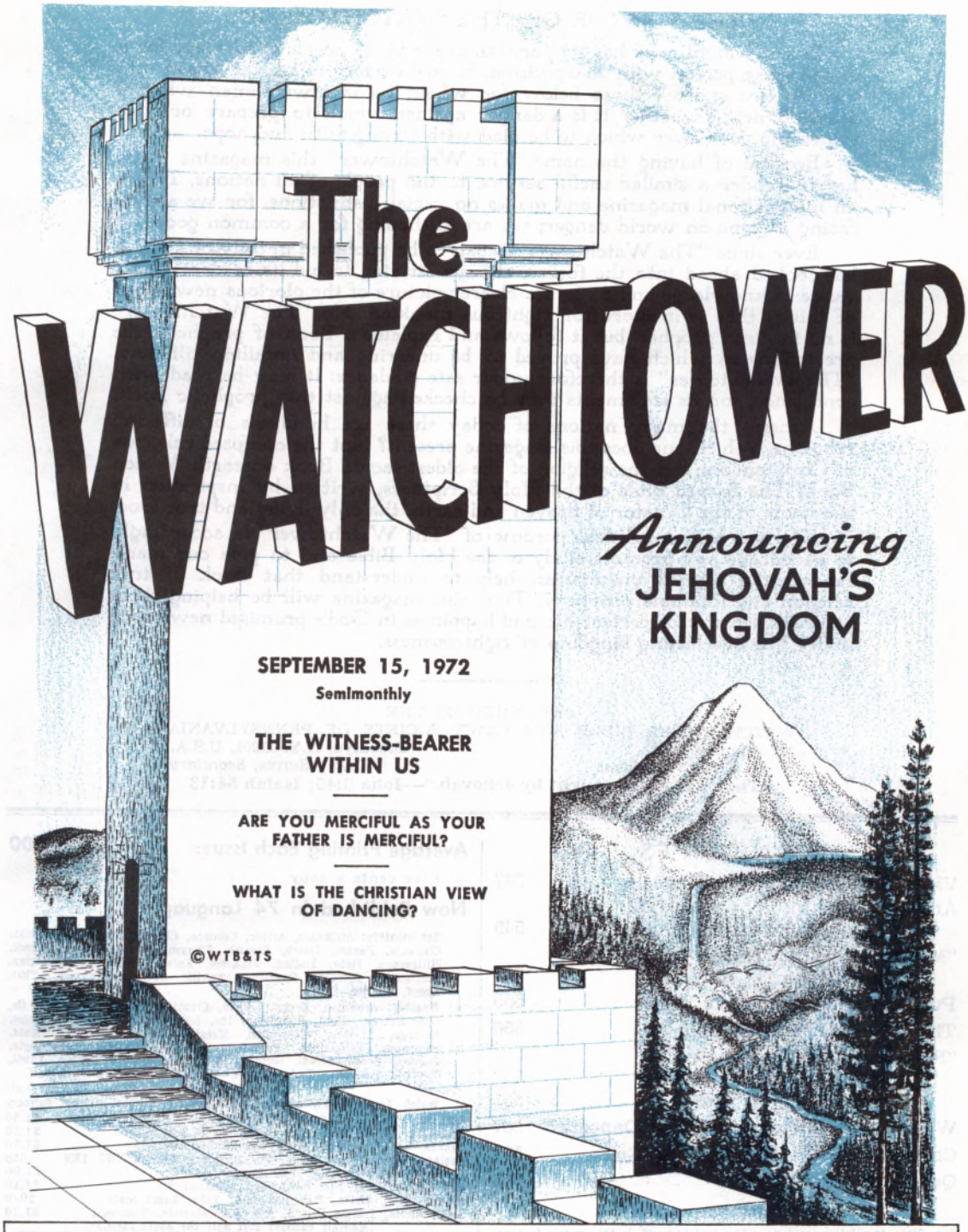

"YOU ARE MY WITNESSES," SAYS JEHOVAH.—Isa. 43:12

THE PURPOSE OF "THE WATCHTOWER"

Every watchtower has its purpose. It serves as an elevated place for a wide-awake person with sharp vision. It enables him to see far ahead into the distance and tell those below for whom he is a watchman what is drawing near, whether it is a danger against which to prepare or it is something good over which to be glad with strong faith and hope.

Because of having the name "The Watchtower" this magazine justly has to render a similar useful service to the people of all nations. This is an international magazine and makes no racial distinctions, for we are all facing a common world danger; we are all hoping for a common good.

Ever since "The Watchtower" began to be published in July of 1879 it has looked ahead into the future, always striving to aid its readers to advance in knowledge and to gain a clearer picture of the glorious new order of things that is in store for righteous mankind. No, "The Watchtower" is no inspired prophet, but it follows and explains a Book of prophecy the predictions in which have proved to be unerring and unfailing till now. "The Watchtower" is therefore under safe guidance. It may be read with confidence, for its statements may be checked against that prophetic Book.

Among the many nations of today there are hundreds of differing religions. Which one does this magazine present? Not the confused religions of Christendom, but the religion of the oldest sacred Book on earth. Which Book? The Sacred Bible of the Holy Scriptures, written by inspiration in the name of the Creator of heaven and earth, the only living and true God.

