

Awake!

Examining the

FOUNDATIONS
OF
Modern-Day
Religion

SPECIAL ISSUE

THE REASON FOR THIS MAGAZINE

News sources that are able to keep you awake to the vital issues of our times must be unfettered by censorship and selfish interests. "Awake!" has no fetters. It recognizes facts, faces facts, is free to publish facts. It is not bound by political ties; it is unhampered by traditional creeds. This magazine keeps itself free, that it may speak freely to you. But it does not abuse its freedom. It maintains integrity to truth.

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CONTENTS

Of Vital Concern to You	3
Why People Belong to	
Religious Organizations	4
What Is Looked To as Authority?	7
The Clergy View Modern-Day Religion	11
Babylonian Origins of	
Modern-Day Religious Concepts	12

Built Around the Affairs of	
This System of Things	17
The Future for the Religion	
Disapproved by God	21
Build Your Faith on	
a Solid Foundation	24
What to Do About It	28
Watching the World	30

Awake!

"It is already the hour for you to awake."

—Romans 13:11

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Number 8

WHAT things do you consider to be of vital concern? Perhaps the health and well-being of you and your family come to mind. Certainly these are important, vitally affecting the happiness and future of you and your loved ones. But what about your worship and your relationship to your Creator? Does this not also affect the happiness and future of you and your family?

Even though a person may realize what vitally affects him, at times it is a human failing to neglect these very things. Yet, is it not foolish to take an indifferent attitude toward matters that so vitally affect your life and happiness? If a doctor advised you that continuing to cater to some bad habit would cut your life short, would you not do something about it? Or if a construction engineer warned you that your house was in danger of collapsing due to a faulty foundation, would you not take the steps necessary to protect yourself and your family?

Then you must appreciate that your religion is of even more vital concern to you, for it affects your life now and into the distant future as well.

Although you may feel that your religion is adequate and you are satisfied with it, what you must consider is the possibility

Of Vital Concern to **YOU**

ty that it may not be the one God approves. Surely you have seen how many different religions there are in the world and have observed the many things done in the name of religion that are sources of concern to thinking persons: wars have been fought, political rivalries engaged in, oppressive rulers supported, all in the name of religion. And who has not noticed the many conflicting beliefs and practices of these numerous religions!

Just because a religion is old, or because you have been raised in it, does not make it right or acceptable to God. So you owe it to yourself and your loved ones to examine the foundations of modern-day religion, including your own, to determine if it is approved by God.

Do not dismiss the matter lightly, as of no concern. How foolish it would be to throw away the very life and happiness you desire now and in the future just because you neglected to make sure whether your religion was approved by God!

Since this matter is of such vital concern to you, affecting your life, happiness and future, join with us as we examine the foundations of modern-day religion. In doing so you will see how it stands with God. It will also help you to determine how you stand with God!

Why

PEOPLE BELONG TO RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

DURING a recent television show in Australia a woman was asked which church she attended. She replied that, although a Presbyterian, she attended the Methodist Church. When asked the reason, she replied, "Because it's the nearest." With a similar superficial motive, a man described himself during a recent survey of religious adherence in Britain as "Church of England, only to distinguish myself from Roman Catholic or other denomination." Such remarks by people queried in religious surveys point up the fact that many persons belong to religious organizations for reasons other than that they are convinced that theirs teaches and practices God's truths.

It should prove enlightening, then, to examine why people belong to all kinds of religious organizations around the world. The frank answers from clergymen, professors, researchers and religious writers will help us to examine the foundations of modern-day religion.

For Festive Occasions of Life

In any examination of motives for belonging to religious organizations, time and again spokesmen for them lament that the majority of their members do not go to church regularly. Why, then, do they belong? "The vast mass of the population"

in England, says a Fellow of University College, Oxford, use "the churches and especially the Church of England to celebrate birth, marriage, death, and to a lesser degree Christmas."

Underscoring the same reason, Archbishop of York F. D. Coggan declared: "There is a vast company of men and women who like a little religion on great occasions. They pay lip service to 'Christian principles' but that is all."

The situation is similar in Scandinavia. In Denmark, for example, more than 97 percent of the people are affiliated with the Church of Denmark, yet

less than 3 percent attend church. According to Per Salomonsen, head of a research project to describe religion in Denmark, the reason so many do not resign from the church is that they want to take advantage of "the services offered by the People's Church at the festive occasions of life." Referring to baptisms, confirmations and weddings, the late Professor Hal Koch, D.D., wrote in a Danish newspaper: "These festivals belong to human life and the people demand the church to 'stage' them to a certain degree . . . it is no doubt because the People's Church renders these services that so few would think of leaving it."

In France the motives for belonging to the Roman Catholic Church are hardly different; thus a parish priest in Paris wrote that the multitudes of people who belong to the church are "seasonals." He explained: "They come to see us periodi-

cally, without fail, on certain occasions such as for baptism, communion, marriage and funeral."⁵

Giving us a view of why people belong to religious organizations in West Germany, Dr. Jürgen Rausch wrote:

"Many citizens expect nothing more of the Church than that she willingly and without undue pressure add color to their family celebrations, without asking them what they believe, or perhaps even checking their knowledge of the religion they so inconspicuously and pleasantly belong to. . . . Many things indicate that truly a large number of persons fail to consider the Church a real factor in their lives, but rather view her only as a kind of national park for the preservation of culture."⁶

Turning from Europe to Africa, we find the same kinds of laments, such as this one in a South African newspaper: "Most of them [church members] take it for granted that the parish church and its priest exist to serve their occasional needs, such as baptism and marriages, and to help them in sickness and death."⁷ Similar comments can be heard throughout Latin America. Thus around the world you will find vast numbers of persons belonging to a religion simply to add color to the special occasions in life, rather than to serve God.

To Please Parents, Be with Friends

Another large group of people are church members mainly out of deference for or pressure from their parents. This is especially true with young persons. Discussing the rite of children being confirmed in West Germany, one report said: "This religious rite is not celebrated voluntarily, but is imposed upon the child by moral pressure and the pressure of the parents. . . . Confession becomes compulsory under pressure and faith becomes hypocrisy."⁸

Besides belonging to please one's parents, some belong to churches because their friends do. Cleric John O. Mellon of

a fashionable New York Presbyterian church said that church members themselves admit they joined a certain church, not because of what the church stood for, but because their friends were members there.⁹ Sometimes it is not a friend that prompts one to belong to a religion but the example of a noted person. In India, for instance, thousands of "outcaste" *harijans* have, in recent years, embraced Buddhism merely because their champion, Dr. Ambedkar, a chief framer of India's new constitution, turned Buddhist before his death a few years ago.

Self-seeking Benefits, Social Club

In many parts of the world churchgoing is fashionable. In Loccum, West Germany, minister Kopf told a Lutheran group that the "vast majority of our people" are at least "inwardly secularists," since "it is fashionable today to belong to a church."¹⁰ And John Highet of Glasgow University declared that people in England, as in America, take up churchgoing as a status symbol. The English, he said, often go to church "because it's good for business, politics and one's individual social ranking."¹¹

In Roman Catholic lands there is a similar attitude. An article called "The Filipino and His Faith" recently viewed religion in the Philippines "as a social institution and not as a spiritual discipline." Throughout Latin America many belong to the church because they were born into it; but they belong also because it is easier to hold jobs, to receive education; to legalize marriages and to receive a "proper burial."

It is not just in Christendom that people belong to religious groups for self-seeking benefits. This is illustrated by the situation in Japan, where the main religions are Buddhism and Shinto. While it is true that, like the people of Christendom, vast numbers of Japanese belong to

the "old" religions mainly because they were born into them, there is a recent development. This is the rise of hundreds of "new religions" since the end of World War II. Why are many millions of Japanese joining these Shinto and Buddhist offshoots? Because they highly emphasize practical benefits, such as business prosperity and cure of disease, usually by magic formulas. In his book *The New Religions of Japan*, Harry Thomsen says that in appealing to the masses with benefits, the new religions downgrade truth. "There is a deep significance in the substitution of benefit for truth," he writes. "For the man in the street or on the farm, 'benefit' has a far better sound than 'truth.'"

Thus, wherever we turn, we find the reason for belonging is not primarily determined by one's conviction that one's organization teaches and practices God's truths. In Australia, for example, a recent report states: "There are many Australians who see the churches as primarily sources of morality and civilization, rather than as repositories of supernatural truth. . . . In a survey of religious attitudes in Melbourne . . . only 2 percent mentioned religious training [as the motive for attending Sunday School]."¹²

Among the other reasons for belonging to a religion one often hears the social-club motive. A team of Jewish sociologists reports that a large segment of American Jews go to synagogue for social and cultural reasons. Another researcher reports that synagogues meet the social and communal needs of Jews. "This, rather than a strong religious drive," he declares, "is the reason for booming synagogue membership."¹³

As with synagogue membership, so it is to a great extent with Protestant churches throughout the world. Surveys report that people belong "to meet new friends" or "to get into some activities." Many churches

not only serve as social clubs but sponsor a variety of clubs such as "Art Club," "Business and Professional Women's Club," and so on. Pointing to this social-club motive, cleric John Heuss of New York City's fashionable Trinity Parish wrote in the *Reader's Digest* for June 1962:

"To many people the Church today is a pleasant community activity where one's children attend Sunday school, where adults go to worship occasionally, and where one goes during the week to meet other nice people. . . . To put on a drive for new members, to hold bazaars, lunches, dinners, and bake sales—all this is admirable, but it is not religion. Indeed, it may well be that most of those things upon which we usually congratulate ourselves are, if viewed as the sole ends for which our parishes exist, repugnant to Almighty God."

What, then, does this examination of why people belong to religious organizations reveal? That, while there are unquestionably thousands of sincere church members, the motive of the masses is not the search for God's truths, but having a means to add color to special occasions in life, pleasing parents, being with friends, having status, gaining economic or political advantages and having a place to meet new friends and socialize. How evident that right motive, which should be a foundation block of modern-day religion, too often is either missing, shattered or crumbling! Surely worship built on such a foundation does not please God.

