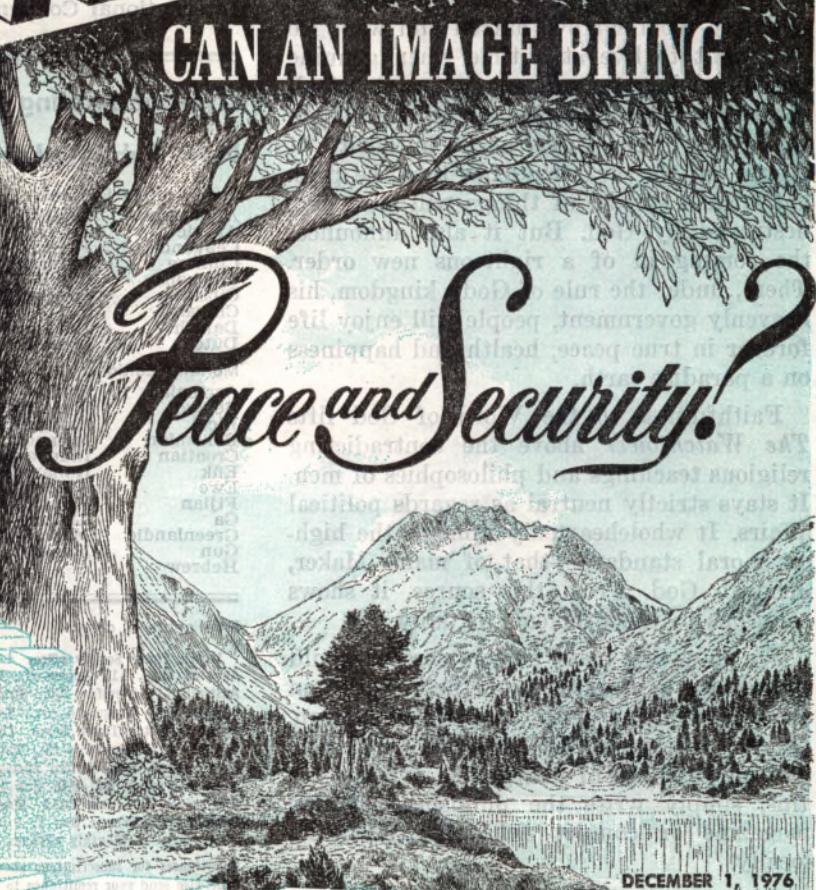


The

# WATCHTOWER

CAN AN IMAGE BRING

*Peace and Security?*



DECEMBER 1, 1976

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

# The WATCHTOWER

December 1, 1976  
Vol. 97, Number 23

A watchtower enables a person to see far into the distance and announce to others what is coming. Can a magazine serve similarly in our day? Yes, from its first issue (July 1879) onward, *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, has done just that.

How can it benefit you? Consider: Do you long for a better world, one of true justice and free from sorrow, hatred and war? Do you want to live at a time when genuine peace and love prevail among people of all races? Then this magazine can aid you. Using God's Word, the Bible, as its authority, it points out the clear evidence that the present wicked system of things will soon end, destroyed by God. But it also announces the coming in of a righteous new order. There, under the rule of God's kingdom, his heavenly government, people will enjoy life forever in true peace, health and happiness on a paradise earth.

Faithfulness to the Word of God lifts *The Watchtower* above the contradicting religious teachings and philosophies of men. It stays strictly neutral as regards political affairs. It wholeheartedly upholds the highest moral standard—that of man's Maker, Jehovah God. From this source, it shows solutions to the problems of daily life.

We know that many sincere persons would appreciate a discussion of these things in their own home with a qualified person. One of Jehovah's Witnesses will be glad to call on you free of charge. To arrange for this, simply write the publishers of this magazine or contact Jehovah's Witnesses locally.

DECEMBER 1, 1976

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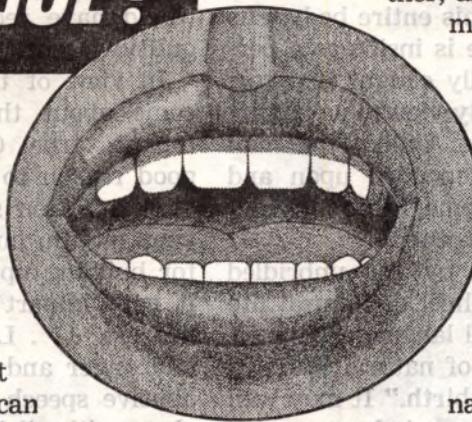
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# Why RESTRAIN THE TONGUE?

OF THE written word, it has often been said, "The pen is mightier than the sword." The spoken word can likewise have a powerful impact on others. Wholesome speech can be a strong force for good. But an unrestrained tongue can bring about tremendous damage.

The Bible proverb certainly proves true: "The calmness of the tongue is a tree of life, but distortion in it means a breaking down in the spirit." (Prov. 15:4) A wise person's calm speech can help his listeners to avoid a course leading to death. Twisted speech, on the other hand, brings trouble and discouragement, injuring and disheartening the hearers.

Since the tongue can have such a powerful effect either for good or for bad, perfect control of the tongue would naturally be desirable. For imperfect humans, however, that is an impossibility. The disciple James made this acknowledgment: "We all stumble many times. If anyone does not stumble in word, this one is a perfect man, able to bridle also his whole body. . . . For every species of wild beast as well as bird and creeping thing and sea creature is to be tamed and has been tamed by humankind. But the tongue, not one of mankind can get it tamed."—Jas. 3:2, 7, 8.



Does this mean that we should not even try to control our tongue? No. Restraining the tongue may be very hard. But this does not excuse our misusing it. Note what the disciple James continues on to write: "An unruly injurious thing, [the tongue] is full of death-dealing poison. With it we bless Jehovah, even the Father, and yet with it we curse men who have come into existence 'in the likeness of God.' Out of the same mouth come forth blessing and cursing. *It is not proper*, my brothers, for these things to go on occurring this way."

—Jas. 3:8-10.

It goes against the natural sense of fitness when the organ that blesses God is used to revile and defame those whom he loves—humans made in his image. While some may excuse it as simply 'letting off steam,' to think that such use of the tongue could ever be proper is absurd. It is just as irrational as it would be to expect a spring to bubble forth both sweet water and bitter, or for one plant or tree variety to bear the fruit of an entirely different variety. The disciple James fittingly asked: "A fountain does not cause the sweet and the bitter to bubble out of the same opening, does it? My brothers, a fig tree cannot produce olives or a vine figs, can it?"—Jas. 3:11, 12.

Besides, through wrong use of the tongue a person can injure himself permanently. The disciple James highlighted this point. After likening the effects from misuse of the tongue to a small fire that can set an extensive woodland aflame, James stated: "The tongue is constituted a world of unrighteousness among our

members, for it spots up all the body and sets the wheel of natural life afame and it is set afame by Gehenna."—Jas. 3:5, 6.

The tongue can indeed be a "world of unrighteousness." Think of all the combined mass of evil it can cause through scandal, slander, false testimony, misrepresentation, deceptive propaganda and false teaching. The person who misuses his tongue "spots up" his entire body. His speech betrays what he is inside as a person. The man repeatedly caught in lying, for example, is generally viewed as having a moral defect or spot. Unlike the man whose word can be depended upon and whose speech is wholesome, he simply cannot gain the respect of others.

But what is meant by the unbridled tongue's 'setting the wheel of natural life afame'? In the original language (Greek) the expression "wheel of natural life" literally is "wheel of the birth." It may well be that James had in mind a wooden wheel, such as that on a chariot, which could be set on fire by a hot, smoking axle. Similarly, the tongue can set afame the entire round of a person's life into which he came by birth. The fact that the unrestrained tongue is spoken of as being "set afame by Gehenna" may call attention to its power to cause destructive results. Or, it may mean that misuse of the tongue can so affect the whole round of life into which a person comes by birth that he could reach the point of meriting the judgment of Gehenna.

Jesus Christ made it clear that wrong use of the tongue could bring such a serious consequence. He said: "Whoever says [to his brother], 'You despicable fool!' will be liable to the fiery Gehenna." (Matt. 5: 22) Yes, one who wrongly judges and condemns his brother as a "despicable fool," that is, a morally worthless person, would rightly be liable to the judgment of Gehenna. Why? Because by thus condemning his brother, he would be pronouncing that

one as deserving the judgment of Gehenna. In his heart, he would be desiring such a terrible judgment for his brother. Thereby he himself would become liable to the adverse judgment he wished for his brother. This possible penalty would harmonize with the stipulation of the Mosaic law requiring that a false witness receive the very same punishment that the accused would have received had he been found guilty.—Deut. 19:17-21.

In view of the lasting harm that can come about through wrong use of the tongue, true Christians certainly have good reason to heed the inspired advice: "Let a rotten saying not proceed out of your mouth, but whatever saying is good for building up as the need may be, that it may impart what is favorable to the hearers. . . . Let all malicious bitterness and anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech be taken away from you along with all badness."—Eph. 4:29-31.

How can this be done? The tongue does not speak on its own but is motivated by the heart. As Jesus Christ pointed out: "A good man brings forth good out of the good treasure of his heart, but a wicked man brings forth what is wicked out of his wicked treasure; for out of the heart's abundance his mouth speaks." (Luke 6: 45) So if we are to restrain our tongue, we must root jealousy and contentiousness from our hearts and continue cultivating genuine love for humans made in God's image. (Jas. 3:14-16) We must fill our minds with upbuilding things.—Phil. 4:8.

Recognizing the importance of tongue control, we should make it our determination to avoid misusing this organ of speech. If we stumble in word, we should deeply regret it and appeal to God for forgiveness. At the same time we should endeavor to improve in making our hearts a treasure house of good things so that our speech will have an upbuilding effect on others.



# Can an IMAGE Bring PEACE and SECURITY?

**H**OW do you react to the question, 'Can an image bring peace and security'? Do you think it strange that such a question would be raised? Who would even claim that an image could bring an end to war?

There is an image, however, that has been looked to for more than thirty years as man's best hope for peace. It is not some figure of a human or an animal but is an international organization. As an image that organization is a reflection of the way the world is. What is that organization? It is the United Nations. The Philadelphia *Inquirer* quoted a U.S. official as saying regarding it: "The U.N. is a mirror of the world the way it is—not the way we'd like it to be." Dag Hammarskjold, as secretary-general of the United Nations, used to express the same thought.

The amazing thing about this is that the Bible pointed forward to the coming into existence of such an image, mirror or reflection of the worldwide political system. By examining what the Bible says, we gain advance knowledge of what role the United Nations will yet play in world affairs. There is tremendous value in making

this knowledge our own, as it can help us to take a wise course in this critical period of human history.

#### AN IMAGE OF WHAT?

The Bible book of Revelation uses symbolism when depicting developments in world affairs. The meaning of what is stated can be ascertained with the help of other parts of the Bible and the actual events of history.

A symbolic description that fits the United Nations is found at Revelation 13:14, 15, where we read of the 'making of an image to the wild beast.' That wild beast is earlier described as being "like a leopard" and as having "seven heads" and "ten horns" (each topped with a diadem), 'feet as those of a bear,' and a lionlike mouth.—Rev. 13:1, 2.