The sacred, nonpolitical purpose of "The Watchtower" is accordingly to encourage and promote study of the Holy Bible and to give our many readers the needed unsectarian help to understand that Book of true religion and infallible prophecy. Thus this magazine will be helping them to prove worthy of perfect life and happiness in God's promised new order under His everlasting kingdom of righteousness.

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"They will all be taught by Jehovah."—John 6:45; Isaiah 54:13

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The WATCHTOWER
Announcing JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM
Vol. XCIII September 15, 1972 Number 18

VIEW OBSTACLES AS A Challenge

THERE is an old saying: "A poor writer blames his pen." And there is much truth in that adage. What is a man likely to do when he fails to accomplish that which he himself or others expected of him? Is it not to point to obstacles that caused him to come short, to blame his pen, as it were?

True, obstacles may have had a bearing on his failure, but were they the only factor, or did his mental attitude have something to do with it? Did he give up too easily? Was he too readily discouraged? Did he fail to try hard enough? Was he lacking in resourcefulness? Could be. Could be.

How large can these obstacles be and still be overcome? By way of illustration, back in 1969 the New York Metropolitan Opera company opened with the performance of "Aïda." It was described as "grand" and as one that "showed what professionalism means." But what was particularly remarkable about the event? The conductor. Two days before the performance he had fallen on the ice and broken his right arm. He met the challenge by conducting the entire opera with just his left arm, his right being in a cast. Overcome the obstacle? He certainly did!

There is no question about blindness being a serious obstacle, yet some blind persons overcome even this handicap. If he had dropped out or finished at the bottom of his class, one could have made excuses for the law student who was born blind. But not he. Of 970 students graduating, he was at the top of his class.

And what about the North Carolina farmer whose eyesight is so bad he can hardly tell day from night? He does his farming after midnight because then it is quiet. He operates a 250-acre farm and says "sound and my fingertips are my eyes. . . . My only problem is that people who help me sometimes try to take over, when I know I can do it better." He can drive forty-five cattle from one pasture to another, can feed them and inject them with hypodermics and can even castrate bulls. "I can load the cattle more quickly and easily because they know me," he observed.

Among other obstacles that people have faced up to are lack of a formal education, poverty and racial prejudice. While some have been discouraged by these obstacles, others have viewed them as challenges, which they have successfully met and overcome.

Now, you may never be faced with such obstacles, with such challenges, but under present world conditions you are bound to be confronted with other difficulties. For example, an obstacle to your doing your best may be misunderstanding or clash of personalities. This may be between members of a family, between an employer and an employee, or between fellow Christians. In such a situation, what should you do? Sulk, give in to self-pity or resentment and so keep from doing your best? Why not view it as a challenge? Be on the lookout for the suitable occasion to bring up the subject and reach an understanding with the other party. But if unable to clear up the situation, learn to ignore it. Develop a thick skin, as it were.

Or do you suffer because others fail to show appreciation for what you do? Appreciation may not be expressed by your marriage mate or by your parents or by your children for what you do. While expressions of appreciation are a real stimulus, an incentive to do our best, yet we can do our best even without them. Many of the prophets of old, such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel, received few if any expressions of commendation from their contemporaries, and yet they were outstanding servants of God. We see from the letters of the apostle Paul that he suffered at times from a lack of appreciation on the part of some, but what a fine example he set in zeal in the Christian ministry! (2 Cor. 10:10-12; 11:5, 6) Keep your self-respect and pride in your work. Also, keep reminding yourself that, as it was with his faithful servants in the past, so, too, in our day, God sees and appreciates your efforts.

The embracing of true Christianity in particular is a matter of meeting the challenge of obstacles. In Africa there are such obstacles as polygamy, intense tribal loyalty and worship of the juju. While giving up these practices may seem like an insurmountable obstacle to most Africans, yet literally hundreds of thousands on that continent have viewed these things simply as challenges and have overcome them to become Christian witnesses of Jehovah. And how glad they are that they have done so!

In other lands the challenge that must be faced by those who would become disciples of Jesus Christ includes alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, and various forms of sexual immorality. Here, too, many thousands have overcome these obstacles to become Christian witnesses of Jehovah God.—1 Cor. 6:9-11.

Having embraced true Christianity, one continues to face obstacles that must be viewed as challenges. One such is the opposition and indifference met up with in the Christian ministry. Such opposition does make the ministry more difficult, but is it any valid excuse for slowing down or quitting? Not in view of the many fine examples in the Bible of those who persisted in serving God in spite of such obstacles!—Heb. 12:2, 3.

A Christian may have 'resolved in his heart' to engage in the field ministry the next morning or to attend a congregation meeting that evening. But then suddenly bad weather makes its appearance, or one suffers from some slight physical indisposition, both seemingly plausible excuses for not carrying out one's resolve. But to follow the line of least resistance is to miss a blessing. In fact, by overcoming the unexpected obstacle one can be certain of added blessings, if for no other reason than that the greater the effort put forth the greater the satisfaction that comes with accomplishment.

Truly, obstacles are not things to be yielded to but challenges to be met and overcome!

Are You Merciful As Your Father Is Merciful?

JEHOVAH is a God "rich in mercy." Of him the psalmist sang: "Jehovah is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and great in loving-kindness. Jehovah is good to all, and his mercies are over all his works."—Eph. 2:4; Ps. 145:8, 9.

