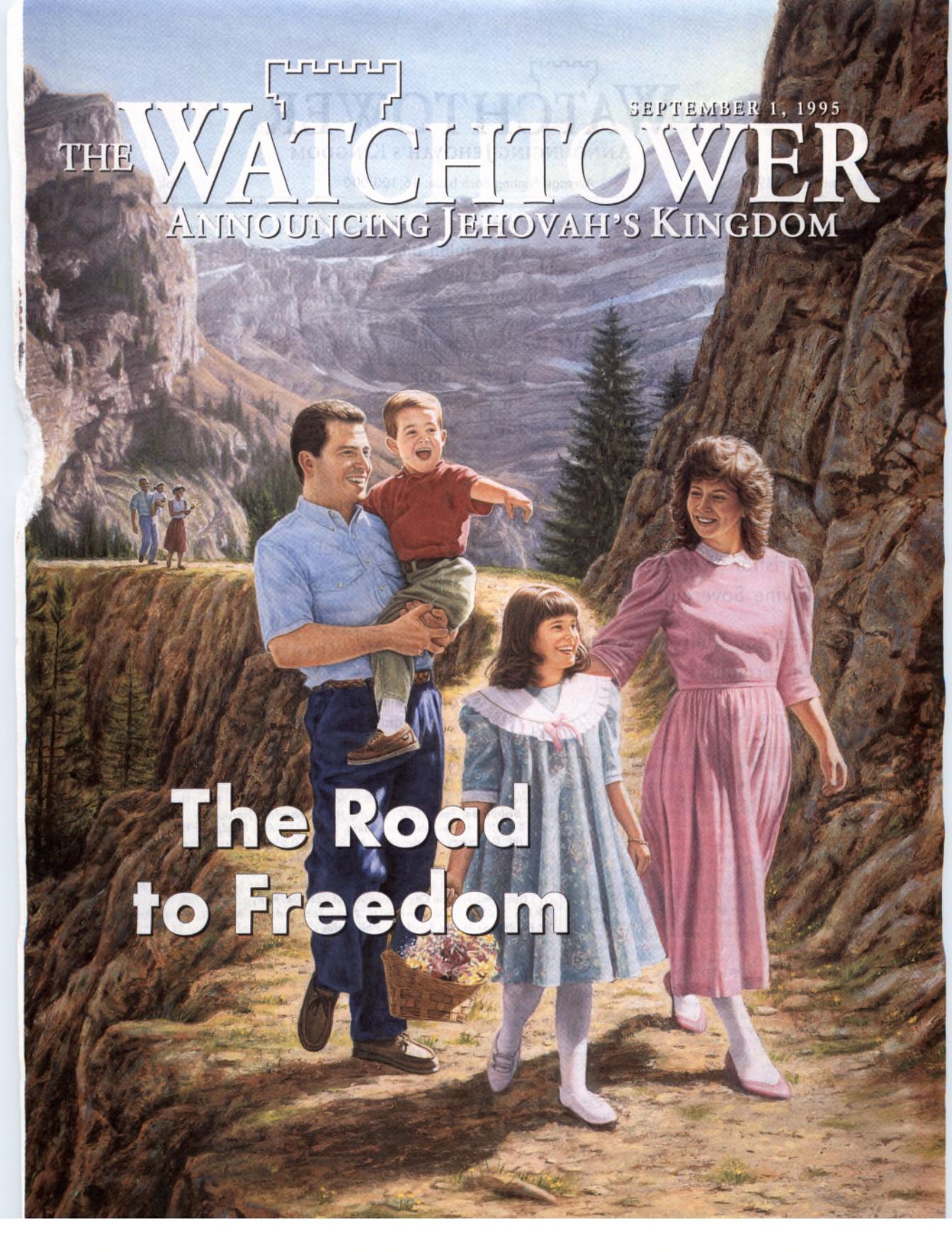


THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

SEPTEMBER 1, 1995



The Road to Freedom

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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A Wide Road With Little Freedom

A family of three—father, mother, and small daughter—were at home in Sydney, Australia, when the house caught fire. They tried to jump through the windows, but these were barred. Because of the security bars, the firemen could not save them. The mother and father perished in the smoke and flames. The daughter later died in the hospital.

HOW sad that this family died because of installations that were supposed to protect them! It is a comment on our times that this family is not alone in having its home safeguarded by bars and security locks. Many of the neighbors also have homes and properties resembling fortresses. Why? They are seeking security and peace of mind. What a blight on a "free" society when people feel safe only when cooped up like prisoners in their own homes! In a growing number of neighborhoods, children can no longer safely play in a nearby park or walk to school unescorted by a parent or some other adult. In many areas of life, freedom is evaporating like the morning dew.

A Changed Pattern of Life

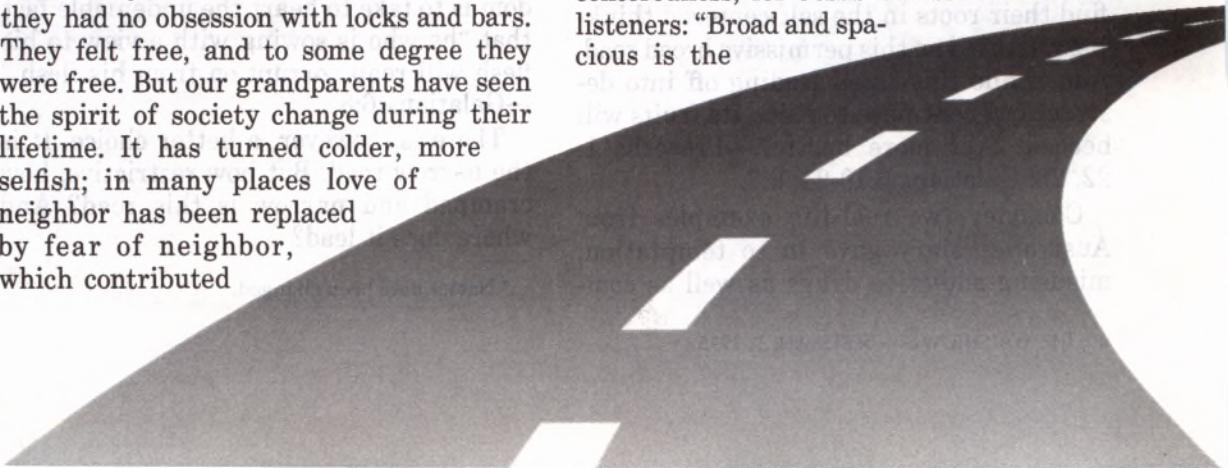
The days of our grandparents were different. As children, they could usually play where they liked without fear. As adults, they had no obsession with locks and bars. They felt free, and to some degree they were free. But our grandparents have seen the spirit of society change during their lifetime. It has turned colder, more selfish; in many places love of neighbor has been replaced by fear of neighbor, which contributed

to the tragic event mentioned above. Paralleling this growing lack of freedom has been a steady deterioration of moral values. Society has become enamored of a "new morality," but in reality, a situation has now been reached where it is hard to see any morality at all.

A former lecturer in education at the University of Queensland, Dr. Rupert Goodman, writes: "Young people are now exposed to a different, hedonistic . . . lifestyle where the 'self' is central: self-indulgence, self-awareness, self-fulfilment, self-interest." He also says: "Values such as self-control, self-denial, hard work, thrift, respect for authority, love and honour of parents . . . are foreign concepts to many."

Indeed a Broad Way

Those familiar with Bible prophecy are not surprised at this widespread self-centeredness, for Jesus Christ warned his listeners: "Broad and spacious is the



road leading off into destruction, and many are the ones going in through it; whereas narrow is the gate and cramped the road leading off into life, and few are the ones finding it.” (Matthew 7:13, 14) The first road, with ample room for many travelers, is “broad” because it is not restricted by having Bible principles govern morality and everyday living. It appeals to those who like to think as they please and live as they please—with no rules, no commitments.

True, many who have chosen the broad way claim to enjoy their freedom. But most of them are driven by a common spirit of selfishness. The Bible says they are governed by “the spirit that now operates in the sons of disobedience.” This spirit moves them to live “in harmony with the . . . flesh, doing the things willed by the flesh,” whether that be immorality, abuse of drugs, or ruthless pursuit of wealth, prestige, or power.—Ephesians 2:2, 3.

The Broad Way Leads to Disaster

Note that those traveling on the broad way are driven to do “the things willed by the flesh.” This shows that they are not free at all—they have a master. They are slaves of the flesh. And serving this master can lead to many problems—pandemics of sexually transmitted diseases, broken homes, bodies and minds that are sick from drug and alcohol abuse, just to name a few. Even acts of violence, burglary, and rape find their roots in the self-centered thinking nurtured on this permissive broad road. And, while this “road leading off into destruction” continues to exist, its fruits will become ever more hurtful.—Proverbs 1:22, 23; Galatians 5:19-21; 6:7.

Consider two real-life examples from Australia. Mary gave in to temptation, misusing addictive drugs as well as com-

mitting immorality.* But the happiness she sought eluded her. Even after having two children, her life seemed empty. She reached her lowest point when she learned she had contracted AIDS.

Tom was hurt in a different way. “I grew up on a church mission in north Queensland,” he writes. “At 16, I started drinking heavily. My father, uncles, and friends were all heavy drinkers, so it seemed the natural thing to do. I got to the stage where I would drink anything, from beer to methylated spirits. I also started betting on horses, sometimes losing most of my hard-earned wages. This was no small amount, for my work at cutting sugarcane paid quite well.

“Then I married and we had children. Rather than face my responsibilities, I did what my friends did—drink, gamble, and fight. I was often locked up in the local jail. But even this had no effect on me. My life was a downhill slide. It was a mess.”

Yes, by giving in to wrong desires, Tom and Mary hurt not only themselves but also their families. Sadly, many other young people tend to be seduced by the liberal, misguided spirit of freedom offered on the broad road. If only young ones could see through the veneer, the charade. If only they could see the realities of the broad way—the harsh taxes that all traveling on it must eventually pay. True, it is broad and easy to get onto. But its very broadness is its curse. The course of wisdom is to take to heart the undeniable fact that “he who is sowing with a view to his flesh will reap corruption from his flesh.”—Galatians 6:8.

There is, however, a better choice. It is the narrow road. But how restrictive, how cramped and narrow is this road? And where does it lead?