In the prophecy of Daniel, mention is made of four beasts—a lion, a bear, a leopard and a fearsome beast with ten horns—each beast representing a 'king' or 'kingdom.' (Dan. 7:4-7, 17, 23) The "wild beast" of Revelation thus has features of the beasts of Daniel's prophecy. On this basis, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* draws the following conclusion: "The

first of these beasts [of Revelation chapter 13] combines in itself the joint characteristics of the four beasts of Daniel's vision . . . Accordingly, this first beast represents the combined forces of all political rule opposed to God in the world."—Vol. 1, p. 369.

In having representations from many nations, the United Nations most certainly is an image, reflection or mirror of these political rulerships governing mankind.

#### THE "SCARLET-COLORED WILD BEAST"

Evidently the image of the wild beast is later referred to at Revelation 17:3 as a "scarlet-colored wild beast." Like the "wild beast" of Revelation 13:1, 2, the "scarlet-colored wild beast" has "seven heads, and ten horns." So it reflects or mirrors the chief features of the "wild beast." However, the horns of the "scarlet-colored wild beast" are not topped with diadems. This is appropriate, since the "scarlet-colored wild beast" does not picture the entire system of political rulership as it has been progressively exercised by seven world powers. Instead, according to Revelation 17:11, the scarlet-colored beast is "an eighth king, but springs from the seven." This agrees with the fact that the great powers or remnants thereof that once ruled vast territories are represented in the United Nations. As a unit, the United Nations acts as a "king," with authority comparable to that exercised by a ruler.

#### WHAT LIES AHEAD?

The Bible, however, does not say that this "eighth king" will bring about true peace and security. It points to a bleak future for the "scarlet-colored wild beast," saying that it will 'go off into destruction.' (Rev. 17:11) While not able to bring about lasting peace, the United Nations may, however, figure in the development of things to the point where people will be saying: "Peace and security!"

Wise will be those who are not deceived by such a cry. Why so? The Bible answers: "Whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security!' then sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them just as the pang of distress upon a pregnant woman; and they will by no means escape."

—1 Thess. 5:3.

The only way for anyone to escape this calamity is to remain separate from human schemes to bring "peace and security" in a way that ignores God and his Word. This is evident from what the Bible next says to true Christians: "You, brothers, you are not in darkness, so that that day should overtake you as it would thieves."

—1 Thess. 5:4.

Some persons may reason that they have nothing to worry about. Being members of a religious organization, they may feel that they will not be overtaken by calamity. But this can be very dangerous reasoning. The Bible shows that not all religion is approved by God. In a letter to fellow believers, the Christian disciple James wrote: "The form of worship 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." (Jas. 1:27) "Adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God?" (Jas. 4:4) So, then, nominally Christian religious organizations that do not remain clean from the world's ways, attitudes and actions are harlots or prostitutes from God's standpoint. They are unfaithful to the God whom they claim as their Lord.

Hence, it is of interest to note that the Holy Scriptures speak about a harlot in connection with the "scarlet-colored wild beast." We read: "I caught sight of a woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored wild beast that was full of blasphemous names and that had seven heads and ten horns.

And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and was adorned with gold and precious stone and pearls and had in her hand a golden cup that was full of disgusting things and the unclean things of her fornication. And upon her forehead was written a name, a mystery: 'Babylon the Great, the mother of the harlots and of the disgusting things of the earth.'"

—Rev. 17:3-5.

What about the world's religious systems as a whole? Do they act like the harlot "Babylon the Great"? Have they looked to the United Nations as man's only hope for peace and security and, hence, as needed for their own preservation? Do these religious systems, then, not depend upon the United Nations as does a rider upon his horse? The facts speak for themselves.

The Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, with a membership of over 250 churches, have repeatedly declared the United Nations to be "the chief temporal hope for world peace." The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states: "Recent pontiffs have stressed the necessity of international organization and the principles that should guide it, and have praised the UN for its purposes and various programs and accomplishments. The Holy See maintains a permanent observer at the UN and contributes financial as well as moral support to many of its economic, social, scientific, cultural, and humanitarian programs. It participates as a full member or observer in a number of Specialized Agencies and participates in diplomatic and other conferences called by the UN. Sixteen Catholic international organizations contribute formally to the work of ECOSOC and various Specialized Agencies through the medium of consultative status with these bodies, and Catholic groups and individuals in various coun-

tries contribute to the formation of national policy and action with regard to the UN."—Vol. 14, p. 423.

Will all such friendliness with the world be of real benefit to any religious system? No, the Bible declares that "Babylon the Great," the harlotrous religious empire, will experience a great shock. Revelation 17:16 says: "The ten horns that you saw, and the wild beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her devastated and naked, and will eat up her fleshy parts and will completely burn her with fire."

So there is real danger in becoming involved with the "scarlet-colored wild beast." Never will it bring real peace and security. But it will unleash destructive fury against the religious systems who have looked to it as man's "chief temporal hope for world peace." This should not come as a surprise. Even now many members of the United Nations openly state that they are anti-God. In turning against religion, the "scarlet-colored wild beast" and its "ten horns" will, therefore, not be acting out of any love for the Most High. Its going against religion will be an expression of an anti-God attitude. So even if it does bring about a semblance of peace and security, it will merit destruction for setting itself up in total opposition to Jehovah God. For that reason those who join in any U.N. cry of "Peace and security!" face disaster, even if they are not in sympathy with "Babylon the Great."

Are you acting in harmony with this advance knowledge? Have you separated yourself from the world's ways, attitudes and actions? Are you proving that you look to God's kingdom by Christ as the only means for bringing about lasting peace and security? Only by continuing to do these things can you hope to escape entanglements that could mean your losing God's approval and life itself.

# Insight on the News

- In search of support for their theory that North America and Europe were once connected by a land bridge, scientists recently investigated Ellesmere Island in Canada's Arctic Northwest Territory. Of interest is the fact that they found "evidence that in those days the climate in the area was swampy and temperate." —New York "Times," September 24, 1976.

Yet Ellesmere Island is now largely ice covered. What accounts for this complete change of climate? The Bible's historical record suggests an answer. It describes the creation of an "expanse" around the earth that made a 'division between the waters beneath the expanse and the waters above the expanse.' Thus the atmosphere around the globe would have a relatively uniform warm climate due to the hothouse effect created by the water canopy "above the expanse." —Gen. 1:6, 7.

Second Peter 3:5, 6 confirms that the earth was "standing compactly out of water and in the midst of water," and that it was "by those means the world of that time suffered destruction when it was deluged with water." Apparently the canopy disappeared as the waters deluged the earth, and this could be a major factor in the Arctic areas' becoming frigid.

- A Danish family was recently denied Canadian citizenship by the Federal Court of Appeal. Yet Mr. Justice George Addy of the court

**What Makes a Good Citizen?** wrote that "both Appellants impressed me as being good, honest people with a deep religious faith which they translate into action in their daily lives. They are members of the movement known as Jehovah's Witnesses . . . Both he and his wife are apparently strong believers in the work ethic and have never taken advantage of the social benefits provided for in our society. . . . Their children are exceptionally clean-cut and alert and the family from all appearances is a model one."

Then why the denial of citizenship by this very judge? "The single obstacle to a grant

of citizenship," writes Ian Hunter of the University of Western Ontario law faculty, was the fact that, in taking the oath of allegiance, they would not agree to participate in any war effort.

Observes Hunter: "The worldly wiseman may consider Mr. Jensen a fool. Others will think him sincere, but misguided. Others, naïve. I, for what it's worth, consider Mr. Jensen (whom I do not know) a saint, whose position exemplifies that peculiar wisdom of the saints which the world inevitably mistakes for madness."

"We regularly admit to citizenship miscreants who soon fill our jails, and drones who [fatten] on our preposterous welfare system, yet we penalize . . . a man of integrity who will not participate in the slaughter of war. Somehow I believe that Canada would be stronger and more secure, even in wartime, if Mr. and Mrs. Jensen were welcomed to the company of 'my fellow Canadians.'" —London "Free Press" (Ontario), August 28, 1976.

- When Croatian nationalists hijacked an American airliner to Paris recently, Roman Catholic Bishop Edward O'Rourke of Peoria, Illinois, was aboard. At one point he was allowed to address the passengers over the intercom. With what effect? One passenger related that he 'gave us absolution, telling us it was time to make our peace with God. . . . He got the people panicky and scared.'

A flight attendant censured the bishop for depressing the passengers, and another passenger told him that it was not right to instill fear, that he should have been offering encouragement. But Bishop O'Rourke said that 'it was time to prepare the spirit for the afterlife.'

Thus the bishop had an opportunity to follow through on the Biblical counsel to true men of God to "give courage to those who are apprehensive." Yet he chose instead to use scare tactics based on the false teaching that some last-minute ritualistic pronouncement of "absolution" by a man could make a difference in God's judgment of a person. —1 Thess. 5:14, Catholic "Jerusalem Bible."

# FILLING COLOMBIA WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF JEHOVAH

LIKE her Spanish-American neighbors, Colombia is a land of contrasts. Or, as some prefer to express it, there are two Colombias, the urban and the rural. While much of the country remains out of tune with this twentieth century, her large, mushrooming cities identify themselves with modern cities the world over. Bogotá, the capital, because of her numerous universities and cultural activities, has long been known as "the Athens of South America." Contrastingly, though, in the rural provinces of Córdoba and La Guajira, 60 to 80 percent of the populace is illiterate.

Not many years ago, the Christian witnesses of Jehovah were virtually unknown in this predominantly Roman Catholic land. In 1942 just two native Colombians actively engaged in the Bible educational work that today readily identifies Jehovah's Witnesses everywhere. In comparison, in the enlarged Colombian field of today there are 16,286 of "God's fellow workers." (1 Cor. 3:9) Outstanding is the fact that 8,902 of these Witnesses were baptized during the last three years alone.

## COLOMBIANS TURN TO THE BIBLE

Interest in Bible reading has increased noticeably since Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council in 1962.

To meet the demand for Bible knowledge, last year alone the Colombian branch office of the Watch Tower Society shipped out 351,764 Bibles and Bible study aid books. Twenty years ago the year's total was a mere 7,815.

But what prompts so many people to study the Bible with Jehovah's Christian witnesses? As the following experiences reveal, the reasons are varied. For example, though in bondage to false religion, many are very sincere in their religious devotion. 'What they are unknowingly giving godly devotion to, this Jehovah's Witnesses are publishing to them,' just as the apostle Paul did.—Acts 17:23.

In imitation of Paul, one of Jehovah's Witnesses was speaking the good news from house to house, and in the same block, but going in the opposite direction, was a Catholic woman collecting money for her church. When they met on the same doorstep, both were invited in. Although the householder manifested no interest in the Kingdom message, the church lady did. She accepted a copy of the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*, and a study was started with her that very week. Now, as a dedicated servant of Jehovah God, she still goes from house to house, but with an entirely different motive. She is now fully aware of the One to whom she renders sacred service.—Matt. 4:10.

While many Colombians today have more in a material way than their parents ever had, for many others life remains basically a hand-to-mouth existence. Seeking to alleviate the sufferings of their underprivileged countrymen, many compassionate Colombians devote themselves to social work. To such lovers of justice, the message of God's kingdom often appeals.

Here is a case in point. A nun in the religious community "Daughters of Mary the Savior" of San Juan, Costa Rica, dedicated six years to the study of philosophy and critical interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures. But she confesses:

"I did not find God in the convent. The selfishness, the spirit of competition, the meaningless materialistic activities that were all a part of convent life did not correspond to the sublime, desirable life I thought should result from serving God. My conclusions were that there was no God, hence the Bible was the product of men.

