Awake!

WHERE IS Religion LEADING MANKIND?

APRIL 22, 1972

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Awake!
"It is already the hour for you to awake."
—Romans 13:11

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THE STRONG CHARGES AGAINST WORLD RELIGION

JUST where is world religion leading mankind? You may be surprised, even shocked, at the answer to that question.

Still, we feel that you would want a frank, straightforward discussion of the matter.

But why should I be interested? you may ask. Perhaps you feel that the question does not really affect you.

Yet, are you interested in yourself and the welfare of your family? No doubt you are. Then whether you go to church or not, world religion involves you in a way that could lead to tragic consequences for both you and your loved ones.

How can this be so? Is not that stretching matters? You may feel that religion could not have that much influence. Yet, listen to one of the charges that God himself hurls against world religion: "In her was found the blood of . . . all those who have been slaughtered on the earth." —Rev. 18:24.

Think of that! God's Word says that world religion bears the main guilt for all the wars that have slaughtered so many millions throughout history!

The Bible also depicts world religion as a harlot. It says that she has 'gone to bed' with the rulers of the earth and that those who live on earth have been "made drunk with the wine of her fornication." This woman, world religion, is called "the mother of the harlots and of the disgusting things of the earth." —Rev. 17:2, 5.*

Does that shock you? Yet, that is what God's Word says about it. And who should know the truth about religion better than God himself?

But can the world's troubles really be blamed on religion? Well, what about Communism? And what about the oppression by the rich that has caused many to turn to Communism?

Josef Hromadka, dean of the Comenius theological faculty in Prague, Czechoslovakia, said: "I am not a Communist, I am a Christian. But I know that it is we, we Christians alone, who are responsible for Communism. . . . We 'said, and did not.' . . . Remember that the Communists once were Christians. If they do not believe in a just God, whose fault is it?"[1]†

It is not only hypocritical piety that has

* See the book *"Babylon the Great Has Fallen!" God's Kingdom Rules!*
† References are on page 29.

turned millions against the churches. There is more to it. Whom has world religion generally supported? Has it not been the oppressive rich, the wealthy landowners and powerful business interests? To find relief, many have turned to Communism.

Then, too, what about today's moral breakdown? Is it possible that religion bears the main guilt for this too? Could it be largely to blame for the fornication, adultery, homosexuality and venereal disease so rampant throughout Christendom today?

Wars, Communism, immorality—many people would find it difficult to believe that world religion could be responsible for leading mankind into such things. Yet, remember that Jesus Christ called the religious leaders of his day "blind guides." He said: "If, then, a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit." (Matt. 15:14) Yes, those religious leaders were misleading the people.

Jesus even showed that those religious leaders were directly responsible for leading the Jews to the terrible destruction that came upon Jerusalem and Judea less than forty years later.—Matt. 23:29-36.

Is there a parallel to that today? Is modern-day religion actually leading the masses of mankind to a similar destruction? Even to suggest such a thing may offend you. But what if that is exactly what God's Word says? If so, then should we not at least take the time to consider why, and what we can do about it?

Hence, let us examine where religion is really leading mankind. Then we will see what God purposes to do about it. Also, it will become clear to you how all this affects you and your loved ones.

HOW DOES RELIGION LEAD?

ON THE surface it appears that political rulers are leading religion. And in some instances this is the case. But why have some rulers been able to wield power at all, particularly dictators in lands claiming to be Christian?

Is it not because of the way religion has directed the people's thinking? Religion actually has conditioned the minds of the people so that dictators can get and keep power. It has directed them to look to the political rulers to bring about the social conditions that they desire.

The religious leaders themselves, with a few exceptions, have praised and followed the political rulers. At times the clergy even enter directly into politics by telling their people which way to vote.

Therefore, when a dictator arises and promises people things they want, many will follow. But then, what if he calls for a war? The masses have been conditioned by the clergy to follow in that too.

Sometimes the political rulers go too far. They do things the clergy do not like. But then, who in the first place was responsible for the existence of such bad government? Could the Hitler government, for example, have wielded such great power if the vast majority of the clergy had not told, or allowed, their people to back him? Was the position of Nazism not strengthened by the concordat between Hitler and the Vatican?

Could Communism have come to power in Russia if the Church there had not supported wealthy landowners and other oppressive elements to the point that reaction was inevitable? Could Communism have taken hold in China had it not been for the treatment the people there received at the hands of the nations of Christendom?

Some of the more radical clergy now even recommend revolution. But in doing this, are they really changing their ways? Are they not merely directing the people to another form of selfish rule, rather than showing them the true liberation taught in God's Word, the Bible?

Also, what about morality? What happens to church members who practice fornication, adultery and sex perversion? Are they not in most cases permitted to remain members in good standing? Is not this failure of the churches to give moral discipline and guidance a major cause of the alarming rise in venereal disease, in illegitimate births and in abortions throughout Christendom?

The situation today is exactly as it was before Israel went into exile to Babylonia, and their capital city of Jerusalem was destroyed. The Bible says of that time: "Both the prophet and the priest themselves have become polluted."—Jer. 23:11.

In what kind of conditions did that result? The Bible answers: "There are the pronouncing of curses and practicing of deception and murdering and stealing and committing of adultery that have broken forth, and acts of bloodshed have touched other acts of bloodshed."—Hos. 4:2.

The truth is that the religious clergy have not kept faith with God today, as they did not in ancient Israel. They have not taught their flocks the truths of God's Word, nor do they obey it themselves. They have become more interested in doing what they think, instead of doing what God says they should be doing.

This is not to say that there have been no clergymen who disapproved the disgusting things done in the name of God. And honest men in government have tried to remedy matters. But the dominant spirit of compromise and selfishness, and the system that has developed over centuries of ignoring right principles, have tied the hands of those who try to reform Christendom.

Perhaps the most tragic consequences of world religion's failure is in connection with the wars of mankind. It is enlightening to take a look at the record. For example, what is religion's record in connection with the Vietnam war?

The VIETNAM WAR —Where Has Religion Led?

THOUSANDS of young Catholics, Protestants and members of other religions have fought in Vietnam. Many are still fighting. Clergymen minister to the men right on the battlefield. Did religion have a part in leading the men to this war?

What is the position of Protestant reli-

gions toward the conflict now? Jesuit Robert Drinan in his recent book *Vietnam and Armageddon* points to "the almost unanimous sentiment among Protestant theologians that the Vietnam war is morally indefensible."[2] Various Protestant denominations have recently issued statements in opposition to the war.

Some priests took an active part in the war, as did this one whose picture appeared in "Life" magazine

Jewish religious organizations, too, have recently opposed the war. A heading last December in the Washington *Post* said: "KENSINGTON TEMPLE RESOLUTION URGES END OF VIETNAM WAR." The resolution urged President Nixon to "set and announce a complete withdrawal of all American forces operating in and over Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia."[3]

The Catholic Position

What about the Roman Catholic position? Last November American bishops met in national convention, and the New York *Times* front-page headline reported: "U.S. CATHOLIC BISHOPS CALL FOR END TO INDOCHINA WAR."[4] The resolution adopted by the bishops pointed to "the destruction of human life and of moral values," and said: "It is our firm conviction, therefore, that the speedy ending of this war is a moral imperative of the highest priority."[5]

Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit explained that the resolution "means that the war is unjust."[6] Therefore, he said, anyone who agrees with the Catholic position "may not participate in this war."[7]

From such evidence one might conclude that religion has been leading mankind away from war. But why have hundreds of thousands of young Catholics and Protestants fought in Vietnam over the years? Have they acted contrary to the guidance they have received from their religion?

Confused Guidance

Actually the opposition of religion to the Vietnam war is not as clear-cut as the foregoing may indicate. For example, Archbishop Philip Hannan of New Orleans said he was among "a considerable number of the bishops who do not fully support the resolution" recently adopted by the American bishops.[8] So Catholics may understandably be confused as to the guidance being given even now!

It is similar with Protestant religions. In 1968 the Lutheran Church in America took a stand officially approving selective conscientious objection. However, since then Lutherans have also spoken in support of fighting in Vietnam. For example, in the 1970 spring issue of the Lutheran publication the *Springfielder,* professor-chaplain Martin Scharlemann writes:

> "We hear it said that we must love our neighbor as ourselves. Of course, that's right. Who could quarrel with it since it is a word of the Lord? But, there is another step to this. . . . My relationship to a North Vietnamese soldier is not a one-to-one affair. In between are two sets of loyalties: Mine to my country and his to his. I have a responsibility toward my country which outranks my concern for his; and that's true on his side, too. Now, when he is wounded and when he is in need of my help, then once more he becomes my neighbor in the ethical sense

of the New Testament. The one-to-one relationship returns."[9]

So this minister argues that loyalty to country nullifies Christ's command to love one's neighbor. It certainly must be confusing to persons when their church approves conscientious objection, and yet a minister encourages fighting in the war!