What does that mean to you? Do you think of God's mercifulness as a quality that comes into play only when persons are "on trial" before him due to having committed some wrong? Does he express mercy only when lightening his sentence of judgment toward offenders?

By no means. True, as used in the Scriptures, mercy (Heb., *ra·hham';* Gr., *e'le·os*) may describe a negative action, such as holding back punishment. But it most frequently describes a positive action. As discussed in an earlier issue of this magazine,* mercy is, basically, "compassion in action," an expression of kind consideration or pity that brings relief to those who are in need, in difficulty or danger.

Far from being limited to judicial decisions, mercy is a characteristic quality of God's personality. It is his *normal way* of reacting toward those in need, a heart-warming facet of his love. God's Son, who revealed what his Father is like, helps us, by his own personality, speech and acts, to appreciate that Jehovah is indeed "the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort." (John 1:18; 2 Cor. 1:3) In fact, a major reason for God's Son to be sent to earth was that "he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God," one through whom we can "approach with freeness of speech to the throne of undeserved kindness, that we may obtain mercy and find undeserved kindness for help at the right time."—Heb. 2:17, 18; 4:15, 16.

Not that God is a sentimentalist. His exercise of mercy is always in harmony with his other qualities and righteous standards, including his justice and holiness. (Hos. 2:19) So, we should never try to presume upon God's mercy, thinking that he will continue his mercy toward us no matter what we do. There is no mocking him, and those who willfully sow evil can only expect to reap evil. (Gal. 6:7) If we show deliberate disrespect for God's righteous ways by our words, acts and course of life, we offend him, and he may rightly "shut off his mercies in anger."—Ps. 77:9; Rom. 2:4-11.

MERCY BEGETS MERCY

God's Son said: "Happy are the merciful, since they will be shown mercy." (Matt. 5:7) This is true to a large extent even in our dealings with one another as humans, is it not? Jesus gave the principle that "just as you want men to do to you, do the same way to them." After urging his disciples to "continue becoming merciful" like their Father, and to stop judging and condemning others, he added: "Practice giving, and people will give to you. They will pour into your laps a fine measure, pressed down, shaken together and overflowing. For with the measure that you are measuring out, they will measure out

* *The Watchtower*, July 1, 1971, pp. 411-415.

to you in return."—Luke 6:31, 36-38.

Many of the inspired proverbs stress this point. Proverbs 28:27 says: "He that is giving to the one of little means will have no want, but he that is hiding his eyes will get many curses." Also: "He that is kindly in eye will be blessed, for he has given of his food to the lowly one."—Prov. 22:9.

But such compassionate dealing is certainly not to be limited to material giving. People need to be fed in their minds and hearts, they need spiritual sustenance and heartening news and encouragement. Otherwise they suffer a want and a starvation that is more painful than that owing to lack of material food. This is true today as never before.

In a world where there is so much insensitivity to people's needs, where harsh criticism is so frequent and encouraging expressions of appreciation are so few, the merciful person is indeed a refreshing blessing. His generous giving of himself, even more than of his possessions, will not go unrewarded—certainly not unrewarded by Jehovah. God's Word says: "He that is showing favor to the lowly one is lending to Jehovah, and his treatment He will repay to him." (Prov. 19:17) Yes, Jehovah appreciates those who imitate his mercy.

The Bible intimately associates mercy with goodness. After promising to reveal 'all his goodness' to Moses, Jehovah caused his angel to pass before the prophet and speak of God's mercy and loving-kindness. (Ex. 33:19; 34:6, 7) Psalm 145:9, too, parallels goodness and mercy, saying: "Jehovah is good to all, and his mercies are over all his works."

The extent to which the merciful person can stir reciprocal feelings of compassion in others is seen in Paul's expression at Romans 5:7, where he states: "For hardly will anyone die for a righteous man; indeed, *for the good man, perhaps, someone even dares to die.*" As we have seen, goodness embraces mercifulness. Why, then, is it more likely that someone would dare to die for the "good man" than for the "righteous man"?

A man could be viewed by people as "righteous" if he is just, honest, not guilty of immorality. He is a man free from accusation of wrongdoing. But the "good man" goes beyond this. He is not only concerned with doing what is right and proper. He is moved by compassion to do even *more* than justice requires, being motivated by wholesome consideration of others and the keen desire to benefit them, help them, contributing as much as he can to their happiness. While the "righteous man" gains respect and admiration, his appeal to the heart is not as strong as that of the "good man." Yes, for the man who is warm, considerate, merciful, helpful, whose goodness is truly notable, winning affection in the heart of others—for such a man, Paul says, one might be willing to die. And if humans can show such appreciation for the compassionate person, how much more does God do so! For God's sacrifice of his beloved Son exemplifies His own love of goodness and compassion. —Rom. 5:6-8.