* Names have been changed.

The Narrow Road to Freedom

FEW intelligent people dispute that the universe is governed by natural laws. These laws control everything from tiny atoms to mighty galaxies containing billions of stars. Were it otherwise, there could be no planning and no understanding; life itself could not exist. By comprehending natural laws and working with them, man has been able to accomplish astounding feats, such as walking on the moon and beaming color pictures from any place on earth or even from beyond earth's atmosphere onto the television screens in our homes.

But what about moral laws? Is adherence to them just as beneficial and fruitful? Many seem to feel that there are no moral laws and choose a permissive philosophy or religion that fits their own desires.

There are some, though, who choose another way, the 'narrow way' that leads to life' as outlined in the Bible. We should not be surprised that this is the choice of only the minority, for Jesus said of the narrow way: "Few are the ones finding it." (Matthew 7:14) Why just a few?

Because the narrow path is restricted by God's laws and principles. It would appeal only to someone sincerely desiring to conform his life to God's standards. In sharp contrast with the broad road, which gives the illusion of freedom but in reality enslaves, the narrow road, which seems restrictive, sets a person free in every important respect. Its boundaries are set by "the perfect law that belongs to freedom." —James 1:25.

How the Narrow Way Liberates

True, it is not always easy to stay on the narrow way. Every living human is imper-

fect and has an inherited tendency toward wrongdoing. So a person might be inclined to stray a little. Nonetheless, the benefits of sticking with 'the cramped road' are worth any needed self-discipline or adjustments, for God 'teaches us to benefit ourselves.' —Isaiah 48:17; Romans 3:23.

To illustrate: Wise parents map out a dietary 'cramped road' for their children. This sometimes means being firm at mealtimes. But when the children grow older, they will appreciate their parents' loving discipline. As adults, they will have developed a taste for healthy food. And the broad variety of nutritious food available will preclude their ever feeling restricted.

In a spiritual way, God does the same with those on the narrow road leading to life. He nurtures within meek ones wholesome desires that lead to happiness and true freedom. This he does by providing his Word, the Bible. Additionally, he invites us to pray for his spirit to help us, and he commands us to associate with fellow Christians, who can encourage us to keep on the narrow path. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) Yes, God is love, and this supreme quality underlies his objectives and all his methods.—1 John 4:8.

When love, peace, goodness, self-control, and other fruits of God's spirit prevail, the narrow road does not seem restrictive. As the scripture says, "against such things there is no law." (Galatians 5:22, 23) "Where the spirit of Jehovah is, there is freedom." (2 Corinthians 3:17) Even now, genuine Christians are getting a taste of this freedom. They are free from many of the fears afflicting people today, such as fear of the future and a superstitious fear

of death. How thrilling to contemplate the future when "the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea"! (Isaiah 11:9) Then, even fear of crime will be no more. Locks and bars will be gone forever. All will feel free and safe—day and night, at home and outdoors. That will be freedom indeed!

We Are Assured of God's Help

True, living by God's standards takes effort, yet "his commandments are not burdensome," even for imperfect humans. (1 John 5:3) As we adjust to the narrow way and feel the benefits of walking on it, we develop a growing dislike for the ways and the thinking that characterize those on the broad road. (Psalm 97:10) Obeying God's law appeals to the better nature in all of us. Instead of "the pain of heart" and "sheer breakdown of spirit" that are characteristic of many, God promises: "Look! My own servants will cry out joyfully because of the good condition of the heart." Yes, a heart trained by Jehovah is joyful and free.—Isaiah 65:14.

Jesus died to make real freedom possible for us. The Bible says: "God loved the world 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) Now, as the King of God's heavenly Kingdom, Jesus is administering the benefits of that sacrifice. Shortly, after "the great tribulation," when the broad road and those on it will come to their end, he will patiently begin guiding obedient mankind along the remainder of the narrow way right to its end, human perfection. (Revelation 7:14-17; Matthew 24:21, 29-31) At last we will experience the realization of the grand promise: "Creation it-

self also will be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God." This God-given freedom cannot be surpassed. Even death will be done away with.—Romans 8:21; Revelation 21:3, 4.

By seeing and understanding clearly where the narrow road leads, a person is better able to choose this path and keep walking along it. Young ones in particular are helped not to be shortsighted and not to chafe at what they regard as restrictions imposed by God's standards. They learn to see these as a proof of God's love and as a shield against the evils of the broad road. (Hebrews 12:5, 6) Of course, one needs to be patient, remembering that it takes time to develop godly qualities and desires, just as it takes time for a fruit tree to produce good fruit. But the tree will produce if it is cultivated and watered.

So study God's Word, associate with other Christians, and "pray incessantly" for holy spirit. (1 Thessalonians 5:17) Trust God to help you "make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5, 6) But is all of this practical? Does it really work? Yes, it worked for Tom as well as for Mary, who were mentioned in the previous article.

They Stopped Walking on the Broad Road

Tom writes: "In the mid-70's, we came in contact with Jehovah's Witnesses when one of them called at our home. The discussion led to a study of the Bible. Step-by-step I began to clean up my life. I was baptized in 1982 and am now serving in the local congregation. Our son too is now baptized. I thank my wife for putting up with me for all those years before I learned the truth. And above all I thank Jehovah and his Son, Christ Jesus, for all they have given us and



for the hope we now have for the future."

And what about Mary? Well, she felt that God would never forgive her, but she wanted to learn about him for the sake of her children. When she heard that Jehovah's Witnesses were teaching her neighbor the Bible, she too asked for help. However, her ingrained bad habits made progress difficult. The study swung through highs and lows. Her little seven-year-old daughter, though, kept her going. "Come on, Mom. You can do it!" she would say. Then Mary would try harder.

When her common-law husband, also a drug abuser, returned home, he too joined in the study. Eventually both conquered their bad habits. Then, after legalizing their marriage and submitting to baptism, they experienced great happiness and felt like a real family for the first time. Sadly, AIDS finally took Mary's life, but she died with her heart fixed on the Bible's promise of a resurrection and life on a paradise earth, cleansed of every trace of the malignant broad road.

Yes, it is possible to get off the broad and spacious road that leads to destruction. Christ Jesus said: "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) Why not, then, resolve to set your feet on the narrow path that leads to life? By taking to heart and applying what you learn from God's Word, you may personally experience the Bible's heartwarming promise: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." —John 8:32.

WITNESSES AGAINST THE FALSE GODS

“You are my witnesses,” is the utterance of Jehovah, even my servant whom I have chosen.’”—ISAIAH 43:10.

WHO is the true God? Today, this most important question faces all mankind. Although humans worship a multitude of gods, only One can give us life and offer us a happy future. Only of One can it be said: “By him we have life and move and exist.” (Acts 17:28) Indeed, only one God has the right to be worshiped. As the heavenly chorus in the book of Revelation says: “You are worthy, Jehovah, even our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created.”—Revelation 4:11.

² In the garden of Eden, Satan lyingly challenged Jehovah’s right to be worshiped. Using a serpent, he told Eve that if she rebelled against Jehovah’s law and ate from the tree that Jehovah had forbidden, she herself would be like God. His words were: “God knows that in the very day of your eating from it your eyes are bound to be opened and you are bound to be like God, knowing good and bad.” (Genesis 3:5) Eve believed the serpent and ate the forbidden fruit.

³ Of course, Satan lied. (John 8:44) The only way Eve became “like God” when she sinned was that she took it upon herself to

1. Who is the true God, and in what respects is he supreme above the multitude of gods worshiped today?

2, 3. (a) How did Satan lyingly challenge Jehovah’s right to be worshiped? (b) What was the result of Eve’s sin for Eve and her children, and what was the result for Satan?

decide what was right and what was wrong, something that should have been left to Jehovah. And despite Satan’s lie, eventually she died. So the only real beneficiary of Eve’s sin was Satan. Indeed, Satan’s unstated goal in persuading Eve to sin was to become a god himself. When Eve sinned, she became his first human follower, and soon she was joined by Adam. Most of their children were not only born “in sin” but also fell under Satan’s influence, and in a short time, a whole world that was alienated from the true God came into existence.—Genesis 6:5; Psalm 51:5.

⁴ That world was destroyed in the Flood. (2 Peter 3:6) After the Flood a second world alienated from Jehovah developed, and it still exists. Of it the Bible says: “The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.” (1 John 5:19) By its acting against the spirit and the letter of Jehovah’s law, this world serves Satan’s ends. He is its god. (2 Corinthians 4:4) Yet, he is basically an impotent god. He cannot make people happy or give them life; only Jehovah can do that. Hence, people who want a fulfilled life and a better world must first learn that Jehovah is the true God and then learn to do his will. (Psalm 37:18, 27, 28; Ecclesiastes 12:13) There is thus an urgent need for men and women of faith to witness, or proclaim the truth, about Jehovah.

4. (a) Who is the god of this world? (b) Of what is there an urgent need?

⁵ Right from the beginning, such faithful individuals have appeared on the world scene. The apostle Paul, in Hebrews chapter 11, gives a long list of them and calls them "so great a cloud of witnesses." (Hebrews 12:1) Adam and Eve's second son, Abel, was the first on Paul's list. Enoch and Noah are also mentioned from the time before the Flood. (Hebrews 11:4, 5, 7) Prominent is Abraham, the ancestor of the Jewish race. Abraham, who is called "Jehovah's friend," became the forefather of Jesus, "the faithful and true witness."—James 2:23; Revelation 3:14.

Abraham's Witness for the Truth

⁶ How did Abraham serve as a witness? By his strong faith in and loyal obedience to Jehovah. When he was summoned to leave the urban center of Ur and live out the rest of his life in a distant land, Abraham obeyed. (Genesis 15:7; Acts 7:2-4) Wandering tribesmen will often abandon their traveling life and settle for the more secure life of the city. Hence, when Abraham left the city to take up life in tents, he gave strong evidence of his trust in Jehovah God. His obedience was a witness to onlookers. Jehovah richly blessed Abraham for his faith. Although living in tents, Abraham prospered materially. When Lot and his family were carried away captive, Jehovah gave Abraham success in his pursuit, so that he was able to rescue them. Abraham's wife bore a son in her old age, and thus Jehovah's promise that Abraham would father a seed was confirmed. Through Abraham, people saw that Jehovah is a living God who fulfills his promises.—Genesis 12:1-3; 14:14-16; 21:1-7.

