out from among them, and separate yourselves," says Jehovah, "and quit touching the unclean thing"; "and I will take you in."'"
—2 Corinthians 6:16, 17.

Breaking Free From False Religion in the Time of the End

¹³ The messages that Christ sent to the seven congregations in Asia Minor by means of the Revelation given to the apostle John indicate clearly that by the end of the first century C.E., Babylonish religious practices and attitudes were creeping into the Christian congregation. (Revelation, chapters 2 and 3) The apostasy blossomed particularly from the second century to the fifth century C.E., resulting in the emergence of a corrupt imitation of the pure Christian religion. Such Babylonish doctrines as the immortality of the soul, a burning hell, and the Trinity were incorporated into the teachings of apostate Christianity. The Catholic, the Orthodox, and later the Protestant churches all adopted these false dogmas and, therefore, became a part of Babylon the Great, the Devil's world empire of false religion.

¹⁴ True religion has never been completely

13. What is indicated in the messages that Christ sent to the seven congregations in Asia Minor, and what emerged as a result?
- 14, 15. (a) What did Jesus' illustration of the wheat and the weeds show? (b) What occurred toward the end of the 19th century, and by 1914, what progress had true Christians made as to doctrine?

ly stamped out. There have always been truth-lovers throughout the centuries, some of whom paid with their lives for their faithfulness to Jehovah and his Word, the Bible. But as Jesus' illustration of the wheat and the weeds shows, the symbolic wheat, or anointed sons of the Kingdom, would only be separated from the weeds, or sons of the wicked one, at "the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43) As the time of the end—the time for this separation to take place—drew near, sincere Bible students in the late 19th century began breaking free from bondage to false religion.

¹⁵ By 1914 these Christians, known today as Jehovah's Witnesses, had cultivated strong faith in the ransom. They knew that Christ's presence must be invisible. They understood that 1914 would mark the end of "the times of the Gentiles." (Luke 21:24, *King James Version*) And they clearly understood the meaning of the soul and the resurrection. They were also enlightened as to the gross error of the churches' teachings on hellfire and the Trinity. They learned and began to use the divine name and perceived the wrongness of the evolution theory and the practice of spiritism.

¹⁶ A good start had been made in throwing off the shackles of false religion. And in 1919, Babylon the Great completely lost its hold over God's people. Just as a remnant of Jews had been delivered from Babylon in 537 B.C.E., so the faithful remnant of anointed Christians heeded the call to "get out from the midst of her [Babylon the Great]." —Isaiah 52:11.

¹⁷ From 1922 onward, hard-hitting Bible

16. What call did anointed Christians respond to in 1919?
17. (a) What developed from 1922 onward, and what need made itself felt among God's people? (b) What extreme position was adopted, and why is this understandable?

truths were published and publicly circulated, exposing Babylonish false religion, particularly Christendom's churches. The need was seen to impress upon the minds of God's cleansed people that the break with all forms of false religion must be total. Thus, for years, even the use of the word "religion" was avoided when speaking of pure worship. Slogans, such as "Religion Is a Snare and a Racket," were paraded in the streets of big cities. Books such as *Government* (1928) and "*The Truth Shall Make You Free*" (1943) made a clear distinction between "Christianity" and "religion." This extreme position is understandable, since a clean break had to be made with the all-pervading religious systems of Babylon the Great.

True and False Religion

¹⁸ Then, in 1951, the time was ripe for Jehovah to give his people a crystal-clear understanding of the difference between true religion and false religion. The 1975 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* reports: "In 1951, advocates of true worship learned something significant about the term 'religion.' Some of them could well recall 1938 when, at times, they carried the thought-provoking sign 'Religion Is a Snare and a Racket.' From their standpoint then, all 'religion' was unchristian, from the Devil. But *The Watchtower* of March 15, 1951, approved of using the adjectives 'true' and 'false' respecting religion. Furthermore, the absorbing book *What Has Religion Done for Mankind?* (published in 1951 and released during the 'Clean Worship' Assembly at Wembley Stadium, London, England) had this to say: 'Taken according to the way it is used, "religion" in its simplest

18. What new understanding of "religion" was given in 1951, and how is this explained in the 1975 *Yearbook*?

definition means a system of worship, a form of worship, without regard to whether it is true or false worship. This agrees with the meaning of the Hebrew word for it, '*a-boh-dah*', which literally means "service", regardless of to whom it is rendered.' Thereafter, the expressions 'false religion' and 'true religion' became common among Jehovah's witnesses." —Page 225.

¹⁹ In answer to a reader's question, the August 15, 1951, issue of *The Watchtower* stated: "None should feel upset by the use of the term 'religion'. Because we use it does not put us in the class of the tradition-bound false religions, no more than does the calling of ourselves Christians put us in with the false Christians of Christendom."

²⁰ Far from being a compromise, this new understanding of the word "religion" enabled Jehovah's people to widen the gulf between true and false worship, as the following article will show.

19, 20. (a) Why were true worshipers not to be upset by the use of the word "religion" as applied to pure worship? (b) What did this new understanding enable Jehovah's people to do?

To Test Our Understanding

- When and how did false religion begin on earth?
- What did Satan try to establish after the Flood, and how was his plan thwarted?
- Of what did Babylon become the symbol?
- What deliverances occurred in 537 B.C.E., in the first century C.E., and in 1919?
- What new understanding of the word "religion" was given in 1951, and why then?



PRACTICING PURE RELIGION FOR SURVIVAL

"Religion that is pure and genuine in the sight of God the Father will show itself by such things as . . . keeping oneself uncontaminated by the world."

—JAMES 1:27, Phillips.

RELIGION has been defined as "the expression of man's belief in and reverence for a superhuman power recognized as the creator and governor of the universe." Who, then, logically has the right to determine the difference between true religion and false religion? Surely it must be the One believed in and rever-

1. How has religion been defined, and who logically has the right to determine the difference between false religion and true?

enced, the Creator. Jehovah has clearly outlined in his Word his position on true religion and false.

The Word "Religion" in the Bible

2. The Greek word translated "form of worship," or "religion," is *threskeia*. A
2. How do dictionaries explain the original Greek word translated "form of worship" or "religion," and to what kinds of worship can it be applied?

Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament defines this word as “*the worship of God, religion, esp[ecially]* as it expresses itself in *religious service or cult.*” The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* provides further details, stating: “The etymology is disputed; . . . modern scholars favor a link with *therap-* (‘to serve’). . . . Distinction of meaning may also be noted. The good sense is ‘religious zeal’ . . . , ‘worship of God,’ ‘religion.’ . . . But there is also a bad sense, i.e., ‘religious excess,’ ‘wrong worship.’” Thus, *threskeia* may be translated either “*religion*” or “*form of worship*,” good or bad.

³ This word appears only four times in the Christian Greek Scriptures. The apostle Paul used it twice to designate false religion. At Acts 26:5, he is recorded as stating that prior to becoming a Christian, “according to the strictest sect of our form of worship [“*religion*,” *Phillips*] I lived a Pharisee.” In his letter to the Colossians, he warned: “Let no man deprive you of the prize who takes delight in a mock humility and a form of worship of the angels.” (Colossians 2:18) Such angel worship was apparently prevalent in Phrygia in those days, but it was a form of false religion.* Interestingly, whereas some Bible translations render *threskeia* “*religion*,” at Colossians 2:18 most use the word “*worship*.” The *New World Translation* consistently translates *threskeia* “*form of worship*,” a footnote in the *Reference Bible* mentioning each time the alternative translation “*religion*” is used in the Latin versions.

* For an explanation of the angel worship mentioned at Colossians 2:18, see *The Watchtower*, July 15, 1985, pages 12-13.

3. How did the apostle Paul use the word translated “*form of worship*,” and what interesting comment is made on the translation of Colossians 2:18?

“Clean and Undefined” From God’s Standpoint

⁴ The other two occurrences of the word *threskeia* are in the letter written by the disciple James, a member of the governing body of the first-century Christian congregation. He wrote: “If any man seems to himself to be a formal worshiper [“to be ‘*religious*,” *Phillips*] and yet does not bridle his tongue, but goes on deceiving his own heart, this man’s form of worship [“*religion*,” *Phillips*] is futile. The form of worship [“*religion*,” *Phillips*] that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself without spot from the world.”—James 1:26, 27.

⁵ Yes, observing Jehovah’s position on religion is vital if we want to have his approval and survive into the new world he has promised. (2 Peter 3:13) James shows that a person might seem to himself to be truly religious and yet his form of worship could be futile. The Greek word here translated “futile” also means “idle, empty, fruitless, useless, powerless, lacking truth.” This could be the case if someone claiming to be a Christian did not bridle his tongue and use it to praise God and to build up his fellow Christians. He would be “deceiving his own heart” and not be practicing “*religion* that is pure and genuine in the sight of God.” (*Phillips*) It is Jehovah’s viewpoint that counts.

⁶ James does not enumerate all the things that Jehovah requires in connection with pure worship. In line with the general

4, 5. (a) According to James, whose position on religion is the most important? (b) What could make a person’s form of worship futile, and what is meant by the word translated “futile”?

6. (a) What is the theme of the letter by James? (b) What requisite for pure worship did James emphasize, and what has the modern-day Governing Body stated in this regard?

Religious leaders assembled in Assisi, Italy, in October 1986

theme of his letter, which is faith proved by works and the need to keep free from friendship with Satan's world, he highlights just two requirements. One is "to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation." This involves true Christian love. Jehovah has always shown loving concern for orphans and widows. (Deuteronomy 10:17, 18; Malachi 3:5) One of the initial acts of the first-century governing body of the Christian congregation was in behalf of Christian widows. (Acts 6:1-6) The apostle Paul gave detailed instructions for providing loving care for destitute elderly widows who had proved themselves faithful over the years and who had no family to help them. (1 Timothy 5:3-16) The modern-day Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses has likewise issued precise instructions on "Caring for the Poor," stating: "True worship involves looking after faithful and loyal ones who may be in need of material assistance." (See the book *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry*, pages 122-3.) Bodies of elders or individual Christians who show themselves negligent in this respect are omitting an important aspect of the form of worship that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and Father.

"Without Spot From the World"

⁷ The second requisite for true religion mentioned by James was "to keep oneself

^{7, 8. (a)} What second requisite for true religion did James mention? (b) Do the clergy and priests meet this requirement? (c) What can be said of Jehovah's Witnesses?



without spot from the world." Jesus stated: "My kingdom is no part of this world"; consistently, his true followers would be "no part of the world." (John 15:19; 18:36) Can this be said of the clergy and priests of any of this world's religions? They endorse the United Nations. Many of their leaders accepted the pope's invitation to meet in Assisi, Italy, in October 1986 to unite their prayers for the success of the UN-sponsored "International Year of Peace." However, their efforts were in vain, judging by the millions killed in the wars of that year and in the years since. The clergy often hobnob with the ruling political party, while treacherously making secret deals with the opposition so that whoever rules will view them as "friends." —James 4:4.

⁸ Jehovah's Witnesses have made a reputation for themselves as Christians who remain neutral in political affairs and in the conflicts of this world. They maintain this stance on all continents and in all nations, as attested to by press reports and modern historical records in all parts of the world. They are truly "without spot from

the world." Theirs is the "religion that is pure and genuine in the sight of God." —James 1:27, Phillips.

Other Marks of True Religion

⁹ If religion is "reverence for a superhuman power recognized as the creator and governor of the universe," surely the true religion must direct worship to the only true God, Jehovah. It must not becloud people's understanding of God by teaching such pagan concepts as a triune god in which the Father shares his almighty, glory, and eternity with two other persons in a mysterious Trinity. (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:6) It must also make known God's matchless name, Jehovah, and honor that name, indeed bear God's name as an organized people. (Psalm 83:18; Acts 15:14) In this its practitioners must follow the example of Christ Jesus. (John 17:6) What people today meet this requirement other than the Christian Witnesses of Jehovah?

¹⁰ The apostle Peter stated: "Furthermore, there is no salvation in anyone else, for there is not another name [Jesus Christ] under heaven that has been given among men by which we must get saved." (Acts 4:8-12) Pure religion that will offer survival into God's new world must, therefore, inspire faith in Christ and in the value of the ransom sacrifice. (John 3:16, 36; 17:3; Ephesians 1:7) Moreover, it must help true worshipers to submit to Christ as Jehovah's reigning King and anointed High Priest.—Psalm 2:6-8; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 4:14, 15.