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WHAT IS LOOKED TO AS

Authority?

NO SCRUTINY
of the founda-

tion of modern-day religion would be thorough unless we examined the authority to which the religions look. Does not the quality of the foundation upholding a religion depend upon the authority to which it looks? Does not a weak authority mean a weak foundation? Hence a strong authority is needed, and not only must such a sound, strong authority be looked to, but it must *be* the authority; that is, its principles must actually be put into practice by its adherents.

There are many forms of modern-day religion whose adherents vary from a small handful to thousands and even millions. To what authority do they look for support of their way of worship? How strong is that authority? Do they live by it? Does it give them a firm foundation, a good reason for their adherents putting trust in them? Let us examine what modern-day religion looks to as authority.

Tradition as Authority

It is frankly admitted that many groups rely heavily on tradition, which may be information, opinions, beliefs or customs handed down by word of mouth or by example. Traditions have their value; traditions in dress, eating habits and architecture have enriched men with variety. But

not all tradition has proved beneficial. Though customs and information handed down in religion can be helpful, they often tend to be inaccurate. Especially with the lapse of time details of happenings are forgotten or distorted. It has been well said that not the least misfortune in a prominent falsehood is the fact that tradition is apt to repeat it for truth.

We note, as an example, that *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 15, page 6, says: "It is an old tradition that Jesus Christ was born on 25 December." But is that tradition accurate? The Bible does not give the exact date but does indicate Jesus' birth was before wintertime, while the shepherds were still out on their fields at night. It points to about October 1.* Tradition handed down December 25 because that date coincides with the pagan Roman Saturnalia and the birthday of the pagan sun-god Mithras. Thus tradition has perpetuated a falsehood.

Tradition can also prove tyrannical. Speaking as the voice of men long dead, tradition may lay its "dead hand" on the living; and instead of serving from its place of vantage as a guide, it may take over the helm, leading one in the wrong direction. It may thus block progress, as in the case of creeds that are considered closed and not open to reason. Though it should be well known that man must check tradition by reason, too often man checks reason by tradition.

It is little wonder, then, that some clergymen bemoan the fact that their religion rests too heavily on tradition, as did Bish-

* For detailed proof see *The Watchtower* of December 15, 1957, pp. 742, 743.

op Austin Pardue of the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh who said: "The vicious malady of our orthodox American denominations comes from the corroding acids of disbelief which have watered down our convictions to the point where much of our religion has become a matter of mere custom and tradition."¹ Concerning a clergyman in the Church of England, *The Australian Church Record* of December 6, 1963, says: "Speaking at an Evangelical Conference in Sydney on November 29, the Venerable H. G. S. Begbie said that what was known as 'Anglican tradition' was replacing scripture as the standard doctrine in the Church of England today."

Thus tradition as an authority is gaining among Protestant religions, though it has not generally reached the high level it has gained in the Roman Catholic religion, where it stands as equal with the Bible or above it. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 15, page 7, says: "Side by side with Scripture there is tradition. . . . This granted, it is impossible to be satisfied with the Bible alone for the solution of all dogmatic problems." Many Catholic religious teachers prefer tradition. A Catholic priest in Quebec, Canada, said, as quoted in the newspaper *Le Messager (The Messenger)*: "Tradition is clearly superior as a rule of faith to Scripture."

Though the Jews have the Hebrew Scriptures from Genesis to Malachi, they rely instead on a great body of oral tradition. Incorporating much of this tradition is the Talmud, which the rabbis have written over the centuries. Regarding the Talmud, *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12, page 26, states: "For the majority of Jews it is still the supreme authority in religion."

The Jewish religious leaders in the days of Jesus Christ also put tradition ahead of the written word of God. Such preference

for tradition, Jesus Christ showed, did not make sense. He told the Jewish religious leaders: "Adroitly you set aside the commandment of God in order to retain your tradition. . . . and thus you make the word of God invalid by your tradition which you handed down."—Mark 7:9, 13.

As a foundation for religion, tradition appeals to the voice and habits of men long dead and who may have been in error. The discerning person knows that human tradition is not a safe and sound foundation upon which to build his worship of God.

Psychology as the Authority

Psychology, which tries to explain why people act, think and feel as they do, is increasingly becoming the authority to which religious leaders look. It is not uncommon for ministers to speak of their "special training in psychology and psychiatry." A clergyman in Detroit, Michigan, wrote a person who was withdrawing from his church for Biblical reasons: "I am not so much interested in your theological beliefs and interpretations of the Bible as I am about your mind." Yes, there is no doubt that with many clergymen psychology has become a higher authority than the Bible. In his book *The Great Religious Leaders*, Charles Francis Potter wrote about modern-day religion: "Another and more powerful trend is the infiltration of psychological explanations of problems of conduct which for centuries have been explained theologically. . . . Clumsily, perhaps, but powerfully, psychology is pushing in and usurping theology's throne in the world of religion. The most crowded churches and halls are those where the preachers translate Christianity in psychological terms."

If the churches wish to make psychology their foundation authority, they should at

least make it clear that they are not teaching the Bible, but rather relying on human reasonings and preaching what one clergyman called "a psychiatric gospel of relaxation and peace of mind."

Scientific Theories

More and more religious leaders look to scientists as authorities because of their influence and renown. Many persons even make science their supreme authority, as Charles Lindbergh wrote in his book *Of Flight and Life*: "To me in youth, science was more important than either man or God. I worshiped science. I was awed by its knowledge. . . . It took many years for me to discover that science, with all its brilliance, lights only a middle chapter of creation. . . . Now I understand that spiritual truth is more essential to a nation than the mortar in its cities' walls."

Thus Lindbergh spotlights the danger of using science as a supreme authority. For what is science? It is not a divine guide; it does not reveal God's purposes. Blindly following it, as is done in Russia and elsewhere, leads to materialistic philosophies and the crushing out of all spirituality.

Yet what do modern religious leaders do when there is a seeming conflict between science and the Bible? As an example, modern-day religion to a great extent places the theory of evolution above the Bible. Says one professor: "The popular theologian, patting his brother scientist on the back, now rejects the literal interpretation of the creation story of Genesis. . . . The popular churches now worship at the shrine of the evolutionistic scientist."² The fact that Jesus Christ confirmed the Genesis record does not deter these professedly Christian clergymen from looking to the evolutionistic scientist.—Matt. 19:4, 5.

Actually, however, science upholds true religion and is not out of accord with the

Bible.* Where, then, is the conflict? In the realm of scientific speculation and theory. It is to this that increasing numbers of religious leaders look as authority.

It is a dangerous thing to build religious faith on the shifting sands of scientific theory and speculation. True science confines itself to facts, but a study of origins without a divine guide departs from science and enters the sphere of philosophy, which depends on human conclusions, which, in turn, shift from generation to generation. Nonetheless, among the religions of Christendom, as well as those in the Orient, it is a common practice for religious leaders to look to worldly philosophers as authorities.

Human Philosophies

One philosopher of the past, Buddha, discarded all claims to divine revelation and appeals to tradition. But did his disclaiming divine revelation cause his adherents to be any less devout? Certainly not. Though Buddhism is claimed by some to be only a philosophy, and not a religion, that philosophy has in fact become the foundation on which many millions of persons have built their worship. What is said by some Buddhists to be meditation becomes fervent prayer in the case of others. What some view as aids to concentration are objects of worship to others.

Because religion has leaned heavily on profound metaphysical distinctions of the philosophers, historian John Lord wrote in his *Beacon Lights of History*: "Has not theology attempted too much? . . . Has it not often made a religion which is based on deductions and metaphysical distinctions as imperative as a religion based on simple declarations?"

* For discussion of this see the April 22, 1963, issue of *Awake!* on "The Bible Triumphs in a Scientific World," which contains a series of articles on this subject, viewing it from many aspects. You may consult it at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's witnesses nearest you.

It is not uncommon for clergymen even in Christendom to quote pagan philosophers such as Socrates as an authority. Regarding this practice, the German clergyman Hans-Lutz Poetsch said in the booklet *Die Kirche erhebt ihre Stimme* (*The Church Speaks Out*): "She [the church] has fallen victim to philosophy. Immoderate in an over assessment of human reasoning, she had been defeated on the field of logic." This is reminiscent of Martin Niemöller's statement at the World Conference of Churches in Amsterdam, when he must have shocked some, saying: "Europe's attempt to build a Christian world in a thousand years has failed. We have attempted to change the gospel into a program of human wisdom, instead of carrying out God's real program."³

Not only is this true in America and Europe, but a like situation exists in Africa; churches that profess to be Christian are inclined to listen to the philosophies of men rather than the wisdom of God and of his Son Jesus Christ. Wrote a teacher of the history of Christianity at the University of Pretoria, South Africa: "In our own multi-racial South Africa the Church of Christ in its protestant form, speaks in so many divergent and contradictory voices on social, political and governmental problems, that the voice of Jesus has become almost inaudible."—*Delayed Action*, by Dr. Ben Marais, p. 37.

What About the Bible?

It becomes increasingly evident that, while Christendom speaks of the Bible as the Word of God, it has not relied on the Bible as its Guide. Instead, it has turned to human tradition, psychology, unproved theories of science and human philosophies. What are the results?

The history of Christendom has been one stained with inquisitions, religious wars, two world wars, divorces, corruption

in government and rising rates of immorality and crime. The majority of criminals profess to belong to some church. However, the difficulty lies, not with the Bible, but with the religious organizations that have failed to inculcate its righteous principles. As cleric J. Arthur Lewis declared at a Baptist church in Australia: "We endorse the Sermon on the Mount as an ethic beyond all praise. But our endorsement is not matched by our obedience."⁴

Yet it is well known that Bible principles are sound and that applying them would, indeed, solve the problems with which mankind is confronted. Why, even the Hindu leader Mahatma Gandhi once told the British Viceroy of India, Lord Irwin: "When your country and mine shall get together on the teachings laid down by Christ in his Sermon on the Mount, we shall have solved the problems not only of our countries but those of the whole world."⁵ Not only the Sermon on the Mount but the entire Bible is filled with counsel from God that is badly needed by all mankind. For the benefit of all of us He has said concerning those Holy Scriptures: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness."—2 Tim. 3:16.