LACK OF COMPASSION OFFENSIVE

If mercy begets mercy, the converse is just as true. Jesus' parable of the unmerciful slave who, having been pardoned a huge debt by his royal master, thereafter showed no compassion toward a fellow slave who owed but a small amount, well illustrates this. The man's lack of mercy was repugnant to yet other slaves who told the master; and the master, calling the unmerciful slave before him, said: "Wicked slave, I canceled all that debt for you, when you entreated me. Ought you not, in turn, to have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I also had mercy on you?" Provoked to wrath, the master had the un-

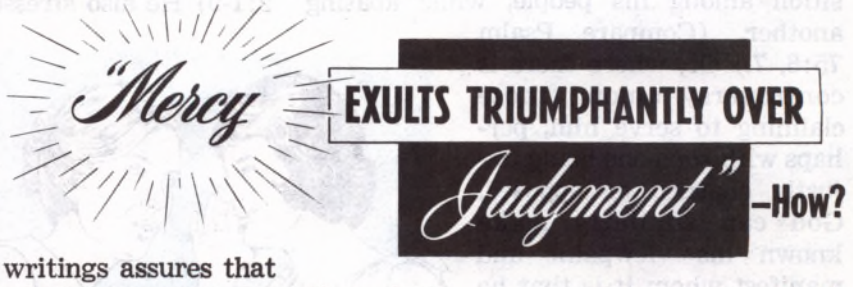
merciful slave thrown into jail.—Matt. 18:32-34.

Similar feeling was expressed by David on hearing Nathan's account of the wealthy man who took a poor man's single lamb to provide a meal for a guest. In wrath David cried out: "The man doing this deserves to die!" Why? "Because he did not have compassion" toward his fellowman. But David, though at heart a compassionate man himself, as his expression showed, suffered the crushing blow of being told: "You yourself are the man!" So, then, though we may be practicers of mercy, we cannot let ourselves become complacent but must heed the exhortation, "Continue becoming merciful, just as your Father is merciful."—2 Sam. 12:1-7; Luke 6:36.

The seriousness of the matter is seen in the Bible's statement that the "merciless" are counted among those viewed by God as "deserving of death." (Rom. 1:31, 32) Consider the case of the Pharisees, who Jesus said were, as a *class,* destined for Gehenna, everlasting destruction. (Matt. 23:23, 33) Evidently lack of mercy contributed largely to their meriting this condemnation. When reproving them for 'condemning the guiltless ones,' Jesus told them to "go . . . and learn what this means, 'I want mercy, and not sacrifice.' "—Matt. 9:11-13; 12:7; Hos. 6:6.

At the root of the Pharisees' problem was their extreme legalistic approach to all matters. They were intensely concerned with rules, regulations and procedures, but they overlooked or gave less consideration to the more weighty principles of God's Word and the fundamental precepts of true worship. They were certainly not like the One they claimed as their heavenly Father. (John 8:41) Do we see in ourselves any inclination to be like them?

Even though God's mercy is by no means limited to times of judgment, these are certainly occasions when it is thus notably evident. And how much we should desire to be objects of God's mercy at such times!



THAT mercy can 'exult triumphantly over judgment' should keenly interest every one of us. Why? Because the apostle Paul in his inspired writings assures that "each of us will render an account for himself to God."—Jas. 2:13; Rom. 14:12.

Heightening our concern is the fact that God's time for taking judicial action toward all mankind now draws very near. Prophecies show that mystic "Babylon the Great," the world empire of false religion, as well as all the political nations, will shortly feel the force of divine judgment. All persons on earth face a period of "great tribulation," and survival through it rests on their having God's approval, his favorable judgment. (Matt. 24:21, 22; 25:31-34, 41; Rev. 17:1-5; 19:11-15) That time of tribulation will usher in the millennial rule of God's Son over the earth, during which "Judgment Day" the living survivors and the resurrected dead will be judged according to their deeds.—Matt. 11:21-24; 12:41, 42; Acts 10:42; Rev. 20:12, 13.

But mercy can 'exult triumphantly over

Will those who show favoritism to the financially prosperous be shown mercy by God?

judgment' even in the present time, for God's judicial expressions are not limited exclusively to those judgment periods that lie in the future. Through Christ Jesus as head of the Christian congregation earth wide, Jehovah God daily deals with his servants. In varying degrees and ways, He makes manifest his favor or lack of favor upon them, both collectively and individually, even as he did with the congregation of fleshly Israel in ancient times.

Jehovah may, for example, act as Judge in raising one to a more responsible position among his people, while abasing another. (Compare Psalm 75:6, 7.) Or, where there is controversy among those claiming to serve him, perhaps with someone being unjustly charged or opposed, God can similarly make known his viewpoint and manifest whom it is that he favors in the issue. (Ps. 35:1, 23, 24) Then, too, the Scriptures show that within the Christian congregation there are elders who serve as judges representing Christ Jesus, their Head, and his Father, Jehovah God. Their judgment is to be guided and based on God's expressed Word. God can use such men in expressing judgment or in applying discipline.—1 Cor. 5:3-5, 12, 13; 6:2-5.

Is injurious gossip merciful?

AVOID 'HAVING YOUR JUDGMENT WITHOUT MERCY'

Whether at some critical point during the present time, or in a fast-approaching Day of Judgment, how will we fare in rendering an account for ourselves before God and his appointed Judge, Christ Jesus? Many factors are involved, but we may, with great benefit, here consider the one that James, the disciple and half brother of Jesus, emphasizes when saying: "For the one that does not practice mercy will have his judgment without mercy. Mercy exults triumphantly over judgment." (Jas. 2:13) How can we prove ourselves 'practicers of mercy' so as to avoid a "judgment without mercy"?