¹¹ Pure religion must be based on the revealed will of the one true God and not

9. What is a third requirement for true religion, and why?

10. For a religion to offer survival into God's new world, what must it do, and why?

11. Upon what must true religion be based, and what is the position of Jehovah's Witnesses in this regard?

on man-made traditions or philosophies. We would know nothing of Jehovah and his wonderful purposes, nor of Jesus and the ransom sacrifice, were it not for the Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses instill in people unshakable confidence in the Bible. They also prove by their daily living that they agree with the apostle Paul's statement: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, . . . that the man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work."—2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

The True Religion —A Way of Life

¹² Jesus declared: "God is a Spirit, and those worshiping him must worship with spirit and truth." (John 4:24) The true religion, or form of worship, is not, therefore, a ceremonial, ritualistic, outward display of godliness. Pure worship is spiritual, based on faith. (Hebrews 11:6) That faith must, however, be backed up by works. (James 2:17) True religion rejects popular trends. It adheres to the Bible's standards of morality and clean speech. (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Ephesians 5:3-5) Its practitioners sincerely endeavor to produce the fruitage of God's spirit in their family life, at their secular work, in school, and even in their recreation. (Galatians 5:22, 23) Jehovah's Witnesses try never to forget the apostle Paul's counsel: "Therefore, whether you are eating or drinking or doing anything else, do all things for God's glory." (1 Corinthians 10:31) Their religion is not mere formalism; it is a way of life.

¹³ Of course, true religion involves spiritual activities. These include personal and

12. In addition to faith, what is necessary for worship to be true, and in what respects is true religion a way of life?

13. What does true worship involve, and why can it be said that Jehovah's Witnesses are truly religious people?

True religion involves meeting together for worship

family prayer, the regular study of God's Word and Bible study helps, and attending true Christian congregation meetings. These latter are opened and closed with songs of praise to Jehovah and with prayers. (Matthew 26:30; Ephesians 5:19) Upbuilding spiritual subjects are examined by means of discourses and question-and-answer discussions of printed material available to all. Such meetings are usually held in tidy but not ornate Kingdom Halls, which are used exclusively for religious purposes: regular meetings, weddings, memorial services. Jehovah's Witnesses respect their Kingdom Halls and larger Assembly Halls as places dedicated to Jehovah's worship. Unlike many churches of Christendom, Kingdom Halls are not social clubs.

¹⁴ We saw earlier that scholars link the Greek word translated "form of worship" or "religion" with the verb "to serve." Interestingly, the Hebrew equivalent, 'avodah', can be translated "service" or "worship." (Compare the footnotes on Exodus 3:12 and 10:26.) To Hebrews, worship meant service. And this is what it means to true worshipers today. A very important, distinctive mark of true religion is that all who practice it share in the godly service of preaching "this good news of the kingdom . . . in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." (Matthew 24:14; Acts 1:8; 5:42) What religion is known worldwide for its public witnessing to God's Kingdom as mankind's only hope?

14. What did worship mean to Hebrew-speaking people, and what activity distinguishes Jehovah's Witnesses today?



A Positive, Unifying Force

¹⁵ False religion divides. It has caused, and is still causing, hatred and bloodshed. On the contrary, true religion unites. Jesus stated: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:35) The love that unites Jehovah's Witnesses transcends the national, social, economic, and racial boundaries that divide the rest of humankind. The Witnesses are "standing firm in one spirit, with one soul striving side by side for the faith of the good news."—Philippians 1:27.

¹⁶ The "good news" that they preach is that shortly God's immutable purpose will be accomplished. His will is going to be carried out, "as in heaven, also upon earth." (Matthew 6:10) Jehovah's glorious name will be sanctified, and the earth will become a paradise, where true worshipers will be able to live forever. (Psalm 37:29) Literally millions of people in all lands are associating with Jehovah's Witnesses,

15. What is an outstanding characteristic of true religion?

16. (a) What "good news" do Jehovah's Witnesses preach? (b) What prophecies are being fulfilled upon Jehovah's people, and what blessings have followed?

saying, in fulfillment of Bible prophecy: "We will go with you people, for we have heard that God is with you people." (Zechariah 8:23) Jehovah is blessing his people. "The small one" has truly become "a mighty nation," a worldwide congregation completely united in every respect—in thought, in work, in worship. (Isaiah 60:22) This is something false religion has never been able to accomplish.

The Triumph of Pure Religion

¹⁷ God's Word has foretold the destruction of the world empire of false religion, symbolically named "Babylon the Great." The Bible also represents the "kings," or political rulers, of the earth by the symbol of the horns of a wild beast. It tells us that God will put into the hearts of these rulers the purpose to overturn and completely destroy this harlotlike institution of Satan the Devil.—See Revelation 17:1, 2, 5, 6, 12, 13, 15-18.*

¹⁸ Why does Babylon the Great deserve destruction? The Bible answers: "In her was found the blood of prophets and of holy ones and of all those who have been slaughtered on the earth." (Revelation 18:24) Showing that this bloodguilt incurred by false religion goes back even beyond the founding of Babylon, Jesus condemned the religious leaders of Judaism, which had attached itself to Babylon the Great, when he said: "Serpents, offspring of vipers, how are you to flee from the judgment of Gehenna? . . . There [will] come upon you all the righteous blood spilled on earth, from

* For a full explanation of this prophecy, see the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!* published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., chapters 33-6.

17. What is in store for Babylon the Great, and how will this be brought about?

18. What important reason does the Bible give for destroying Babylon the Great, and when did false religion start in this appalling course?

the blood of righteous Abel." (Matthew 23:33-35) Yes, false religion, which began on earth at the time of the rebellion in Eden, must answer for its appalling bloodguilt.

¹⁹ After the destruction of Babylon the Great, true worshipers on earth will join their voices with the heavenly choir that sings out: "Praise Jah, you people! . . . For he has executed judgment upon the great harlot . . . , and he has avenged the blood of his slaves at her hand. . . . And the smoke from her goes on ascending forever and ever."—Revelation 19:1-3.

²⁰ Then the other component parts of Satan's visible organization will be destroyed. (Revelation 19:17-21) After this, Satan, the founder of all false religion, and his demons will be abyssed. No longer will they be free to persecute true worshipers of Jehovah. (Revelation 20:1-3) Pure religion will have triumphed over the false. Faithful men and women who heed the divine warning to flee now from Babylon the Great will have the opportunity to survive and enter into God's new world. There, they will be able to practice true religion and worshipfully serve Jehovah forever.