"Returning to my home in Medellin, Colombia, I soon became concerned about Colombian social problems. I studied native groups in the province of Chocó for a year and then decided to join company with the leftist movements. But after eight months of dialogue with several of their leaders, I came to appreciate that their predominant interest was personal advancement and prestige. Unsuccessful in finding substance and quality in life, I decided to leave the country in pursuit of money.

"Arriving in Bogotá to prepare for my trip, I came in contact with one of Jehovah's Witnesses and a friendship developed between us. Once when visiting her, I agreed to accompany her on some Bible studies she had near her home in the country. Among such simple folk I was surprised to find such an ability to understand and apply the Bible so fitly in every aspect of life. I asked myself, 'Was the Bible divinely inspired after all?'

"When I returned to Bogotá, my first impulse was to look up the Witnesses. The answers they showed me in the Bible convinced me that they are preaching the Word of God and, therefore, the truth."

Now, as a dedicated, baptized servant of Jehovah, this former nun happily proclaims God's kingdom as the only solution to social injustice.

#### YOUTHS RESPOND

Less than four years ago, a tall, black American hippie living in Cali, Colombia, held the opinion that Jehovah's Witnesses were too calm in their attitude toward the

world's injustices. The first time he accompanied his girl companion to a Bible study with a Witness missionary, his attitude was like that of a watchdog. However, he mellowed when he realized that what he was hearing was the only realistic remedy for world conditions. He and his girl companion got married, and, within ten months of their first study, were baptized.

These new Witnesses wasted no time in telling fellow hippies what they were learning. As a result, a sixteen-year-old member of a rock band from a well-to-do family was soon making remarkable changes in his life-style. His appearance improved markedly when he had three years' growth of hair cut off and changed his see-through feminine blouses for something more becoming. His thirst for the truth far overshadowed any craving he may have had for drugs as he received a Bible study almost daily. Just six months from the time of his first study, he was baptized with the other two former hippies and, ever since, has devoted his full time to spreading the knowledge of Jehovah.

When in high school in Barranquilla, a youth aged fifteen got started on drugs. He describes how they affected his mind:

"I couldn't coordinate my thoughts. My mind worked so fast that I couldn't sleep at night. I thought of taking my life, I felt so frustrated.

"Then one Saturday night, looking for something to read, I found the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life* in my closet. One of Jehovah's Witnesses had tried unsuccessfully to study it with me. But now I didn't want to put it down; it was six o'clock the next morning when I finally did. It awakened in me the hope that I was going to find something better in life. I was so enthused over what I had read that I told everyone within earshot. However, my reaction made my parents very nervous and they decided to take me to a psychiatrist on Monday.

"That Wednesday the Witness returned and started a Bible study with me. When

the psychiatrist found out though, she pleaded with me to study with any other group but not with Jehovah's Witnesses. 'They'll really make you crazy,' she said. Yet I could see that the Witnesses were sincere in helping me. They wanted me to have the same hope they have. And, indeed, it's a hope that should move anyone to make a change!"

The young man never did return to the psychiatrist but continued studying and associating with the Witnesses. Now fully devoted to doing the will of God, he is currently studying His Word with another young man with a drug problem.

The insistence on the part of the Witnesses, young and old, to live in accord with their knowledge of God often results in opportunities to help others to learn the way of the truth. For refusing to stock tobacco products in his store, a Witness in Bucaramanga had this experience:

A man asking for cigarettes was informed that they were not sold there. After thinking a moment, he said: "If you don't sell tobacco, there has to be a reason, and I'd like to know what it is." The Witness explained that his Bible-trained conscience would not allow him to sell his neighbor an enslaving product that is injurious to health. (Matt. 22:39) Impressed, the man asked for more information. A Bible study was commenced and he is now attending the meetings.

#### "PROGRESS AT AN ACCELERATED SPEED"

By reason of their filling the land with the knowledge of Jehovah, the Witnesses have acquired favorable recognition from various sectors of the community.

Recently, for example, a municipal judge, in writing to the branch office requesting a Bible, said:

"Above all, we desire to congratulate you for the commendable work you are effecting among all the peoples of Colombia, without any discrimination and, in not a few cases, at the expense of great difficulties and opposition. . . . We send you our word of encouragement in your work, hoping that the

new religious equal rights legislation facilitates your job."

And a reporter, writing in one of the nation's leading newspapers, *El Espectador*, had this to say:

"While the apostolic Roman Catholic religion continues to decline, other religious sects or communities progress at an accelerated speed. In Colombia, for example, the community known as 'Jehovah's Witnesses' grows daily, obtaining more followers. The Witnesses possess notable moral and intellectual qualities and daily set excellent examples for Catholics.

"Even though we do not belong to Jehovah's Witnesses, we can affirm that these Christians are distinguished by their honesty, their respect for others, their preoccupation for the acquisition of useful knowledge, their discretion and desire always to do good. . . . They never have difficulties finding places for their meetings because they are characterized, besides, by their order and cleanliness."

#### FROM BACKYARDS TO COLISEUMS

The reporter's statements were made on the occasion of the "Divine Victory" International Assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses in Bogotá in January 1974. The new Covered Coliseum was taxed to the limit to accommodate the 23,409 who attended. Formerly, Witness assemblies in this land were held in backyards and workshops, any place large enough to contain the small crowds expected. In contrast, they now have them in the largest convention facilities the cities have to offer.

Up until ten years ago the city of Barranquilla refused to grant civic properties to the Witnesses for their conventions. When permission was finally obtained for the use of that city's Covered Coliseum, the price stipulated was prohibitive. Further applications, however, did, in time, result in consent at a more reasonable cost, and the Coliseum was used. On the occasion of the last assembly held on the same premises, there was no charge whatsoever. Why not? Because, according to

the official decree from the Mayor's office, 'the meetings realize no profit, the admission is completely free and, besides, Jehovah's Witnesses customarily improve the installations.'

For the truth imparted and the warm fellowship enjoyed at their assemblies, it is not unusual for the Witnesses to make great sacrifices in order to be on hand. From the Zapata, Antioquia, Congregation, twenty-two men, women and children walked eleven hours to board a bus that took them to their circuit assembly.

#### KINGDOM HALLS REFLECT EXPANSION

Also reflecting the expansion of the organization in this land is the acceleration in the construction of Kingdom Halls. Ten years ago there was hardly a congregation that owned its own meeting place. Today about a third of them do and many of these share their halls with other congregations.

This acquisition of very presentable, spacious Kingdom Halls has contributed immeasurably to the acceptance of Jehovah's Witnesses as part of the community. Many more have been attracted to investigate the organization. Furthermore, since it is not unusual for the attendance to be double the number of Witnesses, the halls have provided much needed seating accommodation. This year at the memorial observance of Christ's death, 56,924 attended, which is almost four times the number of Witnesses in all of Colombia!

Whether they are educated city people or humble, hardworking *campesinos* or country folk, all of Jehovah's Witnesses in this country are "standing firm in one spirit, with one soul striving side by side for the faith of the good news." (Phil. 1:27) Their zeal with regard to "the faith of the good news" is well illustrated by the El Caimán, Antioquia, Congregation. To send the monthly report of their witnessing activities to the Colombian branch

office, one of them must walk eight hours, then ride the bus four more hours, just to reach the post office!

#### TAKING IN KNOWLEDGE OF THE ONLY TRUE GOD

Is it still the Lord's will that a greater measure of the "water of life" flow forth to the Colombian people? There is every reason to believe so.—Rev. 22:17.

Recently, three of Jehovah's Witnesses traveled two hours from their home in Barrancabermeja, Santander, to the small community of Yarima. Knowing that the area was notorious as a center of guerrilla activity, they went with some feeling of reservation. But what a reception awaited them! Within a short time they had distributed all their Bible literature. Returning better equipped a few days later, they again soon exhausted their supplies. In just five hours they placed in the hands of those humble people over 300 Bibles and books and hundreds of magazines.

After drinking of "the water of truth," an isolated person in Antioquia was moved to write the following to the branch office:

"I am writing to ask you a favor, that you visit my home to study the Bible. I have known many religious sects but none has given me the spiritual peace that I desire, which is to know the true way in order to one day come to enjoy the reward that our Heavenly Father offers to all of us who do his will. Reading one of your books, *True Peace and Security*, has given me the intense desire to invite you to visit us here in Yari."

Yes, Jehovah continues to 'open hearts wide to pay attention to the things being spoken' by his true servants. And just as long as these sincere truth seekers say, "Visit my home to study the Bible," Jehovah's Witnesses will be happy to do so because they know that "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; Acts 16:14, 15.

# Why A God of Love GIVES REPROOF

"Happy is the able-bodied man whom you correct, O Jah, and whom you teach out of your own law."—Ps. 94:12.

JEHOVAH GOD wants persons to live, yes, to enjoy life. He does not take pleasure in the death even of the wicked, but, rather, "in that someone wicked turns back from his way and actually keeps living."—Ezek. 33:11.

Because of this concern for mankind, God provided a ransom through his beloved Son's sacrifice of his own perfect life. "For God loved the world [of mankind] so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life."—John 3:16.

This same divine interest is what causes God to provide reproof and discipline for humans. Very obviously, perfection is not a characteristic of any of us. We constantly fall short, not reaching the mark in our efforts to do things exactly as we should, and that is the literal meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words for "sin," namely, "to miss the mark." So, we all need correction and discipline. We should appreciate this discipline as an evidence of God's love, designed, not simply as a punishment, but to train us in righteousness in the way a father trains his sons.—Heb. 12:5-11.

Take, as an illustration, a man in a boat, alone on the sea and running short of food and water. If, due either to ignorance or to bad judgment, he is seriously off course in his efforts to reach land, he will die. Surely he would be grateful if some-

one, by some means, could signal to him how to correct his course, thereby saving his life. He would be foolish to resent or reject such helpful correction.

In the same way, all of us, being innately sinful, need regular correction in order to get on, or stay on, the narrow course that leads to life. Without it we inevitably deviate into the broad course that leads to destruction.—Matt. 7:13, 14.

Human imperfection and need for correction show up from childhood onward. That is why, as any parent can testify, it takes a lot of love to bring up a child properly, instilling in mind and heart an appreciation for right principles. Proverbs 22:15 truthfully states that "foolishness is tied up with the heart" of a child, and it takes discipline to bring the child to the point of being governed by life's realities and by truth, rather than by foolish, shortsighted, childish ideas.

All of this tests the parent's patience, his or her desire and determination to be compassionate and long-suffering in instructing and educating the child in a way of life that will promote future happiness. When response is slow, or the child does not listen or obey, one may feel like giving up; one may incline to view the situation as hopeless. Hurt or angry feelings could easily dominate. But love does not allow for giving up merely because of the unpleasantness of the situation. To hold back from giving needed instruction and patient, well-thought-out discipline to a child would show, not love, but a lack of it, since

love keeps looking for and working for the best interests, both present and future, of the one loved. (See Proverbs 13:24.) Moreover, love "does not become provoked. It does not keep account of the injury." It "hopes all things."—1 Cor. 13:5, 7.

A loving parent therefore keeps expressing hope on behalf of a child as long as there is any basis at all for such hope. Fathers and mothers who really care do not easily 'give up' on any of their children; they do not back away from giving needed direction and correction coupled with reasoning and love. They show the quality of being long-suffering.