Consider first the context of James' inspired words. He had earlier pointed out how wrong it was to show favoritism in the congregation, to be partial to the financially prosperous over the poor. (Jas. 2:1-9) He also stressed the importance of aiding and caring for those in need among the disciples. (Jas. 1:27; 2:14-17) Then, discussing the "heavier judgment" to which those serving as congregational teachers are liable, he stated forcefully the need to use the tongue rightly—to bless and benefit, not to curse and damage.—Jas. 3:1-18.

So, then, where do we find ourselves in this picture? Do we show special con-

sideration to the financially prosperous over the financially poor, whether ministering outside or inside God's congregation? If in a position of responsibility among God's people, do we accord special favor, privileges and concessions on such basis? Or do we treat all with impartiality, being more interested in discerning good spiritual qualities, rather than material possessions or business acumen? Do we remember that, although some may contribute more in a monetary way than others, it is still the 'mite of the widow of little means' that is most laudable, because it is given, not out of one's abundance, but out of want?—Luke 21:1-4.

Genuine mercy requires acts, not mere words, when cases of need arise among fellow Christians

But what has this to do with mercy? How does partiality or favoritism affect mercy?

James wrote: "If, now, you practice carrying out the kingly law according to the scripture: 'You must love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing quite well. But if you continue showing favoritism ["snobbery," *New English Bible*], you are working a sin, for you are reproved by the law as transgressors." (Jas. 2:8, 9) Partiality or favoritism works against mercy, stifles it. It tends to make one insensitive to others' needs or, as Proverbs 21:13 says, to stop up one's ear from hearing "the complaining cry of the lowly one."

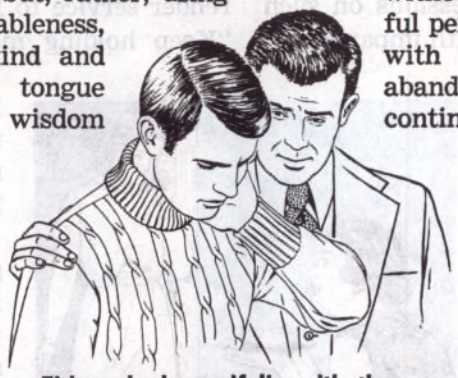
True, special consideration may be, and in some cases even should be, shown. But it should be the individual's fine *spiritual* qualities that move us to show this special consideration. For example, 1 Timothy 5:17 says: "Let the older men who preside in a fine way be reckoned worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard in speaking and teaching." Of Epaphroditus, who had come "near to death, exposing his soul to danger" in order to render service to Paul, the apostle wrote: "Keep holding men of that sort dear." (Phil. 2:25, 29, 30) This is not partiality. It is the giving of due and merited recognition to faithful service.

James shows that mercy plays a vital role in true worship. He says that "the form of worship that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself without spot from the world." (Jas. 1:27) When seeing serious needs of brothers, such worship does not allow you to show concern only by expressing the wish or even faith that 'things will work out all right for them.' It moves you to *act* on their behalf, doing what you can to help.—Jas. 2:14-17.

The apostle John wrote in similar vein: "Whoever has this world's means for supporting life and beholds his brother having need and yet shuts the door of his tender compassions upon him, in what way does the love of God remain in him? Little children, let us love, neither in word nor with the tongue, but in deed and truth." Yes, along with the "public declaration" of God's name we do not want to forget the "doing of good and the sharing of things with others, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased," because "your Father is

merciful."—1 John 3:17, 18; Heb. 13:15, 16; Luke 6:36.

Besides this, true worship calls for 'bridling the tongue,' not using it in proudness or jealousy, nor in bragging or making partial distinctions, but, rather, using it in meekness, peaceableness, reasonableness. Such kind and healthful use of the tongue shows that one has the wisdom that is "full of mercy." (Jas. 3:13-18) This, too, is vital, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." That is why Jesus said that "every unprofitable saying that men speak, they will render an account concerning it on Judgment Day."—Matt. 12:34-36.



Elders deal mercifully with those who themselves practice mercy

So, then, if we were to show partiality in our dealings with others, if we were unfeeling as to concern for their needs, if our use of the tongue were harsh against others, critically judging them—what could we expect in time of judgment? James says: "The one that does not practice mercy will have his judgment without mercy." Yes, the one "stopping up his ear from the complaining cry of the lowly one, he himself also will call and not be answered." (Prov. 21:13) God, in effect, lets them 'taste their own medicine.'

HOW MERCY CAN EXULT TRIUMPHANTLY IN TIME OF JUDGMENT

Jehovah God is, indeed, "gracious and merciful, slow to anger and great in loving-kindness." But those who desire his mercy in time of judgment must themselves be merciful. Jesus earlier made the same point James makes when he said: "Happy are the merciful, since they will be shown mercy."—Ps. 145:8; Matt. 5:7.