5. What "cloud of witnesses" did Paul mention? Name some people that he lists.

6, 7. In what ways were Abraham's life and actions a witness that Jehovah is the true God?

⁷ When returning from rescuing Lot, Abraham was met by Melchizedek, king of Salem (later called Jerusalem), who welcomed Abraham, saying: "Blessed be Abram of the Most High God." The king of Sodom also met him and wanted to give him gifts. Abraham refused. Why? He did not want there to be any doubt as to the Source of his blessings. He said: "I do lift up my hand in an oath to Jehovah the Most High God, Producer of heaven and earth, that, from a thread to a sandal lace, no, I shall take nothing from anything that is yours, in order that you may not say, 'It was I who made Abram rich.'" (Genesis 14:17-24) What a fine witness Abraham was!

A Nation of Witnesses

⁸ Moses, a descendant of Abraham, also appears on Paul's list of witnesses. Moses turned his back on the riches of Egypt and later boldly faced the ruler of that great world power in order to lead the children of Israel to freedom. Where did he get the courage? From his faith. Paul says: "[Moses] continued steadfast as seeing the One who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:27) The gods of Egypt were visible, touchable. Even today, their statues impress people. But Jehovah, though invisible, was far more real to Moses than all those false gods. Moses had no doubt that Jehovah existed and that he would reward His worshipers. (Hebrews 11:6) Moses became an outstanding witness.

⁹ After leading the Israelites to freedom, Moses became the mediator of a covenant between Jehovah and the descendants of Abraham through Jacob. As a result, the nation of Israel came into existence as Jehovah's special possession. (Exodus 19:5, 6) For the first time, a *national* witness was to

8. How did Moses show great faith in Jehovah?
9. How was the nation of Israel to serve Jehovah?



be given. Jehovah's words through Isaiah, some 800 years later, applied in principle from the beginning of the nation's existence: "You are my witnesses," is the utterance of Jehovah, "even my servant whom I have chosen, in order that you may know and have faith in me, and that you may understand that I am the same One." (Isaiah 43:10) How would this new nation serve as Jehovah's witnesses? By their faith and obedience and through Jehovah's actions in their behalf.

¶¹⁰ Some 40 years after its beginning, Israel was about to take possession of the Prom-

ised Land. Spies went out to reconnoiter the city of Jericho, and Rahab, an inhabitant of Jericho, protected them. Why? She said: "We have heard how Jehovah dried up the waters of the Red Sea from before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, namely, Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. When we got to hear it, then our hearts began to melt, and no spirit has arisen yet in anybody because of you, for Jehovah your God is God in the heavens above and on the

**Through his faith and obedience,
Abraham gave an outstanding witness
to Jehovah's Godship**

10. In what way did Jehovah's powerful works in behalf of Israel provide a witness, and with what results?

earth beneath.” (Joshua 2:10, 11) The report of Jehovah’s powerful works moved Rahab and her family to leave Jericho and its false gods and to worship Jehovah with Israel. Clearly, Jehovah had given a powerful witness through Israel.—Joshua 6:25.

¹¹ While the Israelites were still in Egypt, Jehovah sent Moses to Pharaoh and said: “Go in to Pharaoh, because I—I have let his heart and the hearts of his servants become unresponsive, in order that I may set these signs of mine right before him, and in order that you may declare in the ears of your son and your son’s son how severely I have dealt with Egypt and my signs that I have established among them; and you will certainly know that I am Jehovah.” (Exodus 10:1, 2) Obedient Israelites would tell their children of Jehovah’s mighty acts. Their children, in turn, would tell of them to their children, and so it would be done from generation to generation. Thus, Jehovah’s powerful deeds would be remembered. Likewise today, parents have the responsibility of witnessing to their children.—Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Proverbs 22:6.

¹² Jehovah’s rich blessing on Israel when it was faithful served as a witness to surrounding nations. As Moses said after recounting Jehovah’s promised blessings: “All the peoples of the earth will have to see that Jehovah’s name has been called upon you, and they will indeed be afraid of you.” (Deuteronomy 28:10) Solomon was given wisdom and wealth because of his faith. Under him the nation prospered and enjoyed a long period of peace. Concerning that time we read: “They kept coming from all the peoples to hear Solomon’s wisdom, even from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.” (1 Kings 4:25,

11. What responsibility did all Israelite parents have as to witnessing?

12. How did Jehovah’s blessing on Solomon and Israel serve as a witness?

29, 30, 34) Prominent among Solomon’s visitors was the queen of Sheba. After seeing for herself Jehovah’s blessing on the nation and its king, she said: “May Jehovah your God come to be blessed, who has taken delight in you by putting you upon his throne as king for Jehovah your God; because your God loved Israel.”—2 Chronicles 9:8.

¹³ The apostle Paul mentioned what was perhaps Israel’s most effective witness. When discussing fleshly Israel with the Christian congregation in Rome, he said: “They were entrusted with the sacred pronouncements of God.” (Romans 3:1, 2) Starting with Moses, certain faithful Israelites were inspired to record in writing Jehovah’s dealings with Israel, as well as his counsel, his laws, and his prophecies. Through these writings those ancient scribes bore witness to all generations to come—including ours today—that there is only one God, and his name is Jehovah.—Daniel 12:9; 1 Peter 1:10-12.

¹⁴ Unhappily, Israel frequently failed to exercise faith, and then Jehovah had to send witnesses to his own nation. Many of these were persecuted. Paul said that some “received their trial by mockings and scourgings, indeed, more than that, by bonds and prisons.” (Hebrews 11:36) Faithful witnesses indeed! How sad that their persecutions often came from fellow members of Jehovah’s chosen nation! (Matthew 23:31, 37) In fact, the sin of the nation became so great that in 607 B.C.E., Jehovah brought in the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem with its temple and lead the majority of surviving Israelites off into exile. (Jeremiah 20:4; 21:10) Was that the end of the national witness to Jehovah’s name? No.

13. What may have been Israel’s most effective witness, and how do we still benefit from it?

14. Why did some who witnessed for Jehovah suffer persecution?

A Trial of Gods

¹⁵ Even in Babylonian exile, faithful members of the nation did not hesitate to witness about Jehovah's Godship and power. For example, Daniel boldly interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, explained the writing on the wall for Belshazzar, and refused to compromise before Darius in the matter of prayer. The three Hebrews too, when refusing to bow to an image, gave Nebuchadnezzar a marvelous witness.—Daniel 3:13-18; 5:13-29; 6:4-27.

¹⁶ Nevertheless, Jehovah purposed that a national witness would again be given on the soil of Israel. Ezekiel, who prophesied among the exiled Jews in Babylon, wrote of Jehovah's determination with regard to the devastated land: "I will multiply upon you humankind, the whole house of Israel, all of it, and the cities must become inhabited, and the devastated places themselves will be rebuilt." (Ezekiel 36:10) Why would Jehovah do this? Primarily as a witness to his own name. Through Ezekiel he said: "Not for your sakes am I doing it, O house of Israel, but for my holy name, which you have pro-

15. How was a witness given even in Babylonian exile?
16. How did Jehovah foretell the return of Israel to their land, and what would be the purpose of this return?

Do You Remember?

- How did Abraham give a witness that Jehovah is the true God?
- What outstanding quality of Moses enabled him to be a faithful witness?
- In what ways did Israel give a national witness about Jehovah?
- How was the liberation of Israel from Babylon a demonstration that Jehovah is the only true God?

faned among the nations."—Ezekiel 36:22; Jeremiah 50:28.

¹⁷ It was when prophesying Israel's return from Babylonian exile that the prophet Isaiah was inspired to pen the words of Isaiah 43:10, saying that Israel was Jehovah's witness, his servant. In Isaiah 43 and 44, Jehovah is described as Israel's Creator, Former, God, Holy One, Savior, Repurchaser, King, and Maker. (Isaiah 43:3, 14, 15; 44:2) Israel's exile was allowed because the nation repeatedly failed to glorify him as such. However, they were still his people. Jehovah had said to them: "Do not be afraid, for I have repurchased you. I have called you by your name. You are mine." (Isaiah 43:1) Israel's exile in Babylon would end.

¹⁸ Indeed, Jehovah made the liberation of Israel from Babylon into a trial of gods. He challenged the false gods of the nations to bring forth their witnesses, and he named Israel as his witness. (Isaiah 43:9, 12) When he broke the bars of Israel's exile, he proved that the gods of Babylon were no gods at all and that he is the only true God. (Isaiah 43:14, 15) When, some 200 years before the event, he named Cyrus the Persian as his servant in freeing the Jews, he gave further proof of his Godship. (Isaiah 44:28) Israel would be liberated. Why? Jehovah explains: "That they [Israel] should recount the praise of me." (Isaiah 43:21) It would give further opportunity for a witness.

¹⁹ When the time came, Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon just as prophesied. Cyrus, though a pagan, proclaimed Jehovah's Godship when he issued a pronouncement to the Jews in Babylon: "Whoever

17. What is the context of the words of Isaiah 43:10?
18. How did the liberation of Israel from Babylon prove that Jehovah is the only true God?
19. What witness was given by Cyrus' inviting the Israelites to return to Jerusalem and by the acts of faithful Jews after that return?

there is among you of all his people, may his God prove to be with him. So let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of Jehovah the God of Israel—he is the true God—which was in Jerusalem.” (Ezra 1:3) Many Jews responded. They trekked back to the Promised Land and erected an altar on the ancient temple site. Despite discouragement and strong opposition, they were finally able to rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem. All of this happened, as Jehovah himself said, “not by a military force, nor by power, but by [his] spirit.” (Zechariah 4:6) These accomplishments gave further evidence that Jehovah is the true God.

²⁰ Thus, Jehovah continued to use Israel, though a nation of imperfect and sometimes rebellious people, as his witness. In the pre-Christian world, that nation, with its temple and priesthood, stood as the world center of true worship. Whoever reads in the Hebrew Scriptures of Jehovah’s acts in relation to Israel can have no doubt whatsoever that there is only one true God, and his name is Jehovah. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Zechariah 14:9) However, a much greater witness was to be given to Jehovah’s name, and we shall discuss this in the following article.