#### **EVEN AS A FATHER REPROVES HIS SON'**

How refreshing to stop and think that in all of this parents simply reflect God's own splendid example! For he does not easily give up on his servants; rather, he displays an amazing degree of long-suffering toward them. Thus, Levites in



"The one whom Jehovah loves he reproves, even as a father does a son in whom he finds pleasure."

—Prov. 3:12

the days of Nehemiah, when praying to God, referred to the Israelites' experiences in the wilderness of Sinai and said:

"They themselves, even our forefathers, acted presumptuously and . . . they refused to listen, and they did not remember your wonderful acts that you performed with them, but they hardened their neck and appointed a head to return to their servitude in Egypt. But you are a God of acts of forgiveness, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness, and you did not leave them."—Neh. 9:16, 17.

Besides God's patience, we can note that his fatherly discipline and his correction, though perhaps painful to the one corrected, always retain a *positive aspect*. They are given with a beneficial end in view. That is why Proverbs 3:11, 12 urges: "The discipline of Jehovah, O my son, do not reject; and do not abhor his reproof, because the one whom Jehovah loves he reproves, even as a father does a son in whom he finds pleasure."—Compare Hebrews 12:5-11.

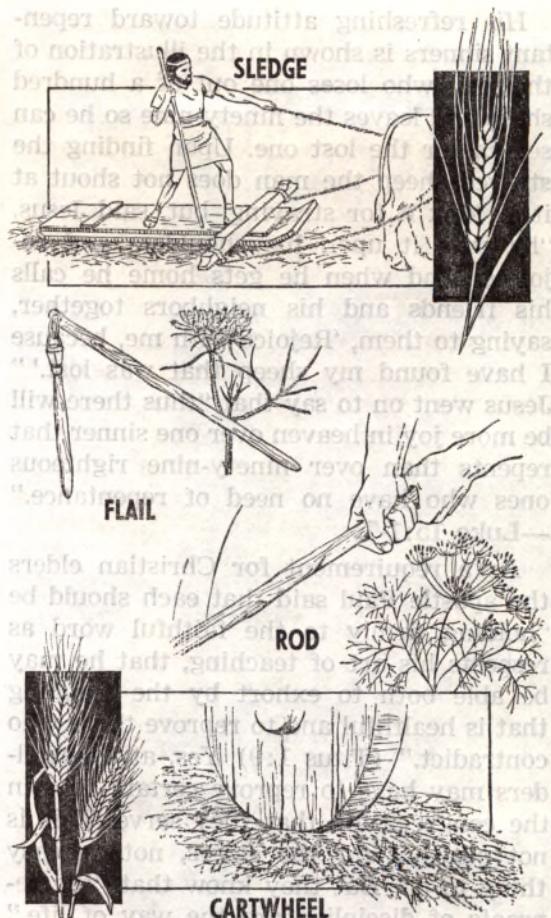
So it is not just a case of a vengeful ruler becoming indignant and incensed because someone failed to show due respect for his laws. True, gross sin does anger God and rightly so. (Num. 25:1-3) But his anger is not motivated by selfishness or mere personal pride. He knows better than anyone the horrible consequences that sin can produce, how disastrous its poisoning influence can be, how damaging it is to human happiness. Disrespect for his sovereignty can never bring good, only harm. It harms the practitioner and inevitably harms others. A loving God therefore could not help but resent sin, could never nonchalantly overlook it. Though he is "slow to anger," when God does act against sin he does so to stop further harm from result-

ing.—Ex. 34:6; compare Psalm 106:36-40.

Not only this but Jehovah also gauges the severity (or mildness) of his reproof, not according to a rigid formula, but according to the actual need that exists. Using the illustration of a farmer, Jehovah says at Isaiah 28:23-29 (*New English Bible*):

"Listen and hear what I say, attend and hear my words. Will the ploughman continually plough for the sowing, breaking his ground and harrowing it? Does he not, once he has levelled it, broadcast the dill and scatter the cummin? Does he not plant the wheat in rows with barley and spelt along the edge? Does not his God instruct him and train him aright? Dill is not threshed with a sledge, and the cartwheel is not rolled over cummin; dill is beaten with a rod, and cummin with a flail. Corn is crushed, but not to the uttermost, not with a final crushing; his cartwheels rumble over it and break it up, but they do not grind it fine. This message, too, comes from the **LORD** of Hosts, whose purposes are wonderful and his power great."

A farmer does not plow up the ground continually, but only to the extent needed. The Israelite farmer scattered or broadcast some smaller seeds, whereas other more valued grains were placed in rows. And when threshing, the smaller, more tender grains were not threshed with heavy equipment that would crush them, but with a rod or flail. Even the larger, harder grains that were threshed with heavy instruments, such as a wooden sledge or a cartwheel, were not threshed to the point of utterly crushing them. So, too, Jehovah wisely, justly and lovingly measures out reproof, discipline and correction—whether light, moderate, heavy or even severe—according to the need of each individual situation. Only those who willfully resist his patient efforts to aid them, will experience the force of his destructive power.



#### SHEPHERDS FOR THE REFRESHMENT AND PROTECTION OF THE FLOCK

How good, too, to consider the example of God's Son, the "fine shepherd" of God's sheep! (John 10:11) On earth he reflected God's qualities and set the example for all those who would act as shepherds in the Christian congregation. What was and is his manner of dealing with those who become his disciples? He himself gave this warm invitation:

"Come to me, all whose work is hard, whose load is heavy; and I will give you relief. Bend your necks to my yoke, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble-hearted; and your souls will find relief. For my yoke is good to bear, my load is light." —Matt. 11:28-30, *New English Bible*.

His refreshing attitude toward repentant sinners is shown in the illustration of the man who loses one out of a hundred sheep and leaves the ninety-nine so he can search for the lost one. Upon finding the strayed sheep the man does not shout at it or kick it for straying, but, said Jesus, "he puts it upon his shoulders and rejoices. And when he gets home he calls his friends and his neighbors together, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost.'" Jesus went on to say that "thus there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner that repents than over ninety-nine righteous ones who have no need of repentance."

—Luke 15:1-7.

As a requirement for Christian elders the apostle Paul said that each should be "holding firmly to the faithful word as respects his art of teaching, that he may be able both to exhort by the teaching that is healthful and to reprove those who contradict." (Titus 1:9) Yes, at times elders may have to reprove certain ones in the congregation that they serve. This is not pleasant for the elders, not an easy thing to do. But they know that "the reproofs of discipline are the way of life," and that 'all those whom Jehovah loves he reproves,' themselves included. (Prov. 6:23; 3:11, 12; Heb. 12:6) They find it to be true that "he that is reproving a man will afterward find more favor than he will that is flattering with his tongue." (Prov. 28:23) And so when the circumstances call for it they do not hold back from straightforwardly showing erring ones how they can and should correct their course. (Prov. 27:5) Like God, they keep a positive goal in mind.

How should an elder approach one who has taken a wrong course? If the elder adopts a superior attitude, like that of a policeman dealing with a criminal or a prosecuting attorney questioning a sus-

pect, the reaction produced will certainly not be beneficial. (1 Pet. 5:2, 3, 5) But if the elder shows fellow feeling, realizing that he himself is imperfect, not immune to committing error, then he can reflect a brotherly spirit. (Gal. 6:1) He is there not primarily to condemn but to help, and the one in error is far more likely to respond well to such an approach. (1 Pet. 3:8) Each situation is different and the wise person will seek to gain knowledge and insight as to circumstances, rather than jump to conclusions.—Prov. 18:15; 21:11.

Although the erring one may be reluctant to talk or even be somewhat evasive, patience and kindness can do much to overcome this. (Prov. 25:15; 2 Tim. 2:24-26) He should be convinced that the elders really do have his best interests at heart; they are his brothers. Even where the circumstances call for strong counsel, perhaps even the severity of reproof, it is important for an elder to remember always that it is the wrongdoing that is hated and condemned, not the person. (Jude 23) Of course, those who refuse all efforts to aid them, who are defiant and unrepentant of serious wrongdoing, thereby show themselves to be a danger to the congregation, and its interests would require their being disfellowshiped. And yet, even here Scriptural counsel can and should be given so that these realize that sincere repentance can later gain for them readmission to the congregation.

But just what does it mean to "reprove" someone? In the Christian congregation, is the purpose of reproof principally to shame or reprimand another? Would it be giving "reproof" simply to announce that a certain person has engaged in some wrong conduct and express disapproval of that wrong conduct? We shall see now what the Bible shows.

**HOW**

# WISE REPROVERS

## Aid Erring Ones

LONG ago the faithful man Elihu said of Jehovah God: "He will uncover their ear to exhortation, and he will say that they should turn back from what is hurtful. If they obey and serve, they will finish their days in what is good and their years in pleasantness. But if they do not obey, they will pass away even by a missile, and they will expire without knowledge. And those apostate in heart will themselves lay up anger. They should not cry for help because he has bound them." —Job 36:10-13.

Christian elders rightly desire to show themselves to be wise reprovers so as to 'turn back erring ones from what is hurtful.' Obviously, this requires that they understand what is meant by "reproof" in the Bible.

### HOW "REPROOF" AND "REBUKE" DIFFER

In the Bible, in its original languages, we find certain words used to express the idea of reproofing and others to express the thought of rebuking. What is the difference? "To rebuke" means to criticize sharply or censure severely, to "reprimand." A "rebuke" may be simply an expression of strong disapproval and is often intended principally to get someone to stop some offensive or undesirable action or speech. (Compare Genesis 37:10; Job 11:3.) For example, when Jesus' disciples were acclaiming him as he made his way to Jerusalem, the Pharisees said to him,

1, 2. What results from response or failure to respond to God's reproof, and what do elders need in order to be wise reprovers? 3. What is a rebuke, and what is generally its purpose?

*"An earring of gold . . . is a wise reproof upon the hearing ear."* —Prov. 25:12.

"Teacher, rebuke your disciples," meaning, in effect, "Tell them to stop saying those things." Jesus replied that "if these remained silent, the stones would cry out." —Luke 19:39, 40.

For "rebuke" the inspired Gospel writer here used the Greek word *e-pi-ti-ma'o*. The Greek word corresponding to "reproval" is the word *e-leng'kho*. At Matthew 18:15 that word appears when Jesus says that "if your brother commits a sin, go lay bare his fault [Greek, *e-leng'kho*; Kingdom Interlinear, "reprove"] between you and him alone." (Compare Leviticus 19:17.) In a corresponding passage at Luke 17:3 Jesus is reported as saying, "If your brother commits a sin give him a rebuke [Greek, *e-pi-ti-ma'o*], and if he repents forgive him." Does that show that "rebuke" and "reproof" are interchangeable and mean essentially the same thing? It would be unwise to assume that on the basis of this single example. The way the Scriptures use the two terms reveals the distinction between them.

5 In the Christian Greek Scriptures, for example, we find Jesus 'rebuking' (*e-pi-ti-ma'o*) demons, telling them to 'be silent' and to 'get out' of persons that they were

4. Does a comparison of Matthew 18:15 and Luke 17:3 show that "rebuke" and "reproof" can be used interchangeably?

5, 6. What examples illustrate that these two terms are really distinct in meaning, and what does this indicate concerning their use in the two texts mentioned earlier?

possessing. (Matt. 17:18; Mark 1:25; 9:25; Luke 4:35, 41; 9:42) Nowhere do the Bible writers speak of the demons as being reproved (*e-leng'kho*) by Jesus. He also 'rebuked' the fever in Peter's mother-in-law, causing it to leave her; and, on the Sea of Galilee, he 'rebuked' the violent winds and raging sea, putting a stop to their threat of capsizing the boat in which he and his disciples were.—Luke 4:39; Matt. 8:26; Mark 4:39; Luke 8:24.