But what has happened? Religions around the world continue to rely on human reasoning rather than this divine wisdom. It is therefore urgent for you to examine the foundation of your own faith. On what is it built? Have you been relying on men, or do you pay attention to God?

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The Clergy View Modern-Day Religion

"A Museum"

● Lutheran pastor Pries of West Germany wrote in a newspaper: "To most of our people today the Church is nothing more than a museum. Our form of Christianity belongs to the past, for which reason we should stop falsely dubbing our people Christians."—*Schleswiger Nachrichten (Schleswig News)*, July 20, 1957.

Wrong Direction

● The assistant superintendent of the Central Methodist Mission in Australia, T. D. Noffs, recently pleaded for a change of direction for modern-day religion. "The Christian Church cannot forever proceed with platitudes and irrelevancies, with fiddle-faddle, with operating huge rich country club churches which are almost totally unrelated to the lives of the people, echoing with clichés and prescriptions for peace of mind."—*Newcastle Morning Herald*, December 30, 1963.

'Influence Gone'

● A letter from cleric W. C. G. Proctor about the increase of crime in Ireland appeared in a Dublin newspaper. It said, in part: "Ought not, indeed, we who are ministers of religion feel a bit ashamed of ourselves as we hear of members of the 'flock' taking to crime? Where has our influence gone? What has been the use of our teaching? A Christian will not participate in crime, and, contrariwise, one who deliberately commits a crime is not a Christian. Therefore, the Churches are failing in their task of making the people of Ireland Christian."—*Evening Mail*, Dublin, December 9, 1959.

One Thing Only

● The Foreign Mission Board of the Brazilian Baptist Convention sponsored a tract that could apply to many modern-day religions. It said: "When Jesus left his disciples . . . he gave them only one job. That was to evangelize the world. . . . The truth is that we are doing everything else except the one thing that He ordered us to do. Jesus never ordered us to build colleges, universities, seminaries, but we are doing it. He never ordered us to raise hospitals, asylums, old people's homes. He never told us that we ought to construct

Churches or organize Sunday Schools or Youth concentrations, but these things are what we are doing. . . . However, the only thing that he told us to do is the only thing that we have left undone. We have not taken the Gospel to the whole world. We have not carried out His orders."

'Cannot Prove Teachings'

● The following item appeared in the *West Australian* (Perth) on September 12, 1963: "T. SANDERS, Bunbury: Archdeacon Kemp has decided not to give religious instruction in schools despite his Lord's command to preach the gospel. Much of the Church of England religious instruction given in schools is too spiritually mysterious and superstitious for anyone to understand. The clergy themselves cannot prove that which they teach. Children attending school know that all knowledge has to be tested. Examples have to be proved. Even to be half right with an answer is not acceptable to a teacher. Unless the clergy have as much knowledge as the children's teachers, they had better stay away for children are quick to sense faults."

Identity Unclear

● Professor Krister Stendahl, of the theological faculty at the University of Uppsala, Sweden, stated at a meeting that "nobody knows what the Church really is. This lack of clarity is natural in a country where 7.5 million belong to the Church but only 200,000 attend Church services."—*Svenska Dagbladet (Swedish Daily)*, February 13, 1960.

Overtaken by World

● In Australia, Baptist clergyman Phil Hayes said in the *Perth Sunday Telegraph's* "Message for the Week": "The early Christians were living witnesses to Jesus Christ. The early Christians turned the world upside down. In our modern day the world has turned the Church upside down, because we have lost our grip, our way, our faith."—*Sunday Telegraph*, Sydney, June 28, 1959, p. 77.

● What, then, are we to conclude? Should we simply turn our backs on all religion? No, that is not the course of wisdom, as we are sure you will agree when you have considered the evidence presented on the following pages.

BABYLONIAN ORIGINS

of MODERN-DAY RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS



BABYLON had it first!

Yes, just as today one often reads advertisements in which the boast is made, "We had it first!" so with ancient Babylonia or Babylon. Regarding ever so many modern religious concepts, ancient Babylon can well boast, "We had it first!" In fact, regardless of the quarter of this globe in which you may be living, most likely you will be sur-

prised to learn how many of the prevailing religious concepts can be traced back to ancient Babylon.

Thus one learned professor, author of the book *Religion of Babylon and Assyria*, tells us of the "profound impression made upon the ancient world by the remarkable manifestations of religious thought in Babylonia and by the religious activity that prevailed in that region." He also reports that "prior to the rise of Christianity, Egypt, Persia and Greece felt the influence of Babylonian religion."¹ Another scholar states that "the researches of modern writers . . . uniformly regard Babylon and Assyria as the cradle of ancient Paganism,"² and still another observes that "the Assyrians borrowed largely from the Babylonians."³

However, not only the ancient civilizations borrowed their religious concepts from Babylon. The religions of people in all parts of the world even down to this day bear the mark of ancient Babylon. It is true that some make the assertion that the various religious superstitions and idolatries of different nations were spon-

taneous developments on the part of each group. But Colonel Garnier in his renowned volume *The Worship of the Dead* shows that scholars who have most fully studied the subject "have indisputably proved the connection and identity of the religious systems of nations most remote from each other, showing that, not merely Egyptians, Chaldeans, Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans, but also the Hindus, the Buddhists of China and Tibet, the Goths, Anglo-Saxons, Druids, Mexicans and Peruvians, the Aborigines of Australia, and even the savages of the South Sea Islands, must all have derived their religious ideas from a common source and a common center. Everywhere we find the most startling coincidences in rites, ceremonies, customs, traditions and in the names and relations of their respective gods and goddesses."⁴

Yet it is of great interest to observe that, in spite of the fact that religious beliefs and practices in every part of the earth manifest the characteristics of the religion of ancient Babylon, that is not true of the Holy Bible, the basis for true Christianity. Where professed Christians

cling to doctrines and rites that are clearly Babylonish, the facts will show that they ignore what the Bible says about worship that is acceptable to God. As we consider some of the fundamental religious concepts and their Babylonian foundations, the contrast between Babylonish religion and the teachings of the Bible will become quite clear.

The Trinity Concept

One of the most common religious concepts held today throughout the world, and that not only in Christendom but also in non-Christian lands, is that of a trinity or triad of gods. According to the Roman Catholic *Encyclopedia*, the trinity is "the central doctrine of the Christian religion." How important the other half of Christendom views this teaching to be can be gathered from the fact that in 1961 the World Council of Churches added acceptance of the trinity to its conditions for membership. On the other side of the world there is the Hindu triad or trinity consisting of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. Even a Buddhist image in Japan has three heads. Certain African tribes also have a trinity of deities.

What is the origin of this modern-day religious concept? It came from ancient Babylon. At the head of its pantheon of gods there was a triad consisting of Anu, Enlil (Bel) and Ea, followed by another triad or trinity, that of the gods Sin, Shamash and Adad. Thus we are told that "to invoke Anu, Bel and Ea became a standing formula that the rulers of Babylon as well as of Assyria were fond of employing. These were the three gods *par excellence*."¹ The ancient Babylonians even had several triads or trinities of devils!

But what does the Bible have to say about this religious concept? Does it ever mention a trinity by name? Does it ever

or in any place define, explain, expound or argue for this doctrine? Not once! Although the Roman Catholic Church considers this her central doctrine, and belief in it is a determining factor for membership in the ostensibly Christian World Council of Churches, the Bible does not teach this Babylonian concept of God. Rather, it says: "It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service."—Matt. 4:10; Deut. 6:13.

The Concept of Consciousness

After Death

A modern-day religious concept that is perhaps even more widespread than the trinity is the belief that the dead are conscious in a spirit realm. It has many variations both inside and outside of Christendom and is, in turn, the basis of many other religious concepts. Included among these are eternal torment or hellfire, purgatory, reincarnation, transmigration of souls, spiritism—of which there are said to be ten million devotees in Brazil alone²—and the native concept of the Koreans that causes them to "sacrifice to the world of unseen spirits of their ancestors in order to avert misfortune and ensure blessings."³

This concept of the dead being conscious also has its foundations in ancient Babylon. Its people believed that "death was a passage to another kind of life,"⁴ although not professing to believe in immortality of the soul. Apparently the idea of total extinction of life and consciousness, or annihilation, once life had begun was inconceivable to them. They believed that their dead went to a huge cavern beneath the earth, most commonly referred to as Aralu. It was a place of eternal foreboding and gloom, a place from which no one ever returned.

The Babylonians also held that life in Aralu was far more tolerable for some souls than for others and that soldiers fared better than the rest. This calls to mind a statement made by a Roman Catholic priest during the Korean War to the effect that soldiers dying on the battlefield did not need to go first to purgatory but went straight to heaven, for war was "part of God's plan for populating the kingdom of heaven."¹⁰

What does the Bible say about this? Does it, too, teach that death is the door to "another kind of life"? Certainly not. It clearly says: "As for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all."—Eccl. 9:5.

The Concept of Magic

In the minds of many persons the concept of consciousness after death or immortality of the soul is closely related to the practice of magic. It likewise may be said to be a religious concept that has devotees in all parts of the earth, being not at all limited to one race. To note an example, we find a Brazilian scholar writing about the situation in the state of Bahia, Brazil: "The number of whites, mulattoes and individuals of all colors or color gradations who, in their afflictions, in their troubles, consult the Negro fetisheers," either secretly or openly, "would be incalculable if it were not more simple to say that in general it is the mass of the population, except for a small minority."¹¹ Africa, too, is filled with the religious use of magic, use of the juju being an example. Yes, in nearly every land the use of charms or talismans is prevalent.