19, 20. (a) What will true worshipers do after judgment has been executed upon Babylon the Great? (b) What will then occur, and what prospect will open up before all true worshipers?

Test Your Memory

- Whose position on religion is the most important, and why?
- What two requisites for true religion did James emphasize?
- What are other requirements for pure worship?
- What "good news" are Jehovah's Witnesses preaching?
- How will true religion triumph over false religion?

More Missionaries for the Global Harvest

SEPTEMBER is a month of harvest for farmers, but a much more important harvest work drew a large crowd to the Jersey City Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, just across the Hudson River from New York City, on September 8, 1991. The 91st class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead was graduating. Some 4,263 members of the Bethel family and invited guests were there, with another 1,151 tied in by telephone lines to the Brooklyn headquarters and the farms at Wallkill and Patterson.

The president of Gilead School, Frederick W. Franz, nearly 98 years old, opened the program with a touching and deeply reverent prayer. Albert D. Schroeder, a member of the Governing Body and former registrar and instructor of the school, served as chairman of the graduation program. He reminded the audience of Psalm 2:1, 2 and other prophecies that foretell this time of shaking and tumult among the nations. This state of disruption has meant the opening of many new fields for the harvest work.

The first talk of the day was delivered by George M. Couch, a member of the Bethel Committee. His theme was "Count Your Blessings." He reminded the Gilead students that it is never too early to begin this practice. He remarked that the students themselves were certainly blessed but that these blessings had come only after much hard work. Similarly, 97-year-old Jacob wrestled all night long with an angel—all for the sake of receiving a blessing. (Genesis 32:24-32) Brother Couch urged the students not to dwell on negative thoughts but to become a

blessing to others by cultivating peace of mind through prayer and determination.

John E. Barr of the Governing Body spoke next on the theme "Have Love Among Yourselves." Jesus' followers were willing to die for one another. "Do you feel this kind of love welling up in your hearts?" he asked the students. 'Without this love,' he said, 'we're nothing. It's just as simple as that.' (1 Corinthians 13:3) Brother Barr listed some practical ways to show love. He encouraged the students to treat fellow missionaries with respect, always seeking a tactful way to say things. 'Forget the small issues,' he advised them, citing 1 Peter 4:8. He noted that even the missionaries' cook days were occasions when they could show love by viewing the work as more than a mere perfunctory duty. He reminded the students: "We never stop owing our brothers and sisters love."—Romans 13:8.

"How Confident Are You?" was the interesting theme developed by David A. Olson of the Service Department Committee. He highlighted two areas of confidence: in Jehovah and his organization, for which we have innumerable reasons (Proverbs 14:6; Jeremiah 17:8); and in self. Missionaries have reason for a measure of self-confidence, such as their background as ministers and the trust that Jehovah and his organization have placed in them. The apostle Paul showed such confidence for similar reasons. (1 Corinthians 16:13; Philippians 4:13) Brother Olson cautioned, though, against the overconfidence that the world promotes, as exemplified by a famous writer who reportedly said: "I often quote myself. It adds spice to my

conversation." However, confidence balanced with humility can inspire confidence in others. This was certainly true in Paul's case.—*Philippians 1:12-14.*

Lyman A. Swingle of the Governing Body next exhorted the students: "To the Fields to Be Harvested, You Gilead Graduates!" He said that this was a harvest day for Gilead School and for the worldwide brotherhood, as the graduates would go forth and join the thousands of previous graduates still in the missionary work—some from the first, second, and third classes of the 1940's! Brother Swingle remarked that back then no one knew that the missionary work would go on for another 50 years, or that Nazism, Fascism, and other governmental barriers to the preaching work would crumble. "If we are awed over what Jehovah has done in the past," he asked, "what about the future?" He concluded with the rousing call to the students: "To the field!"

The two principal instructors for Gilead School then addressed the 91st class for the last time. Jack D. Redford spoke on the theme "Acquire Wisdom." Gilead School, he told the students, teaches knowledge and understanding, but they must acquire wisdom, the ability to use their knowledge in the right way. He urged the students to reject the myth that they had learned it all at Gilead. "It's what you learn *after* the school that counts." Among the things they must yet learn: to deal peaceably with people, being able to say "I'm sorry" to a mate, to fellow missionaries, and to local brothers and sisters; to be wary of trusting first impressions and to realize that every problem is complex, requiring a deepened understanding of circumstances before giving wise counsel; and to respect the local brothers for their ability to get by in difficult circumstances.—*Proverbs 15:28; 16:23; James 1:19.*

Ulysses V. Glass, the registrar of Gilead School, made *Philippians 3:16* the theme of his talk. He commended the class for the

progress they had made and exhorted them to continue in line with that scripture. While the students should go on acquiring accurate knowledge, he noted, they would never know *everything*. He illustrated the point with a digital watch. Its owner may know how to make it function without knowing just how it actually works. Similarly, missionaries should not look down on those who, while not matching their depth of knowledge, know what is important—how to fear Jehovah. (*Proverbs 1:7*) He reminded the class of the importance of keeping a 'simple eye.' (*Matthew 6:22*) The spiritual eye can be hampered just as the physical eye can. Some, for instance, have tunnel vision—being too focused on a few details to see the whole picture—while others, conversely, see only the peripheral issues and are ever distracted from key issues they need to address.

The final talk of the morning was entitled "Identifying and Working With Jehovah's Organization," delivered by Theodore Jaracz of the Governing Body. Brother Jaracz remarked that while there are thousands of organizations and societies in the world, only one of all these does *not* originate with the world. How to identify the one that represents Jehovah? God's Word provides the identifying marks. The Bible shows that his heavenly creation is highly organized. (*Psalm 103:20, 21; Isaiah 40:26*) Jehovah's earthly organization is also identifiable by its orderliness as well as by its separateness from the world, its strict adherence to Bible

Class Statistics

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Number of countries represented: | 6 |
| Number of countries assigned to: | 12 |
| Number of students: | 24 |
| Number of married couples: | 12 |
| Average age: | 33.4 |
| Average years in truth: | 16.13 |
| Average years in full-time ministry: | 11.3 |

principles, its high level of moral cleanliness, and the love among its members. Brother Jaracz urged the Gilead students to assist as many as possible in their assignments to identify Jehovah's organization Scripturally. In that connection, he made a thrilling announcement: Gilead School is soon to double in size, to about 50 students in the 93rd class! Also, Gilead Extension School classes in Germany will commence at about the same time. Applause was long and loud!