<sup>6</sup> It would be most inappropriate to try to substitute the word "reprove" (*e-leng'kho*) in the foregoing cases. One can rebuke even an animal. (Ps. 68:30) But, as we shall see, only humans who have the power of reason and qualities of heart and conscience can be reproved. So it appears that the use of the word "rebuke" at Luke 17:3, earlier referred to, simply illustrates that a reproof may be accompanied by or include a rebuke.

<sup>7</sup> To what, then, does the Greek word *e-leng'kho* (to reprove) refer? It is true that this word at one time was used in classical Greek to express the idea of "to disgrace" or "to shame." But Greek lexicons show that this was not how the word was generally used.\* And they show that in the Christian Greek Scriptures this is definitely not the dominant thought of the word. Note these definitions of *e-leng'kho* (to reprove) from Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*:

To "cross-examine, question, . . . accuse one of doing, . . . to be convicted. . . 2. test,

\* Robinson's *Lexicon of the New Testament* says of *e-leng'kho*: "to shame, to disgrace, only in Homer [a Greek poet of pre-Christian times]. . . . Usually and in N[ew] T[estament] to convince, . . . to refute, to prove one in the wrong."

Vincent's *Word Studies in the New Testament* says: "In earlier classical Greek it signifies to disgrace or put to shame . . . Then [later], to cross-examine or question, *for the purpose of convincing, convicting, or refuting. . . Of arguments, to bring to the proof; prove; prove by a chain of reasoning.*" (Italics ours)

7. What was the sense of the Greek word for "reprove" that the inspired Bible writers used, as that term was employed by people of their day?

bring to the proof. . . . 3. prove . . . bring convincing proof. . . . 4. refute, . . . b. put right, correct. . . . 5. get the better of. . . . 6. expose."

<sup>8</sup> These definitions are based largely on the way non-Biblical Greek writings use the word. But one thing is quite clear from these definitions. They all indicate that the person who has to be reproved manifests, if not an outright denial of any wrongdoing, at least an unwillingness to admit the wrong or some degree of failure to recognize the true nature of the wrong and the need to repent of it. Such a one shows that he needs to be "convinced" or "convicted" of the wrong. We will see why this point is an important one to remember.

<sup>9</sup> These definitions are borne out by the Bible's use of the Greek word. For example, note the text earlier referred to at Matthew 18:15 where Jesus says that "if your brother commits a sin, go *lay bare his fault* [*e-leng'kho*; "reprove (him)," *Kingdom Interlinear*] between you and him alone." It is for the very reason that the offender does not recognize or acknowledge his sin and repent of it that the offended one has to reprove him by laying bare his fault.

<sup>10</sup> Other scriptures where this word (*e-leng'kho*) is used also describe reproof of those who, up to that point, had not accepted correction, showing this by keeping on in their wrongdoing.—Compare Luke 3:19; John 3:20; Ephesians 5:6, 7, 11-14; 2 Timothy 4:24; Titus 1:9-13; 2 Peter 2:15, 16.

<sup>11</sup> By what means, then, are persons reproved? Reproving involves far more than simply making an accusation or express-

8. What does this show as to the basic reason why reproof was needed?

9, 10. How does the Bible also show that it is failure to recognize and repent of the wrong that makes reproof necessary?

11, 12. (a) What does the Scriptural way for reproving wrongdoers therefore include as an essential feature, and what is this to accomplish? (b) How can the difference between "rebuke" and "reproof" be illustrated in parental discipline of children?

ing condemnation of what someone has done (as in a rebuke). It therefore also involves much more than simply reading off an announcement that someone has engaged in wrong conduct. The Bible shows that reproof requires *the presentation of evidence or argument*. (Compare Hebrews 11:1, where the noun *e'leng-khos* is translated "evident demonstration" of realities.) So, in highlighting the difference between the Bible terms for "rebuke" and "reprove," Greek scholar Trench's *Synonyms of the New Testament* says:

"One may 'rebuke' another without bringing the rebuked to a conviction of any fault on his part; and this, either because there was no fault, and the rebuke was therefore unneeded or unjust [compare Matthew 16:22; 19:13; 20:31]; or else because, though there was such a fault, the rebuke was ineffectual to bring the offender to own it; and in this possibility of 'rebuking' for sin, without 'convincing' of sin, lies the distinction between these two words. . . . *e'leng-khos* [reproof] implies not merely the charge, but the truth of the charge, and the manifestation of the truth of the charge; nay more than all this, very often also the acknowledgment, if not outward, yet inward, of its truth on the side of the party accused. . . ."

<sup>12</sup> This difference might be compared to the parent who is satisfied with scolding a child to get it to stop something as compared to the parent who is willing to take the time to reason with the child and to help it to see why the wrong action is really bad and why the child should really want to avoid it. While rebukes have their place, often the need for reproof is greater.

<sup>13</sup> The presenting of evidence in giving reproof therefore may serve two purposes: It may be to prove that the person did indeed commit the act or acts of which he is accused, or it may be needed to demonstrate or 'bring home' to the individual just how wrong his course was. At John 16:8, 9 Jesus said that God's holy spirit

would "give the world convincing evidence [*e'leng'kho*; 'reprove,' *Int*] concerning sin . . . because they are not exercising faith in me." But as for himself, though his opposers might unjustly rebuke him, Jesus knew that they could never present "convincing evidence" of any sin on his part, and so he said to them: "Who of you convicts [*e'leng'kho*; 'is reproving,' *Int*] me of sin?"—John 8:46.

#### THE MOTIVE BEHIND CHRISTIAN REPROOF

<sup>14</sup> But this is not all. For God's servants, reproof means more than just demonstrating and proving that wrong has been committed (as is often the sense of the term in secular Greek writings). The Bible's use of the word is distinctive from its secular use. In what way? In that "reproof" in the Scriptures has a motive beyond just convicting wrongdoers or satisfying justice. Focusing on what that motive is, the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Vol. II) says (italics ours):

"The use of *e'leng'kho* in the N[ew] T[estament] is restricted. . . . It means 'to show someone his sin and to summon him to repentance.' This may be a private matter between two people, as in Mt. 18:15; Eph. 5:11. But it may also be a congregational affair under the leader, as in the Pastorals: 1 Tm. 5:20; 2 Tm. 4:2; Tt. 1:9, 13; 2:15. . . . The word does not mean only 'to blame' or 'to reprove,' nor 'to convince' in the sense of proof, nor 'to reveal' or 'expose,' but 'to set right,' namely, 'to point away from sin to repentance.'"

<sup>15</sup> Bible reproof, then, is not simply to shame or to express disapproval of someone's wrong action, as a rebuke may be. Instead of simply seeking to get someone to stop some wrong action, the aim of reproof is a positive one, namely, to reach the person's heart and cause him to come to hate that wrong. So any 'laying bare' of a person's wrong action is not simply

13. What two purposes does the evidence given in reproof serve?

14, 15. What, however, is the final aim of Christian reproof and its convincing evidence?

to expose him but to gain him as a brother and to try to keep him from being lost from the congregation because of sinking deeper into sin.—Matt. 18:15, 16.

#### **REPROVED BY OUR OWN HEARTS OR THROUGH THE HELP OF OTHERS**

<sup>16</sup> What, then, if a Christian commits some wrongdoing one or more times, but thereafter his conscience moves him to repent and he turns away from such wrongdoing, abandoning it? Does he still need someone to reprove him?

<sup>17</sup> Here we need to keep in mind the meaning of the word “reprove” (*e-leng'-kho*). We have seen that it can carry such thoughts as having to accuse and perhaps question or cross-examine a person, bringing him to the proof of his wrong, or refuting through convincing argument his wrong viewpoint about some admitted action, thereby convicting him in his own mind and heart. And all of this with a view to *bringing him to repentance*, so that he will not only stop the wrong practice but will not return to it.

<sup>18</sup> In the situation mentioned earlier, however, of one who repents of his sin and abandons it, has not the wrongdoer, in effect, already reproved himself? Yes, his own conscience does the accusing and God’s Word and spirit do the convicting and his heart moves him to repent and turn away from the wrongdoing. He does not require someone else to ‘lay bare his fault’ in order to get him to acknowledge and correct his wrong course.—Compare Psalm 16:7; Jeremiah 2:19.

<sup>19</sup> This was evidently the case with the apostle Peter. Jesus had warned Peter that he would deny his Lord three times. When the difficult circumstances of Jesus’ arrest and trial came, Peter showed weakness

16, 17. In answering the question as to the need to reprove one who has already abandoned wrongdoing, what factors should be kept in mind?

18. Can a person be reproved by his own heart, and, if so, how?

19. What example do we find of this in Peter’s actions?

and did indeed deny Jesus on three occasions. Yet, it took only a glance from Jesus to reach Peter’s heart and cause him to go out and weep bitterly in repentance for what he had done. His own heart and his memory of Jesus’ earlier words had reproved him. Peter’s course from then on testified to his determination not to be guilty again of a similar grave wrong. Some weeks later Jesus saw fit to use Peter as one of the ‘foundation stones’ in forming the Christian congregation.—Luke 22:54-62.

<sup>20</sup> This does not mean that one may not need help in such cases. Though there may be the determination not to return to some wrong, there may well be the need of help by others to strengthen that resolve. Jehovah God has provided brothers to help us in that way.—Prov. 17:17; Luke 22:31, 32; Gal. 6:2.

<sup>21</sup> Different from Peter, at an earlier time King David needed someone to reprove him. He had committed misdeeds of a very serious kind, resulting in great harm to others. Yet he had not faced up to the wrongness of his course and, instead, had sought ways to cover over his wrongdoing. For that reason God sent the prophet Nathan to reprove David. Nathan did this by using a powerful and graphic illustration that depicted a situation paralleling David’s. Incensed at the selfishness of the man portrayed in Nathan’s illustration, David condemned the man’s cruel lack of compassion. Nathan then shocked David by saying, “You yourself are the man!” Seeing his actions in their true light and understanding and feeling keenly how base they really were, David now repented. To fail to do so would have made him a fit subject for death, as he himself had admitted.—2 Sam. 12:1-13.

20, 21. (a) Even though determined not to return to wrongdoing, of what provision can a person wisely avail himself? (b) Why did David need reproof, and how did Nathan give this to him?

<sup>22</sup> In one of his psalms, David expressed the right attitude toward reproof, saying: "Should the righteous one strike me, it would be a loving-kindness; and should he reprove me, it would be oil upon the head, which my head would not want to refuse." (Ps. 141:5) Further, in Psalm 32: 1-6, David described the agonizing suffering he personally experienced due to failing to seek Jehovah's pardon for sins committed and the blessed relief that repentance and confession to God brought him.

<sup>23</sup> To be wise reprovers, congregational shepherds also need to keep in mind that, just as wrongdoing can vary widely in gravity, so too reproof may have a wide range of degrees of severity. (Compare Galatians 6:1; 2 Timothy 2:24-26 with Titus 1:13.) Even those who are making a fine record as servants of God may at times need reproof on some wrong viewpoint, speech or action.

<sup>24</sup> That was true of Peter on a later oc-

22. How does David express a fine attitude toward reproof and also show the great benefits that repentance brings?

23. What will wise reprovers recognize, and how do the texts cited in this paragraph illustrate this?

24, 25. Is it possible for faithful servants of God also to need reproof, and what good results do they obtain from this?