20. Despite Israel’s weaknesses, what can be said about their giving a witness to Jehovah’s name in the ancient world?

CHRISTIAN WITNESSES FOR DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

“You should declare abroad the excellencies¹ of the one that called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”—1 PETER 2:9.

IN PRE-CHRISTIAN times, a long line of witnesses boldly testified that Jehovah is the only true God. (Hebrews 11:4-12:1) Strong in their faith, they fearlessly obeyed Jehovah’s laws and refused to compromise in matters of worship. They gave a powerful witness to Jehovah’s universal sovereignty.—Psalm 18:21-23; 47:1, 2.

² The last and greatest pre-Christian wit-

1. What effective witness was given about Jehovah in pre-Christian times?
2. (a) Who is Jehovah’s greatest Witness?
(b) Who replaced the nation of Israel as Jehovah’s witness? How do we know?

ness was John the Baptist. (Matthew 11:11) He was privileged to announce the coming of the Chosen One, and he introduced Jesus as the promised Messiah. (John 1:29-34) Jesus is Jehovah’s greatest Witness, “the faithful and true witness.” (Revelation 3:14) Because fleshly Israel rejected Jesus, Jehovah rejected them and appointed a new nation, the spiritual Israel of God, to be his witness. (Isaiah 42:8-12; John 1:11, 12; Galatians 6:16) Peter quoted a prophecy about Israel and showed that it applied to “the Israel of God,” the Christian congregation, when he said: “You are ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people

for special possession, that you should declare abroad the excellencies' of the one that called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."—1 Peter 2:9; Exodus 19:5, 6; Isaiah 43:21; 60:2.

³ Peter's words show that the primary responsibility of the Israel of God is to give a public witness about Jehovah's glory. In our day this spiritual nation has been joined by "a great crowd" of witnesses who also glorify God publicly. They cry out with a loud voice for all to hear: "Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb." (Revelation 7:9, 10; Isaiah 60:8-10) How can the Israel of God and its companions accomplish their witness? By their faith and obedience.

False Witnesses

⁴ Faith and obedience involve living by godly principles. The importance of this is seen in what Jesus said about the Jewish religious leaders of his day. These "seated themselves in the seat of Moses" as teachers of the Law. They even sent missionaries to convert nonbelievers. Yet, Jesus said to them: "You traverse sea and dry land to make one proselyte, and when he becomes one you make him a subject for Gehenna twice as much so as yourselves." These religionists were false witnesses—arrogant, hypocritical, and unloving. (Matthew 23:1-12, 15) On one occasion Jesus said to some Jews: "You are from your father the Devil, and you wish to do the desires of your father." Why would he say such a thing to members of God's chosen nation? Because they would not heed the words of Jehovah's greatest Witness.—John 8:41, 44, 47.

3. What is the primary responsibility of the Israel of God and of the "great crowd"?
4. Why were the Jews of Jesus' day false witnesses?

⁵ In a similar way, during the centuries since Jesus' time, hundreds of millions in Christendom have claimed to be his disciples. However, they have not done God's will and so are not acknowledged by Jesus. (Matthew 7:21-23; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3) Christendom has sent out missionaries, many of whom were doubtless sincere. Yet, they taught people to worship a Trinitarian god who burns sinners in hellfire, and most of their converts show little evidence of being Christians. For example, the African land of Rwanda has been a fertile field for Roman Catholic missionaries. Still, Rwandan Catholics joined wholeheartedly in the recent ethnic warfare in that land. The fruitage in that missionary field shows that it did not receive a genuine Christian witness from Christendom.—Matthew 7:15-20.

Living by Godly Principles

⁶ Wrong conduct by those who claim to be Christians brings reproach on "the way of the truth." (2 Peter 2:2) A genuine Christian lives according to godly principles. He does not steal, lie, cheat, or commit immorality. (Romans 2:22) He certainly does not murder his neighbor. Christian husbands take loving oversight of their families. Wives respectfully support that oversight. Children are trained by their parents and are thus prepared to be responsible Christian adults. (Ephesians 5:21-6:4) True, all of us are imperfect and make mistakes. But a real Christian respects Bible standards and makes a genuine effort to apply them. This is noticeable to others and gives a fine witness. On occasion, those who previously opposed the truth observed the right conduct of a Christian and were won over.—1 Peter 2:12, 15; 3:1.

5. How do we know that Christendom has given a false witness about God?
6. In what ways is right conduct a vital part of giving a witness?



Far from being restricted, the good news is now being declared "in all creation that is under heaven"

⁷ Jesus showed a vital aspect of Christian conduct when he said: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:35) Satan's world is characterized by "unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, badness, being full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malicious disposition, being whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, insolent, haughty, self-assuming, inventors of injurious things, disobedient to parents." (Ro-

7. How important is it that Christians love one another?

mans 1:29, 30) In such an environment, a worldwide organization characterized by love would be powerful evidence of God's spirit in action—an effective witness. Jehovah's Witnesses make up such an organization.—1 Peter 2:17.

Witnesses Are Students of the Bible

⁸ To succeed in giving a fine witness, a Christian must know and love Jehovah's

8, 9. (a) How was the psalmist strengthened by his study of God's Law and meditation on it? (b) In what ways will Bible study and meditation strengthen us to keep on giving a witness?

righteous principles and truly hate the corruptness of the world. (Psalm 97:10) The world is persuasive in promoting its own thinking, and its spirit can be difficult to resist. (Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 John 2:15, 16) What can help us maintain the proper mental attitude? Regular and meaningful study of the Bible. The writer of Psalm 119 repeated many times his love of Jehovah's Law. He read it and meditated on it constantly, "all day long." (Psalm 119:92, 93, 97-105) As a result, he could write: "Falsehood I have hated, and I do keep detesting it. Your law I have loved." Moreover, his deep love impelled him to act. He says: "Seven times in the day I have praised you because of your righteous judicial decisions."—Psalm 119:163, 164.

⁹ In a similar way, our regular study of God's Word and meditation on it will touch our hearts and move us to 'praise him'—witness about Jehovah—frequently, even "seven times in the day." (Romans 10:10) In harmony with this, the writer of the first psalm says that one who regularly meditates on Jehovah's words "will certainly become like a tree planted by streams of water, that gives its own fruit in its season and the foliage of which does not wither, and everything he does will succeed." (Psalm 1:3) The apostle Paul also showed the power of God's Word when he wrote: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, that the man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work."—2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

¹⁰ The rapid increase in the number of true worshipers in this 20th century bespeaks the blessing of Jehovah. Without

10. What is clear about Jehovah's people in these last days?

any doubt, as a group, these modern-day witnesses for divine sovereignty have cultivated love of Jehovah's law in their hearts. Like the psalmist, they are moved to obey His law and faithfully witness "day and night" about Jehovah's glory. —Revelation 7:15.

Jehovah's Mighty Works

¹¹ In the first century, holy spirit empowered faithful Christian witnesses to perform miracles, which gave strong proof that their witness was true. When John the Baptist was in prison, he sent disciples to ask Jesus: "Are you the Coming One, or are we to expect a different one?" Jesus did not answer yes or no. Rather, he said: "Go your way and report to John what you are hearing and seeing: The blind are seeing again, and the lame are walking about, the lepers are being cleansed and the deaf are hearing, and the dead are being raised up, and the poor are having the good news declared to them; and happy is he that finds no cause for stumbling in me." (Matthew 11:3-6) These powerful works served as a witness to John that Jesus was indeed "the Coming One."—Acts 2:22.

¹² In a similar way, some of Jesus' followers healed the sick and even raised the dead. (Acts 5:15, 16; 20:9-12) These miracles were like a witness from God himself on their behalf. (Hebrews 2:4) And such works demonstrated Jehovah's almighty power. For example, it is true that Satan, "the ruler of the world," has the means to cause death. (John 14:30; Hebrews 2:14) But when Peter raised the faithful woman Dorcas from the dead, he could only have done it by Jehovah's power, since only He can restore life.—Psalm 16:10; 36:9; Acts 2:25-27; 9:36-43.

11, 12. What was accomplished by the miracles performed by Jesus and his followers?

¹³ Today, those miraculous works no longer take place. Their purpose has been served. (1 Corinthians 13:8) Nevertheless, we still have the record of them in the Bible, testified to by many onlookers. When Christians today draw attention to these historical accounts, those works are still giving an effective witness to Jehovah's power. (1 Corinthians 15:3-6) In addition, back in Isaiah's day, Jehovah pointed to accurate prophecy as an outstanding proof that He is the true God. (Isaiah 46:8-11) Many divinely inspired Bible prophecies are being fulfilled today—a number of them on the Christian congregation. (Isaiah 60:8-10; Daniel 12:6-12; Malachi 3:17, 18; Matthew 24:9; Revelation 11:1-13) As well as pinpointing that we are living in "the last days," the fulfillment of these prophecies vindicates Jehovah as the only true God.—2 Timothy 3:1.

¹⁴ Finally, Jehovah still does great things, wondrous things, for his people. The increasing light on Bible truth is directed by Jehovah's spirit. (Psalm 86:10; Revelation 4:5, 6) The outstanding increases reported around the world are evidence that Jehovah 'is speeding it up in its own time.' (Isaiah 60:22) When bitter persecution has broken out in country after country throughout the last days, the courageous endurance of Jehovah's people has been possible because of the strengthening support of holy spirit. (Psalm 18:1, 2, 17, 18; 2 Corinthians 1:8-10) Yes, the modern-day history of Jehovah's Witnesses is in itself a powerful witness that Jehovah is the Sovereign Lord.

—Zechariah 4:6.

13. (a) In what way do the Bible miracles still testify to Jehovah's power? (b) How does the fulfillment of prophecy play a key part in proving Jehovah's Godship?

14. In what ways is the modern-day history of Jehovah's Witnesses a powerful witness that Jehovah is the Sovereign Lord?

The Good News to Be Preached

¹⁵ Jehovah appointed Israel as his witness to the nations. (Isaiah 43:10) However, only a few Israelites were divinely commanded to go and preach to non-Israelites, and this was usually in order to announce Jehovah's judgments. (Jeremiah 1:5; Jonah 1:1, 2) Nevertheless, prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures indicate that Jehovah would one day turn his attention to the nations in a large way, and this he has done through the spiritual Israel of God. (Isaiah 2:2-4; 62:2) Before ascending to heaven, Jesus commanded his followers: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations." (Matthew 28:19) While Jesus had concentrated on "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," his followers were sent to "all the nations," even "to the most distant part of the earth." (Matthew 15:24; Acts 1:8) The Christian witness was to be heard by all mankind.