As the climax of the morning, all 24 Gilead students received diplomas. Soon they would be on their way to 12 different countries around the world. The class presented a heartfelt resolution, thanking the Governing Body

and the Bethel family. After lunch, Brother Charles J. Rice of the Watchtower Farms Committee conducted an abbreviated *Watchtower Study*. Then the graduates put on a lively program, enacting some of the experiences they had in the field service during their five-month course at Wallkill, New York. After that, publishers representing several local congregations presented a drama entitled *Youths Who Remember Their Creator Now.*

To close the program, Brother George Ganganas, a 95-year-old member of the Governing Body, offered a characteristically animated prayer to Jehovah. The audience left in high spirits, each no doubt moved to have an ever greater share in the global harvest work.



91st Graduating Class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead

In the list below, rows are numbered from front to back and names are listed from left to right in each row.
(1) McDowell, A.; Youngquist, L.; Skokan, B.; Wargnier, N.; Miller, Y.; Muñoz, M. (2) Bales, M.; Perez, D.; Attick, E.; Vainikainen, A.; Mostberg, K. (3) DePriest, D.; DePriest, T.; Perez, R.; Wargnier, J.; Muñoz, J.; Miller, J. (4) McDowell, S.; Bales, D.; Skokan, M.; Attick, C.; Youngquist, W.; Vainikainen, J.; Mostberg, S.

STICKING CLOSE TO GOD'S ORGANIZATION

AS TOLD BY ROY A. RYAN

Sandhill, Missouri, was appropriately named, since it was little more than a large sand hill in the open rolling countryside. This crossroads village was situated three miles west of Rutledge and had only eight or nine houses, a Methodist church, and a small blacksmith shop. There I was born on October 25, 1900.

MY FATHER was the village blacksmith. Although my parents rarely attended church, Mother began sending me to Sunday school at the Methodist Church. I didn't like the name Methodist, believing a person should be called a Christian; yet I did develop a thirst for Bible truth and an interest in eternal life.

When I was 16 years old, I went to work for the Santa Fe railroad. One of the International Bible Students (as Jehovah's Witnesses were then called) by the name of Jim came to work on our railroad gang, and he and I frequently worked together. Jim talked, and I listened to what he had to say about the Bible. It sounded good to me, so I asked if I could borrow one of his books.

Jim lent me the first volume of *Studies in the Scriptures*, published by C. T. Russell of the International Bible Students Association. When I returned it, I had him get me more volumes. Shortly after that, Jim left the railroad, and the next time I saw him was on the street in Rutledge, taking orders for the illustrated book *Scenario of the Photo-Drama of Creation*. Later he invited me to the group meetings being held in his home. Every Sunday, I walked the three



miles into Rutledge for the meeting.

When the *Golden Age* magazine (now *Awake!*) was introduced in 1919, I wanted to start in the field ministry. Another new Bible Student and I were determined to distribute this new magazine from door to door. We felt somewhat intimidated about calling on people in

our hometown, so we boarded a train and went to a nearby town. When we arrived in the morning, we each went our own way and knocked on doors until the afternoon, even though we had no training in this work. I took orders for two subscriptions, one from a man I worked with on the railroad.

On October 10, 1920, I was baptized in a pond near Rutledge. My parents were opposed to my becoming involved with the International Bible Students. This was because of the clergy-inspired opposition that the Bible Students experienced during the war years of 1914-18. Later, however, my father began attending some meetings of the Bible Students, and he also read *The Golden Age*. Before she died, my mother became more favorable to our understanding of the Bible's truth. Yet none of my family ever made this truth their own.

A Time of Testing

In those early days, there were just three besides me who regularly attended the Bible study meetings in Rutledge. These three eventually left the organization. One was an excellent speaker, who would give public Bible talks in the area. However, he became proud of his abilities and felt it beneath his dignity to share in the house-to-house preaching as the early Christians had done.—Acts 5:42; 20:20.

When these three stopped associating with the International Bible Students, I remember feeling like the apostle Peter at the time Jesus spoke to the people about 'eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood.' Stumbled by his teaching, many on that occasion left him. At that, Jesus asked the apostles: "You do not want to go also, do you?" Peter answered: "Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life."—John 6:67, 68.

Although Peter did not fully understand what Jesus meant by 'eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood,' he recognized that Jesus had the sayings of life. That is the way I felt about the organization. It had the truth even though I did not always fully understand everything I read in the publications. Yet, whenever something was said that I did not understand, I never argued against it. Later, the matter was clarified, or viewpoints were at times adjusted. I was always happy that I had patiently waited for the clarification.
—Proverbs 4:18.

Adjustments to Pioneer

In July 1924, I attended an international convention in Columbus, Ohio. *The Golden Age* described it as "the greatest convention of Bible Students held during the ages." There the stirring resolution "Indictment" was adopted. The information re-

ceived and the spirit manifested at that convention encouraged me to become a full-time minister, or pioneer.

Upon returning from the convention, I quit my job with the railroad, and a fellow Bible Student and I began serving as pioneers together. However, after about a year, the health of my parents deteriorated to the extent that they needed my help. I stopped pioneering and got a job working for a pipeline company, but since the people working there were not a good influence, I left that job and went into the business of raising bees and selling the honey.

By the fall of 1933, my parents had both died, leaving me free of obligations. So in the spring of 1934, I turned my bees over to the care of another person, built a small trailer to live in, and started in the full-time ministry again as a pioneer. At first I worked with an elderly Witness in the vicinity of Quincy, Illinois. Later I moved back to Missouri, where I joined a group of pioneers.

In 1935 there was a severe drought in the Midwest, and since we were working in a strictly agricultural area, it was tough going. No one had any money, so grateful people often gave us foodstuffs or other articles when we left them literature.

Pioneering in the South

That winter we moved down to Arkansas to escape the cold weather. We were able to distribute more literature in that area and received all the canned goods we could use. We often accepted other things that we could turn into cash, including old aluminumware, old brass or copper, old car radiators and batteries. This gave us gas money for my Model A Ford, which we used in the ministry.

We served in Newton, Searcy, and Carroll counties in the mountainous Ozark

Plateau. The experiences we had preaching among the mountain people of Arkansas would fill a book. Since roads were primitive or nonexistent in those days, we did much of our work on foot. Some pioneers in our group used to go on horseback to contact people in the upper reaches of the mountains.