Here again, we find that Babylon had it first, for it is recognized as the very home of magic. "The popular beliefs of Europe in the Middle Ages," but by no means limited to that time and place, "respecting evil spirits, exorcisms and charms and re-

garding witches and the characteristics of the Chief of the powers of evil, are simply survivals from the old Chaldean culture. Thus the Chaldean witch was believed to possess the power of flying through the air on a stick."¹² And for the average Babylonian "the priest was primarily the one who could drive evil demons out of the body, . . . who could thwart the power of wizards and witches, who could ward off attacks of mischievous spirits, or who could prognosticate the future and determine the intention or will of the gods."¹³

However, we see the greatest possible difference between the religion of the Bible and that of the Babylonians, for in the last book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy, we read: "There should not be found in you anyone who . . . employs divination, a practitioner of magic or anyone who looks for omens or a sorcerer, or one who binds others with a spell or anyone who consults a spirit medium or a professional foreteller of events or anyone who inquires of the dead." (Deut. 18:10, 11) As one authority on Babylonian religion observes, "there can be little doubt but that this Pentateuchal opposition is aimed chiefly against Babylonian customs."¹⁴

The Clergy-Laity Concept

In most religions throughout the world today there is a distinction between the priests or clergy and the common people or laity. By means of titles and special garb the clergy are set apart because of their ordination and their special education and, oftentimes, their use of languages not understood by the people in general. Certain functions are the prerogatives of only the clergy, and this is true of the Roman Catholic clergy, the Protestant clergy and those not professing to be Christian, such as Buddhists and African fetish priests.

Here again, we find that Babylon had it first! It had an elaborate system of priestcraft with priests of various ranks and orders. In fact, *The Encyclopædia Britannica* tells us that "the distinction between priest and layman is characteristic of this religion."⁹ As time went on there was "a growing power of the priests as mediators between men and gods."¹⁰ Their training was long and comprehensive. Their writings were in "dead languages" and they jealously guarded their ritual knowledge from the common people.

All this is in striking contrast with what the Bible shows should be the situation among Christians. There we are told: "You, do not you be called Rabbi, for one is your teacher, whereas all you are brothers. Neither be called 'leaders,' for your Leader is one, the Christ." And far from there being a class of mediators, the Bible shows that there is only one: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a corresponding ransom for all."
—Matt. 23:8, 10; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6.

The "Mother of God" Concept

Another modern-day religious concept is that which holds Mary, the mother of the human Jesus, to be the "mother of God." Indicative of the attention and affection bestowed upon her are the Roman Catholic dogmas of the immaculate conception of Mary and her bodily assumption into heaven; the size and number of statues and pictures of her featured in Roman Catholic circles as well as the large number of pages devoted to her in Catholic literature.

This concept also finds its origin in ancient Babylon's religion. In addition to its pantheon of male gods it also had goddesses, among which one ranked first and was called "mother of the gods." She was also referred to as "the lady who causes growth in the city, the mother of its chil-

dren."¹⁰ This goddess gradually came to be identified with Ishtar, she absorbing in her the titles and qualities of all the other goddesses, and as such had many temples dedicated to her.

The "mother of God" concept may be a popular one today in certain religious circles and has been ever since the days of ancient Babylon, but it does not find any precedent in the Bible, in either the Hebrew or the Christian Greek Scriptures. God's prophets of old condemned those who made offerings to the "queen of the heavens." As for Mary, the mother of Jesus, while Jesus showed appropriate consideration for her, he did not glorify her, and in reporting events that occurred *after* Pentecost, no mention is made of her name in any of the Christian Greek Scriptures. (Jer. 7:18; Gal. 4:4) The "mother of God" teaching is Babylonian, not Biblical.

What has been presented here is only a sampling of a vast array of evidence that leads to the same conclusion. Nevertheless, it is sufficient to show that a large part of modern-day religion has its foundation in ancient Babylon.

How It Came About

The evidence is clear. An examination of the foundations of modern-day religion shows that, apart from the Holy Bible, religious teachings and practices around the world are stamped with the mark of ancient Babylon. But how did it happen?

The very first portion of the Bible, called Genesis, explains. It informs us that in the twenty-fourth century before our Common Era wickedness had become so rampant in the earth that man's Creator, Jehovah God, destroyed all mankind by means of a global flood, with the exception of Noah and his household, eight souls in all. Though these Flood-survivors worshiped their Creator, among their descendants were those who preferred to make a name

for themselves, men who spurned the divine law and showed no regard for the sanctity of life. Their ringleader was Nimrod, who became the first human king.

Of their activities the Bible reports: "Now all the earth continued to be of one language and of one set of words. And it came about that in their journeying eastward they eventually discovered a valley plain in the land of Shinar, and they took up dwelling there.

... They now said: 'Come on! Let us build ourselves a city and also a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a celebrated name for ourselves, for fear we may be scattered over all the surface of the earth.' " (Gen. 11:1-4) That tower was set up for religious purposes, but not to honor the true God, man's Creator. They were seeking to make a celebrated name for themselves; and their leader, Nimrod, was one who had made a reputation for himself as "a mighty hunter in opposition to Jehovah," the true God. (Gen. 10:8, 9) For mankind's own good, Jehovah God did not allow this apostasy to continue without reproof. He expressed his displeasure with it by confusing their language, forcing them to cease their united building work.

"Accordingly Jehovah scattered them from there over all the surface of the earth," the Bible reports, and as they scattered they carried their apostate religious ideas with them. Now, of course, with new languages they had new names for their gods and their teachings, but

they all reflected their origin at Babel (Greek: Babylon), where Jehovah God had confused their tongues.—Gen. 11:5-9.

Thus, amazingly, most of modern-day religion, which claims to be the worship of God, in reality leads mankind away from the true God. Adhering to Babylonish traditions, rather than to God's Word as recorded in the Holy Bible, such religion shows itself to be in opposition to Jeho-

vah. At times that opposition is shown simply by indifference on the part of the worshipers for what Jehovah God has to say to mankind through the Bible. At other times it is manifest by those

who profess to teach the Bible, but who purge the name of God from his own Book, endeavoring to make him a nameless Lord or God who will be acceptable to everyone. And on yet other occasions that opposition is manifest by official decrees against those who worship Jehovah or even by violent persecution. But regardless of how the opposition is shown, religion that is built on Babylonish foundations and so is in opposition to Jehovah God, the Creator of man, cannot bring lasting blessings to its adherents.

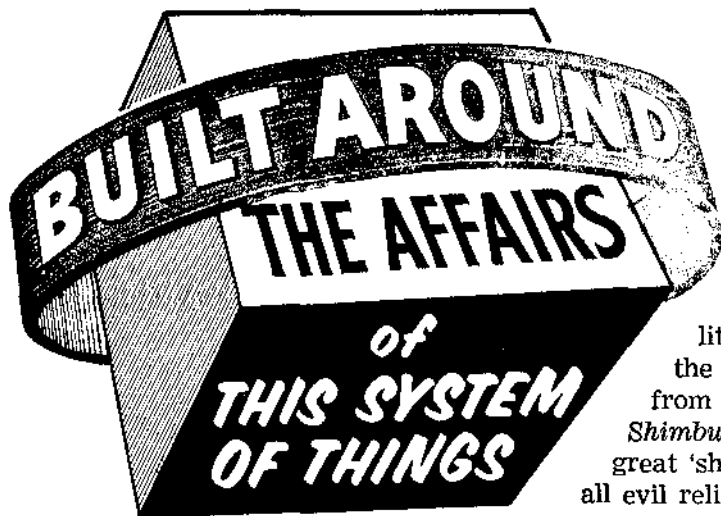
COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- A Perfect World—Worth Working For?
- So You Feel Sorry for Yourself.
- The Deputy—a stage play that has stirred up consciences and opposition.
- Emotional Judgment Denies Individual Rights.
- The Apostle Paul's Writership Vindicated.

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BUILT AROUND THE AFFAIRS of THIS SYSTEM OF THINGS

MODERN-DAY religion is built around this present system of things. Its roots are deeply embedded in the various elements of this present system. It has adapted itself to a wide variety of social, commercial, political and nationalistic sentiments, depending on the country in which it finds itself.

This is so not only with respect to the religions of Christendom. In Asia, Africa, yes, on all continents, religions have their foundations deep in this system of things.

Deeply Involved

That modern-day religion is deeply involved and seeks to perpetuate the present system of things can be seen by examining its attitude and behavior around the world.

In Japan, Shinto was the state religion until the end of World War II. Although the formal tie has been abolished, prominent officials still make visits to Shinto headquarters to report on matters of state. In addition, other prominent Japanese religions are ardent participators in politics. Of the religion called Seicho-no-Ie the book *The New Religions of Japan* states: "Now the emphasis is not on the Emperor, but upon the 'fatherland' and the national flag.

And Seicho-no-Ie is one of the Japanese religions which most ardently advocate a 'religious political movement.'"

The fast-growing Soka Gakkai religion is also deeply involved with this system of things. That its efforts are toward gaining political majority is evidenced by the following statements quoted from its organ, the newspaper *Seikyo Shimbun*: "When as the result of our great 'shakubuku,' our country is rid of all evil religions, the Diet ought to decide to create a national center of worship. For that end, it is necessary to send our members to the national legislature so that we could command a majority."

The *Look* magazine of September 10, 1963, noted their success toward gaining their objectives. It said: "In the elections of 1962, Soka Gakkai had installed 15 members in Japan's Upper House (senate), and 99 percent of its candidates were shoo-ins in local and prefectural elections throughout the country." Stated an observer: "Ultra-nationalism, which once wore the garb of Shinto, may return in the robes of Soka Gakkai."

In the British Isles the Church of England is closely associated with this system of things—the head of the State, the queen, also being the head of the Church. In fact, so close has been the association of the Church of England with the ruling classes in England that it has been unkindly described as "the Tory party on its knees." Said the Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral in London: "It should be obvious therefore that the Church's concerns must overlap politics at many points. For the Church to resign all interest in political affairs would be to abdicate a large part of its rights and duties."