One might conclude that the views of this Lutheran minister are the exception today, and that religion now directs persons away from fighting in Vietnam. But was that true five or six years ago?

Earlier View of the War

Over five years ago Roman Catholic priests across the United States were questioned by Catholic Polls, Inc. They were asked: Should the United States adopt a firm policy of winning the war in Vietnam? The priests replied: Yes—2,706; No—371.[10]

Speaking of the Vietnam war, Cardinal Spellman said that United States troops were "soldiers of Christ"

Frequently priests spoke and acted in full support of the war effort. For example, a newspaper reported that a priest and two other clergymen sought "to convince a group of Brooklyn students that the biblical injunction against killing did not apply to the war in Viet Nam." Robert J. McNamara, the priest, argued: "What we're doing there is necessary to prevent oligarchy."[11]

Some priests took an even more active part in the war. A large page-and-a-half picture of one priest appeared in *Life* magazine with the boldface caption, "A Brave Priest Fighting on His Own." The article said: "In the midst of the war, the helmeted, gun-toting figure above is a strange and heartening phenomenon—a Catholic priest who is conducting his own private war against the Viet Cong."[12]

Why were priests almost unanimously in favor of striving for a United States victory in Vietnam? A strong influence no doubt was the guidance given by their bishops. In November 1966 the American bishops in an official statement said: "It is reasonable to argue that our presence in Vietnam is justified. . . . We commend the valor of our men in the armed forces, and we express to them our debt of gratitude. . . . we can conscientiously support the position of our country in the present circumstances."[13]

Some bishops spoke almost as though the war was a holy crusade. The late Francis Cardinal Spellman said that United States troops were "soldiers of Christ"[14] who were fighting a war for civilization, and that "less than victory is inconceivable."[15] To persons who might question the rightness of the United States' cause, Spellman answered: "My country right or wrong."[16]

Of Spellman's call for "victory," George R. Davis, minister of the National City Christian Church in Washington, D.C., said: "I am in agreement."[17] Other Protestant ministers showed their agreement in various ways.

Robert Mummey, a Christian Science minister, argued in favor of the war, telling a group of university students: "Killing must be done with a pure heart, otherwise you have an immoral killing. If our soldiers were indoctrinated to hate the enemy, then to kill him would be an immoral act."[18]

Clergymen also showed their support of the war by honoring those killed in action. Martin Haerther, a Des Moines, Iowa, Lutheran pastor, said at one funeral: "When a soldier dies in line of duty in a just war [Vietnam], not only is it a glorious death in the service of country but it is a blessed end for him . . . I am sure the angels were on hand to carry his soul into heaven and he is now enjoying peace."[19]

Where Religion Has Led

It becomes obvious that during its early stages the churches in the United States supported the Vietnam war. And to what did this lead?

For one thing it led to members of the same religion killing one another on the battlefield. There are, for example, an estimated one million Catholics in North Vietnam. What position did the priests there take? The New York *Times* reported: "The pastor of the Church of St. Anthony of Padua in Hanoi, the Rev. Joseph Nguyen Van Que, . . . said that he customarily blessed young Catholics who were joining the [North Vietnam] armed forces."[20] Thus members of the same religion have killed one another on the battlefields in Vietnam, and with clergy blessing!

However, as noted before, there has recently been a change. In fact, an interdenominational "Call to Penitence and Action" has been published urging an end to the war.[21]

But why have religious leaders changed their viewpoint? The answer to this question will help to reveal what often determines the position religion takes on matters, and hence where it leads mankind.

WHAT DETERMINES THE DIRECTION *that religion takes?*

BY CONDONING the Vietnam war at first, the churches led many people to consider it proper to fight in it. But now some religious organizations and their officials condemn the war. They declare that participation in it is wrong.

Why the change? Are the churches now guiding their members to live in harmony with Bible teachings? Or do other factors determine the guidance that religion provides?

The Oregon *Journal* recently noted that 'churchmen were only going along with the crowd.'[22] Thus, when people expressed little opposition to the war, the churches supported it. But when the public grew disgusted with the drawn-out fighting and bloodshed, then the clergy began opposing the war.

Alden Munson, editor of the *United Methodist,* a publication of the Methodist Church, explained:

"An accumulation of messy affairs like My Lai and the best communication coverage of

war in history have had an effect on the entire nation, and the church is finally tagging along on antiwar sentiment. . . . Estimates of civilian casualties in Vietnam since 1965 range from 1 to 4 million men, women and children, but only now are the churches beginning to express horror."[23]

Yes, it was not until the war became 'unpopular' that religion's cry for "peace" grew audible. It has been noted of churches that they determine what is currently popular, and then decide their position accordingly. New York city clergyman Robert J. McCracken admitted: "We are careful not to take a stand unless we know in what direction the wind is blowing."[24]

Attempt to Show Consistent Leadership

The Catholic Church recently indicated that it has not changed its position on the war. It asserts that Catholic leadership never did support the Vietnam war. This claim is, in effect, made in a document released last year by the U.S. Catholic Conference (USCC), the administrative arm of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Yet even prominent Catholic theologians say that, rather than being opposed to the war, the bishops had supported it. In fact, about the same time the USCC document was released, Catholic priest Peter J. Riga, Professor of Religion at La Salle College, wrote:

> "Because of their massive failure of moral leadership in the greatest moral issue of our day, these American Catholic bishops who supported this war (some 95 per cent) should resign en masse because they are no longer fit for the office; . . . he who has blood on his hands is not fit to be a minister. I say that the American Catholic bishops, by their moral failure, have the blood of men on their hands."[25]

Do such charges by Catholics themselves cause you to wonder about the truthfulness of what the bishops have published?

Misrepresenting the Truth

Commonweal, a Catholic magazine, discussed this matter. The writer, Catholic professor and sociologist Gordon Zahn, after studying the USCC document said:

> "I must challenge it as an apparently deliberate attempt to create, by means of a highly selective approach to history, a false impression that the formal leadership of the church has been a source of consistent, though prudently restrained, opposition to the war."[26]

Illustrating the document's "highly selective approach to history" is the absence in it of statements of Catholic leaders who voiced support of the war. The most significant omission is the late Cardinal Spellman's endorsements.

In fact, the statements made by Church leaders in support of the war, omitted in this document, are so numerous that *Commonweal* observed: "One suspects the USCC researchers could have compiled at least as extensive a body of episcopal statements supporting the war from the archives of the New York Archdiocese alone."[27]

But all of such evidence was deliberately left out! Yet "simple honesty," *Commonweal* said, should require the inclusion of such statements, "embarrassing though they may seem now that the full measure of that war's immorality is there for all to see."[28]

Is it not apparent that the USCC document is an obvious attempt to cover up religion's early support for what is now an unpopular war? Such dishonesty may surprise you.

What Determines Where Religion Leads

It is true that ministers often teach from the Bible about 'peace on earth' and 'love of neighbor.' Thus you may have assumed that religion directs mankind to live in harmony with Bible teachings, and to turn away from war and violence.

It is a mistake, however, to consider only what religion *says*. Rather, it is vital also to examine what religion actually *does*. What does religion do when national leaders decide it is in their nation's interest to fight a war?

Under these circumstances, do the churches point to Jesus' words: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves"? (John 13:35) Do they explain to their members that genuine Christian love is not affected by national boundaries? Do they make clear that all true followers of Christ love one another regardless of the country in which they live or the race to which they belong?

Do the churches also emphasize to their members the words of Jesus' apostle John: "We should have love for one another; not like Cain, who originated with the wicked one and slaughtered his brother"? (1 John 3:10-12) Do they explain that killing fellow humans on the battlefield, and especially members of their own religion, is not showing love for them? Do they point out that one who does this is, in fact, serving the "wicked one," Satan the Devil?

It is quite obvious that when nations prepare for war the churches set aside such Bible teachings. A well-known Protestant clergyman, the late Harry Emerson Fosdick, admitted:

> "Our Western history has been one war after another. We have bred men for war, trained men for war; we have glorified war; we have made warriors our heroes and even in our churches we have put the battle flags . . . With one corner of our mouth we have praised the Prince of Peace and with the other we have glorified war."[29]

The fact is, *not what the Bible says, but what national leaders say and what is currently popular with the people determine where religion leads.* Commenting editorially regarding the Vietnam war, the Vancouver *Sun* noted: "It is a weakness of perhaps all organized religion that the church follows the flag . . . What war was ever fought in which God wasn't claimed to be on each side?"[30]

Supporting Only "Just Wars"?

The excuse that the churches often give for backing their country's wars is that their country's cause is just—it fights only "just wars." Therefore, it is argued, it is religion's duty to back the national war effort.