¹⁶ Paul showed that he understood this well. By the year 61 C.E., he could say that the good news was "bearing fruit and increasing in all the world." The good news was not limited to just one nation or one sect, such as that which engaged in "worship of the angels." Rather, it was openly "preached in all creation that is under heaven." (Colossians 1:6, 23; 2:13, 14, 16-18) Thus, the Israel of God in the first century fulfilled its commission to "declare abroad the excellencies" of the one that called [them] out of darkness into his wonderful light."

¹⁷ Still, that first-century preaching work was merely a foretaste of what would be accomplished during the last days. Looking forward especially to our time, Jesus said:

15. What expanded witness was to be given by the Christian congregation?

16. What commission did the first-century Christian congregation fulfill, and to what extent?

17. How does Matthew 24:14 continue to be fulfilled in a large way?

"This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10) Has this prophecy been fulfilled? Indeed, it has. From a small start in 1919, the preaching of the good news has now been extended to more than 230 countries. The witness is heard in the frozen North and in the steaming tropics. Large continents are covered, and remote islands are sought out so that their inhabitants can receive a witness. Even in the midst of great upheaval, such as the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the good news continues to be preached. As in the first century, the witness is bearing fruit "in all the world." The good news is openly announced "in all creation that is under heaven." The result? First, the remaining ones of the Israel of God have been gathered "out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." Second, the millions of the "great crowd" began to be brought in from "all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." (Revelation 5:9; 7:9) Matthew 24:14 continues to be fulfilled in a large way.

Do You Remember?

- Who replaced Israel as Jehovah's "witness" to the nations?
- How does Christian conduct contribute to giving a witness?
- Why is study of the Bible and meditation on it essential for the Christian Witness?
- In what way does the modern-day history of Jehovah's Witnesses serve as evidence that Jehovah is the true God?
- What is accomplished by the preaching of the good news?

¹⁸ The worldwide preaching of the good news helps to prove that Jesus' royal presence has begun. (Matthew 24:3) Further, it is the main means by which "the harvest of the earth" is being reaped, as it points people to the only true hope for mankind, Jehovah's Kingdom. (Revelation 14:15, 16) Since only genuine Christians share in the preaching of the good news, this important work helps to distinguish the true Christians from the false. (Malachi 3:18) In this way, it works for the salvation of those who preach as well as of those who respond. (1 Timothy 4:16) Most important, preaching the good news brings praise and honor to Jehovah God, the one who commanded that it be done, who supports those who do it, and who makes it fruitful.—2 Corinthians 4:7.

¹⁹ No wonder the apostle Paul was moved to say: "Woe is me if I did not declare the good news!" (1 Corinthians 9:16) Christians today feel the same way. It is a grand privilege and a great responsibility to be "God's fellow workers," shedding the light of truth in this bedarkened world. (1 Corinthians 3:9; Isaiah 60:2, 3) The work that had a small beginning in 1919 has now reached astounding proportions. Almost five million Christians are witnessing for divine sovereignty as they spend more than a billion hours a year to bring the message of salvation to others. What a joy it is to have a part in this work of sanctifying Jehovah's name! As we enter the 1996 service year, let us be determined not to slow down. Rather, we will more than ever heed Paul's words to Timothy: "Preach the word, be at it urgently." (2 Timothy 4:2) As we do so, we pray with all our hearts that Jehovah will continue to bless our efforts.

18. What are some things that are being accomplished by the worldwide preaching of the good news?

19. What determination are all Christians encouraged to have as they enter the new service year?

CAN YOU CULTIVATE MORE DISCERNMENT?

DISCERNMENT is "the power or faculty of the mind by which it distinguishes one thing from another." It can also be "acuteness of judgment" or the "power of perceiving differences of things or ideas." So says *Webster's Universal Dictionary*. Clearly, discernment is a quality to be desired. Its value is seen in Solomon's words: "When wisdom enters into your heart and knowledge itself becomes pleasant to your very soul, . . . discernment itself will safeguard you, to deliver you from the bad way."—Proverbs 2:10-12.

Yes, discernment will help us to resist "the bad way," which exists in an abundance today. And it brings many other benefits. For example, parents often hear their children say, 'You just don't understand!' With a little probing, parents who are discerning know how to draw out the feelings and issues that are troubling their children. (Proverbs 20:5) A discerning husband will listen to his wife and gain insight into her thinking and feelings rather than jump to conclusions. The wife will do the same with her husband. Thus, "by wisdom a household will be built up, and by discernment it will prove firmly established."—Proverbs 24:3.

Discernment helps a person to handle situations successfully. Proverbs 17:27 says: "Anyone holding back his sayings is possessed of knowledge, and a man of discernment is cool of spirit." A discerning person is not hotheaded, rushing into every situa-

tion without thinking. He carefully ponders the possible outcomes before committing himself. (Luke 14:28, 29) He also enjoys more peaceful relations with others because a "mouth of discretion" leads him to choose his words carefully. (Proverbs 10:19; 12:8) But, most important, a discerning person humbly recognizes his own limitations and looks to God rather than men for guidance. This is pleasing to Jehovah and is another reason for cultivating discernment.—Proverbs 2:1-9; James 4:6.

Israel's Lack of Discernment

The danger of failing to exercise discernment is seen in an event in the early history of Israel. Looking back on that time, the inspired psalmist said: "As for our forefathers in Egypt, they did not show any insight into your wonderful works. They did not remember the abundance of your grand loving-kindness, but they behaved rebelliously at the sea, by the Red Sea."—Psalm 106:7.

When Moses led Israel out of Egypt, Jehovah had already shown his power and his determination to free his people by visiting ten plagues on that mighty world power. After Pharaoh let the Israelites go, Moses led them to the banks of the Red Sea. However, the armies of Egypt marched after them in pursuit. It seemed as though the Israelites were trapped and that their newfound freedom was to be very short-lived. So the Bible record says: "The sons of Israel got quite afraid and began to cry out to Jehovah." And they turned on Moses, saying:

"What is this that you have done to us in leading us out of Egypt? . . . For it is better for us to serve the Egyptians than for us to die in the wilderness."—Exodus 14:10-12.

Their fear may seem understandable until we remember that they had already seen ten outstanding demonstrations of Jehovah's power. They knew firsthand what Moses would remind them of some 40 years later: "Jehovah brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm and with great fearsomeness and with signs and miracles." (Deuteronomy 26:8) Hence, as the psalmist wrote, when the Israelites turned against Moses' direction, "they did not show any insight." Nevertheless, Jehovah, true to his promise, inflicted a stunning defeat on the forces of Egypt.—Exodus 14:19-31.

Our faith could similarly falter if we were to greet trials with doubt or indecision. Discernment will help us to view things always in perspective, remembering how much greater Jehovah is than any who may be opposing us. Discernment will also help us to keep in mind what Jehovah has already done for us. It will help us never to lose sight of the fact that he is the One "guarding all those loving him."—Psalm 145:18-20.

Gaining Spiritual Discernment

Discernment does not automatically come with age. It must be cultivated. Wise King Solomon, who gained international fame for his discernment, said: "Happy is the man that has found wisdom, and the man that gets discernment, for having it as gain is better than having silver as gain and having it as produce than gold itself." (Proverbs 3:13, 14) Where did Solomon get his discernment? From Jehovah. When Jehovah asked Solomon what blessing he wanted, Solomon answered: "You must give to your servant an obedient heart to judge your people, to discern between good and bad." (1 Kings

3:9) Yes, Solomon looked to Jehovah as his helper. He asked for discernment, and Jehovah gave it to him to an unusual degree. The result? "Solomon's wisdom was vaster than the wisdom of all the Orientals and than all the wisdom of Egypt."—1 Kings 4:30.

Solomon's experience shows us where to go in our search for discernment. Like Solomon, we should look to Jehovah. How? Well, Jehovah has provided his Word, the Bible, which gives us insight into his thinking. When we read the Bible, we are digging into a valuable quarry of knowledge that will provide the building blocks of spiritual discernment. The information that we accumulate from our Bible reading should be meditated upon. Then, it can be used to make right decisions. In time, our perceptive powers are developed to the extent that we become "full-grown in powers of understanding," able to "distinguish [or, discern between] both right and wrong."—1 Corinthians 14:20; Hebrews 5:14; compare 1 Corinthians 2:10.

Interestingly, we can still benefit from the discernment that Jehovah gave to Solomon. How? Solomon became adept at expressing wisdom in the form of proverbs, which were, in effect, capsules of divinely inspired wisdom. Many of these sayings are preserved in the Bible book of Proverbs. Studying that book helps us to benefit from Solomon's discernment and also to develop discernment ourselves.

To help us in our Bible study, we can use Bible study aids, such as the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines. For more than 116 years, *The Watchtower* has been announcing Jehovah's Kingdom to honesthearted ones. *Awake!* magazine and its predecessors have been commenting on world conditions since 1919. These two magazines examine Bible truths and provide progressive

spiritual enlightenment that helps us to discern errors, whether they are taught by Christendom or are found in our own thinking patterns.—Proverbs 4:18.

Another help in developing discernment is right association. One of King Solomon's proverbs says: "He that is walking with wise persons will become wise, but he that is having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly." (Proverbs 13:20) It is a shame that King Solomon's son Rehoboam did not remember this proverb at an important juncture in his life. After the death of his father, the tribes of Israel came to him to demand that he lighten their burdens. First, Rehoboam consulted with the older men, and these showed discernment when they encouraged him to listen to his subjects. Then, he went to the younger men. These showed inexperience and a lack of discernment, encouraging Rehoboam to answer the Israelites with threats. Rehoboam listened to the younger men. The result? Israel rebelled, and Rehoboam lost a large part of his kingdom.—1 Kings 12:1-17.

A vital part of developing discernment is seeking the help of holy spirit. In reviewing Jehovah's dealings with the Israelites after their release from captivity in Egypt, the Bible writer Nehemiah said: "Your good spirit you gave to make them prudent." (Nehemiah 9:20) Jehovah's spirit can also help to make us prudent. As you pray for Jehovah's spirit to give you discernment, pray with confidence because Jehovah "gives generously to all and without reproaching."—James 1:5; Matthew 7:7-11; 21:22.