The Roman Catholic Church has this same attitude toward taking part in the affairs of this system of things. Not only has she delved into commercial affairs, amassing financial assets and holdings so vast that they dwarf the total budgets of almost every country in the world; but, in order to protect these interests, she has often allied herself with military dictators, such as Franco of Spain and the late Benito Mussolini.

A recent example of backing a political dictator was in Colombia, South America, where priests gave support to ex-dictator Rojas Pinilla. According to the May 12, 1963, edition of *El Tiempo* (Time) of Bogotá, one of the priests said: "I am infected by the military regime of General Rojas Pinilla, whom I admire and respect for the exemplary work of his past government. If Rojas Pinilla is not the one, then may it be another, but of the military, because as a priest and a citizen I am with the movement, and I believe that this is the only solution for the country." This same paper previously reported that the Vatican gave full support to such political participation, saying: "Let Catholics take an active part in political life."

So with the blessing of its leaders the Catholic Church takes an active part in politics, even imploring God's blessing on political parties she supports. For example, during the presidency of the late J. F. Kennedy, at a political rally in the United States attended by 1,500 diners, priest Edmund Cuneo prayed, as reported in the *Philadelphia Bulletin* of October 17, 1962: "We return Thee thanks, O Almighty God . . . We are particularly grateful for the new inspiration, the new enthusiasm and, we hope, the new courage to go out and work for the Democratic Party with all our available energy. . . . If we wish greater benefits from the government, we must work to keep the Democrats in. This is our

challenge and we beg Thee, God, to give us divine assistance. Amen."

But the Catholic Church does more than merely pray for God's blessing on her political ambitions. For instance, in Puerto Rico during the 1960 national election campaign, Catholic bishops sought to oust Governor Luis Muñoz Marín by prohibiting all Catholics from voting for him, and urging them to support their Catholic party. To answer those critical of this mixing in politics, Monsignor Grovas cited the Church's official organ, the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* (*The Roman Observer*) of May 18, 1960: "The church cannot be agnostic (or indifferent), particularly when politics touches the altar, as Pius XI said. It is, then, its duty and its right to intervene even in this field."

So it goes with modern-day religion in one country after another. In Denmark the king is the head of the Danish People's Church, whose laws are given by the government and parliament. Ecclesiastical matters are governed by the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs. In Cyprus an archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church is not only part of the political life of the country, but is its president! In South Africa a clergyman of the Reformed Church said: "We Afrikaners have always cooperated closely in fields of church and politics. . . . We as a people and we as a Church have turned Afrikaner Nationalism, and with it Apartheid, into an idol. We bow low before it."

How apparent it is that modern-day religion is built around the affairs of this old system of things! It supports political governments of all shades in peace and war. It depends on Church-State alliances where these are possible. It has thrown its full support behind the United Nations, calling it the world's best hope for peace. It has expended time, energy and money to support schools that delve into various fields

of knowledge not related to the ministry. In short, it has completely absorbed the various elements of this old system of things so as to become an integral part of it, inseparable and indistinguishable from it.

The Results

But is this involvement in the affairs of this system of things a good thing? What happens when religion is married to the State, or when it leaps into political fracas and endeavors to whip up support of its favorite party or regime? Does it produce the good fruitage of peace, unity and love?

Think now. Does it not rather result in hard feelings, or, worse yet, even in divisions and wars? When a priest prays, "We must work to keep the Democrats in," and begs God's assistance to that end, are not church members divided? Does God favor one political party over another? Is God the God of the Democrats, but not of the Republicans? Is he God of one political power, but not of another nation?

Is it not apparent that mixing in the affairs of this old system leads to divisions and strife? For example, consider what happened recently in Australia when the clergy openly supported different political parties. The Labor party leader Arthur A. Calwell lamented that, as a result of this, "every Catholic family, every convent, every monastery, every rectory is divided." The *New York Times* of January 30, 1961, observed that "the rift extends to the hierarchy. Archbishop Mannix is openly at odds with Cardinal Norman T. Gilroy of Sydney," and "also with his own Co-adjutor Archbishop, Australian-born Justin D. Simonds."

When modern-day religion sides with a political party or regime, then it becomes involved in their political squabbles and

battles. Thus Catholic is set against Catholic, Baptist against Baptist, Lutheran against Lutheran, and so on. During wartime the clergy who support one government even encourage their congregations to go out and kill others of the same faith who have thrown in their lot with a different political power. An outstanding example of this was during the first and second world wars. No doubt you still remember how the clergy on both sides petitioned God to grant them victory over those of the same religious faith fighting on the opposite side.

It thus becomes apparent that close union with this old system of things is a divisive, corrupting influence. By such involvement modern-day religion has ceased to be an ennobling force; it no longer can champion love of fellowman and respect for life. But, rather, by sinking its foundations into worldly affairs, modern-day religion has become infected with this old system's moral decadence, divisions, prejudices and hatreds.

This was sharply drawn to public attention by book reviewer Maurice Weiler, writing in the August 13, 1962, issue of *Le Monde* (*The World*), a Paris newspaper. He said: "What explains that for so many centuries the Christian peoples have participated in so many wars: wars of conquest, crusades, wars of religion, colonial wars? How is it that the churches—Catholic and Protestant—generally approved these wars, sometimes encouraged them, always tolerated them? How did it come about that both camps prayed to God and called for his blessing upon the fighting forces? One must go back to what the author dares to call the 'heresy of Constantine.' The day the Christian society thought it could hasten its triumph by associating with the political powers."

Why the Bad Fruits?

Many religions of today, however, will defend their mixing in worldly affairs by claiming that in this way they can win over this world to righteous ways, cleansing it from its badness. As Archbishop Montini of Milan (now Pope Paul VI) explained in a speech in 1957: "May we never forget that the fundamental attitude of Catholics who wish to convert the world must first be one of love for the world . . . Love for our times, our civilization, our technology, our arts, our sports, our world."

But is this God's way? If so, why is it that the fruits are bad? Why is it that, as we have already seen, participation in politics puts fellow worshipers at odds with one another? Why is it that religious people who are involved in the political affairs of this system of things have repeatedly found themselves on the battlefield, slaughtering their fellow believers?

It is good for us to observe that the course that the Bible advocates can help us to avoid these bad fruits. It does not endorse religious involvement in the affairs of this system of things. Rather than saying, as did Pope Paul, that one's attitude "must first be one of love for the world," the pope's own Bible says: "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world," for whosoever "will be a friend of this world becometh an enemy of God." And Jesus Christ said of his true followers: "They are not of the world, as I also am not of the world." "I have chosen you out of the world," Jesus told his disciples, "therefore the world hateth you."—1 John 2:15; Jas. 4:4; John 17:16; 15:19, *Douay Version*.

However, most modern-day religions have ignored this sound counsel. Rather

than succeeding in changing the world, professed "Christians have conformed themselves to the world," the Lutheran Church paper *Sonntagsblatt für die Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche* (*Sunday News for the Evangelical Lutheran Church*) acknowledged. "Yes, indeed, we have developed a good neighbor policy with the world. . . . We bow and scrape before the world so as to be the way it wants us to be. Indeed, it has no longer reason to hate us! Since we are of the world, the world loves us and hates us no longer."

What does this mean for modern-day religion that has made itself part of this old system of things? The answer becomes obvious when we understand what the Bible says about the rulership of this world.

Although the Bible shows that Jesus repeatedly expressed his subjection to Jehovah God, yet he said that "the ruler of this world" had no hold on him. (John 14:30) Why so? Because, as the Scriptures make clear, that ruler is Satan the Devil. (Matt. 4:8, 9) For that reason 1 John 5:19 says: "The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one," and in 2 Corinthians 4:4 he is referred to as "the god of this system of things."

The deplorable conditions that characterize this present system of things make it evident that, knowingly or unknowingly, the majority of mankind have submitted to his rulership. Clearly, then, when modern-day religion becomes involved in the affairs of this old system of things, it puts itself at the service of the "god of this system of things," it takes the side of the Devil, and so makes itself an enemy of Jehovah, the true God.—Jas. 4:4.

Take a good look at that foundation on which so much of modern-day religion is built. Is that what you want?



THE FUTURE

FOR THE
**RELIGION
DISAPPROVED
BY GOD**

A BILITY to tell with accuracy the things that have not yet come to pass does not belong to man; it is an evidence of godship. So it was appropriate that Jehovah God, the Creator, should in the pages of the Bible challenge those who claim to be gods, saying: "Tell to us the things that are going to happen. The first things—what they were—do tell, that we may apply our heart and know the future of them. Or cause us to hear even the things that are coming. Tell the things that are to come afterward, that we may know that you are gods." —Isa. 41:22, 23.

Have they successfully met that challenge? Do the sacred writings that are relied on by people who worship gods other than Jehovah contain such evidence of divine inspiration? Do they contain prophecies given in the past and that have already been fulfilled, so giving their worshipers reason to believe that what they say about the future will come true? No, they do not. But the Bible does!

For example, over 130 years before Cyrus the Persian was even born, the Bible foretold that he would overthrow the Babylonian World Power and liberate the Jews it held captive. (Isa. 44:28-45:3) And over two hundred years in advance, it foretold the rise of the Grecian World Power under a powerful king, Alexander, and the division of the kingdom among four lesser rul-

ers following his death. (Dan. 8:5-8, 20-22) It has also accurately foretold the rise of the League of Nations and its successor, the United Nations, in modern times. (Rev. 17:8-11) So when it tells us what lies ahead for religion that is in opposition to Jehovah God, we do well to pay attention. Why so? Because, unlike other so-called sacred writings, it has by its record of fulfilled prophecy proved that it is indeed the Word of God!

Judgments Already Executed

It is often true that the events of the past cast considerable light on the present and even help us to understand what to expect in the future, and that is true in this case too. When we study the Bible record concerning the dealings of Jehovah God with the worship of other gods, we can perceive what the future holds.