So, if a truly compassionate Christian should himself come into some difficulty, perhaps due to falling short in some respect or even because of some momentary misstep, he need not fear a "judgment without mercy." Such a merciful person is not to be compared with the man who completely abandons a righteous course to continue in a wicked one, with the result that "none of all his righteous acts that he has done will be remembered" by God or by his representatives. (Ezek. 18:24) In time of judgment—whether prior to the "great tribulation," during it or thereafter—his merciful course will stand him in good stead. "For God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love you showed for his name, in that you have ministered to the holy ones and continue ministering." —Heb. 6:10.

David's case illustrates this matter. Had God just viewed David as he was at the time of committing his wrong acts with regard to Uriah the Hittite and his wife, Jehovah certainly would have had no cause to show any mercy in David's case. But Jehovah knew that this act was far from being characteristic of David and that he was, in reality, a compassionate man. David's record of sincere devotion and his being merciful at heart certainly contributed heavily toward Jehovah's showing him mercy at that time, though David by no means escaped discipline from God.

Job, under heavy accusation from claimed friends, asked: "When he [God] calls for an accounting, what can I answer him?" What things came to Job's mind?

His surrounding words show that he knew Jehovah would be much concerned

as to whether Job had been a man of true compassion, a man of loving-kindness, as well as an integrity-keeper. (Job 31:13-22, 29-32; compare Psalm 37:21-26.) Note, too, that because of the refreshing kindness shown him by the disciple Onesiphorus, Paul prayed that the Lord might grant this man "to find mercy from Jehovah in that day," along with his household. —2 Tim. 1:16-18.

Therefore, God rightly exercises mercy toward those who have a fine record of merciful dealing. When they are brought into judgment before God, their merciful course provides him with just reason for applying generously to them the provisions now available through his Son's ransom sacrifice. Thus mercy, in effect, can 'exult triumphantly' over the threat of adverse judgment that might otherwise be leveled against them. (Jas. 2:13) They having been compassionate in dealing with others, Jehovah is compassionate toward them.

Those who serve as elders in congregations will certainly seek to represent faithfully Jehovah's view and ways in all their dealings with their brothers and sisters. They will remember that they themselves are to "render an account" before the Chief Shepherd of the flock. (Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:2-4) When serving as judges they will not fail to note a fine record of mercy on the part of some who may, for the moment, experience some slip in their Christian walking, but who then repent and manifest the sincere desire to continue in faithfulness.

Yes, all of us have real reason keenly to desire that our "account" show a record of much mercy, for "mercy exults triumphantly over judgment."

Purposeful Use of School Time

YOUNG ministers of Jehovah's witnesses who are yet in secondary or high school often have an unusual outlook toward their time in school. In contrast with so many young people today, they do not consider school a waste of time. Rather, they view their school years as an opportunity to receive education that will help them to serve as qualified ministers and training so that they can maintain themselves in the ministry. When possible, Witness families select courses that will be particularly beneficial to these ends.

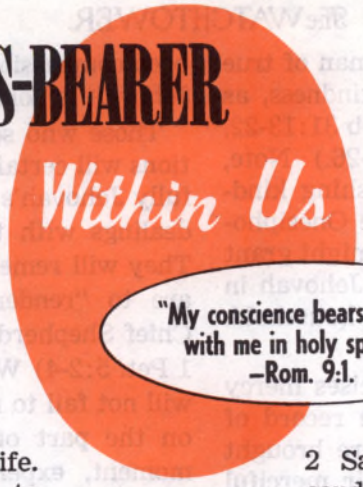
One sixteen-year-old girl in California well exemplifies this. In harmony with her purpose to devote herself to the ministry upon graduating from school, she has been taking courses that will aid her to do this. Recently the Chairman of the Business Education Department at her school wrote these unsolicited comments to her parents:

"Donna is a student in my Recordkeeping class and I want to take just a moment of your time to tell you how much I appreciate her. It is a pleasure to have worked with her this past semester. Her ways are mature and she works without complaining. She is in a class where students work at their own pace and has needed no prodding from me to utilize her time profitably. Seldom does she ask for help, preferring to solve problems herself. This trait is most appreciated as this frees me to work with other less self-directed young people.

"Donna is quiet at school, while being most courteous to both students and faculty. I have never heard her utter a harsh word to anyone. We often feel a little defeated with some young people, but Donna is one who provides a lift to our spirits. Thank you for having such a fine girl and for letting us work with [you] on her education."

The regular family Bible study conducted in the home by her parents has aided Donna to have this purposeful outlook on her school years. Thus in the future she will not have occasion to look back with regret but, rather, with satisfaction, knowing that her serious and wise view of her school years contributed to her lasting happiness as a servant of God.

THE WITNESS-BEARER Within Us



WE ALL have a witness-bearer within us. It can greatly aid us in making decisions that seriously affect both our present and future happiness. Actually, this witness-bearer contributes testimony in trials involving our very life. And the way we respond to its voice unavoidably affects the lives of others. This makes all the more tragic the fact that it can become a perverted witness. It can supply misleading testimony or even fail completely to speak out at critical times.

[2] What is this witness-bearer? It is our conscience. (2 Cor. 1:12) In English, "conscience" basically means the same as the Greek term (*sy·nei'de·sis*) used by inspired Bible writers. It means "co-knowledge" or "having knowledge of something with [oneself]." It is the voice of what Bible writers refer to as "the secret self," "the man we are inside," "the secret person of the heart." (Ps. 51:6; 2 Cor. 4:16; 1 Pet. 3:4; compare Romans 7:22.) Have you ever used expressions such as, "In my heart I felt it was the right thing to do"? Or, "I would like to do what you ask but something inside me says 'No' "? This is conscience speaking, our inward realization or sense of right and wrong.