But think about that for a moment. Does not every nation that becomes involved in a war claim that its cause is "just"? It is as a recent encyclopedia observes: "The causes of war may be selfish, base, or even wicked, but the reasons stated are usually lofty and noble. Both sides in a war may show reasons which they consider to be valid."[31]

Thus on the basis of what are considered 'valid reasons,' each nation, even though the people of those nations may hold exactly opposite views, fights what it calls a "just war." Patriotism flourishes, and the churches are swept along, each religion 'following the flag.' The prominent Protestant church leader, Martin Niemoeller, said that ever since the days of the Roman emperors it has been this way in Christendom. "The church has never known an unjust war," he explained, "but has justified always the war of her own sovereign and state."[32]

The Catholic historian E. I. Watkin wrote:

> "Painful as the admission must be, we cannot in the interest of a false edification or dishonest loyalty deny or ignore the historical fact that Bishops have consistently supported all wars waged by the government of their country. I do not know in fact of a single instance in which a national hierarchy has condemned as unjust any war . . . Whatever the official theory, in practice 'my country

always right' has been the maxim followed in wartime by Catholic Bishops. . . . where belligerent nationalism is concerned they have spoken as the mouthpiece of Caesar."[33]

Is it really true that the churches have "consistently supported all wars waged by the government of their country"? Has religion only posed as a force for good, but in truth been a backer of war and violence? What do the facts of history reveal?

RELIGION'S ROLE IN PAST WARS

THE English philosopher John Locke once said: "All the talk of history is of nothing almost but fighting and killing."[34] And yet, says one authority: "Religion has been one of the most powerful forces in history."[35]

Why has almost the entire existence of man been plagued with terrible wars when religion has exercised such a powerful influence? What has been religion's role in past wars?

Aztecs and War

Aztec religion taught that the gods must be appeased by human offerings. Thus, historian Victor W. von Hagen explains:

> "War and religion, at least to the Aztecs, were inseparable. They belonged to each other. . . . To obtain appropriate prisoner victims as sacrifice for the gods, there were ceaseless little wars."[36]

In the year 1486, more than 20,000 prisoner victims were amassed for the dedication of the great pyramid of the god Huitzilopochtli. Then, one after another, the victims' hearts were cut out and were offered to the god. Can you imagine the horror that those religion-inspired wars spread among early American peoples?

Ancient Empires and War

What role did religion play among the early empires and peoples in Asia, Africa and Europe? Those ancient nations were noted for their many wars, as well as their religiousness. Religion and war went hand in hand. One reference work, for example, notes:

Aztec priests hold victim while another priest cuts out his heart, to be offered to the god of war (scene based on an eyewitness account)

"Egyptian religion never condemned war. The most ancient of Egyptian wars were among the gods themselves or between gods and men; and so Egyptian kings in making war claimed divine example. . . . In short, all war was moral, ideal, supernatural, and sanctioned by divine precedent."[37]

At times religious leaders did more than merely condone or approve their nation's wars; they actually urged the people to fight. The late clergyman W. B. Wright says of ancient Assyria:

"Fighting was the business of the nation, and the priests were incessant fomenters of war. They were supported largely from the spoils of conquest, of which a fixed percentage was invariably assigned them before others shared, for this race of plunderers was excessively religious."[38]

It is an inescapable fact: The warring peoples of ancient times were deeply religious. Military leaders regularly sought help from their gods. Observes one authority: "We usually find that it is one of the chief functions of any god to help and protect his people in war."[39]

The crusaders were responsible for some of the worst massacres and atrocities in history—all perpetrated in the name of Christ!

It was customary for soldiers to carry standards of their gods into battle. These were apparently emblems or symbols made of wood or metal. One encyclopedia notes:

"The Roman standards were guarded with religious veneration in the temples of Rome. It was not unusual for a general to order a standard to be cast into the ranks of the enemy, to add zeal to the onset of his soldiers by exciting them to recover what to them was perhaps the most sacred thing the earth possessed."[40]

Of course, those ancient nations were not Christian. The teachings that Jesus Christ later introduced had a profound effect upon mankind, changing the lives of true believers for the better.

But in time big changes occurred in Christianity. In the fourth century, the corrupt Roman emperor Constantine, for political reasons, made Christianity the state religion. From then on, the Roman Catholic Church grew to great power. Was it different from other religions? Did it promote peace? Was it true Christianity?

The Crusades—Christendom's "Holy Wars"

It was in the year 1095 that Pope Urban II convened the council of Clermont. By that time the land of ancient Palestine had fallen into the hands of people who did not profess Christianity. Therefore, the pope, in what is called "one of the most effective talks in history," urged the vast congregation at Clermont to wage war upon the "infidels" who now held the "holy land." Urban exhorted the crowd:

"Christian warriors . . . go and fight against the barbarians, go and fight for the deliverance of the holy places . . . bathe your hands in the blood of the infidels. . . . become soldiers of the living God! When Jesus Christ summons you to his defence, let no base affections detain you in your homes."[41]

Thus the Crusades, or so-called "holy wars," were inaugurated, and continued during the two succeeding centuries. "The pulpits of Europe resounded with exhortations to the Crusades," a historian observes.[42] Another writes: "Bishops went to their dioceses preaching this military

Christianity. . . . Monks ordered swords to be made. . . . Europe was now an agitated sea, throwing wave after wave upon Syrian shores."[43]

The terrible warfare that thus resulted almost defies description. "All the warlike lusts of the age were set at liberty under the sanction of religion and retributive justice," one historian observed.[44] The deeds of the crusaders include some of the worst massacres, senseless plunderings and wicked atrocities to be read in the pages of history—all perpetrated in the name of Christ! Professor Roland H. Bainton writes:

> "Here was a war inaugurated by the Church. . . . Crucifixion, ripping open those who had swallowed coins, mutilation—Bohemond of Antioch sent to the Greek Emperor a whole cargo of noses and thumbs sliced from the Saracens—such exploits the chronicles of the crusades recount without qualm. . . . The mood was strangely compounded of barbarian lust for combat and Christian zeal for the faith."[45]

What a responsibility religion must bear for linking the name of Christ to such horrible deeds—deeds that could not be more contrary to his teachings! What must God think of those who misrepresent him?

Christendom's Past Internal Wars

In the Middle Ages professed Christians also fought among themselves, and often with the pope's blessing! Regarding such internal wars of Christendom, the historian J. C. Ridpath said: "The papal sanction was an important factor in all the conflicts of the Middle Ages, and to obtain this the secular princes were wont to bid against each other as in a market."[46]

Later, beginning about 1517, the religious revolt that produced Protestantism increased the fighting and killing among the peoples professing Christianity. G. M. Trevelyan, as professor of history at Cambridge, wrote:

> "Religion was in that age almost the sole intellectual and moral influence, [yet] . . . humanity was no part of its special teaching. It must indeed be allowed that religion was then associated with the rack, the stake, the burning town, the massacre of women and children, the hate that never dies, the wrongs that can never be avenged. The greatest mass of mental suffering and physical pain that Europe has undergone since the barbaric ages was brought about by the partially successful struggle of the Catholic reaction to recover revolted Christendom."[47]

The Roman Catholic Church fought savagely to bring protesters, or Protestants, back within the fold. Protestants strongly resisted. Antwerp, for example, was besieged in 1576, and one history says: "Those gentle messengers of Holy Mother Church, the Spanish soldiers, went into the fight with these cries upon their lips, 'Saint James, Spain, blood, flesh, fire, sack!' Eight thousand men, women and children were murdered."[48]

The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) between Catholics and Protestants was especially terrible. During it Germany lost some three fourths of its population. Augsburg dropped from 80,000 to 18,000 inhabitants. And only about one quarter of the people of Bohemia remained. The fall of the Protestant city of Magdeburg illustrates the savagery of the fighting. German historian Frederick Schiller writes:

> "Here commenced a scene of horrors for which history has no language—poetry no pencil. Neither innocent childhood, nor helpless old age; neither youth, sex, rank, nor beauty, could disarm the fury of the conquerors. Wives were abused in the arms of their husbands, daughters at the feet of their parents; and the defenseless sex exposed to the double sacrifice of virtue and life."[49]

It is indeed true that the history of mankind "is of nothing almost but fighting and killing." But it is also true that religion has been 'a powerful force in history' mainly responsible for the terrible bloodshed. Is this still true?