Brother Ryan in his earlier years beside a Model T Ford

Once we heard about an interested man named Sam, whom we finally found living on the top of a mountain. He welcomed us with open arms and was happy to have us stay overnight. Although Sam's wife was not interested in our message, his 16-year-old son, Rex, was. When we left, Sam invited us back. So two weeks later, we stayed with them again.

Upon leaving the second time, it was Sam's wife who invited us back. She said we were a good influence on Rex. "He's an awful bad boy to cuss," she explained, "and I don't think he's cussed near so much since you boys was here." Years later I met Rex again when he attended the Gilead missionary school in South Lansing, New York. Experiences such as this have brought me great satisfaction through the years.

Bethel Service

When I applied to be a pioneer, I also applied to serve at the headquarters of

Jehovah's Witnesses in New York, called Bethel. In the spring of 1935, I was notified that my application had been accepted and that I was to report to the Watchtower Society's Kingdom Farm in South Lansing, New York, to begin my Bethel service. I immediately made arrangements for a fellow Witness to take over my pioneer trailer.

I drove to New York in my Model A Ford, and at about half past ten on the morning of May 3, 1935, I arrived. Around one o'clock that afternoon, I was put to work splitting wood. The next day I was told to report to the dairy barn to help milk cows. I worked with the dairy for several years, sometimes milking in the morning and evening and working with the garden and field-crop crews during the day. I also took care of the bees and harvested honey for the Bethel family. In 1953, I was transferred to the cheese-making department.

One of those who touched my life because of his sterling example of humility, loyalty, and obedience to Jehovah was Walter John "Pappy" Thorn. He was one of 21 Bible Students appointed in 1894 to be the first pilgrims—men who did work similar to that of today's circuit overseers—visiting a number of congregations to encourage them. After many years in the traveling work, Brother Thorn came to Kingdom Farm and worked in the henhouse. On many occasions I heard him say: "Whenever I get to thinking a great deal of myself, I take myself into the corner, so to speak, and say: 'You little speck of dust. What have you got to be proud of?'"

Another modest man who became a role model for me was John Booth, now a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses. He has been quoted over the years as saying: "It's not so much where you serve but whom you serve that is truly important." A simple statement but how true! Serving Jehovah is the greatest of all privileges!

One of the highlights in my Bethel service was the opening of the missionary school of Gilead at Kingdom Farm in 1943. Associating with pioneers from many parts of the world was indeed exciting. In those days there were about a hundred students in each class, so every six months a hundred new ones came to Kingdom Farm. Graduations would attract thousands of people to this educational facility in the rural farmlands of upstate New York.

A Job Change

When Gilead school was moved to Brooklyn and the main dormitory and classroom building at South Lansing was sold, the dairy was moved to Watchtower Farms at Wallkill, New York. So in the fall of 1969, I was transferred to the farm at Wallkill and continued making cheese until 1983. Then I was given a job change, and I began working in landscaping.



While being interviewed some time ago, I was asked what I thought about being given a job change after 30 years of making cheese. "It didn't bother me," I noted frankly, "because I didn't like making cheese anyway." The point was that we can be happy serving Jehovah in any assignment if we keep the right perspective and humbly submit to theocratic direction. So although

I didn't really like making cheese, I enjoyed my assignment because it assisted the Bethel family. If we serve our grand God, Jehovah, faithfully and uncomplainingly, we can be happy no matter what our assignment is.

In my declining years, I do not think I could be in a better situation than serving at Bethel. I am well cared for and have been able to continue performing my work assignments even though I am 90 years of age. For many years now, I have had the privilege of taking my turn in chairing the morning worship program of the Bethel family here at Watchtower Farms. As I have opportunity, I encourage new ones at Bethel to take advantage of all privileges of service they are given and to learn to be content and happy with them.

Over the years, I have several times been able to visit foreign places—India, Nepal, the Far East, and Europe. The following advice may be of assistance to those in their respective congregations of Jehovah's people around the world: Be happy and content in your present circumstances and blossom in a spiritual way in the soil where you are planted.

I have chosen to remain single, since it has enabled me to continue undistracted in my service to God. As a reward for faithfulness, our great God has given the prospect of eternal life. For many, that will mean endless life in a paradise home here on earth. Others of us look forward to endless life in the heavens, caring for whatever assignment we are given.

Some would think my 90 years have been a long, rich life. My life has been rich but not long enough. By staying close to God's organization and his words of truth, we can extend our lives eternally.*

* During the time Roy Ryan was recording his life experiences, his health took a sudden turn for the worse. He finished his earthly course on July 5, 1991, not long after taking his regular turn as chairman of morning worship at Watchtower Farms.

How Can We Repay Jehovah?

JEHOVAH GOD furnishes the best example of giving. He bestowed upon all mankind "life and breath and all things." (Acts 17:25) God makes his sun rise upon wicked and righteous people alike. (Matthew 5:45) Indeed, 'Jehovah gives us rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts to the full with food and good cheer.' (Acts 14:15-17) Why, "every good gift and every perfect present is from above, for it comes down from the Father of the celestial lights"!—James 1:17.

Besides all of God's material gifts, he sends out spiritual light and truth. (Psalm 43:3) Jehovah's loyal servants are richly blessed with the spiritual food he supplies at the right time through "the faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45-47) We can benefit from God's spiritual provisions because he has made it possible for sinful and dying humans to become reconciled to him. How? Through the death of his Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28; Romans 5:8-12) What a gift from the loving God, Jehovah!—John 3:16.

Any Repayment Possible?

Centuries before the ransom was provided, an inspired psalmist so deeply appreciated God-given mercy, deliverance, and help that he said: "What shall I repay to Jehovah for all his benefits to me? The cup of grand salvation I shall take up, and on the name of Jehovah I shall call. My vows I shall pay to Jehovah, yes, in front of all his people." —Psalm 116:12-14.

If we are wholeheartedly dedicated to Jehovah, we call on his name in faith and pay vows made to him. As Jehovah's Witnesses, we can bless God by speaking well of him at all times and declaring the message of his

Kingdom. (Psalm 145:1, 2, 10-13; Matthew 24:14) But we cannot enrich Jehovah, who owns all things, or repay him for all his benefits to us.—1 Chronicles 29:14-17.