[3] How is it a "witness-bearer"? In that it testifies either against or in favor of our conduct as measuring up to moral standards, either accusing or excusing us. It can be a valuable moral safety factor because it can inflict pain when it condemns, or bring pleasure when it approves.

[4] For example, after David performed an act of disrespect toward King Saul, the record says that "David's heart kept striking him." (1 Sam. 24:5; compare 2 Samuel 24:10.) His conscience condemned him. Following another serious misdeed, David suffered the pangs of a guilty conscience. As he himself relates: "When I kept silent my bones wore out through my groaning all day long. For day and night [God's] hand was heavy upon me. My life's moisture has been changed as in the dry heat of summer." But when he finally confessed his wrong to God and gained His pardon, David experienced relief and joy. His conscience was put at ease, made clean again.—Ps. 32:1-5; compare verses 10, 11.

GOD'S WISDOM SEEN IN HUMAN CONSCIENCE

[5] At the beginning of mankind's history, Jehovah God did not surround the first humans with rules to control every minute detail and facet of life. His general instructions and the one negative command he gave them can be summed up in a few lines in the Bible. (Gen. 1:28-30; 2:15-17) Why was no extensive code of law necessary?

[6] Jehovah God created his human creatures with intelligent minds and with hearts possessed of moral sense. By the co-

1, 2. (a) Why should we be very interested in learning about the witness-bearer within us? (b) What is this witness-bearer, and with what is it associated?

3, 4. How does our conscience 'bear witness'? And how can it guide us morally?

5-8. (a) Why did God not need to give the first humans an extensive and detailed law code? (b) Even when new situations and circumstances should arise, how could they determine what the right course to take would be? (c) Give examples as to how the faculty of conscience would act in them.

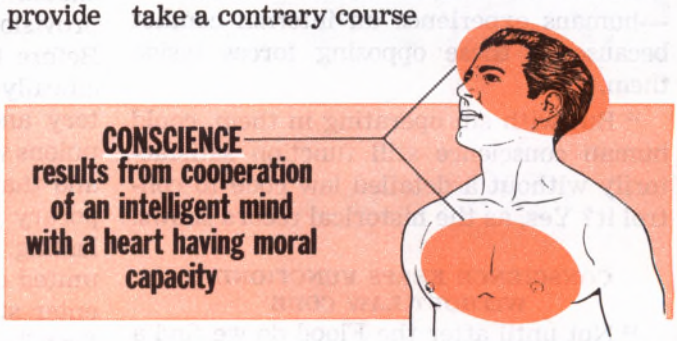
operation of mind and heart the faculty of conscience results. Man's conscience has its source in the fact that man was made in God's own 'image and likeness,' not in a physical sense, obviously, but in a *moral* likeness. (Gen. 1:26, 27; compare 2 Corinthians 3:18.) Thus, the faculty of conscience was implanted in humans from creation forward.

[7] Instead of giving laws spelling out and defining every detail of right and wrong, God could fortify man's moral sense by revealing His personality, ways and standards to man. Thereby God would provide *principles* to guide his human children. As they grew in knowledge, understanding and appreciation of him, their conscience or moral sense would enable them to apply these principles to whatever circumstance might arise.

[8] God, for example, had no need to give Adam a formal law telling him not to beat his wife or throw stones at her, or forbidding the slaughtering of animal and bird life just for the "sport" of it. Why, all around the human pair they could see evidence of their Creator's love, his generosity, consideration and kindness. They could see it in the marvelous, versatile bodies he gave them, the beauty and rich variety of their environment, the delights he had provided for all their senses—smell, taste, touch, sight and hearing. (Ps. 139:14; 104:10-24; Eccl. 3:11) How much more potent an appeal to righteousness and goodness should this make to human hearts than a mere decree! God's love for them set the pattern for the human pair's dealings with each other. It provided the basis for their conscience to speak out against cruelty or inconsiderateness of any kind.

SIN INTRODUCES INTERNAL CONFLICT

[9] Since he was created in God's likeness, for Adam to reflect his Father's qualities, to 'mirror' his Creator by right conduct, would be the *normal, natural* thing for Adam to do. Yet he was free, as a moral agent, to make his own choice. If given a choice between acting in harmony with God's personality and ways or acting contrary thereto, Adam could take either course. *But only by choosing the harmonious course could man "feel right" about the matter.* To take a contrary course would "go against the grain," producing internal disturbance in man.



[10] The historical records bear this out. When Adam and his wife violated the one negative command God gave them, they suffered internal upheaval. They began experiencing feelings of guilt, anxiety, shame and insecurity. When his Creator spoke to him, Adam admitted an attempt to hide, out of fear. It was as if a built-in lie detector were at work in him, providing just cause for God's immediately asking: "From the tree from which I commanded you not to eat have you eaten?" Indeed, a witness-bearer within man was testifying to that very conclusion.—Gen. 3:6-11.