RELIGION AND WAR in RECENT TIMES

RELIGIOUS wars unfortunately are not limited to the distant past. They have occurred in modern times. One may, for example, read news reports about "battles between Catholics and Protestants" in Ireland.[50]

Since August 1969 over 200 have died in the fighting there, and many hundreds more have been hurt. A recent report says: "Gutted shops, shattered windows, bomb-damage sales, broken wooden mannequins at locked store entrances—all are sad, grotesque reminders of the worsening urban war between Protestants and Roman Catholics."[51]

But what about crusades or "holy wars"? Surely religion has not backed wars today as it did the Crusades, you may think. But it has. Church leaders themselves admit this.

For example, in July 1969 a terrible war broke out between El Salvador and Honduras. According to one encyclopedia's yearbook: "The conflict quickly brought death and human tragedy on a scale rarely known in Salvadoran history."[52] Who was responsible for this war?

Honduras' bishop Jose Carranza accused the Catholic clergy of El Salvador of fomenting it by their writings, speeches and attitude. He said that they called it a "holy war," and urged Catholics to fight.[53]

It is a fact, religion in recent times has differed little from the Middle Ages when clergymen urged their congregations 'to go forth and kill the infidels.' The respected church historian Roland H. Bainton, for example, observed: "The churches in the United States particularly took a crusading attitude toward the First World War."[54]

World War I—A "Holy War"?

Obviously the first world war had causes quite different from those of the "holy wars" of centuries ago. The church directly sponsored the crusades to recover the "holy land." On the other hand, World War I had primarily political causes. Yet the role of religion in this modern war was remarkably similar to that played by religion in the earlier "holy wars."

Commenting on this, the Chairman of the Faculty of Religion at Claremont Graduate School, Joseph C. Hough, pointed to the example of the bishop of London, A. F. Winnington-Ingram. This bishop urged the English people:

> "Kill Germans—do kill them; not for the sake of killing, but to save the world, to kill the good as well as the bad, to kill the young as well as the old, to kill those who have shown kindness to our wounded as well as those fiends . . . As I have said a thousand times, I look upon it as a war for purity, I look upon everyone who died in it as a martyr."[55]

And what were they doing on the other side? The archbishop of Cologne, Germany, said the following to German soldiers:

> "Beloved people of our Fatherland, God is with us in this fight for righteousness where we have been drawn in against our wish. We command you in the name of God, to fight to the last drop of your blood for the honor and glory of the country. In his wisdom and justice, God knows that we are on the side of righteousness and he will give us the victory."[56]

Such words are reminiscent of Pope Urban's appeal, "Go and fight against the

barbarians," which launched the Crusades. Yet the words of the bishop of London and the archbishop of Cologne are not unusual. Rather, they are typical of the spirit that prevailed in the churches on both sides during World War I.

Professor Bainton said of the churches in America:

> "American churchmen of all faiths were never so united with each other and with the mind of the country. This was a holy war. Jesus was dressed in khaki and portrayed sighting down a gun barrel. The Germans were Huns. To kill them was to purge the earth of monsters."[57]

This is not an exaggerated description of the attitude of the clergy. An editorial in *Fortune* magazine observed: "Such hatred for the enemy as there was in the front lines produced no oratory to compare with the invectives hurled against Germany by the men of Christ."[58] Ray H. Abrams wrote a book, *Preachers Present Arms,* in which an entire chapter entitled "The Holy War" is devoted to the clergy's whole-souled endorsement of the war. For example, Randolph H. McKim exclaimed from his pulpit in Washington:

> "It is God who has summoned us to this war. It is his war we are fighting. . . . This conflict is indeed a crusade. The greatest in history—the holiest. It is in the profoundest and truest sense a Holy War. . . . Yes, it is Christ, the King of Righteousness, who calls us to grapple in deadly strife with this unholy and blasphemous power [Germany]."[59]

Also, Albert C. Dieffenbach, editor of *The Christian Register,* wrote in an editorial:

> "As Christians, of course, we say Christ approves [of the war]. But would he fight and kill? . . . There is not an opportunity to deal death to the enemy that he would shirk from or delay in seizing! He would take bayonet and grenade and bomb and rifle and do the work of deadliness against that which is the most deadly enemy of his Father's kingdom in a thousand years."[60]

Do those expressions sound shocking to you? Yet, this is what many clergymen and religious publications were saying during World War I. Few religious leaders on either side were opposed to the fighting and killing. R. H. Abrams said he was unable to locate a single priest who was against the war.

You can understand, therefore, why British Brigadier General Frank P. Crozier said: "The Christian Churches are the finest blood-lust creators which we have, and of them we made free use."[61]

What Would Have Happened?

However, what would have happened if the churches in the warring nations had successfully taught their members that it was wrong to kill their fellowman, especially fellow Christians? Since the peoples in those nations were practically all professing Christians, the war would have been impossible to carry on!

Commenting on this matter, a prominent rabbi at the time, Stephen S. Wise, said: "Failure of the churches and synagogues to maintain leadership over the people was the cause of the present war."[62] The churches, as is typical of them, failed to give the people guidance that would lead them from participation in the war.

Churches and World War II

Was it any different during World War II? It is said of the eminent Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr: "He led many American Christians from pacifism to an acceptance of the moral necessity of fighting Hitler in the Second World War."[63]

The modern historian A. P. Stokes said: "The Churches as a whole threw themselves heartily not only into matters of war relief . . . but into the more vigorous support of the War. Some went so far as to call it a religious war."[64]

In France and England, too, churches rallied to the support of the national cause. For example, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Cambrai called France's fight a "war in defense of civilization, of the law of nations, human morality, liberty, in short, of humanity."[65] Clearly the churches were leading their peoples to the battlefield against Germany.

But what about the churches in Germany? Did they support Adolf Hitler? Did they back his war aims?

Backing Hitler

In 1933 a concordat between Germany and the Vatican was signed. Article 16 of the concordat stipulated that each bishop of the Catholic Church, before taking office, must take an "oath of loyalty" to the Nazi regime. And Article 30 required that a prayer be said "for the welfare of the German Reich and its people" after every High Mass.[66]

In 1936, when reports were circulated that Catholics were opposed to Hitler's regime, Cardinal Faulhaber said in a sermon on June 7: "You all are witnesses for the fact that on all Sundays and holidays at the main service we pray in all churches for the Führer as we have promised in the Concordat. . . . We feel offended on account of this questioning of our loyalty to the state."[67]

So where were the churches leading the German people? The Roman Catholic Professor of History at Vienna University, Friedrich Heer, explains: "In the cold facts of German history, the Cross and the swastika came ever closer together, until the swastika proclaimed the message of victory from the towers of German cathedrals, swastika flags appeared round altars and Catholic and Protestant theologians, pastors, churchmen and statesmen welcomed the alliance with Hitler."[68]

On September 17, 1939, over two weeks after Germany invaded Poland, the German bishops issued a joint pastoral letter in which they said: "In this decisive hour we admonish our Catholic soldiers to do their duty in obedience to the Führer and be ready to sacrifice their whole individuality. We appeal to the faithful to join in ardent prayers that the Divine Provi-

[New York Post, August 27, 1940, Blue Final Edition, p. 15]

Nazi Army Praised

German Catholic Bishops Loyal

BERLIN, Aug. 27 (AP).—A solemn pledge of loyalty to Hitler by the German Catholic bishops conference at Fulda is to be read to the faithful from pulpits

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[New York Times, September 25, 1939, Late City Edition, p. 6]

GERMAN SOLDIERS RALLIED BY CHURCHES

Protestant and Catholic Exhort to Reich Victory and Just Peace

Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

FRANKFORT-ON-THE-MAIN, Germany, Sept. 24—Periodicals of the German Protestant and Catho- Churches are now publishing articles explaining

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[New York Times, December 7, 1941, Late City Edition, p. 33]

'WAR PRAYER' FOR REICH

Catholic Bishops at Fulda Ask Blessing and Victory

By Telephone to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

FULDA, Germany, Dec. 6—The Conference of German Catholic Bishops assembled in Fulda has recommended the introduction of a special "war prayer" which is to be read at the beginning and end of all divine services.

The prayer implores Providence to bless German arms with victory and grant protection to the lives and health of all soldiers. The Bishops further instructed Catholic clergy to keep and remember in a special Sunday sermon at least once a month German soldiers land, on sea and in the

The German while

dence of God Almighty may lead this war to blessed success and peace for our fatherland and nation."[69]

In the summer of 1940 Catholic bishop Franz Josef Rarkowski said: "The German *Volk* [People] . . . has an untroubled conscience . . . *It knows that it is fighting a just war,* one born of the necessity of a people's self-preservation."[70]

The New York *Times* in 1939 noted: "Periodicals of the German Protestant and Catholic Churches are now publishing many exhort[at]ive articles explaining the duties of soldiers fighting in the defense of their country and admonishing the German soldiers to fight in the spirit of Saint Michael for a German victory and a just peace."[71]

Is it not apparent where the churches were leading the German people? Professor Gordon Zahn wrote: "The German Catholic who looked to his religious superiors for spiritual guidance and direction regarding service in Hitler's wars received virtually the same answers he would have received from the Nazi ruler himself."[72]

The religious guidance given is evidenced by the total support of the war by church members. Professor Heer explained: "Of about thirty-two million German Catholics—fifteen and a half million of whom were men—only seven openly refused military service. Six of these were Austrians."[73] The situation was the same with German Protestants.