Making donations for the advancement of Kingdom interests is not a way to repay or enrich Jehovah. However, such giving affords us opportunities to display our love for God. Contributions given, not out of selfish motivation or for publicity and praise, but with a generous spirit and to promote true worship, bring the giver happiness and Jehovah's blessing. (Matthew 6:1-4; Acts 20:35) A person can be assured of a share in such giving and the resulting happiness by regularly setting aside something from his material possessions to support true worship and help deserving ones. (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2) Should this be done by tithing?

Should You Tithe?

Jehovah said through his prophet Malachi: "Bring all the tenth parts into the storehouse, that there may come to be food in my house; and test me out, please, in this respect, . . . whether I shall not open to you people the floodgates of the heavens and actually empty out upon you a blessing until there is no more want." (Malachi 3:10) Another translation reads: "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse."—*An American Translation*.

A tithe is a tenth part of something. It is the 10 percent given or paid as a tribute. Tithing is especially done for religious purposes. It means giving a tenth of one's income to promote worship.

The patriarch Abraham (Abram) gave the king-priest Melchizedek of Salem one tenth of the spoils of victory over Chedorlaomer and his allies. (Genesis 14:18-20; Hebrews 7:

4-10) Later, Jacob vowed to give one tenth of his substance to God. (Genesis 28:20-22) In each case, the giving of a tenth was voluntary, for those early Hebrews had no laws obligating them to give tithes.

Tithing Under the Law

As Jehovah's people, the Israelites received tithing laws. These apparently involved the use of *two* tenths of the yearly income, though some scholars think there was only one annual tithe. No tithe was paid during a Sabbath year, since no income was then anticipated. (Leviticus 25:1-12) Tithes were given in addition to the firstfruits offered to God.—Exodus 23:19.

One tenth of the produce of the land and of the fruit trees and evidently of the increase of the herds and flocks was taken to the

sanctuary and given to the Levites, who received no inheritance in the land. In turn, they gave a tenth of what they received to support the Aaronic priesthood. Evidently the grain was threshed and the fruit of the vine and of the olive tree was converted into wine and oil before the titling. If an Israelite wished to give money instead of produce, he could do so, provided he added a fifth of its value.—Leviticus 27:30-33; Numbers 18:21-30.

Another tithe also seems to have been set aside. Normally, it was used by a family when the people assembled for festivals. But what if the distance to Jerusalem was too great for convenient transport of this tithe? Then the grain, new wine, oil, and animals were turned into money that could be carried easily. (Deuteronomy 12:4-18; 14:22-27) At the

HOW SOME CONTRIBUTE TO THE KINGDOM WORK

- 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 nearest branch office.
- GIFTS: Voluntary donations of money may be sent directly to the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, New York 11201, or to the Society's local branch office. Jewelry or other valuables may also be donated. 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.
- 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 So-

ciet, 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 Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania 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.

For more information regarding such matters, write to the Treasurer's Office, Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, New York 11201, or to the Society's local branch office.

end of every third and sixth year of the seven-year sabbatical cycle, the tithe was set aside for the Levites, alien residents, widows, and fatherless boys.—Deuteronomy 14:28, 29; 26:12.

Under the Law, there was no penalty for failing to tithe. Rather, Jehovah placed the people under a strong moral obligation to provide tithes. At times they had to declare before him that the tithe had been paid in full. (Deuteronomy 26:13-15) Anything wrongfully withheld was looked upon as something stolen from God.—Malachi 3:7-9.

Tithing was not a burdensome arrangement. In fact, when the Israelites kept these laws, they became more prosperous. The tithe promoted true worship without placing undue emphasis on how to make material provisions for it. Hence, the tititing arrangement worked to the good of all in Israel. But is tititing for Christians?

Must Christians Tithe?

For some time, tititing was common in the realm of Christendom. *The Encyclopedia Americana* states: “It . . . gradually became common by the 6th century. The Council of Tours in 567 and the second Council of Macon in 585 advocated tititing. . . . Abuses became common, particularly when the right to collect tithes was often given or sold to laymen. Beginning with Pope Gregory VII this prac-

tice was declared illegal. Many laymen then presented their tititing rights to monasteries and cathedral chapters. The Reformation did not abolish tititing, and the practice was continued in the Roman Catholic Church and in Protestant countries.” Tithing was abolished or gradually replaced in various lands, and few religions now practice it.

So, then, are Christians required to tithe? In his Bible concordance, Alexander Cruden said: “Neither our Saviour, nor his apostles have commanded any thing in this affair of tithes.” Indeed, Christians are not commanded to tithe. God himself put an end to the Mosaic Law, with its tititing arrangements, nailing it to Jesus’ torture stake. (Romans 6:14; Colossians 2:13, 14) Instead of being required to give a specified amount to defray congregation expenses, therefore, Christians make voluntary contributions.

Honor Jehovah With Your Valuable Things

Of course, if a Christian voluntarily chooses to give a tenth of his income to advance true worship, there would be no Scriptural objection to his making such donations. In a letter accompanying his donation, a 15-year-old lad in Papua New Guinea wrote: “When I was little, my father used to tell me, ‘When you start working, you must give the first-fruits to Jehovah.’ I remember the words of Proverbs 3:1, 9, which say we must give the firstfruits to Jehovah to honor him. So I promised to do this, and now I must fulfill my promise. I am so happy to send this money to help the Kingdom work.” The Bible does not call upon Christians to make such a promise. However, generous giving is a fine way to display keen interest in promoting true worship.

A Christian may choose to set no specific limit on donations he makes to advance the worship of Jehovah God. To illustrate: While at an assembly of Jehovah’s Witnesses, two

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- A Ministry for You?
- What Does Subjection in Marriage Mean?

elderly sisters were discussing donations that might be made to the Kingdom work. As to obtaining food at the assembly site, one of the sisters, who is 87 years old, asked how much it might cost so that she could donate that amount. The other sister, who is 90, said: 'Just give what you think it is worth—and a little more.' What a fine attitude this older sister displayed!

Since Jehovah's people have dedicated their all to him, they gladly make monetary donations and other contributions to support true worship. (Compare 2 Corinthians 8:12.) In fact, the Christian way of giving provides opportunities to demonstrate deep appreciation for the worship of Jehovah. Such giving is not restricted to a tithe, or tenth, and there may be circumstances in which an individual is moved to give more to advance Kingdom interests.—Matthew 6:33.