Thirty-four centuries ago ancient Egypt was the scene of a historic drama. The issue of religion brought on a contest that shook the nation to its foundations. You need not be of Jewish descent to be stirred by the Bible account of Moses' plea for freedom of worship for Jehovah's people and the dictatorial Pharaoh's rejection of it with the challenge, "Who is Jehovah, so that I should obey his voice?" (Ex. 5:2) Worshiped as a god himself, Pharaoh also had confidence in an imposing array of other gods, temples, altars and priests. But that confidence took a severe beating when he and his priests were obliged to stand helplessly by and see plague after plague strike their land from the hand of Moses'

and Israel's God, Jehovah. Six plagues were enough, though, to cause some of Pharaoh's own servants realistically to seek protection for their household and livestock before the seventh plague of man- and animal-killing hail rained down. (Ex. 9:20-26) Though shaken, proud Pharaoh would not acknowledge defeat until the blow struck by the tenth and last plague. In advance Jehovah had told Moses: "I must pass through the land of Egypt on this night and strike every first-born in the land of Egypt, from man to beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I shall execute judgments." (Ex. 12:12) With his own son dead, Pharaoh acceded to the outcry of his mourning nation and ordered Israel's departure.

When the nation of worshipers of Jehovah marched out of Egypt, a "mixed company" joined them. (Ex. 12:38) They had been eyewitnesses of Jehovah's protection of his people during the last of the seven plagues. They knew the gods of Egypt had been of no value and possessed no true saving power. Egypt's military might was great; but her religious gods were impotent, lifeless!

To Egypt's northeast lay Canaan, a land of numerous tribes and numerous religions. When the nation of Israel lay encamped on Jordan's eastern shores, Jehovah gave them this assurance: "Nobody will take a firm stand against you, until you have exterminated them. The graven images of their gods you should burn in the fire. You must not desire the silver and the gold upon them, nor indeed take it for yourself, for fear you may be ensnared by it; for it is a thing detestable to Jehovah your God." (Deut. 7:24, 25) Disaster was imminent for the Canaanites, but it was not just because their forefather Canaan had been cursed by God in Noah's day. (Gen. 9:25) It was because their religion was bad, detestable!

Yet some Canaanites lived on, but only because they came to serve the true and living God, Jehovah. When Israelite spies infiltrated the walled city of Jericho and found refuge in the woman Rahab's house, she told them how the news of Jehovah's power had preceded them and said: "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 earth beneath." Her life and that of her family were spared when the city was razed to the ground. (Josh. 2:1-13) An entire city of Hivites, called Gibeon, also went over to the side of Jehovah's people, saying: "Here we are, in your hand. Just as it is good and right in your eyes to do to us, do." Their religion may have been good enough for their fathers, but they knew it was now faced with obliteration. —Josh. 9:3-27.

Was the mere acknowledgment of Jehovah as the true God enough? By no means. When Israel later adulterated its worship of Jehovah with false teachings and failed to live up to his pure standards, the entire nation suffered a punishment as fearsome as any meted out to their adversaries. (Jer. 32:26-35) Six centuries later, Christ Jesus, an Israelite himself, again exposed the hypocrisy of their pretended worship of the true God. He flatly told the religious leaders they were like "whitewashed graves," beautiful outside, but full of hypocrisy and lawlessness inside; they were blind guides leading a blind people. For this their religious "house" would be abandoned by God for desolation, and it *was* in the year 70 (A.D.).—Matt. 23:16-38.

The record is there for all to read. It has stood for thousands of years and is today a testimony that Jehovah will never tolerate religion that is not in harmony with his Word and will. Egyptians, Ca-

naanites and Israelites died, not because they were Egyptians, Canaanites and Israelites, but because their religion was wrong, based on false premises, often hypocritical.

Looking to the Future

What, then, does the future hold for modern-day religion that turns a deaf ear to Jehovah's Word and closes its eyes to the warning examples it records? The last book of the Bible, Revelation, leaves no room for doubt. Three of its chapters describe God's judgment on "Babylon the Great," pictured both as a city and as a harlotrous woman who assumes a superior position over the kings of the earth. The old city of Babylon is now a heap of ruins, so who or what is this "Babylon the Great" today? It should bring no shock to be told that the name applies to the modern-day world empire of religions that are in opposition to Jehovah. We have already seen in this magazine the positive proof that the doctrines of such religions are rooted in ancient Babylon. No longer confined to the plains of Shinar in Mesopotamia, such belief has spread out over all the earth through the world's religions and thus today we have Babylon the *Great*. She is, as ancient Babylon ever was, the enemy of Jehovah's pure worship.

The pages of secular history unite in showing that this world empire of religions has held her place of prominence in the world, not by her own armies or her commercial holdings, though sometimes great; rather, she has relied on her religious charm to woo the world rulers and win them to her way of thinking. To be frank, she has been a harlot, willing to sell her favors for a price to any and all who could enrich or exalt her, or increase her power as spiritual mistress over the "kings of the earth." When kings and rulers have

taken office, her religious clergy have been at their side to pray for them, and when these "kings" go to war her religious leaders are there to bless their armies. And who today does not know of her dealings with dictators and kings to feather her nest and make it secure?

But now God's prophetic Word shows that the day for Babylon the Great is past. Try as she will to renew her charms and give herself a "new face," she is shown to be a worn-out harlot, soon to be discarded by her former lovers. Yes, the seventeenth chapter of Revelation shows that the very political powers she once enchanted will turn violently against her in hatred, strip off her religious robes, and lay bare the naked facts of her religious fraud and deceit. Whatever these political powers may think their reason to be, God's Word shows whose purpose they will serve when it says: "Be glad over her, O heaven, also you holy ones and you apostles and you prophets, because God has judicially exacted punishment for you from her! And a strong angel lifted up a stone like a great millstone and hurled it into the sea, saying: 'Thus with a swift pitch will Babylon the great city be hurled down, and she will never be found again.'" Her disappearance will come swiftly as if steel-strong fingers of an invisible hand had fastened around her, rocked her completely off her once-strong foundations and, with a mighty heave, hurled her into the depths of the sea. That is what the future holds for religion disapproved by God.—Rev. 18:20, 21; 17:15-18.

In view of this it is certainly worth while to ask: Where do you stand as regards this worldwide practice of worship that is in opposition to Jehovah God? Does honest investigation show you have built on its foundations? If so, consider carefully the next article.

BUILD YOUR FAITH on a SOLID FOUNDATION

FROM early times men have realized the importance of building on a solid foundation. Jesus Christ, whom the Bible identifies as the Son of God, used this common knowledge to good advantage in illustrating the type of foundation on which a person should build his spiritual life. He likened one who looked to the right source of spiritual instruction and then acted in harmony with what he learned to a man "who built his house upon the rock-mass." And when "the rain poured down and the floods came and the winds blew and lashed against that house," Jesus said, "it did not cave in, for it had been founded upon the rock-mass."—Matt. 7:24, 25.

Yes, for one's faith to be so strong that his spiritual life will not collapse when hard pressed by storms of opposition, it must be firmly grounded. But where? On philosophies evolved by imperfect men? on unproved theories of science? No, a more durable foundation than that is needed. You need a foundation of unshakable truth. But where can it be found?

Almighty God himself inspired men of faith to write a book of instructions for the guidance of mankind. That book, as we saw in the preceding article, is the Bible. As might be expected, the very contents of the Bible inspire confidence. It does not relate mythological ideas as if they were historical fact. To the contrary, it deals with datable historical events, tying in its own narrative with well-known persons and places reported on by secular histo-

rians. For this reason, it is reported that Sir Isaac Newton, noted scientist and a critic of ancient writings, having examined the Holy Scriptures with great care, declared: "I find more sure marks of authenticity in the New Testament than in any profane history whatever."

Archaeology, too, has unearthed a vast array of tangible evidence that overwhelmingly confirms the authenticity of the Scriptures. In fact, when the Bible record touches on any field of science, its accuracy reflects the fact that it is indeed inspired by the One who is the Creator of all things. What it says is sound, and it is as true today as when it was first written.*

Furthermore, the Bible's righteous principles and moral standards show it to be written under divine inspiration. Realistically it explains the reasons for the circumstances with which mankind is now confronted, and it shows us how to conduct ourselves in such a way as to enjoy wholesome relations within our families, with our fellowman and, above all, with the Most High God.

If you have not already done so, you owe it to yourself and your family to examine this inspired record. The Bible is printed, complete or in part, in 1,202 languages; so in all probability you can read it in your own tongue. And since many millions of copies are printed each year,

* For details on archaeological and other scientific confirmation of the Bible, see the book *"All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial,"* published in 1963 by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

it is likely you can easily obtain a copy if you make the effort.

It is apparent that if your faith is to have a solid foundation it must be firmly based upon the inspired Word of God, the Bible. Is that true of what you believe? Have you personally checked all the various doctrines and practices of your religion against the Bible to see if they have a sound Scriptural foundation? It is vital to do so. It is not enough simply to pay lip service to the Bible, while relying on the philosophies and traditions of men. Of those who practice that kind of religion, God says: "It is in vain that they keep worshipping me, because they teach commands of men as doctrines." (Matt. 15:9) So now is the time to check your own position, to be sure that you are building on a solid foundation.

The True God

With that in mind, examine your concept of God. Who is he? What is his name? Did he have a beginning? What qualities or attributes characterize him? What blessings does he hold in store for those who faithfully serve him?

With confidence, we turn to God's own inspired Word for the answers. What it has to say on this matter makes good sense, because it is in harmony with the actual state of things. It does not encourage men to bow before images in worship, because they cannot hear or see or speak; they are valueless gods. (Hab. 2:18) Nor does it teach that God is only the product of men's minds, because it is obvious that the human family had a grand Creator, who, therefore, preceded man.—Rom. 1:20.