So in each country the churches led their members into the war. Catholics slaughtered Catholics on the battlefields. Protestants killed Protestants. And church leaders on both sides prayed to God for victory!

How dishonoring to God it was to link his name with such horrible deeds! Certainly the Bible words are well applied to the churches: "They publicly declare they know God, but they disown him by their works, because they are detestable and disobedient and not approved for good work of any sort."—Titus 1:16.

Religion and Revolution

Church leaders back not only wars between nations, but revolutions within nations as well. In 1937 Spanish Catholics were urged by many of their clergy to support the *movimiento* of General Franco against the Second Spanish Republic. Now, however, bishops and priests, displeased with the Franco regime, recently asked "pardon" for the Church's backing of his *movimiento.*[74]

Regarding present views, Lutheran theologian Karoly Pröhle summarized: "We thus find a notable consensus among theologians concerning the fact that it is possible for Christians to participate in a revolution."[75] Roman Catholic bishops in Britain recently said: "It will not do merely to condemn the use of violence against authority since evidently those in authority may be guilty of worse violence."[76]

Is it surprising, then, that church members today take part in political revolutions? Observed George Celestin, instructor in theology at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas: "Christians are becoming determined to change unjust structures as quickly as possible. This will mean in some cases that the churches may have to preach violence."[77]

Thus, the record of world religion in regard to war and violence is clear, and it is ghastly. World religion stands condemned as bearing the main guilt, as Revelation 18:24 says, for "the blood of . . . all those who have been slaughtered on the earth."

Then, too, what of her guilt for the immorality sweeping the world? How does she figure in this?

WHERE IS RELIGION LEADING ON MORALS?

IN RECENT years, a "revolution" in morality has been taking place in world religion. And by this we mean attitudes toward fornication, adultery and homosexuality.

The United Presbyterian Church has proposed a new "sex code." *Parade* magazine says it is "so liberal that it practically eliminates sin as a major factor in sexual relations." Among the changes advocated is the "removal of all restrictions against unmarried adults who wish to live together [in fornication]."[78]

Time magazine adds: "The report finds 'exceptional circumstances' in which adultery might be justified: . . . It also says the church should explore the possibility of communal and other sex styles for the unmarried."[79]

The United Methodist Church's Committee on Family Life has issued a resolution condoning sexual intercourse for single persons.[80] The Lutheran Church has on hand an 85-page booklet written by twenty-one churchmen stating that premarital intercourse is wrong only if engaged in for selfish reasons.[81]

A clergyman in Denmark wrote in his parish magazine *Vedbæk-Gl. Holte Kirkehilsen:*

> "Nothing is gained by limiting all sex to marriage. . . . It can be correct from an ethical and Christian viewpoint for young people to have sex relations before marriage, and it can be just as correct for married persons . . . to have sexual relations outside of marriage."[82]

Then there was W. L. Gustin, as minister of the Morton Methodist Church in Illinois, who said in a sermon before hundreds of people: "I say loudly and I say clearly, there are advantages of adultery."[83]

Is there a trend toward permissiveness in sexual morals within the Roman Catholic Church? *Time* magazine reports:

> "A modest liberalization is going on at two levels. First, increasing numbers of pastors are softening their application of the traditional morality, often on the grounds that people who engage in illicit sex may be so immature that their guilt is not always a serious matter.
>
> "Second, some theologians are challenging the 'natural law' doctrine that lies behind the church's moral standards. According to natural law, an act is wrong if it is 'against nature,' but the new moralists are skeptical that the church can be certain about what 'nature' actually is."[84]

Does all of this surprise you? It may, if you have not been keeping up with what is going on in world religion. And do not think that these reports are isolated cases. They are not. Such reports are so many and so persistent that it is obviously a trend, especially among younger clergymen.

What About Homosexuality?

Homosexuality? Surely, you may think, the churches could not be condoning that sort of thing, could they? Examine the evidence.

A group of Quakers issued an essay entitled "Towards a Quaker View of Sex." It had this to say: "One should no more deplore 'homosexuality' than left-

handedness. . . . An act which expresses true affection between two individuals and gives pleasure to them both, does not seem to us to be sinful."[85]

Roman Catholic clergymen of the Dominican order publish a quarterly review of theology called "The Thomist." A recent issue said: "At times one may reluctantly accept homosexual unions as the only way in which some people can find a satisfying degree of humanity in their lives."[86]

The Living Church, a weekly magazine of the Episcopal Church, carried an article by San Francisco minister R. W. Cromey, who said: "There is no sex act which in itself is sinful. . . . I also believe that two people of the same sex can express love and deepen that love by sexual intercourse."[87]

Time reported that the United Methodist Church's Committee on Family Life favored "implicitly condoning sex for single persons, homosexuals, and those living in unspecified 'other styles of interpersonal relationship.' "[88] The United Presbyterian Church's proposed new sex code recommended, as *Parade* noted, the "removal of any stigma that makes homosexuals feel they are in irresolvable conflict with the Christian fellowship."[89]

There are now churches that cater almost exclusively to homosexuals. The assistant minister of one said: "We are a Christian church first, and homosexual second." *Christianity Today* related: "The denomination's mother church in Los Angeles has a United Presbyterian-ordained youth director, and holds monthly dances for 13 to 20-year-old homosexuals." The year's "social high" for the church "was a May Festival that crowned a king and queen. A lesbian in formal male attire was chosen king; the queen was a boy" who resembled a girl.[90]

In several countries, such as the Netherlands and the United States, homosexuals have been "married" by clergymen. In France, over national television, a Dutch priest admitted to being a homosexual. When French Cardinal Daniélou was asked about this, he said: "It is quite clear that a homosexual has a perfect right to belong to the Church."[91]

- ***Have You Taught Your Children to Work?***
- ***Bishops Reaffirm Celibacy—Why?***
- ***Blind, and Living a Full, Useful Life.***

—In the next issue.

How extensive is acceptance of homosexuals in the churches? *The Christian Century* printed this comment from prominent theologian Norman Pittenger: "An ever larger number of Christian thinkers would say that homosexuality is not in itself sinful."[92]

How Do They Explain It?

How do these clergymen explain their permission of fornication, adultery and homosexuality? They say that God does not condemn such. For instance, concerning premarital sex relations as being a sin clergyman R. E. Taylor says: "To this question the Bible gives no definite, clear-cut answer."[93]

Theologian Joseph Fletcher states: "Any claim that the Bible requires that sex be expressed solely within marriage is only an inference. There is nothing explicitly forbidding premarital acts. . . . Sex is not always wrong outside marriage, even for Christians."[94]

The essay submitted by the Quaker group declares: "It is to him [the apostle Paul], principally, that those wishing to attack homosexuals turn, for there can be no doubt as to his recorded views (I *Cor.* 6, v. 9). His opinions may have been personal ones, however, . . . so that St. Paul's views are not, in themselves, final."[95]

From such statements, people would conclude that God's Word has nothing final to say about these things. So that is an open invitation to practice them. True, not all clergymen take this permissive view. But increasing numbers of them do. And they remain ministers or priests in good standing with their churches.

Of course, you personally may feel that your church does not approve these things. But have you asked your clergyman how he views these matters? Do you really know what other clergymen of your religion teach elsewhere? Also, when was the last time disciplinary action was taken in your religion against members who practiced fornication, adultery or homosexuality?

What Is the Truth?

An interesting test can help you to determine in which direction the truth is. Ask yourself: If you are a husband, would you want your wife to have sexual relations with another man? If you are a wife, would you approve your husband's having sexual relations with another woman?

If you are a parent, would you welcome your son's becoming a fornicator, or a homosexual? Would you be pleased to have your daughter become a fornicatrix, or a lesbian? If you are a young person, would you want your father and mother to have sexual relations with other persons, rather than being faithful to each other?

If you answer "No" to such questions, then your thinking on this matter is not far from God's thinking. His Word has much to say about this subject. And it is all crystal clear, leaving no room at all for doubt. Also, since "all Scripture is inspired of God," when any Bible writer comments on sexual morals, it is God speaking the truth to us.—2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

What does God's Word say about fornication, adultery and homosexuality? Just a few of many Bible statements are: "Flee from fornication" (1 Cor. 6:18); "God will judge fornicators and adulterers" (Heb. 13:4); "Neither fornicators, . . . nor adulterers, nor men kept for unnatural purposes, nor men who lie with men . . . will inherit God's kingdom." (1 Cor. 6:9, 10) Catholic Bibles call homosexuality "filthy," a "perversion," "monstrous behavior," and "depravity." (*Douay, Jerusalem Bible*) Further, God's specific warning is: "Those practicing such things are deserving of death."—Rom. 1:26-32.