WHEN counseling his fellow worker Timothy as to how he should deal with problems in Ephesus, where some were stirring up fruitless discussions and contradictory teachings, the apostle Paul included these words: "Reprove before all onlookers persons who practice sin, that the rest also may

1, 2. What instructions did Paul give Timothy while Timothy was in Ephesus, and what questions does this raise?

casion. Galatians 2:11-14 relates that when he went to Antioch in Syria he fraternized with uncircumcised non-Jews, eating meals with them. But when certain men from the Jerusalem congregation (men who evidently still held to the idea of Jewish separateness) came to Antioch, Peter stopped associating with Christian Gentiles. The apostle Paul, seeing this erroneous course and its bad effects on other Jewish believers, felt obligated to reprove Peter. By sound argument he showed Peter the wrongness of his course, doing so publicly in the hearing of those present. There can be no doubt that Peter accepted this reproof and he later refers to Paul with warm appreciation.—2 Pet. 3:15, 16.

<sup>25</sup> Yes, as Proverbs 9:8, 9 says: "Give a reproof to a wise person and he will love you. Give to a wise person and he will become still wiser." There "should be a reproving of the understanding one, that he may discern knowledge," as was the case with Peter. May we, then, always have our ears open to receive the wise "reproofs of discipline" that are the "way of life" to all those loving God and his righteousness.—Prov. 19:25; 6:23; 25:12.

## REPROVING Persons Who Practice Sin

"Reprove before all onlookers persons who practice sin, that the rest also may have fear."

—1 Tim. 5:20.

have fear."—1 Tim. 5:20; 1:3-7; 6:3-5.

<sup>26</sup> What did the apostle mean by 'practicing sin'? Would engaging in some wrong more than just once automatically make one a 'practicer' of sin?

## **DETERMINING WHO ARE 'PRACTICERS' OF SIN**

<sup>3</sup> Going back to the language (Greek) in which Paul wrote, we find that the expression "practice sin" is *ha-marta'non-tas*, the present active participle of the verb "to sin" in Greek. What does that tell us? Note what Bible commentaries say (italics added for emphasis):

*The Expositors' Greek Testament* says:

"... the use of the present participle suggests that habitual sinners are under discussion. . . . Paul is speaking of persistent sinners."

Schaff-Lange's *Critical Doctrinal and Homiletical Commentary* states: "The sinful persons are represented as still at the time living in sin, whence the present [form of the verb] is used where otherwise the perfect [form] would be expected."

<sup>4</sup> Paul therefore used a form of the verb that describes present, not past, action, that relates to a course that is continuing, not one that has been abandoned. Recognizing this, various Bible translations contain renderings such as these:

*Young*: "Those sinning . . ."

*Rotherham*: "But them who are sinning . . ."

*Knox*: "... those who are living amiss."

*Revised Standard Version*: "As for those who persist in sin . . ."

*New American Standard*: "Those who continue in sin . . ."

<sup>5</sup> There can be no doubt that each time a sin is repeated, the gravity of the wrongdoing grows. And anyone who extends his sinning over a prolonged period certainly is making a practice of it. However, from the information earlier presented we can see why the sole fact that a person has committed a certain wrong more than once, perhaps two or three times, would not of itself place him among those whom Paul describes as "persons who practice

sin."<sup>6</sup> The vital question is, Has the person turned away from the wrongdoing, abandoning it? Or is it a continuing thing, a persisting course? If the latter is the case, then the individual does fit the apostle's description.

<sup>6</sup> Other texts using the present form of the Greek verbs illustrate the point. At Matthew 7:7, for example, the present (imperative) form of the verb appears three times in Greek, and the *New World Translation* renders it in this way:

*"Keep on asking, and it will be given you; keep on seeking, and you will find; keep on knocking, and it will be opened to you."*

<sup>7</sup> Jesus surely did not mean that just as long as we ask God for something more than once—perhaps a couple of times—that we thereby fulfill this exhortation. No, but we are to *keep on, persist* in asking, seeking and knocking.

<sup>8</sup> So 1 Timothy 5:20 speaks of sinning that requires reproof before all onlookers for the very reason that it is being persisted in, not discontinued. From this it seems evident that the apostle is not describing persons who may have committed some wrong act one or more times but who thereafter have repented and truly abandoned such wrongdoing.

## **NOT HOLDING BACK IN SEEKING NEEDED HELP**

<sup>9</sup> Is there any reason, then, for a congregation member who has slipped into some wrongdoing, whether of a sexual or any other kind, and who has sincerely repented of such wrongdoing, to feel hesitant about seeking the aid of elders so as to be fortified against any future slipping back into the wrongdoing? In answer, note what the disciple James counsels at James 5:14-16:

3, 4. What is the meaning of the Greek expression that Paul here used, and how do certain translations therefore read?

5. (a) What results from repetition of sin? (b) Nevertheless, what is the most important factor in determining who are rightly described as "persons who practice sin"?

6, 7. How does Matthew 7:7 illustrate what is meant by 'practicing' something?

8. Who, then, are referred to at 1 Timothy 5:20, and who are not?

9. What shows that a repentant wrongdoer should never hold back from seeking the aid of Christian elders?

"Is there anyone sick among you? Let him call the older men of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him, greasing him with oil in the name of Jehovah. And the prayer of faith will make the indisposed one well, and Jehovah will raise him up. Also, if he has committed sins [plural, hence showing that more than one instance of sinning could be involved], it will be forgiven him. Therefore openly confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may get healed."—Compare Psalm 41:1-4.

<sup>10</sup> How encouraging toward 'openly confessing sins to one another' if the sincerely repentant wrongdoer knows that those to whom he confesses are primarily interested in helping him "get healed" of his spiritual illness. On the other hand, if such a repentant one felt that they would automatically deal with him as meriting a reprimand before the whole congregation as a 'practicer of sin,' the effect might be quite different.

<sup>11</sup> To illustrate: A man who occasionally drank to excess before becoming a Christian might be alone for a period of several days in his home. During that time, he might overindulge in wine or beer to the point of intoxication, perhaps doing it twice within a few days. Then he might feel very ashamed and sincerely regret what he had done. Realizing that he was starting to lapse back into his old ways, he might very much want the help of the elders so as to be strengthened in his resolve not to repeat the wrong. If he thought that, because the wrong was committed more than once, the elders would automatically find it necessary to publicize his wrongdoing to the congregation, he might be very hesitant to seek their aid.

<sup>12</sup> Such an attitude could create a bar-

10, 11. (a) Knowing that the elders' desire is to bring healing should have what effect on the repentant wrongdoer? (b) Illustrate this.

12. What barrier should not exist, and what will keep it from arising?

rier between the congregational shepherds and those seriously needing their help to overcome a drift into continued wrongdoing. On the other hand, where confidence existed that the elders would take into account one's sincerity in turning away from the wrong and being desirous of *never* going back to it, this would surely be an encouragement to go to the elders, responding to their help as would an ailing sheep to that of his shepherd.—Contrast Psalm 23:1-5 with Ezekiel 34:4.

<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the elders may hear of serious wrongdoing from a source other than the person involved. As shepherds, their concern for the spiritual health of this member of the flock would move them to talk with him about what they have heard. They may find that he appreciates their help but did not seek it because of shyness or due to feeling too ashamed or for similar reasons of a personal nature. They may even find that he has already repented of the wrong and has stopped the wrong course.

<sup>14</sup> Where the elders are satisfied that such a one has genuinely been reproved by his or her own heart and conscience and through the power of God's Word, then their efforts can be directed toward building up that person to spiritual health. They would give sound Scriptural counsel designed to strengthen the repentant one against any repetition of the wrongdoing and would impress upon him the seriousness of the situation. They would help him to appreciate more fully the danger of 'letting down his guard' even momentarily, and the need to 'keep working out his own salvation with fear and trembling.'—Phil. 2:12.

13. Why may elders at times have to take the initiative as regards an erring one?

14. Where satisfied that the wrongdoer has been thoroughly reproved by his own heart, what will the elders still do?

#### **EXERCISING BALANCE AND JUDGMENT IN WEIGHING THE NEED**

<sup>15</sup> In any case of serious wrongdoing, however, whether the repentant one seeks their help or they, instead, go to him, the congregational elders would want to be satisfied that there is sincere repentance and that he is earnestly endeavoring to hold to a right course. If the person's own heart has not reproved him and moved him to abandon the wrong, then the elders have the duty to endeavor to help to bring about these needed things.

<sup>16</sup> Thus, while the number of times a wrong has been done is certainly a serious factor to be considered and weighed, it is not in every case the determining factor as to a person's need for Scriptural reproof. A person may have committed fornication just one time. But if he has not sincerely repented of that wrong he is still a 'practicer' of fornication. How so? In that he has not rejected or repudiated that wrong way in his heart. Jesus said that a man looking at a woman with passion for her was committing adultery with her in his heart. (Matt. 5:28) So, if an individual still looks back on some sinful act with a measure of pleasure rather than with detestation and deep regret and a determination to avoid repeating it, he still has that sin in his heart. He has not been cleansed from sin by God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ and so is still unclean. (1 John 1:9; 2:1) He will likely engage in that wrong again if opportunity affords and he feels he can get away with it.

<sup>17</sup> There is therefore good reason for elders to weigh claims of repentance carefully where the individual has shown himself to be guilty of hypocrisy, lying and deliberate efforts to deceive, or where it

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15. What, then, determines the direction the elders' efforts will take?
  16. Can one who commits a sin just one time be a 'practicer' of that sin? If so, how?
  17. Toward whom in particular must elders exercise much caution as to claims of repentance?

is apparent that the wrong act was preceded by deliberate scheming, perhaps in a coldly calculating way. This is quite different from an individual's 'caving in' due to human weakness under the unexpected pressure of certain tempting circumstances. A case in point is that of Ananias and his wife Sapphira, who schemed together to deceive, 'purposing the wrong act in their hearts.'—Acts 5:1-11.

<sup>18</sup> Thus, if a married man secretly flirts with another woman, all the while putting on a pretense of being clean and perhaps even accepting sacred responsibilities within the congregation, and then actually abandons his wife and elopes with the other woman, should the elders hesitate in disfellowshipping such an individual from the congregation? Obviously not. When the apostle Paul learned of a man who was living with the woman who evidently still was the wife of his father, Paul recommended prompt action on the part of the congregation to "remove the wicked man from among yourselves." (1 Cor. 5:1-5, 12, 13) Likewise, the elders would exercise real caution in accepting a plea for reinstatement from such an individual, since he has given them little basis for trusting his word as sincere and genuine. If, later, he is reinstated, they certainly should exercise great caution in the future as to giving him any responsibility in the congregation.

<sup>19</sup> By contrast with such ones, a congregation member may go to an elder for help and may inform him that he is still at that time struggling with a problem. Though he has not yet been able to conquer the wrong entirely, he may show a sincere heart desire to do so, and, unless

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18. (a) Where wrongdoing is carried out in a flagrant, brazen manner, need elders hesitate in taking disfellowshipping action? What shows this? (b) If one who openly flouted righteous standards is later reinstated due to genuine repentance, what great caution should still be exercised?
  19. How could one who has not yet overcome a problem of wrongdoing still show a better heart desire than those described earlier?

there is other evidence to put this in doubt, the congregation shepherds will aid him accordingly. He is certainly much different from one who schemes to deceive or who tries to justify a wrong course.