The apostle Paul said: "Let each one do just as he has resolved in his heart, not grudging-

ly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7) If you give cheerfully and generously in support of true worship, you will fare well, for a wise proverb says: "Honor Jehovah with your valuable things and with the firstfruits of all your produce. Then your stores of supply will be filled with plenty; and with new wine your own press vats will overflow."—Proverbs 3:9, 10.

We cannot enrich the Most High. To him belong all the gold and silver, the beasts on a thousand mountains, and valuable things without number. (Psalm 50:10-12) Never can we repay God for all his benefits to us. But we can show our deep appreciation for him and for the privilege of rendering sacred service to his praise. And we can be sure that rich blessings flow to those who give liberally to promote pure worship and honor the loving and generous God, Jehovah.—2 Corinthians 9:11.

THEY DO WHAT THEY CAN

Though unable to repay Jehovah for all his benefits to them, many do what they can to support the worldwide preaching work of his Witnesses. (Matthew 24:14; compare Mark 14:3-9.) Interesting in this regard is this letter from a family in Minnesota, U.S.A.:

"Dear Brothers,

"We are sending a donation in the amount of \$——. We are requesting that it be used for financing the worldwide work or be applied to the Kingdom Hall Building Fund, or to any other need the organization may have. . . .

"We are confident that this money will be used in harmony with [Jehovah's] will. We would like to take this opportunity to offer our encouragement to continue the fine work, and especially thank you for the videotape of the [Watch Tower] Society's worldwide operations. It was this tape that made us aware of the enormity of the work, and it impressed upon us that our voluntary donations are needed. Previously, we had let the congregation, circuit, and district take care of sending donations to you, but we now thank Jehovah for being patient with us in our shortsightedness and lovingly showing us the need for us personally to help finance this lifesaving work, in addition to the other forms of donations. We are resolving to send, as a family, a minimum of \$—— per month . . . directly to New York.

"Again, thank you for the fine service you have been to us and for the faithfulness to Jehovah you have displayed."

'They Used to Laugh'

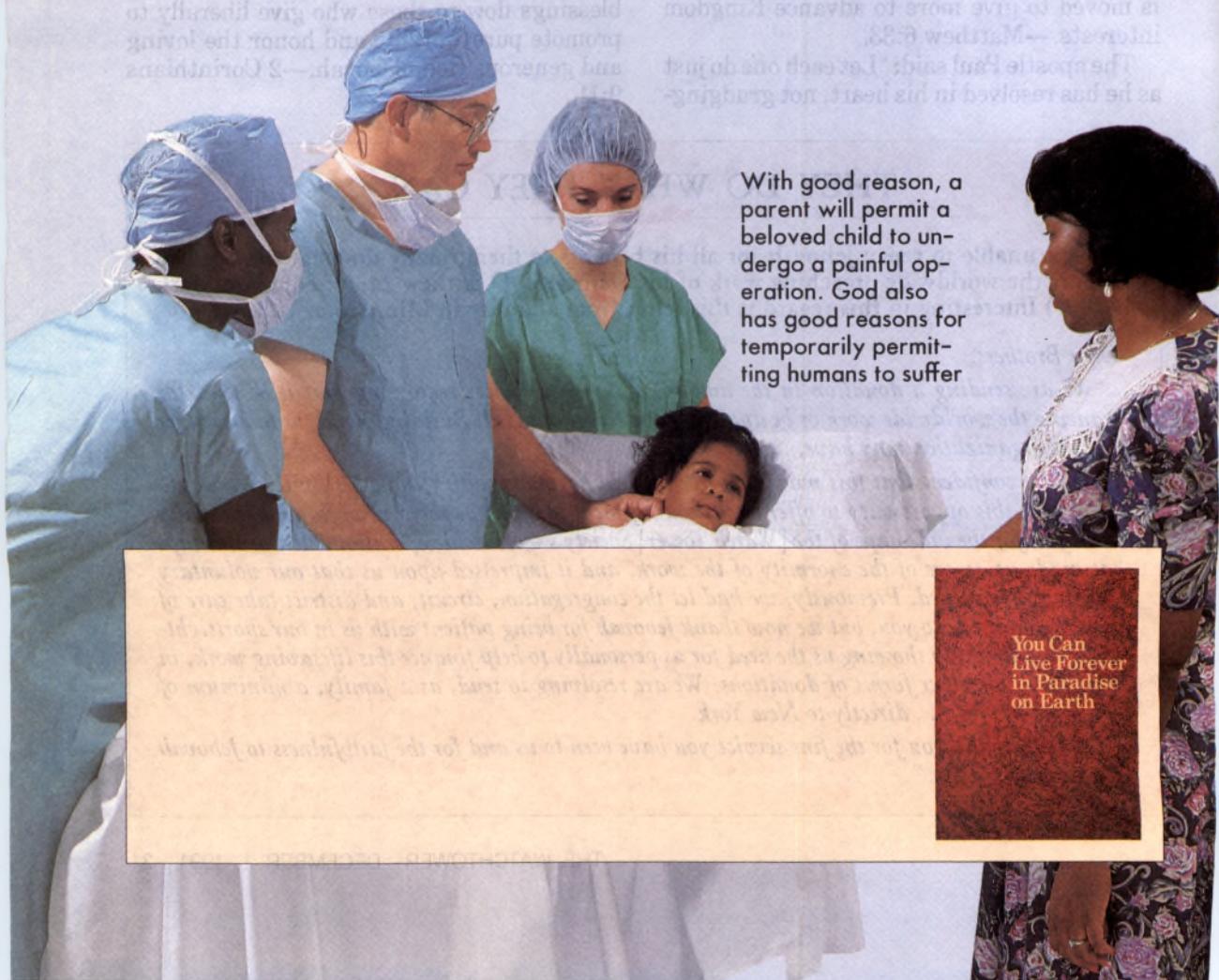
A man serving in the army in Hungary says that not long ago people used to laugh at those who spoke about the Bible. But times have changed. The soldier recently wrote the office of the Watch Tower Society in Budapest, saying:

"A few days ago, I read your publication *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*. Someone had given it to me on loan until I finished reading it. What is written in the book has touched me deeply and has made me think." The soldier wanted a Bible and further information. Such response is no longer unusual in Eastern Europe.

Another letter received at the Budapest office says: "I have read the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*. The book has made a very deep impression on me, and I am writing you to ask for a Witness to visit my home so that I can have a regular Bible study."

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With good reason, a parent will permit a beloved child to undergo a painful operation. God also has good reasons for temporarily permitting humans to suffer

You Can
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in Paradise
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