In simple language the Bible tells us that "God is a Spirit." Unlike men, God does not have a body of flesh and blood, but he is an invisible Personage, being in the same spiritual estate as he made his

angels. Even as God is a Spirit, the Bible informs us that "he makes his angels spirits." These creatures existed long before man.—John 4:24; Heb. 1:7, 14; Job 38:4-7.

And what is God's name? In his own Word he answers: "I am Jehovah. That is my name; and to no one else shall I give my own glory." Over 7,000 times that distinctive name Jehovah appears in the Bible, and worshipers of the true God know and use that name. "Give thanks to Jehovah, you people! Call upon his name. Make known among the peoples his dealings. Make mention that his name is to be put on high." "My people will know my name," Jehovah says; and not only do they know what the name is, but they know it as a name that bears great honor. (Isa. 42:8; 12:4; 52:6) No wonder the Lord Jesus reported in prayer to his God and Father in heaven: "I have made your name known." (John 17:26) Those who wisely build their faith on a solid foundation do not ignore this requirement for worship that is acceptable to their Creator.

In addition to making clear the identity of the Creator, the Bible also tells us about the marvelous things that he has done. Especially are the Scriptures plain when they speak of Jehovah as "the Maker of the earth . . . and the One who by his understanding stretched out the heavens." The universe and the many forms of life on the earth did not come about by accident, but, rather, Jehovah God is the One responsible for the creation of these things.—Jer. 10:12; Ps. 104:24, 25.

Being the Great First Cause responsible for all the marvels of creation, Jehovah never had a beginning. "Even from time indefinite to time indefinite you are God," the divinely inspired Bible psalmist wrote. (Ps. 90:2) This clear, authoritative statement does away with needless speculation

relative to the origin of life and the creation of the universe. Jehovah God is the source of life.—Ps. 36:9.

When reference is made to Jehovah God, be careful not to confuse his identity with Jesus Christ his Son, as is done by those in Christendom whose concept of God has been shaped by traditions that originated in ancient Babylon. Jesus Christ is not Almighty God, nor is he coeternal with God or equal to God. Rather, he refers to himself as “the beginning of the creation by God.” (Rev. 3:14) Yes, he was the first one created by God, a glorious spirit creature in the heavens long before this earth was formed. As one who was created, he was not equal to his Creator, his Father, and he himself pointed this out, saying: “The Father is greater than I am.” (John 14:28) And on another occasion he emphatically stated: “Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.” In the light of such clear statements from the Bible, how Scripturally unfounded is the false religious teaching of the trinity, which claims that there are three persons in God!—Mark 12:29; Deut. 6:4.

Loving Provisions for Life

The solid foundation for faith, God's Word, reveals that the true God Jehovah is matchless in wisdom, justice, power and love. Highlighting one of those qualities in particular, 1 John 4:8 tells us that “God is love.” His very creation of the angels, and later of humans, was a manifestation of his love. He lovingly purposed that his creatures should live and enjoy life eternally—his spirit creatures in heaven with him, and humans here on a beautiful earth cultivated to a paradise state.

This purpose to bless his creatures certainly recommends Jehovah as a God worthy of our worship. It is true that man today undergoes great suffering and is in

time cut down in death, but this is not due to lack of loving concern on God's part. Though Jehovah had made every provision for man's blessing, the first man Adam, with his wife Eve, chose a course of sin, or disobedience to God's law. “Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned.” (Rom. 5:12) Justice required that the penalty for willful disobedience be enforced. Wisdom called for action to be taken against the law violators so that others would not begin to view divine law as of no account. However, God's provision for obedient ones of Adam's offspring to be recovered from sin and to enjoy life in a restored paradise is evidence of his great love. “God loved the world [of mankind] so much,” Jesus explained, “that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.” *Everlasting life!* Just think of it: Because God sent his Son, “the first-born of all creation,” to the earth to lay down his perfect life in atonement for our sins, we have the opportunity for endless life!—John 3:16; Col. 1:15.

This hope of everlasting life is not based on mere desire; it is not a philosophy that has developed because men have found the idea of extinction of life inconceivable. To the contrary, it is solidly based on the firm foundation of the Bible. Does that inspired Word teach that the reason everlasting life is possible is that all men have immortal souls that survive the end of one's human life? No, it plainly says that “the soul that is sinning—it itself will die.” (Ezek. 18:4) To gain eternal life, one must take in knowledge of Jehovah God and his Son Jesus Christ, believe it and order his life in harmony with it. Those failing to do so

face everlasting cutting off in death.—John 17:3; 3:36; Rev. 21:8.

However, those dead who are worthy of life God will remember and, in his due time, will call them forth to life in his righteous new order. "Do not marvel at this," Jesus assuringly said, "because the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out." What blessings will be enjoyed then! For a limited number of 144,000, these blessings will be enjoyed in heaven as rulers with Jesus Christ, while for the vast majority of obedient mankind the blessing of everlasting life will be enjoyed right here on an earth restored to paradise conditions as subjects of that heavenly kingdom.—John 5:28, 29; Rev. 14:1-3; Ps. 37:29, 34.

Support of God's Kingdom

Since the kingdom of God is the agency that Jehovah will use to bless mankind, you must support that kingdom in order to win God's favor. If you pay only lip service to God's kingdom but give your energetic support to the kingdoms of this old world, you are certainly not building on a sound foundation. As Jesus explained, you must be "no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world." But why are Christians commanded to keep themselves "without spot from the world"? It is because the Scriptures reveal that Satan the Devil is "the ruler of this world," or, as it is expressed in another place, "the god of this system of things."—John 17:16; Jas. 1:27; John 12:31; 2 Cor. 4:4.

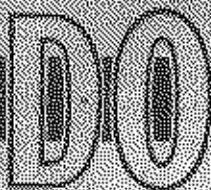
So if we are working for the perpetuation of this system of things, we are not building our spiritual life on a foundation that will endure, because Jehovah God has marked this wicked system for destruction. Pointedly he says: "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in

him . . . Furthermore, the world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever." (1 John 2:15-17) No wonder the Bible forcefully says to those who would mix their worship of God with a life of worldliness: "Adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God."—Jas. 4:4.

That does not mean that those who worship Jehovah do not earn a living in the world, or that they do not obey the laws of the land, but it does mean they do not adopt the spirit of the world, that they do not get involved in its political affairs and they do not seek their friendship in its social institutions. Instead, they place their confidence in the kingdom of God, they submit to its righteous laws recorded in the Bible, and they act as its publicity agents. Of himself Jesus Christ said: "Also to other cities I must declare the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this I was sent forth." (Luke 4:43) True Christians follow that example, and as advocates of the Kingdom they are building their faith on a solid foundation; because, of that kingdom entrusted by Jehovah God to his Son, the Bible says: "His rulership is an indefinitely lasting rulership that will not pass away, and his kingdom one that will not be brought to ruin."—Dan. 7:14.

Do not be like the foolish man of whom Jesus spoke, the one who built his house on sand. "The rain poured down and the floods came and the winds blew and struck against that house and it caved in, and its collapse was great." Rather, be like the "discreet man, who built his house upon the rock-mass. And the rain poured down and the floods came and the winds blew and lashed against that house, but it did not cave in, for it had been founded upon the rock-mass."—Matt. 7:24-27.

WHAT TO



ABOUT IT

IF A hurricane were approaching, would you not appreciate advance warning so that you could seek a place of safety? Or if your house had caught fire, would you not appreciate a neighbor's knocking at your door to awaken you, enabling you to save yourself and your loved ones?

It is for a similar reason that Jehovah's witnesses have brought to your attention the foregoing information concerning modern-day religion. It is with no evil intent, but out of love they have done this. They want to see you gain life under God's righteous kingdom, where obedient mankind will enjoy blessings forever. Since the religion you practice directly affects your prospects for enjoying everlasting life, Jehovah's witnesses publicize what God's Word, the Bible, clearly shows regarding modern-day religion.

Has it not become apparent from our consideration that not all religion practiced today is based on the solid foundation of the Bible and has the Creator's approval? Truly, much of it is only an outward show of godliness, and is not a heartfelt demonstration of true worship motivated by accurate Bible knowledge. It is evident that such worship rendered with improper motives cannot be pleasing to God.

It has also become apparent that belonging to just any religion is not sufficient. When a religious organization is involved in the affairs of this system of things, rather than serving Almighty God, it becomes a handmaid of the State. By thus casting its lot in with this old world, it supports the chief enemy of God, Satan the Devil,

and makes itself an enemy of God (2 Cor. 4:4; Jas. 4:4). So regardless of the motive, even if the religious adherent may be sincere, worship rendered in conjunction with such a religion is unacceptable to God.

We have also seen that religious organizations built around teachings that have been handed down from ancient Babylon are displeasing to God. They manifest the traits of that religion whose founder, Nimrod, was in opposition to Jehovah. Therefore, all religion today that is built on Babylonish foundations is disgusting to God's sight. His purpose toward it is plain—everlasting destruction.

In this regard Jesus said: "Broad and spacious is the road leading off into destruction, and many are the ones going in through it." (Matt. 7:13) The road of modern-day Babylonish religion is very broad. It accommodates many beliefs, practices and adherents. The overwhelming majority of religions on earth today are travelling on this broad road. But, as Jesus said, it is a road that leads to destruction.

What must you do, then, to avoid the destruction coming upon modern-day Babylonish religion? The last book of the Bible, which depicts the vast empire of false religion as an adulterous woman named "Babylon the Great," leaves no uncertainty as to what you should do. If your religion has marks of Babylonish worship, you must abandon it. You must heed the warning and flee from it. Knowing the truth is not enough; you must act on it.—Rev. 17:5.

Note with what urgency the voice out of heaven urges flight from Babylon the

Great: "Get out of her, my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues. For her sins have massed together clear up to heaven, and God has called her acts of injustice to mind. That is why in one day her plagues will come, death and mourning and famine, and she will be completely burned with fire, because Jehovah God, who judged her, is strong."—Rev. 18:4, 5, 8.