Discernment and Insight

The apostle Paul showed discernment when he preached the truth to people of the nations. Once, for example, while in Athens, he was "passing along and carefully observ-

ing" their objects of veneration. Paul was surrounded by idols, and his spirit became irritated within him. Now he had a decision to make. Should he pursue the safe course and keep quiet? Or should he speak out frankly about the rampant idolatry that he found so irritating, even though doing so could be dangerous?

Paul acted with discernment. He had caught sight of an altar with the inscription: "To an Unknown God." Tactfully, Paul acknowledged their devotion to idols and then used that altar as a way to introduce the subject of "the God that made the world and all the things in it." Yes, Jehovah was the God they did not know about! Paul thereby took account of their sensitivity on the matter and was able to give a marvelous witness. With what result? A number of people embraced the truth, including "Dionysius, a judge of the court of the Areopagus, and a woman named Damaris, and others besides them." (Acts 17:16-34) What an example of discernment Paul was!

Without question, discernment does not come easily or naturally. But with patience, prayer, earnest effort, wise association, study of the Bible and meditation on it, and reliance on Jehovah's holy spirit, you too can cultivate it.

In Our Next Issue

What You Should Know
About Jealousy

Godly Families of the Past
—A Pattern for Our Day

Who Were the Masoretes?

“LOVE NEVER FAILS”

AS TOLD BY SAMUEL D. LADESUYI

I am amazed when I look back over the years and see all that has been accomplished. Jehovah has been doing wonderful things throughout the earth. In Ilesha, Nigeria, the few of us who began preaching in 1931 have become 36 congregations. The roughly 4,000 who were publishing in Nigeria when the first graduates of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead arrived in 1947 have grown to over 180,000. In the early days, we did not expect, nor did we even dream of, the expansion that would take place. How thankful I am that I have had a share in this marvelous work! Let me tell you about it.

MY FATHER traded in guns and gunpowder from town to town; he was rarely at home. He had seven wives that I know about, but not all lived with him. My father inherited my mother from his brother who had died. She became his second wife, and I lived with her.

One day Father came home from visiting his first wife, who lived in a neighboring village. While he was there, he learned that my half brother was attending school. My half brother was ten years old, the same age as me. So Father decided that I must attend school too. He gave me nine pence—three pence for a textbook and six pence for a slate. That was in 1924.

A Bible Study Group Is Formed

From my earliest years, I had a love for the Word of God, the Bible. I enjoyed Bible classes in school and was always commended by my Sunday-school teachers. So in 1930, I seized the opportunity to attend a lecture that was given by a visiting Bible

Student, one of the first to preach in Ilesha. After the lecture, he placed with me a copy of the book *The Harp of God* in the Yoruba language.

I had attended Sunday school regularly. Now I started to take *The Harp of God* with me and use it in refuting some of the doctrines that were being taught there. Arguments resulted, and I was frequently warned by church leaders against following this ‘new teaching.’

The following year, while strolling down the street, I came upon a group of people listening to a man who was lecturing them. The lecturer was J. I. Owenpa, a Bible Student. He had been sent there by William R. Brown (often called Bible Brown), who was overseeing the Kingdom preaching work from Lagos.* I learned that a small Bible study group had been formed

* Brother Brown was called Bible Brown because of his custom of pointing to the Bible as the final authority.—See “The Harvest of a True Evangelizer” in *The Watchtower* of September 1, 1992, page 32.

in Ilesha to study *The Harp of God*, so I joined them.

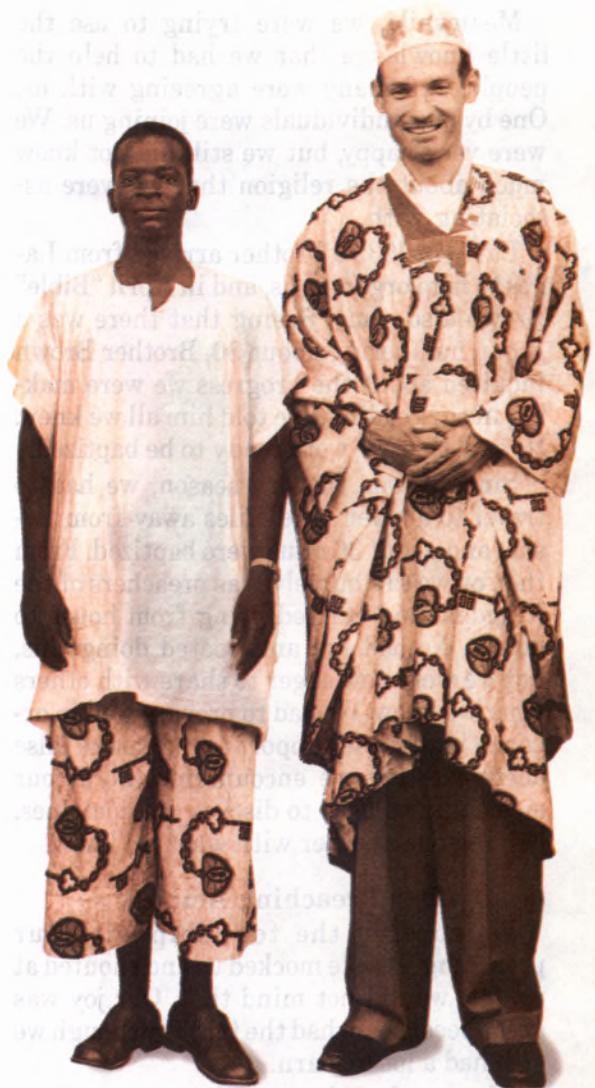
I was the youngest in the group—just a schoolboy, about 16 years old. Normally I should have been embarrassed, even afraid, to associate so closely with men in their 30's and older. But they were very glad to have me among them, and they encouraged me. They were like fathers to me.

Clergy Opposition

Soon we began to face serious opposition from the clergy. Catholics, Anglicans, and others, who formerly fought one another, now united against us. They conspired with the local chiefs to take action to discourage us. They sent the police to confiscate our books, claiming that they were harmful to the people. However, the district officer warned that they had no right to take the books, and two weeks later the books were returned.

After this we were called to a meeting where we met the *oba*, or paramount chief, along with other prominent people of the town. We were about 30 in number at the time. The idea was to stop us from reading the "dangerous" books. They asked if we were strangers, but when they scrutinized our faces, they said, "These are our sons, though there are some strangers among them." They told us that they did not want us to continue studying the books of a religion that was going to harm us.

We went home without saying anything, for we had made up our minds not to pay any attention to those prominent people. Most of us were very happy with what we had been learning and were determined to continue studying. So, although a few became intimidated and withdrew from our group, most of us continued our study in a carpenter's workshop. We had no conductor. We began with prayer and then just



Samuel with Milton Henschel in 1955

took turns in reading the paragraphs of the book. After about an hour, we prayed again and then went home. But we were being spied on, and the chiefs and religious leaders continued to summon us every two weeks and warn us against studying the Bible Students' literature.

Meanwhile, we were trying to use the little knowledge that we had to help the people, and many were agreeing with us. One by one, individuals were joining us. We were very happy, but we still did not know much about the religion that we were associating with.

Early in 1932 a brother arrived from Lagos to help organize us, and in April "Bible" Brown also came. Seeing that there was a group numbering about 30, Brother Brown inquired about the progress we were making in our reading. We told him all we knew. He said that we were ready to be baptized.

Since it was the dry season, we had to travel to a river nine miles away from Ilesha, and about 30 of us were baptized. From then on we saw ourselves as preachers of the Kingdom and started going from house to house. We had not anticipated doing this, but we were now eager to share with others what we knew. We had to prepare well in order to have Bible support to refute the false doctrines that we encountered. So at our meetings, we used to discuss the doctrines, helping one another with what we knew.

Our Preaching Activity

We covered the township with our preaching. People mocked us and shouted at us, but we did not mind that. Our joy was great because we had the truth, although we still had a lot to learn.

We went from house to house every Sunday. People would ask questions, and we would try to answer them. On Sunday evenings we delivered a public lecture. We had no Kingdom Hall, so we held meetings in the open air. We gathered people together, gave a lecture, and invited them to ask questions. Sometimes we preached in the churches.

We also traveled to areas where people had never heard of Jehovah's Witnesses. Most of the time, we went on bicycles, but



Samuel with his wife, Olabisi

sometimes we would charter a bus. When we got to a village, we would loudly blow a horn. The whole village would hear us! People rushed to find out what was happening. Then we delivered our message. After we were finished, people scrambled to get copies of our literature. We placed huge amounts.

We eagerly anticipated the coming of God's Kingdom. I recall that when we received the 1935 Yearbook, one of the brothers, at seeing the full schedule of text discussions for the year, asked: "Does this mean we are going to complete another entire year before Armageddon comes?"

In reply the conductor asked: "Do you think, brother, that if Armageddon should come tomorrow, we will stop reading the Yearbook?" When the brother said no, the conductor said: "Then why are you worrying?" We were, and still are, eager for Jehovah's day.

The War Years

During the second world war, the importation of our books was banned. One

brother in Ilesha unwittingly presented the book *Riches* to a policeman. The policeman asked: "Who owns this book?" The brother said it was his own. The policeman said that it was a prohibited book, took him to the station, and locked him up.

I went to the police station and, after making inquiries, bailed the brother out. Then I telephoned Brother Brown in Lagos to inform him of what had happened. I also asked if there was any law that prohibited the circulation of our books. Brother Brown told me that only the importation, not the circulation, of our books was banned. Three days later, Brother Brown sent a brother from Lagos to see what was happening. This brother decided that all of us should go out in the preaching work the next day with magazines and books.

We spread out in different directions. After about an hour, the news came to me that most of the brothers had been arrested. So the visiting brother and I went to the police station. The police refused to listen to our explanation that the books were not prohibited.

The 33 brothers who had been arrested were sent to the Chief Magistrate's Court at Ife, and I accompanied them. The townspeople who saw us being taken away shouted, "It is finished with these people today. They are not coming here again."

The charge was laid before the chief magistrate, a Nigerian. All the books and magazines were displayed. He asked who had authorized the police chief to arrest these people. The police chief replied that he had acted on instructions from the district officer. The chief magistrate called the police chief and four of our representatives, including me, to his chambers.