Is there anything unclear about that? How could clergymen not know what the truth is? Only if they do not care. But the Bible cautions: "Do not be misled." (1 Cor. 6:9) So do not let hypocritical religious leaders who condone, excuse or encourage immorality serve as a guide for you.[96]

Know for a certainty that the lying words of such religious leaders do not originate with God. With whom, then? Jesus Christ said that Satan is "the father of the lie." And he said to the lying religious leaders in his day: "You are from your father the Devil." (John 8:44) It is no different today.

Thus, when we examine the facts, we can see that God's Word is certainly correct in saying that in world religion "was found the blood of . . . all those who have been slaughtered on the earth," and that her hand "was full of disgusting things and the unclean things of her fornication," and that "those who inhabit the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication"!—Rev. 18:24; 17:2, 4.

RELIGION THAT LEADS TO PEACE and MORALITY

AN EXAMINATION of the evidence makes this clear: The churches, instead of guiding mankind in the ways of peace and morality, have led them into war and immorality. The truth is, the churches have abandoned the teachings of Jesus Christ. They only profess to follow the Bible, but have actually rejected its guidance.

But is this true of all religion? Have all religions abandoned Christ's teachings? Is there any one of them that adheres to the Bible's high standards, leading people toward peace and morality? What about early Christianity?

Early Christians and Peace

The early followers of Jesus Christ were zealous in spreading the Christian faith. Writing in about 60 C.E. the Christian apostle Paul noted that already the "good news" had been "preached in all creation that is under heaven." (Col. 1:23) Christians by then had spread throughout many nations.

What did these Christians do when 'nation rose against nation and kingdom against kingdom' in war? (Matt. 24:7) Did they join the armies of their particular nation and fight? Did they kill fellow Christians living in other countries? How did early Christians view Jesus' instruction to "love one another," and to be "peaceable"? (John 13:34; Matt. 5:9) Regarding this, Hastings' renowned *Encyclopœdia of Religion and Ethics* notes:

> "The view was widely prevalent in the early Church that war is an organized iniquity with which the Church and the followers of Christ can have nothing to do."[97]

Also, the prominent church historian C. J. Cadoux wrote:

> "The early Christians took Jesus at his word, and understood his inculcations of gentleness and non-resistance in their literal sense. They closely identified their religion with peace; they strongly condemned war for the bloodshed which it involved; they appropriated to themselves the Old Testament prophecy which foretold the transformation of the weapons of war into the implements of agriculture [Isa. 2:4]; they declared that it was their policy to return good for evil and to conquer evil with good."[98]

So early Christians did honor Jesus' teachings; they actually lived by them. And they did not seek "loopholes," arguing that Christ did not specifically forbid being a soldier. The German Protestant theologian Peter Meinhold wrote:

> "While the New Testament is silent on the question whether Christians may or may not be soldiers and whether they must resign from the army when they become Christians, the old church took a stand in the issue. Being a Christian and a soldier was considered irreconcilable."[99]

Nor is this just one historian's conclusion; it is the consensus. Historians find, explains an *Early Church History,* that "service in the Imperial armies was irreconcilable with the Christian profession; . . . it

contravened the express commands of Christ and the whole spirit of the Gospel."[100]

So what was it that led early Christians away from fighting and killing? It was their religion, which was based firmly on the teachings of God's Word the Bible!

For well over a hundred years Christianity maintained this position of nonparticipation in worldly wars. Professor Roland H. Bainton observed:

> "From the end of the New Testament period to the decade A.D. 170-80 there is no evidence whatever of Christians in the army. . . . we have our first testimony of Christians in the army, in the so-called Thundering Legion under Marcus Aurelius in the year A.D. 173. From that day forward the evidence of Christians in the ranks increases."[101]

By about 313 C.E. a great change had taken place. Explains one historian: "The Church was allied with the empire, and could no longer maintain her protest against war. Christians were increasingly to be found in the army."[102] By then the teachings of Jesus had been abandoned. Apostasy had set in.

Early Christians and Morality

Prior to this apostasy, Jesus' followers patterned every aspect of their lives in harmony with Bible teachings. Moved by love for Christ and faith in his word, early Christians actually put away fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lying, stealing and every form of dishonesty. The historian John Lord says:

> "The true triumphs of Christianity were seen in making good men of those who professed her doctrines . . . We have testimony to their blameless lives, to their irreproachable morals, to their good citizenship, and to their Christian graces."[103]

In the first and second centuries Christianity did indeed lead to peace and morality. But what about today? Since the churches have abandoned Christ's teachings, does this mean there is no religion that conforms to his teachings?

Jehovah's Witnesses —Today's True Christians?

Encyclopedia Canadiana observes: "The work of Jehovah's Witnesses is the revival and re-establishment of the primitive Christianity practised by Jesus and his disciples during the first and second centuries of our era. . . . All are brothers."[104]

Is this really true? When the nations became involved in World War II, did Jehovah's witnesses obey Christ's teachings to "love one another" and to remain "peaceable"?

In every country in which they lived Jehovah's witnesses would not violate Christ's teachings. "Jehovah's Witnesses maintain a strict neutrality in time of war," observed the *Australian Encyclopædia*. "This led to the banning of the organization in Australia in January 1941."[105] Similar bans were imposed in other countries. Even in the United States thousands of Witnesses were sent to prison because they refused to take up weapons of war. While Jehovah's witnesses individually take this stand, they do not interfere with the affairs of the government under which they live. They do not tell others what they should or should not do in such matters of conscience. Each one must make his own decision.—Gal. 6:5.

In Germany, Hitler persecuted Jehovah's witnesses, throwing them into concentration camps. A recent book, based extensively on unpublished Nuremberg documents, explains why:

> "They refuse to use the German greeting [Hitler salute], to participate in any National Socialist or State functions and to do military service."
>
> "Basing their case on biblical commandment, they refused to take up arms even

against the nation's enemies. . . . it was no surprise when a special law was passed in August 1938 laying down that refusal or incitement to refuse to serve in the armed forces was to be punishable by death."[106]

When World War II began, the Witnesses in German concentration camps were invited to volunteer for military service. A writer, who himself was in the Buchenwald camp during the war, reports:

"In Buchenwald this appeal to the Witnesses was made on September 6, 1939. First Officer-in-Charge Rödl told them: 'You know that war has broken out and that the German nation is in danger. New laws are coming into force. If anyone of you refuses to fight against France or England, all of you must die!' Two SS companies with full equipment were drawn up by the gatehouse. Not a single Jehovah's Witness answered the officer's appeal to fight for Germany."[107]

Although the German officer did not on this occasion follow through on his threat, at other times such threats were carried out. In fact, thousands of Witnesses in Germany remained faithful to Christ's teachings to the death, just as early Christians had. J. S. Conway notes this, and draws a sharp contrast between Jehovah's witnesses and the churches:

"No less than a third of the whole following were to lose their lives as a result of their refusal to conform or compromise. In contrast to the compliance of the larger churches, the Jehovah's Witnesses maintained their doctrinal opposition to the point of fanaticism. Such opposition was all too rare."

"No other sect displayed anything like the same determination in face of the full force of Gestapo terrorism. Indeed, many of the smaller groups, aware of their impotence, attempted to purchase their independence by warm professions of support for the political aims of the new Germany."[108]

Like the early Christians, Jehovah's witnesses have in effect 'beaten their swords into plowshares'

Even church leaders have acknowledged that it is Jehovah's witnesses who adhere to Christ's teachings. Martin Niemoeller, a foremost Protestant leader in Germany before and after World War II, wrote:

"It may be as truthfully recalled that Christian Churches, throughout the ages, have always consented to bless war, troops and arms and that they prayed in a very un-Christian way for the annihilation of their enemy.

"All this is our fault and our fathers' fault, but obviously not God's fault. And to think that we Christians of today are ashamed of the so-called sect of the serious scholars of the Bible [Jehovah's witnesses], who by the hundreds and thousands have gone into concentration camps and died because they refused to serve in war and declined to fire on human beings."[109]

In addition to adhering to Christ's teaching on love and being peaceable, Jehovah's witnesses also are noted for their exemplary moral conduct. For example, an article in the South African publication *Personality* observed: "Jehovah's Witnesses seem to be bursting with good qualities and to be almost free from the bad."[110] A Swedish church journal also commended them for their "high moral stature."[111] Truly, how unlike the churches where immorality is running rampant!