—Ps. 51:1-3, 10, 17.

<sup>20</sup> The person who persists in wrong-doing generally excuses himself in his own mind, even convinces himself that God will condone what he is doing. (Compare Psalm 36:2; 50:17-21.) What is still worse, he may influence others toward such a course. Proverbs 10:17 says: "He that is holding to discipline is a path to life, but he that is leaving reproof is causing to wander." For his own good and for the good of all, he needs to be brought to account and straightened out.

#### **REPROVING WITH ALL LONG-SUFFERING AND ART OF TEACHING**

<sup>21</sup> Where circumstances show that there is need for reproof, how do the congregational shepherds proceed? If the wrong is not acknowledged, the elders are obliged to present the wrongdoer with the "convincing evidence" of his wrong course. They cannot do this if all they have is mere hearsay. (Compare John 16:8; Isaiah 11:3.) They may find it necessary to ask questions in order to establish vital facts. Reproving, however, especially requires that they use Scriptural evidence and argument to refute any thinking on his part that such a sinful course could be excusable in God's eyes. They should seek to help him to see the wrong in its true colors and why it merits his hate. (Heb. 1:9) Thereby they correct and help him to get "set straight." Their aim as shepherds is to bring him to repentance and an abandoning of the wrong course, not only in deed but in mind and heart.

—Titus 1:9; Jas. 1:25; 2:8, 9.

20. What self-deception does the persistor in sin engage in, and why is he a danger to the congregation?

21. When reproof is needed, what is the Scriptural way for elders to give this?

<sup>22</sup> Keeping in focus the purpose of reproof, the elders will not view themselves merely as a fact-finding or guilt-establishing body. They do not simply rebuke a wrongdoer (though their reproof may include a rebuke). They have the noble and loving goal of 'turning back a sinner from the error of his ways in order to save a soul from death.' (Jas. 5:19, 20) Surely they should not feel rushed, as if their efforts to attain that goal must be limited to a single discussion on a certain date. If they feel that more time is needed, they may recommend that the person think and pray about what they have said, and then they could arrange to talk with him again. This may give their words of counsel and reproof opportunity to sink into his mind and heart. And even after they do arrive at some conclusion (after one or several talks with him), they will recognize that bringing him to restored spiritual health may require their further attention and aid for a period of time. But they will have the satisfaction of knowing that, as 2 Timothy 4:2 says, they have reproved and exhorted "with all long-suffering and art of teaching." The time and effort spent are well worth it.\*

<sup>23</sup> The fact that a person has reproved himself in his own heart does not necessarily mean that he would continue to exercise all the same functions in the congregation that he had been doing. Just as a person recovering from a physical ailment is not able to carry the same weight

\* At Isaiah 1:18, where the Hebrew word corresponding to *e'leng'kho* is used, Jehovah says to Israel: "Come, now, you people, and let us set matters straight [‘let us talk this over,’ *Jerusalem Bible*; ‘let us argue it out,’ *New English Bible*] between us,” says Jehovah. “Though the sins of you people should prove to be as scarlet, they will be made white just like snow.”

22. How will the ultimate objective of Christian reproof guide the elders in their efforts, and how can they fulfill the instruction to reprove “with all long-suffering and art of teaching”?

23. (a) Will those who repent and turn from wrong-doing necessarily continue to exercise all the congregational functions that they did before? Why? (b) What factors will the elders weigh in all cases?

as others, so it may be with him. The elders may judge it advisable not to use such a one in matters of responsibility for a time, perhaps feeling that this restriction could contribute to the person's becoming 'readjusted.' (Gal. 6:1) And in the case of one who repents only as a result of being reproved by others, that is, after being convinced of a sinful course in order to bring him to genuine repentance, then the removal of responsibility or privileges could follow as contributing to a "disciplining in righteousness." (2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 12:5, 6) In all cases, the elders must weigh such factors as the seriousness of the wrong committed, the length of time that has passed since it occurred, the circumstances that led up to it, and the extent to which a measure of willfulness was shown or there was failure to give heed to earlier warning counsel.

<sup>24</sup> Truly, all of this calls for balance and judgment, discernment and understanding. Elders must weigh carefully both the interests of the individual and of those of the congregation as a whole. On the one hand, they must feel keenly their obligation before God to prevent wrongdoing from infiltrating and spreading within the congregation. At the same time they must show just as deep concern that their manner of dealing with their brothers always reflects Jehovah God's own wise and merciful ways.—Compare Acts 20:28-31; Jude 3, 4, 21-23.

<sup>25</sup> What, then, of Paul's instruction to reprove those persisting in sin "before all onlookers"? Let us examine how this instruction is to be carried out.

24, 25. (a) What do these Bible principles call on elders to exercise, and how? (b) What now remains to be considered?

## GIVING REPROOF

### "Before All Onlookers"

WHAT, then, of Paul's instructions to Timothy to reprove "before all onlookers" [literally, in Greek, "in the sight of all"]<sup>1</sup> those who persist in sinning? This has a definite purpose, namely, that "the rest also may have fear," that is, fear of coming into the same course of sinning. (1 Tim. 5:20) What circumstances, then, call for reproofing in this manner, and

how can it be done "in the sight of all"?

<sup>2</sup> The phrase "before all onlookers" or "in the sight of all" is not specific as to its application. It could mean that the reproof is given before the entire congregation or it could mean that reproof is given before all those who are in some way involved in or aware of the matter, including witnesses to the wrong-

1. According to 1 Timothy 5:20, those who persist in sinning are to be reproved before whom, and why?

2-4. What can be said as to the application of the phrase "before all onlookers," and what Bible examples illustrate this?

"The ridiculer you should strike, that the inexperienced one may become shrewd; and there should be a reproving of the understanding one, that he may discern knowledge."—Prov. 19:25.

doing, and who are present when the wrongdoer is reproved. Whatever the case, it is evident that the reproof was to be of a public nature rather than purely a private affair.\*

<sup>3</sup> The same Greek phrase found at 1 Timothy 5:20 is also used at Luke 8:45 concerning the woman healed of a flow of blood by Jesus. The account says that she "disclosed before all [Greek, "in the sight of all"] the people the cause for which she touched him." This clearly does not mean that she did this before the entire city population (possibly Capernaum) but before those in the crowd who happened to be there and who heard Jesus ask: "Who was it that touched me?"—Luke 8:43-47.

<sup>4</sup> Somewhat similarly, the apostle Paul says of his reproofing Peter in Antioch: "But when I saw they were not walking straight according to the truth of the good news, I said to Cephas [Peter] before them all . . ." While "before them all" could here mean before the whole congregation gathered in assembly, the pronoun "them" could also refer back to those whom Paul had just mentioned, "those who were not walking straight according to the truth of the good news." It could mean that he spoke his reproof in a gathering other than a congregational meeting, perhaps at a meal, where Jewish

\* A number of translations use the word "public" or "publicly" in translating 1 Timothy 5:20. However, several of these would also limit the "sinners" referred to as being from among the elders mentioned in the previous verse (verse 19). Knox's translation, for example, which says, "Give a public rebuke to those who are living amiss," has a footnote, saying: "To those," probably meaning "to those presbyters [elders]"; and the direction that they are to be rebuked in public is best understood as meaning "Before the other presbyters." With regard to the application of the phrase "before all" as applying either to "all the elders" or to "all in the congregation," Schaff-Lange's commentary states: "Grammatically, one is as allowable as the other." We draw attention to these points only to show that the application of the phrase at 1 Timothy 5:20 "before all onlookers" (or, "in the sight of all") grammatically can allow for more than one application: to a large group, such as an assembled congregation, or to a smaller group, such as a body of elders.

believers were, like Peter, segregating themselves.—Gal. 2:11-14.

<sup>5</sup> Since we cannot be dogmatic as to just how comprehensive the phrase "before all onlookers" is in its application, it would seem that the *need existing* should guide in the way it is applied. If reproof needs to be brought to the attention of the whole congregation, then this should be done. If not, then it should be given before all who are concerned in the matter or who are for some reason in need of having the reproof in order to benefit therefrom.

#### GODLY LOVE GUIDES

<sup>6</sup> There are Scriptural principles that rule against *unnecessary* publicizing of others' trespasses and sins. The Bible as a whole shows that love should generally move one to cover over the sins of one's brother rather than deliberately drawing attention to them. (Compare Proverbs 10:12; 11:12, 13; 16:27; 17:9; 1 Peter 4:8.) Jehovah speaks of reproving the one who, besides committing other wrongs, has exposed or 'given away a fault' against his own brother. (Ps. 50:20, 21) God's Son gave the divine rule that applies in all cases: "All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them." (Matt. 7:12) None of us would want to have our faults aired publicly if *no real need existed*. On the other hand, if our brothers *needed* to hear something for their own good, we would have to put ourselves in their place and recognize that we ourselves would not want to have necessary information withheld from us.

<sup>7</sup> Where genuine need is lacking, the publicizing of others' faults can cause much unnecessary hurt. To illustrate, consider an attractive young woman whose

5. In the absence of a specific Scriptural rule, what will guide us in this application?

6. According to the Scriptures, what controlling effect does love exercise in these matters?

7, 8. Illustrate how an unnecessary publicizing of another's wrongdoing could cause much needless hurt.

work involved traveling and who engaged in some wrongdoing a number of times while away on a trip. Suppose the elders were to hear of this from someone else and, in view of the young woman's failure to approach them of her own accord, after talking with her and determining that the report was true, they then decided to make an announcement before the congregation that they had reproved her, giving her name. What would the congregation think? Suppose some assumed that the wrong was of a sexual nature, whereas in reality something else had happened. On this particular trip the young woman found herself near her home and used the opportunity to visit her family of non-Witnesses. She used to smoke and, influenced by their smoking habits, she weakened and also smoked a number of times. Actually, then, an announcement to the congregation that simply names her as reproved could cause many to develop a very distorted picture of her, resulting from unwarranted assumptions and false conjecture.

<sup>8</sup> A similar situation might involve a husband who indulges in alcoholic beverages to the point of intoxication while at home, doing so a couple of times. Again, if an announcement of reproof were made before the congregation, some in the audience might wrongly suppose that the husband was an adulterer or guilty of some other serious sin quite far from the reality of the matter. How much genuine benefit—for the individuals and for the congregation—would such publicity actually accomplish, and would it really outweigh the hurt produced?

<sup>9</sup> The principle of not publicizing a person's fault beyond what the need requires would also seem to find support from the general procedure followed in fleshly Is-

rael under the Law covenant. The Bible regulations and accounts indicate that cases of wrongdoing came before the city elders at the gates primarily when controversies were involved, as in cases where an offender would not acknowledge having wronged another, and also when the community as a whole was seriously affected or endangered by the wrongdoing.—See *Aid to Bible Understanding*, pp. 384, 385, 1053, 1054.

<sup>10</sup> The expression used by the apostle at 1 Timothy 5:20, "that the rest also may have fear," calls to mind references in the Law covenant to strong action taken against certain wrongdoers, the phrase there being used, that "all Israel will hear and become afraid, and they will not do anything like this bad thing again in your midst." But it is noteworthy that the sins involved were either such as could cause grave danger to the community, including the fomenting and advocating of apostasy, sins that called for the death penalty, or they were sins that had already become public knowledge, such as the bearing of false witness in open court.—Deut. 13:6-11; 17:8-13; 19:15-20.