He asked who Mr. Brown was. We told him that he was the representative of the Watch

Tower Society in Lagos. He then told us that he had received a telegram from Mr. Brown regarding us. He adjourned the case that day and granted bail to the brothers. The following day he acquitted the brothers, setting them free, and he ordered the police to return the books.

We returned to Ilesha, singing. Again the people started shouting, but this time they were saying, "They have come again!"

Jehovah's Standard of Marriage Made Clear

It was in 1947 that the first three Gilead graduates arrived in Nigeria. One of these brothers, Tony Attwood, is still here, serving at the Nigeria Bethel. From that time on, we saw great changes in Jehovah's organization in Nigeria. One of the big changes was our view of polygamy.

I married Olabisi Fashugba in February 1941 and knew enough not to take any additional wives. But until 1947 when the missionaries came, polygamy was common in the congregations. Polygamous brothers were told that they had married more than one wife in ignorance. So if they had two or three or four or five wives, they could keep them, but they should not take any more. That was the policy we had.

Many people had been anxious to join us, especially the Cherubim and Seraphim Society in Ilesha. They said that Jehovah's Witnesses were the only people who taught the truth. They agreed with our teachings and wanted to convert their churches into Kingdom Halls. We were working hard to bring this about. We even had centers to train their elders.

Then came new direction concerning polygamy. One of the missionaries delivered a lecture at a circuit assembly in 1947. He spoke about good conduct and habits. Next

he quoted 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, which says that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God. He then added: "And the *polygamists* will not inherit God's Kingdom!" People in the audience shouted: "Oh, polygamists will not inherit God's Kingdom!" Division resulted. It was like a war. Many of the newly associated ones stopped associating, saying: "Thank God, we have not gone very far."

The majority of the brothers, however, started to mend their ways by setting their wives free. They gave them money and said, 'If you are young, go and look for another husband. I made a mistake by marrying you. Now I must be a husband of one wife.'

Soon another problem came up. Some, after deciding to keep one wife and release the others, changed their minds and decided they wanted to take back one of the other wives and release the one they previously kept! So trouble started again.

Further direction came from headquarters in Brooklyn, based on Malachi 2:14, which refers to "the wife of your youth." The direction was that husbands should keep the *first* wife that they had married. That was how the question was finally resolved.

Privileges of Service

In 1947 the Society began to strengthen the congregations and organize them into circuits. They wanted to appoint mature brothers who were advanced in knowledge as 'servants to the brethren,' now called circuit overseers. Brother Brown asked me if I would accept such an appointment. I said that the reason I was baptized was to do Jehovah's will, adding: "You even baptized me. When there is a chance now to serve Jehovah more fully, do you think I will refuse?"

In October of that year, seven of us were called to Lagos and were given training be-

fore we were sent out in the circuit work. In those days circuits were huge. The entire country was divided into just seven circuits. Congregations were few.

Our work as servants to the brethren was hard. We walked many miles each day, often through steaming tropical forests. Every week we had to travel from village to village. At times I felt that my legs were finished. Sometimes I felt that I was dying! But there was a great deal of joy too, especially at seeing the increasing numbers of people who embraced the truth. Why, in just seven years, the number of publishers in the country quadrupled!

I shared in the circuit work until 1955 when ill health forced me to come back to Ilesha, where I was appointed city overseer. Being at home enabled me to devote more attention to helping my family spiritually. Today all six of my children are faithfully serving Jehovah.

True Love Never Fails

When I look back over the years, I have so much to be thankful for. There were disappointments, worries, and illness, but there were also many joys. Although our knowledge and understanding have developed over the years, I've learned through experience the meaning of 1 Corinthians 13:8, which says: "Love never fails." If you love Jehovah and abide steadfastly in his service, he will help you through your difficulties and will richly bless you.

The light of truth is getting brighter and brighter. In the days when we first started, we thought Armageddon would come quickly; that is why we were hurrying to do all we could. But it was all to our benefit. That is why I agree with the words of the psalmist: "I will praise Jehovah during my lifetime. I will make melody to my God as long as I am."—Psalm 146:2.

THE CATHARI

Were They Christian Martyrs?

“**S**LAY them all; God will recognize His own.” On that summer day of 1209, the population of Béziers, in southern France, was massacred. The monk Arnold Amalric, appointed as papal legate at the head of the Catholic crusaders, showed no mercy. When his men asked how they were to distinguish between Catholics and heretics, he reportedly gave the infamous reply quoted above. Catholic historians water it down to: “Do not worry. I believe very few will be converted.” Whatever his exact answer, the result was the slaughter of at least 20,000 men, women, and children at the hands of some 300,000 crusaders, led by prelates of the Catholic Church.

What brought about this massacre? It was just the beginning of the Albigensian Crusade that Pope Innocent III had launched against so-called heretics in the province of Languedoc, south-central France. Before it ended some 20 years later, possibly one million people—Cathari, Waldenses, and even many Catholics—had lost their lives.

Religious Dissent in Medieval Europe

The rapid growth of trade in the 11th century C.E. brought about great changes in the social and economic structures of medieval Europe. Towns sprung up to house the growing number of craftsmen and tradesmen. This provided scope for new ideas. Religious dissent took root in Languedoc, where a remarkably tolerant and advanced civilization prospered as nowhere else in Europe. The city of Toulouse in Languedoc was the third richest metropolis in Europe. It was

the world in which the troubadours flourished, some of whose lyrics touched on political and religious subjects.

Describing the religious situation in the 11th and 12th centuries, the *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* states: “In the 12th century, as in the previous century, the morals of the clergy, their opulence, their venality, and their immorality, continued to be called into question, but it was principally their wealth and power, their collusion with the secular authorities, and their servility that were criticized.”

Itinerant Preachers

Even Pope Innocent III recognized that the rampant corruption within the church was to blame for the increasing number of dissident, itinerant preachers in Europe, particularly in southern France and northern Italy. The majority of these were either Cathari or Waldenses. He berated the priests for not teaching the people, saying: “The children are in want of the bread that you do not care to break for them.” Yet, rather than promote Bible education for the people, Innocent claimed that “such is the depth of divine Scripture, that not only the simple and illiterate, but even the prudent and learned, are not fully sufficient to try to understand it.” Bible reading was banned to all except the clergy and then permitted only in Latin.

To counteract the itinerant preaching of the dissidents, the pope approved the founding of the Order of Friars Preachers, or Dominicans. In contrast with the opulent Catholic clergy, these friars were to be traveling

preachers commissioned to defend Catholic orthodoxy against the "heretics" in southern France. The pope also sent papal legates to reason with the Cathari and try to bring them back into the Catholic fold. Since these efforts failed, and one of his legates was killed, supposedly by a heretic, Innocent III ordered the Albigensian Crusade in 1209. Albi was one of the towns where Cathari were particularly numerous, so church chroniclers referred to the Cathari as Albigenses (French, *Albigeois*) and used the term to designate all the "heretics" in that region, including the Waldenses. (See box below.)

Who Were the Cathari?

The word "cathar" comes from the Greek word *ka·tha·ros'*, meaning "pure." From the 11th to the 14th century, Catharism spread particularly in Lombardy, northern Italy, and in Languedoc. Cathar beliefs were a mixture of Eastern dualism and Gnosticism, imported perhaps by foreign traders

and missionaries. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* defines Cathar dualism as belief in "two principles: one good, governing all that was spiritual, the other evil, responsible for the material world, including man's body." The Cathari believed that Satan created the material world, which was irrevocably condemned to destruction. Their hope was to escape from the evil, material world.

Cathari were divided into two classes, the perfect and the believers. The perfect were initiated by a rite of spiritual baptism, called *consolamentum*. This was performed by the laying on of hands, after a year's probation. The rite was thought to release the postulant from Satan's rule, purify him from all sin, and impart the holy spirit. This gave rise to the designation "perfect," applied to the relatively small elite who acted as ministers toward the believers. The perfect took vows of abstinence, chastity, and poverty. If married, a perfect had to leave his or her partner, since the Cathari believed that sexual intercourse was the original sin.

THE WALDENSES

Toward the end of the 12th century C.E., Pierre Valdès, or Peter Waldo, a rich merchant of Lyons, financed the first translations of parts of the Bible into various local dialects of Provençal, the vernacular language spoken in southern and southeastern France. A sincere Catholic, he gave up his business and dedicated himself to preaching the Gospel. Disgusted with the corrupt clergy, many other Catholics followed him and became itinerant preachers.

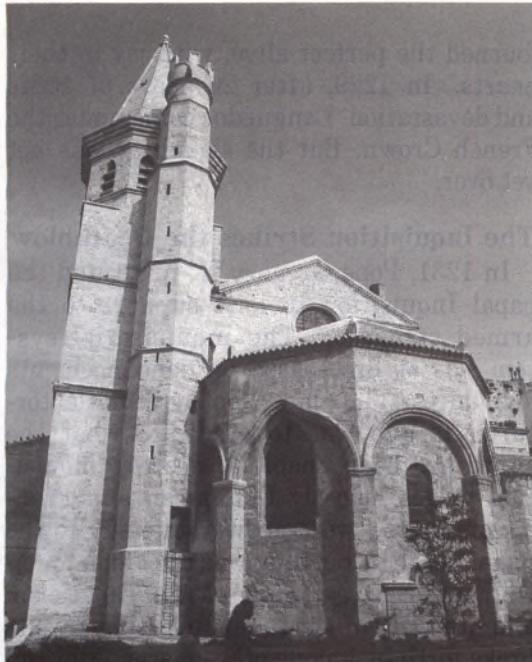
Waldo soon encountered hostility from the local clergy, who persuaded the pope to ban his public witnessing. His reported reply was: "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Compare Acts 5:29.) In view of his persistence, Waldo was excommunicated. His followers, called the Waldenses, or the Poor Men of Lyons, zealously strove to follow his example, preaching two by two in the homes of the

people. This resulted in the rapid spread of their teachings throughout southern, eastern, and parts of northern France, as well as northern Italy.