The reason for the fine moral conduct noted among Jehovah's witnesses is their close adherence to Bible teachings. They do not condone or approve of any form of immorality, as the churches of today

do. Instead, they cut off from their association anyone among them who persists in practicing wrongdoing, even as did the early Christian congregation.—1 Cor. 5:11-13.

Would you like to associate with persons who really do live by the teachings of God's Word? That an organization of such persons would exist today the Bible foretold. It says that in "the final part of the days . . . many peoples will certainly go and say, 'Come, you people, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.' " Concerning these peoples, the prophecy goes on to say: "And they will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. . . . neither will they learn war anymore."—Isa. 2:2-4.

Who are the peoples doing this today? Surely not the churches of Christendom, or even religions outside Christendom. It is Jehovah's witnesses! They imitate the example of the early Christians. Their religion is based firmly on God's Word the Bible, and it is indeed leading them to peace and morality. But world religion is not doing God's will. It is not leading to peace and morality. What, then, will happen to her?

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO World Religion?

WHAT is the destiny of world religion? We can get the answer by considering two other questions: What does God think of religion? and, Is it of any value to the human race?

In view of world religion's record, how do you think the Creator feels about what religion has done to his creation, the human family? Would you feel kindly toward someone who defiled your family and turned them against you?

Actually, world religion has proved to be false religion, with Christendom's religions the most blamable. Their greatest crime is their defamation of God's name, even going so far as to say, "God is dead." They have turned their adherents away from God's Word—how many in Christendom even know what is in the Bible? World religion has pointed to and glorified political leaders as the hope for world peace, ignoring God and his Messianic kingdom. It has led mankind to war, immorality and even atheism.

The clergy cannot make the excuse that they are not to be blamed for the bad actions of the people. Jehovah's words to their counterpart, the Jewish religious leaders, show that they are convicted as responsible. He said: "If they had stood in my intimate group, then they would have made my people hear my own words, and *they would have caused them to turn back from their bad way* and from the badness of their dealings."—Jer. 23:22.

Of No Value to Humankind

God has always known who were false "shepherds." But he has let them con-

tinue so that "their madness will be very plain to all," as the apostle Paul said of men who resisted the truth in his day. —2 Tim. 3:8, 9.

God is making it very clear that world religion has not represented him. Accordingly, his Son Jesus Christ warned against practicers of world religion, particularly its leaders:

> "Be on the watch for the false prophets that come to you in sheep's covering, but inside they are ravenous wolves. . . . every good tree produces fine fruit, but every rotten tree produces worthless fruit; a good tree cannot bear worthless fruit, neither can a rotten tree produce fine fruit. Every tree not producing fine fruit gets cut down and thrown into the fire. Really, then, by their fruits you will recognize those men."—Matt. 7:15-20.

So, there is to be an accounting to God. As Jesus went on to say:

> "Not everyone saying to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but the one doing the will of my Father who is in the heavens will. Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and expel demons in your name, and perform many powerful works in your name?' And yet then I will confess to them: I never knew you! [Christ never recognized them as his representatives.] Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness." —Matt. 7:21-23.

God Destroys World Religion

Almighty God himself will be responsible for the execution of judgment on those who have misrepresented him. Of world religion, symbolized by a harlot, the Bible says: "Her sins have massed together clear up to heaven, and God has called her acts of injustice to mind. . . . 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. 18:5-8.

What will be God's instrument in destroying this harlot-like empire of world religion? None other than her "bedfellows," the political rulers. In the past, the religious leaders have been feared and respected, even by rulers. But they are fast losing their power even to swing their people's votes to favored politicians.

The political rulers, seeing world religion as worthless, and badly needing the wealth it possesses, will turn on her. What will be her fate at their hands? The Bible describes it:

> "The ten horns [representing the kings or rulers of the world (see verse 12)] that you saw, and the wild beast [political organization], these will hate the harlot and will make her devastated and naked, and will eat up her fleshy parts [her structural parts] and will completely burn her with fire. For God put it into their hearts to carry out his thought."—Rev. 17:16, 17.

And this destruction of world religion is very near, for all the elements and circumstances are present. There is the additional fact that religious leaders are hastening the action of rulers by irritating them as never before. Their rebellious speech, their meddling in political affairs, and the participation of some of them in actual sedition put them in a very bad position with the rulers. They are becoming a 'thorn in the flesh,' arousing the rulers' hatred. So, imminent destruction hangs over world religion. Its fall can come any day with surprising suddenness. (Rev. 18:17, 21) Therefore God's warning is urgent:

> "Get out of her [the harlot empire], 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."—Rev. 18:4.

What About True Religion?

What, though, about the religion that follows God's laws and represents him properly as Universal Sovereign? Can and

will God preserve persons living according to true worship when he executes judgment on world religion?

The apostle Peter uses the example of God's servant Lot, who was taken with divine assistance out of Sodom before God destroyed that city. Peter says: "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial, but to reserve unrighteous people for the day of judgment to be cut off."—2 Pet. 2:6-10; Gen. 19:15-17.

Jesus Christ spoke of the time when he would take over his power to rule. He foretold a separating work to take place on earth, a gathering together of 'sheep-like' persons who have love and respect for Christ and his representatives on earth. Opposite these would be gathered the "goats," those who disrespect him.

What will happen to each group? Jesus explained: "Then the king will say to those on his right [the "sheep"], 'Come, you who have been blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world." He then speaks of the "goats," saying, "These will depart into everlasting cutting-off, but the righteous ones into everlasting life." —Matt. 25:31-34, 46.

After the End of World Religion

So, world religion will meet annihilation, to the relief and blessing of all mankind. But true religion will survive, and will fill the earth. In the last book of the Bible the apostle John describes a vision of those who will survive, saying:

> "I saw, and, look! a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of *all* nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." "They are rendering [God] sacred service day and night in his temple; and the One seated on the throne will spread his tent over them."—Rev. 7:9, 15.

Happy will be the lot of those survivors! They will enter a new order of peace and health. They will also enjoy the unparalleled pleasure of seeing their loved ones come back from the grave, many of whom were the victims of world religion.

John continues to describe his vision:

> "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. But another scroll was opened; it is the scroll of life. And the dead were judged out of those things written in the scrolls according to their deeds."—Rev. 20:12.

The "deeds" are not their past misdeeds done under the influence of false reli-

Following the end of world religion, there will be a new order of peace and health. Sorrow and even death will be no more

gion. Such deeds are not brought back against them to condemn them again; otherwise the resurrection would be to no purpose. No, these are the deeds they do under the righteous rule, according to the "scrolls" of God's laws then in effect.

Mankind then being freed from world religion, they will not be deceived as to who God is. They will come to know him and his ways thoroughly. The principle will hold true: "When there are judgments from you [Jehovah] for the earth, righteousness is what the inhabitants of the productive land will certainly learn." —Isa. 26:9.

The inhabitants of earth will then take delight in living by Jehovah's laws, for they will find that these laws work for their good.—Ps. 19:9.

Then, not divisive false religion, but the true worship of Jehovah God, which is a perfect bond of union, will prevail. (Phil. 1:27; Col. 3:14) Then it can be said: "The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."—Rev. 21:3, 4.

DOES the prospect of a new administration of earth's affairs appeal to you? Do you find it comforting to envision an earth without war, false religion, immorality, sickness and death? Or does it all seem like a dream?

Actually, the message about God's purpose of a righteous new order is no dream. Jehovah God does not lie or deceive. (Heb. 6:18) He does not promise something he will not bring to reality. And when he causes his servants to distribute world wide a warning now, with special concentration on the so-called "Christian" nations, we can be sure he means it.

We can also be sure that when God says he will annihilate world religion and preserve his true religion, he means that too. The question is not whether that will happen. It will, without fail. The question is, What will you do about it?

First of all, when you see that world religion is guilty of misrepresenting God and of misleading the people, what should you do? You should do what God's Word says to do. What is that? Get away from it before its sudden crash comes! When Jesus called the professional religionists of his day "blind guides," he said to the common people: *"Let them be."*—Matt. 15:14.

Yes, leave them alone! Get away from them! World religion is unclean and blood-guilty in God's sight. So the strong admonition of the apostle must be heeded by those who want to keep living:

"What fellowship do righteousness and

lawlessness have? Or what sharing does light have with darkness? . . . And what agreement does God's temple have with idols? . . . ' "Therefore get out from among them, and separate yourselves," says Jehovah, "and quit touching the unclean thing"'; '"and I will take you in."' '"And I shall be a father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to me," says Jehovah the Almighty.' "—2 Cor. 6:14-18.

If your church is a part of world religion, flee now! If you know a clergyman who you feel is a good man, then he should flee too!

These are strong words, but they are true. They are God's mind on the matter. For a certainty, time is running out for world religion. Its end is not far off. Therefore you need to take urgent action now.