But how does one get out of modern-day Babylonish religion so as to avoid her terrible judgment? In ancient times when Jehovah God liberated his people from captivity in Babylon, they acted in response to his command: "Turn away, turn away, get out of there, touch nothing unclean; get out from the midst of her, keep yourselves clean, you who are carrying the utensils of Jehovah." (Isa. 52:11) That meant actually leaving Babylon, not taking along with them any of its unclean religious practices.

So today those who respond to the command, "Get out of her," must physically separate themselves from the worldwide system of false religion in all its forms. No longer will they be seen in its houses of worship, as if they could worship Jehovah God acceptably without breaking off their former associations. Nor will they cherish in their homes objects or practices that have Babylonish associations.

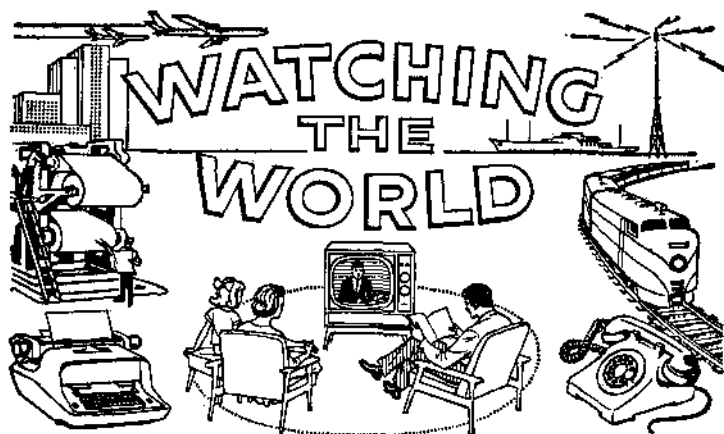
But one who wants to get out of Babylon the Great must do more than that. Writing under inspiration of God, the Christian apostle Paul tells us: "Consequently I entreat you by the compassions of God, brothers, to present your bodies a sacrifice living, holy, acceptable to God, a sacred service with your power of reason. And quit being fashioned after this system

of things, but be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:1, 2) Yes, we must come to know and do what is acceptable in the sight of God. That involves offering ourselves to God for his sacred service, making a dedication of ourselves to Jehovah and helping others to do the same.

To do this, knowledge is required, and that knowledge is found in the Bible. So take to heart the counsel recorded in Proverbs 2:3-5, where it says: "If . . . you call out for understanding itself and you give forth your voice for discernment itself, if you keep seeking for it as for silver, and as for hid treasures you keep searching for it, in that case you will understand the fear of Jehovah, and you will find the very knowledge of God." Doing so means life to you. "This means everlasting life," Jesus Christ emphasized, "their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ."—John 17:3.

Jehovah's witnesses will be pleased to help you to acquire this knowledge. Regularly each week in over 22,700 congregations around the world they have meetings for Bible study that are open to all persons who want to know and serve Jehovah God. Find out where the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's witnesses is in your locality and make it a point to attend those meetings regularly. Additionally, if you would like to have a competent minister come to your home each week at a convenient time to study the Bible with you and your family, Jehovah's witnesses will be glad to furnish that service free of charge. So take advantage of these provisions now to build your faith on a foundation that will meet the approval of Jehovah God.

Happy is the people whose God is Jehovah!
—Ps. 144:15.



The Missionary's Mission

◆ The missionary's mission has changed drastically in recent years. *Newsweek* magazine for December 30 of last year says: "Though there are still exceptions, the missionary today . . . bears witness to his faith not by trying to convert the heathen to the true belief but by helping them in material ways." The write-up says that most missionaries are content with this approach, "for they have rejected the forceful proselytizing of their predecessors." At present there are about 100,000 missionaries around the world. Roman Catholic missionaries in South America find that statements about religious freedom and freedom of conscience by the late Pope John and in the Vatican Council have undercut the notion of making converts. A Catholic priest stated: "Non-Catholics can no longer be judged persons in error who have no rights. People must now see that you don't have to be a Catholic to get into heaven. John's statement about freedom of conscience means the whole theology of missions must be rethought."

Church Could Adapt It

◆ A Roman Catholic missionary, Dr. Henry Aufenanger, stated, as reported in Brisbane, Australia's *Sunday Mail*, that a New Guinea tribal initiation

rite could be adapted by the Roman Catholic Church as preparation for confirmation. The pagan rite includes beatings with rods and deep incisions made on youths' bodies to produce decorative scars. Catholic priest Aufenanger reportedly stated that the tribal initiation would have to be separated from connections with paganism. But, he says, "the candidates for confirmation could continue to receive the beatings and incisions for decorative scars, but the sufferings they endured would be restitution made gladly for their sins and those of their people." Will the natives understand this seeming switch, or will they still believe they are carrying on their pagan custom?

Public Reaction

◆ The friendly relationship existing between the clergy of the Catholic Church and the now-deceased dictator of the Dominican Republic during his thirty-year regime is now acting as a boomerang for them. The Dominican people are making known their previously unexpressed emotions about such conduct by their clergy. This was well illustrated when the film "Nuremberg Trials" was shown in one of the better theaters of the country's capital, Santo Domingo. This film contains a scene in which a

German attorney presents his defense of the highest members of the judiciary under the Nazi regime. Arguing that to condemn them would be the same as condemning thousands of others who, in one way or another, supported the Nazi regime, he then gives striking examples and asks, "Shall we also condemn the Vatican, which in 1933 signed a concordat with Adolf Hitler? Will we find the Vatican guilty?" At this, applause and cheers and laughter broke out among the people in the theater of this so-called Roman Catholic country. The similarity of the situation to what they so well knew was too great to go unnoticed.

Clergy Wear Blinkers

◆ The slim, 52-year-old Dr. Alan Stuart, who was ordained a minister thirty years ago, resigned as vicar of Stalisfield, Kent. The question, Who is God? puzzled him. After thirty years of searching, he confessed simply, "I don't know." In an interview with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Stuart said that he told the archbishop: "I believe in a God. But I don't believe we have found out what God is." The London *Daily Express* quoted the vicar as saying: "The fact is that clergymen deliberately wear blinkers. They don't want to question the foundation of their religion. . . . Most of the official beliefs are superstitions incorporated from pagan beliefs. . . . I believe there are clergymen who think as I do—but the rest are obsessed with the British idea of holding up the ideals of the Establishment. And that seems to include belief in a medieval Church. My father once told me there were only two types of clergy. The morons and the intellectually dishonest. I don't know that he was far out."

Sunday Delivery

◆ Deacon John Macdonald, also secretary at Milton Free

Church in Glasgow, Scotland, allowed oil for the church heating system to be delivered on a Sunday. His reason? He wanted the church to be warm. For that he was told from the pulpit that he placed himself above God. The church pastor, Peter M. Jackson, according to the London *Sunday Express*, January 12, blasted the deacon during a service that caused a bitter row at the church. Evidently minister Jackson never read the words of the Christian apostle Paul recorded at Colossians 2:16, 17, wherein he says: "Let no man judge you in eating and drinking or in respect of a festival or of an observance of the new moon or of a sabbath; for those things are a shadow of the things to come, but the reality belongs to the Christ." The deliveryman said: "I am sure the congregation are grateful the oil arrived. They would have been rather cold otherwise."

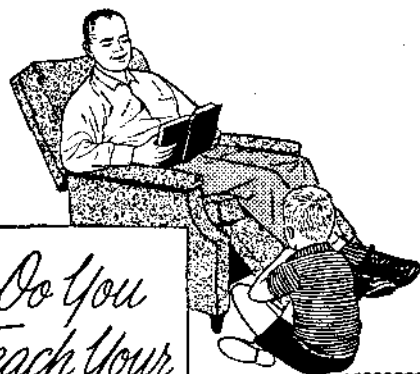
"Thus Saith the Lord"

◆ An editorial in the *Western Methodist*, a periodical published in Perth, West Australia, had stinging words for its readers: "As a general rule," it stated, "we do not read the Scriptures enough. We are not able to quote chapter and verse, and the preacher who imagines his hearers are familiar with this or that incident in the Bible is making a great mistake. . . . If there is a decline in our power as a church today, and competent judges tell us that there is, perhaps the answer may be found in this very failing. We have lost our authority as a church when we have lost the right to say, 'Thus saith the Lord.'"

"Pewmonia"

◆ "The disease of 'pewmonia'—listening to sermons and doing nothing about them—is threatening the modern church-

man," so said minister J. R. Hord, a member of the Board of Evangelism and Social Services for the United Church of Canada. "As long as we do not murder, steal, or commit adultery openly we are accepted as good church members," he said. The real battles of the faith, Hord continued, are not fought in the church on Sunday but must be waged every day. He declared that religious people have lost sight of what their church stands for and what it means to be a Christian. The Toronto (Canada) *Daily Star*, January 29, which carried his report, quoted Hord as saying: "We try to confine Christ to Sundays, stained glass windows and the sanctuary with its high-pitched roof instead of meeting him in the street where people live, work, play, swear, drink and gamble." The question is, Was Hord's audience afflicted with "pewmonia" during his discourse? Time will tell.



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That is a very direct question, isn't it?

But, before you answer anything at all, consider this:

No one wants to believe his religion is wrong. That may be why, to some persons, asking any question about their religion is to cast doubts upon it. But did you know the Bible has much to say about religion—both *good* and *bad*? The Bible tells us too that, in times past, there were many religions good enough for those who practiced them, but they were not good enough for God. And the Bible is full of examples of people who lost their lives because they refused to accept the fact that they were practicing the wrong religion. Can you afford to take that chance? If all the hundreds of religions today were suddenly called to account, could you confidently rely with your life on the religion of your choice?

Today all religions *are* being called to account by God. Their foundations are being closely examined, as this special issue of *Awake!* clearly shows. What will be the outcome? What part will you be called upon to play? You have a choice. Inform yourself so that your decision will be a wise one.

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