In the main, they advocated a return to the beliefs and practices of early Christianity. They challenged, among other teachings, purgatory, prayers for the dead, worship of Mary, prayers to the "saints," adoration of the crucifix, indulgences, the Eucharist, and infant baptism.*

The teachings of the Waldenses sharply contrasted with the non-Christian dualistic teachings of the Cathari, with whom they are often confused. This confusion is primarily due to Catholic polemists who deliberately attempted to identify Waldensian preaching with the teachings of the Albigenses, or Cathari.

* For further information on the Waldenses, see the article "The Waldenses—Heretics or Truth-Seekers?" in *The Watchtower* of August 1, 1981, pages 12-15.



Seven thousand died in the Church of St. Mary Magdalene in Béziers, where crusaders massacred 20,000 men, women, and children

Believers were individuals who, while not adopting an ascetic life-style, nevertheless accepted Cathar teachings. By kneeling in honor of the perfect in a ritual called *melioramentum*, the believer requested forgiveness and a blessing. To enable themselves to lead normal lives, believers contracted with the perfect a *convenenza*, or agreement, providing for death-bed administration of spiritual baptism, or *consolamentum*.

Attitude Toward the Bible

Although the Cathari quoted the Bible extensively, they viewed it primarily as a source of allegories and fables. They considered that the greater part of the Hebrew Scriptures came from the Devil. They used parts of the Greek Scriptures, such as

texts contrasting the flesh with the spirit, to buttress their dualistic philosophy. In the Lord's Prayer, they prayed for "our supersubstantial bread" (meaning "spiritual bread") instead of "our daily bread," material bread being a necessary evil in their eyes.

Many Cathar teachings were in direct contradiction to the Bible. For instance, they believed in the immortality of the soul and in reincarnation. (Compare Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; Ezekiel 18:4, 20.) They also based their beliefs on apocryphal texts. Nevertheless, insofar as the Cathari translated parts of the Scriptures into the vernacular, to a certain extent, they did make the Bible a better-known book in the Middle Ages.

Not Christians

The perfect considered themselves the rightful successors of the apostles and, consequently, called themselves "Christians," emphasizing this by adding "true" or "good." In point of fact, however, many Cathar beliefs were foreign to Christianity. While the Cathari did recognize Jesus as the Son of God, they rejected his having come in the flesh and his redeeming sacrifice. Misinterpreting the Bible's condemnation of the flesh and the world, they considered all matter to stem from evil. They therefore maintained that Jesus could only have had a spiritual body and that while on earth he merely appeared to have a fleshly body. Like first-century apostates, the Cathari were "persons not confessing Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh."—2 John 7.

In his book *Medieval Heresy*, M. D. Lambert writes that Catharism "replaced a Christian morality by a compulsory asceticism, . . . eliminated redemption by refusing to admit the saving power of [Christ's death]." He considers that "the true affinities of the perfect lay with the ascetic

teachers of the East, the bonzes and fakirs of China or India, the adepts of the Orphic mysteries, or the teachers of Gnosticism." In Cathar belief, salvation was dependent, not on the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but rather on the *consolamentum*, or baptism into the holy spirit. For those thus purified, death would bring about a release from matter.

An Unholy Crusade

The common people, weary of the clergy's extortionate demands and rampant decadence, were attracted by the way of life of the Cathari. The perfect identified the Catholic Church and its hierarchy with "the synagogue of Satan" and "the mother of the harlots" of Revelation 3:9 and 17:5. Catharism was prospering and supplanting the church in southern France. Pope Innocent III's reaction was to launch and finance the so-called Albigensian Crusade, the first crusade organized within Christendom against people who claimed to be Christians.

Through letters and legates, the pope harassed the Catholic kings, counts, dukes, and knights of Europe. He promised indulgences and the riches of Languedoc to all who would fight to stamp out the heresy "by whatever means." His call did not fall on deaf ears. Led by Catholic prelates and monks, a motley army of crusaders from the north of France, Flanders, and Germany headed south down the Rhône Valley.

The destruction of Béziers marked the start of a war of conquest that consumed Languedoc in an orgy of fire and blood. Albi, Carcassonne, Castres, Foix, Narbonne, Termes, and Toulouse all fell to the blood-thirsty crusaders. In such Cathar strongholds as Cassès, Minerve, and Lavaur, hundreds of the perfect were burned at the stake. According to the monk-chronicler Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay, the crusaders

'burned the perfect alive, with joy in their hearts.' In 1229, after 20 years of strife and devastation, Languedoc came under the French Crown. But the slaughter was not yet over.

The Inquisition Strikes the Deathblow

In 1231, Pope Gregory IX instituted the papal Inquisition to lend support to the armed struggle.* The inquisitorial system was at first based on denunciations and duress and, later, on systematic torture. Its aim was to eradicate what the sword had been unable to destroy. Inquisition judges—mostly Dominican and Franciscan friars—were answerable only to the pope. Death by burning was the official punishment for heresy. Such was the fanaticism and brutality of the inquisitors that revolts broke forth in, among other places, Albi and Toulouse. In Avignonet, all the members of the Inquisitorial tribunal were massacred.

In 1244 the surrender of the mountain fortress of Montségur, the last refuge of numerous perfects, sounded the death knell for Catharism. About 200 men and women perished in a mass burning at the stake. Over the years, the Inquisition ferreted out the remaining Cathari. The last Cathar was reportedly burned at the stake in Languedoc in 1330. The book *Medieval Heresy* notes: "The fall of Catharism was the prime battle-honour of the Inquisition."

The Cathari were far from being true Christians. But did their criticism of the Catholic Church justify their cruel extermination by so-called Christians? Their Catholic persecutors and murderers dishonored God and Christ and misrepresented true Christianity as they tortured and slaughtered those tens of thousands of dissenters.

* For further details on the medieval Inquisition, see "The Terrifying Inquisition" in the *Awake!* of April 22, 1986, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., pages 20-3.

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

True Christians Will Be Persecuted

SINCE the days of Abel, many of Jehovah's servants have endured religious persecution. (Luke 11:49-51) And no wonder, for the Bible warns that "all those desiring to live with godly devotion in association with Christ Jesus will also be persecuted"! (2 Timothy 3:12) Accordingly, today in more than 25 countries, Jehovah's Witnesses are under ban and endure persecution.

In a country where Jehovah's Witnesses are not only banned but also persecuted by religious elements, more than 12,000 publishers of the good news continue to work zealously, studying the Bible with over 15,000 people. Of course, their preaching work is done with discretion. For the most part, they hold their Christian meetings in private homes, and they are cautious when inviting interested persons to such meetings.

Recently the government has adopted a more lenient attitude toward the Witnesses, who now do much of their work without aggressive interference. However, various religious groups have used their influence to stir up trouble.

In one city an angry mob of some 200 religious fanatics marched toward a house where about 50 of Jehovah's Witnesses were holding a congregation meeting. Some in the mob were carrying rocks and shouting religious slogans. Their obvious intent was to attack the Witnesses and vandalize the house. The religious leaders had apparently been watching the meeting activities for some time and waited for the right moment to attack. The mob was just about to enter the house when 15 policemen arrived and ordered the crowd to disperse. This was a sur-

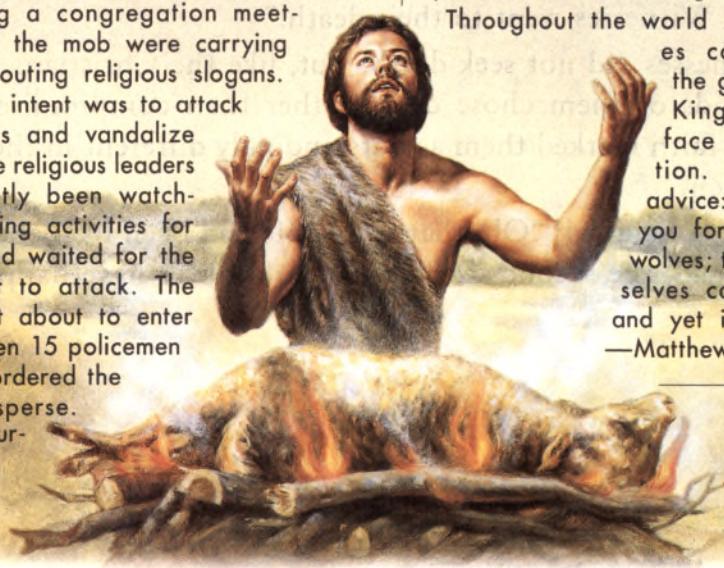
prise to the Witnesses, since none of them had even had time to call the police.

On other occasions, though, the opposers have been more successful. Several Witnesses have been brought to trial and sentenced to imprisonment. One court case had been pending for several years, and apparently the prosecutors had lost interest in it. However, at the instigation of the local clergy, the matter was brought back to the court, and the Witness was given a prison sentence.

In another place a group of Witnesses met in a private home to commemorate the Lord's Evening Meal. Later that evening several policemen arrested the householder and the elder who had conducted the meeting. At the police station, they were severely beaten. A brutal interrogation lasted for several hours. One of the Witnesses also endured the torture of being confined in a cold well.

Why were the police carrying out such an attack? Again, a group of religious fanatics, with the help of the local clergy, was behind the police action. Later the chief of police revealed that the arrests were made without his consent. An apology was issued, and the individuals responsible for the beatings were disciplined.

Throughout the world Jehovah's Witnesses continue to preach the good news of God's Kingdom, even in the face of violent opposition. They follow Jesus' advice: "Look! I am sending you forth as sheep amidst wolves; therefore prove yourselves cautious as serpents and yet innocent as doves." —Matthew 10:16.



Abel was the first to be persecuted

‘Oh, that everyone had been like them!’



These were the words of a columnist in the Luxembourg newspaper *Letzebuerger Journal*. Whom was he talking about?

He had been to Poland to attend a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and noted that one group that had suffered greatly there was never mentioned. In his column of February 2, 1995, he identified this group as Jehovah's Witnesses and wrote: “Neither the most severe detention or concentration camp, nor the threat of perishing miserably in starvation blocks or under the ax or guillotine could make them **reject** their faith.” He continued: “Even brutal SS guards marveled at the **courage** with which Jehovah's Witnesses went to their death.”

Jehovah's Witnesses did not seek death. But, like the Christians in the first century, thousands of them chose death rather than **compromise** Christian principles. Such faith marked them as outstandingly different in the dark days of the Third Reich.

The columnist concluded: “Oh, that all people had been like Jehovah's Witnesses!” If they had, the second world war would never have happened.