Accept Help Now

Mere flight from world religion, while a necessary first step, is not enough however. Even atheists have done that much. There is also another vital step. Everyone who wants life in God's new order must come to *know God* to receive protection through this system's end.—John 17:3.

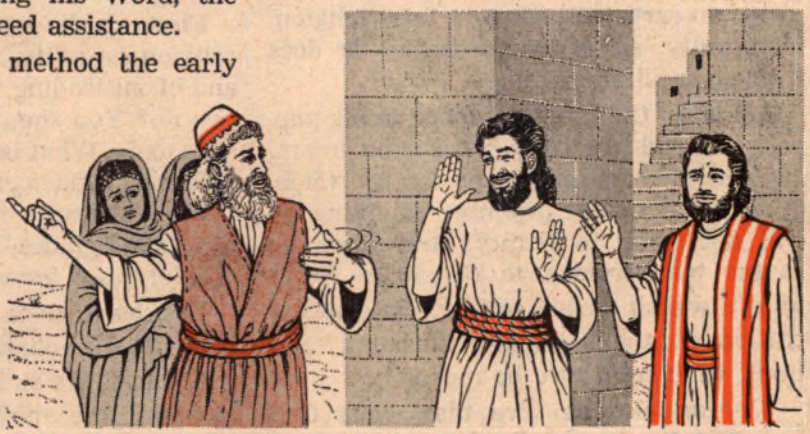
How can you really get to know God and what he requires of you? Only by your personally studying his Word, the Bible. To do this you need assistance.

What was the basic method the early disciples used to guide people to the truth about God? They taught persons privately, often going into the homes of interested persons. There, in the privacy of their own homes, people learned what the Bible really said. It is the same today. Jehovah's witnesses carry on a free six-month program of home visits for those who really want to know about God. By this means millions of persons have received Bible instruction.—Acts 20:20.

True, sometimes these persons meet opposition. It may come from uninformed persons, friends or relatives. But often, by being tactful and patient, they are able to help those who are well-meaning to learn the way to life in God's new order.

Have you availed yourself of the free Bible education offered by Jehovah's witnesses? If not, we urge you to do so now. Do not be among those who are like the sons-in-law of Lot. When the God-dishonoring city of Sodom was about to be destroyed by an act of God, Lot warned them. But the Bible says, "In the eyes of his sons-in-law he [Lot] seemed like a man who was joking." (Gen. 19:14) But it was no joke. The next morning Sodom was annihilated. So were Lot's sons-in-law.

Do you love life? Do you want to keep living? Then hasten to do what God's Word says: "Seek Jehovah, all you meek ones of the earth, . . . Seek righteousness, seek meekness. Probably you may be concealed in the day of Jehovah's anger." —Zeph. 2:3.



When Lot urged his intended sons-in-law to get out of Sodom, they thought he was joking

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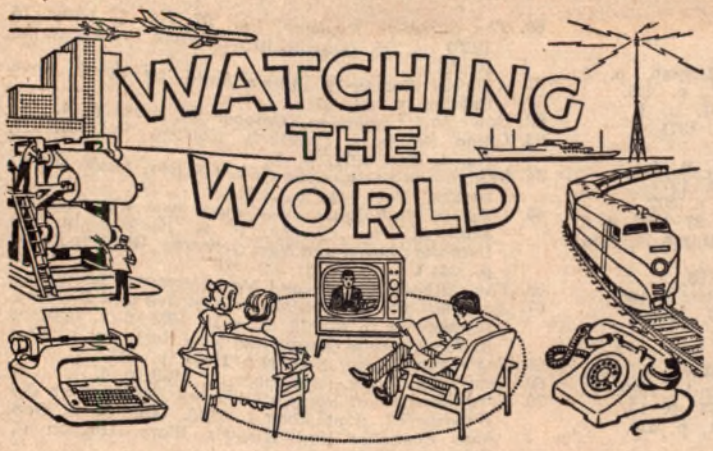

Church Takes Political Role

◈ On May 7 and 8, general elections are to be held in Italy for a new Senate and Chamber of Deputies. The Roman Catholic hierarchy says that it will actively back the Christian Democratic party. The New York *Times* comments: "Thus, the pendulum appeared to be swinging back to deep church involvement in this nation's affairs, as under Pope Pius XII."

Upholding Adultery and Lying

◈ A Unitarian clergyman in Chicago, along with a doctor, concluded that "many marriages improve when one partner or both are engaged" in adultery. They reported that their finding "contradicts the widely-held view that the ideal marriage for everyone is sexual monogamy with complete honesty between partners." Since the clergyman does not condemn lying, cheating and adultery, he clashes head on with God.

No Moral Guidance

◈ The Anglican Dean of Perth, Australia, said that 'the Church has no right to urge morality on society.' He stated: "Morality means what is acceptable to the community, and what is acceptable varies from generation to generation and from place to place." As do so many clergymen, he totally ignored the morality acceptable to God.

Anglican Clergy Loss Critical

◈ The Church of England is losing clergymen so fast that the situation is described as critical. It is now losing about twice as many as it is recruiting. Last year only 392 men were ordained, the lowest total in 22 years and more than 100 fewer than five years ago.

Evolutionists Change Minds Again

◈ Several decades ago fossils of small creatures found in Africa were classified by evolutionists as the genus Australopithecus. Many evolutionists came to accept these as being in the line of man. As the book *Early Man* said: "He apparently is our ancestor." Now, however, after years of digging in Africa, Richard Leakey states that Australopithecus "had nothing whatsoever to do with the development of the genus Homo." Thus, the guessing game continues among those who refuse to accept the fact that God created humans separate and distinct from the animals.

Dabbling in Occult Harmful

◈ Forty to fifty percent of mental patients in California hospitals are there because of dabbling in the occult, claims psychologist Dr. Kurt Koch. San Diego's Youth Action Center counselors also note the rise in mental anguish of those involved in spiritistic practices.

Homeless Children

◈ According to United Nations figures, for every 100 children born in Latin America, about 70 either die in infancy or live in bitter poverty. Thousands are abandoned each year. In the capital of one South American country, there are said to be 6,000 homeless children who live by crime, even murdering for money as they grow up. How obvious it is that mankind sorely needs God's new order.

Birthrates Drop

◈ In 1971, 3,559,000 births were recorded in the United States, a decline of 4 percent from 1970 although the number of potential mothers increased. The nation's overall birthrate per thousand people is now 17.3, the lowest on record. The sharpest decline in birthrates in recent years has been among lower-income women. They bore a million fewer children from 1966 to 1970 than they would have at earlier fertility rates.

School Problems

◈ Schools in many countries are turning into 'blackboard jungles.' Terry Casey, general secretary of Britain's National Association of Schoolmasters, states: "There is no doubt that society and schools are becoming increasingly violent and that we are becoming virtually powerless to cope with it." In the United States the Dallas *Morning News* reports: "Teachers said they saw the breakdown in authority in schools moving across the nation like a thunderstorm." And *Today's Education* says: "The increase in assaults on teachers in the past few years is a symptom of the times: an era of increasing violence in America."

No Letup

◈ In spite of the evidence against drugs, their use increases on American college campuses. In the four years since 1967, the number who have tried LSD or other hallucinogens is reported to have risen from 1 percent to 18 percent. Ten times as many now try marijuana. Large increases were also noted in the use of amphetamines (stimulants) and barbiturates (depressants).

What About the Victims?

◈ Retiring Supreme Court Judge T. A. Dohm of Vancouver declared that society places too much stress on rehabilitating criminals and too little on protecting the public. "The pendulum has swung too far," he said, blaming much of the problem on "do-gooders" who forget about victims of crime.

Support Death Penalty

◈ Almost two thirds of Canadians interviewed said they wanted the death penalty for murder restored when the present suspension ends later this year. The majority believe that the murder rate has increased since the suspension, and that the death penalty is a deterrent.

"Return of the Vigilantes"

◈ In recent times, ominous suggestions have been voiced that if the police could not cope with rising crime, especially that due to drug addiction, then the community would have to take matters in its own hands. Now the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer* reports: "The police in many big American cities are increasingly faced with a novel problem in law enforcement: the return of the vigilantes. The initial signs were bodies of 'known' dope-pushers that turned up, killed by a person or persons unknown." *Newsweek* editorial writer Stewart Alsop also cited a Washington *Post* article which said: "The word is seeping through black ghettos that vigilante action—up to and including 'elimination'—may be the only way to halt the growing use of heroin among black youths."

Warm Friends in Abundance

How many real friends do you have? For many people they can be counted on one hand. Would you like to see the time when everyone on earth is your friend and is sincerely interested in your welfare? The time is near when all mankind will live in warm, peaceful friendship.

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