<sup>11</sup> Jesus' instructions at Matthew 18:15-17 also point to a proper concern that private problems be kept private where possible. The related passage at Luke 17:3, 4 indicates that this counsel deals with sins committed by one individual against another. Jesus said that the one sinned against was not to broadcast the matter but, rather, was to go to the offender and straighten out the matter in private. This could have a good effect, the wrongdoer noting the considerateness shown in not advertising the matter and thereby his becoming more receptive to reproof. Even though private efforts failed, the matter was still not to be spread around but, in-

9, 10. (a) What does the handling of cases of wrongdoing in Israel indicate as to the publicizing of an individual's faults? (b) It was about strong action relating to what kind of sins that the Israelites were to hear and develop fear?

11, 12. What attitude does Jesus encourage at Matthew 18:15-17 regarding the serious sins that his counsel embraced?

stead, the one sinned against would take along one or two others in a further effort. Only if this small group also failed would the matter be brought "to the congregation" (evidently meaning its representative members, the elders; compare Numbers 35:12, 24, 25 with Deuteronomy 19:12; Joshua 20:4).

<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that the sins contemplated in Jesus' counsel were actually serious sins, since he said that failure to respond to congregational reproof would lead to disfellowshiping. (Matt. 18:17) And yet, despite their seriousness, these sins were not to be publicized any more than the circumstances demanded. And, while this counsel directly relates to sins by one individual against another, it seems evident that the principle that God's Son gave of avoiding unnecessary publicity should apply in all cases, whatever the particular type of wrongdoing involved.

<sup>13</sup> From all the Scriptural evidence it would seem that occasions where sinning needs to be reproved before the entire congregation would be limited to cases of serious wrongdoing that are, or are certain to become, general knowledge, or to cases where more private efforts at bringing about repentance and a turning away from wrongdoing have brought uncertain results and it is felt that a potential danger remains for the congregation, a danger against which they need to be warned in order to protect themselves.\* Where the

\* Many Bible commentators, in discussing 1 Timothy 5:20, make expressions along this line. That of Albert Barnes says: ". . . the direction here refers to the manner in which an offender should be treated who has been proved to be guilty, and where the case has become public. Then there is to be a public expression of disapprobation." The commentary of Schaff-Lange says: "The nature of the case itself requires that *hamar-ta'notas* should be specially understood of grosser crimes; indeed, of those which justly cause scandal." Henry's *Bible Commentary* observes: "Public, scandalous sinners must be rebuked publicly; as their sin has been public, and committed before many, or at least come to the hearing of all, so their reproof must be public, and before all."

13. In summary, when should sinning logically be reproved before an entire congregation, and when should this be done "with severity"? *From Helmut and Agnes*

wrongdoing is a source of widespread trouble for the congregation, the reproof needs to be "with severity" and persisted in until the wrongs are cleaned out.—Titus 1:13.

#### DELIVERING PUBLIC REPROOF

<sup>14</sup> Effective reproof of persistent wrongdoing requires the use of convincing evidence from God's Word. To read off an announcement before a group that a person "has been reproved" could not of itself be a case of 'reproving him before all onlookers.' The announcement in fact says that he "has been reproved," showing that the reproof is something that was done in the past—and evidently not in the presence of those hearing the announcement, for otherwise they would not need to hear such announcement. The announcement could be called a 'rebuking before all onlookers' but is not of itself reproof. It is an accusation or exposure, true, but not one accompanied by the convincing evidence that characterizes reproof. To give true reproof before the congregation, God's Word must be brought forcefully to bear on the particular kind of sinning involved. This is vital if a godly fear of falling into such wrong is to be built up in the hearers.

—2 Tim. 4:2.

<sup>15</sup> Is an actual naming of the person at fault required in order to reprove him "before all onlookers"? Since the Scriptures themselves give no indication that naming is involved, it would seem that this too would depend upon the need existing. That reproof can be given at a public gathering without identifying by name the one or ones reproved is evident, however.

<sup>16</sup> For example, in his first letter to the Corinthians the apostle Paul describes an outsider's coming into a Christian meeting. This stranger may not previously have

14. Why is it that an announcement simply stating that someone has been reproved does not really fulfill the instruction to 'reprove before all onlookers'? What is needed?

15, 16. Is the naming of a person essential for reproofing him "before all onlookers," and how does 1 Corinthians 14:23-25 demonstrate this?

realized the wrongness of his past actions and life course. He felt no need for repentance. But the apostle says that, upon hearing those at the meeting speak God's truth, this person is "reproved [convinced of his sin, *An American Translation*] by them all, he is closely examined by all; the secrets of his heart become manifest." It is not that all those present call out his name, since he is a stranger to them. But the powerful truths they speak cause him to see himself in a new light and stir his heart to repentance.—1 Cor. 14:23-25.

<sup>17</sup> Writing to Titus on the island of Crete, Paul admonished him to "keep on reproofing [certain ones] with severity, that they may be healthy in the faith." The reason these needed severe reproof was that they were troublemakers in the congregation. They were 'contradictory, unruly, profitless talkers and deceivers of the mind, who subverted entire households by teaching things they ought not'; others were given to lying and laziness. In order to "keep on" or *persist* in reproofing them, it seems unlikely that Titus would repeatedly read off certain names with periodic announcements that these were engaging in wrong conduct. Rather, in private and in public meetings, he would persistently focus God's Word and its commands on these wrongs. Thereby the congregation would be able to identify any who engaged in these as a bad influence against which to protect themselves. Strong Scriptural counsel would help the whole congregation to have a healthy fear of sharing in such practices.—Titus 1:9-13; compare 2 Timothy 4:2-4; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15.\*

\* While certain individuals are unfavorably named in the writings of Paul and John, it may be noted that this was in letters written to individuals and for the purpose of warning them against apostates or persons actively opposing the work of the apostles. (1 Tim. 1:19, 20; 2 Tim. 1:15; 4:10, 14, 15; 3 John 9) By contrast, many letters written by the inspired writers contain much reproof that was clearly needed but the offenders are left unnamed.—Compare Romans 2:1-4, 17-24; 1 Corinthians 1:11-13; 3:1-4; 15:12; James 2:1-9.

17. Why did some in Crete need severe reproof, and how could Titus 'keep on reproofing them'?

<sup>18</sup> Undoubtedly most cases where congregation members fall into wrongdoing can be handled in a private way by the congregation shepherds. But if they have reason to believe that others may be tempted into the same kind of sin they should devote time in their meetings to reproof of that kind of wrongdoing. If a matter is of public knowledge or involves scandal, they should most certainly do so.

<sup>19</sup> If they feel that the circumstances demand it they could even name the person (though doing so apart from any talk on the subject), stating that they have reproved him. Where scandal is involved, this would enable the congregation members to defend the congregation against those who might accuse it of condoning wrongdoing. And even where the wrongdoing is not widely known, or has been practised in a secretive way, the elders might find it necessary to do this. For example, a young man may have engaged in certain indecent conduct (not necessarily fornication) with several young women, going from one to the other. Upon being reproved, he may express repentance. Yet the elders may still feel certain reservations about him. He may have had to be counseled in the past and may thus show some lack of determination to avoid wrongdoing. The elders may feel that the flock needs some statement to alert all, and particularly the younger sisters, that there is a need for a measure of caution in association with the young man. They may announce that they have reproved him, stating his name.

<sup>20</sup> Of course, where a brief statement is made in this manner, if the wrong itself was done in a secretive way, most of the

18. What circumstances would particularly call for reproofing wrongdoing in congregation meetings?

19. Under what circumstances might elders feel it advisable to make a brief announcement and name the wrongdoer?

20. When only a brief announcement is made, what also is needed for the congregation to "have fear" of falling into similar wrongdoing?

congregation will have no idea of what kind of wrongdoing to be on guard against. They could hardly be expected to "have fear" of engaging in something if they do not know what it is. So at another meeting an elder could give Scriptural information dealing with the particular kind of wrongdoing involved, showing how it is that people are led into it and why it is so condemnable and harmful, as well as giving sound counsel on ways to fortify oneself against falling into such a snare. On the occasion of such a talk, however, there would be no names mentioned.

<sup>21</sup> In fact, elders might find that such a talk is all that is needed, for even though no name has been announced at an earlier meeting, the talk may suffice to provide all the information the congregation members need to defend themselves should the individual approach them and again engage in tactics like those described in the talk. Or, consider the case where an act of immorality results in a pregnancy out of wedlock or leads to a divorce on grounds of adultery. A talk showing how an individual can become involved in sexual wrongs could include the warning that 'we should not feel this cannot happen to us, for it *has* happened in our congregation and we regret to say that it is now producing these unhappy results.' Though no name was given, either before, during or after the talk, the congregation would know, when seeing the resulting pregnancy or the divorce action, that reproof had indeed been given.

<sup>22</sup> As shepherds, congregational elders

21. Even where no name is mentioned, how could congregation members be protected against wrongdoers or be made aware that those whose sinning produces obvious aftereffects have indeed been reproved before all?

22. (a) What Scriptural responsibility do elders have regarding wrongdoing and those engaging in it? (b) Though mercy is shown, why does the one sinning always pay for his sinning?

can heal, reprove, reprimand (rebuke, 2 Timothy 4:2, *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*), can readjust and discipline by their use of God's Word. (Gal. 6:1; 2 Tim. 3:16; Jas. 5:14-16) They can also "rebuke" by disfellowshipping unrepentant ones. (1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 2:6-8) Mercy may be shown by the congregation, but this does not mean that sinners can ever 'get away with it.' For though repentance may gain one Jehovah's mercy, sin will bring its inescapable consequences. The natural outworkings of sinful action always produce hurt—whether minor or major—to the wrongdoer in a mental, emotional or even physical and material way. But for what he suffers he has no one but himself to blame. He is reaping what he has sown.—Gal. 6:7, 8.

<sup>23</sup> Wisely, then, let us all strive to be "sowing," not to the fallen flesh and its corrupt tendencies, but to the spirit, knowing that we can "reap everlasting life from the spirit." Yes, "let us not give up in doing what is fine, for in due season we shall reap if we do not tire out" in pursuing the righteousness that assures God's smile of approval and his rich blessings.—Gal. 6:8, 9.

23. What is the wise course for all of us to take with confidence and endurance?

## IN COMING ISSUES

- Gain the Promised Eternal Life—Exercise Faith!
- A New Year—Time for a Change?
- Will You Shun Ambition?

## **INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS, 1978**

God's Word clearly states that the "scene of this world is changing." (1 Cor. 7:31) Despite the increasing uncertainty and tension as the present system of things nears its end, the activity of God's people must move ahead in having the "everlasting good news" declared in all the earth. (Rev. 14:6) Therefore, if it be Jehovah's will, a series of international conventions will be held during the year 1978. Announcement at this time will provide opportunity for the brothers to make vacation plans and other essential preparations.

In a five-day program will be presented at each convention. In the northern hemisphere the conventions will likely fall within the months of June, July and August, and in the southern hemisphere during the months of December 1978 and January 1979. There will be a limited number of large conventions in the United States, Canada and other large countries. Also, group movements of delegates will be arranged for travel to specific regions abroad, such as the Caribbean, Central America, South America, Scandinavia, Europe, West Africa, Asia, South Pacific, and Israel.

IN COMING ISSUES

- Will You Spend All Night?
  - Time for a Guards
  - A New Year -
  - Exercise Equipment
  - Healthy Life -
  - Girls the Promised