[11] From that point forward man has had

9. What effect would disobedience have on the perfect man, and why?
10. How does the account at Genesis 3:6-11 show that Adam had a witness-bearer within him?
11, 12. What other force now became part of human nature, and what effect does it have on man's moral nature and conscience?

two opposing forces working within him. Though made originally in God's image, he now became sinful, imperfect. Sin marred humans' reflection of their Creator's "likeness," it produced a flaw inherited by all Adam's descendants, with none being able to free themselves from it by their own efforts. The tendency toward wrongdoing now became part of human nature. But did it wipe out or replace the inner sense of right and wrong called conscience? No, this continued as also part of human nature. So—particularly when faced with moral issues and decisions —humans experience an internal conflict because of these opposing forces inside them.

12 But with sin operating in them, could human conscience still function satisfactorily without a detailed law code to control it? Yes, as the historical record shows.

CONSCIENCE KEEPS FUNCTIONING WITHOUT LAW CODE

13 Not until after the Flood do we find a stated law about murder. (Gen. 9:5, 6) So, then, did people prior thereto feel free to kill with no sense of guilt? By no means.

14 In Eden, human death was revealed by God to be for violators of his will. (Gen. 2:16, 17) Logically, then, death should come only as the penalty for sin, and God, as the known Life-Giver, should be the one to designate those meriting death. So, what happened when Cain allowed sin to cause him to kill his brother in heated anger? No stated law condemned murder; yet Cain's conscience testified against him, as seen by his evasiveness when he was questioned by God. (Gen. 4:3-9) Later, the conscience of Cain's descendant Lamech evidently excused him for killing a young man who wounded him. Lamech pleaded self-defense, apparently claiming immunity against any revenger of the man's death. Why? Because he knew of God's promise of action against any attempted avenger in Cain's case and felt his own case far more justifiable than Cain's. (Gen. 4:17, 18, 23, 24) So, humans were never without principles and precedents to guide their consciences.

15 People knew the principle of headship, for God had made known his own headship in Eden and had designated man's headship over woman. Without laws condemning idleness, they knew that man should work in caring for God's earthly provisions. This, too, was revealed in Eden. Before the Law covenant with Israel specifically condemned homosexuality, adultery and rape, they realized that sexual unions were to be between man and woman and that such unions were not to be temporary (as in fornication or adultery) but lasting, in a family relationship with the united ones 'leaving father and mother' to enter such enduring relationship, as "one flesh." (Gen. 2:24; note also Joseph's course; Gen. 39:7-9) Without any laws against trespassing or stealing, they could appreciate the principle of ownership rights, in view of God's command regarding the trees in Eden. Without statutes against fraud, cheating, slander, false accusation, they could see the bad results that came from the first lie.—Gen. 1:26–4:16.

16 So, even if no law code was given with specific decrees and rules, people had principles and precedents to guide them and to equip their consciences to act as true witness-bearers. The situations might differ from person to person, variations of circumstances might arise, yet they could draw upon those principles to arrive

13, 14. Even with sin in the picture, what shows that human conscience could function properly without a law code?

15. How could people's consciences testify against rebellion toward headship, against indolence, sexual immorality and similar wrongs, with only the history of Genesis 1:26 to 4:16 as a basis?

16. Would varying circumstances or new situations change this?

at right conclusions, to make wise decisions. In the centuries following, and even prior to the giving of the Law covenant to Israel, God's dealings with men and his expressions provided further revelation for those still striving to reflect his likeness.

[17] In the first century of the Common Era, Jesus and his apostles called on these early principles and precedents in advocating the righteous view to take in regard to such matters as divorce, persecution and slander, wifely submission to a husband, homicide.—Matt. 19:3-9; John 8:43-47; 1 Tim. 2:11-14; 1 John 3:11, 12.

[18] All of this helps us to appreciate the rightness of the apostle Paul's statement that "law is promulgated, not for a righteous man, but for persons lawless and unruly, ungodly and sinners, lacking loving-kindness, and profane, murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, manslayers, fornicators, men who lie with males, kidnappers, liars, false swearers, and whatever other thing is in opposition to the healthful teaching." (1 Tim. 1:9, 10) The man who has a genuine love of righteousness in his heart does not need specific laws condemning such things to cause him to abstain from them. If he is sincerely striving to manifest God's "likeness" and to 'walk with Him' he will repudiate all such practices. On the other hand, if any person is lacking that righteous desire, specific laws with penalties attached for the violator may act as a deterrent—but they will never fully succeed in preventing his engaging in wrongdoing. Human history gives abundant evidence of this.

17. Show how Jesus and his apostles demonstrated the value of these principles and precedents as guides to righteousness.

18. (a) What kind of people make formal, specific laws needful as deterrents? (b) Contrast these with the person who genuinely loves righteousness.

THE LAW COVENANT AND CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE

[19] In time Jehovah God gave a full set of laws and regulations to the nation of Israel. While this served as a deterrent to wrongdoing and also provided valuable insight into God's standards and qualities, Jehovah had a greater, more farsighted purpose in giving this law code. God gave it to Israel "to make transgressions manifest," so that they, although his chosen people, could lay no claim to righteousness on the basis of their own merit and works. Their inability to keep perfectly that law exposed to full view their sinfulness and powerfully demonstrated their need of the ransom provision God would make through Christ Jesus. Simultaneously, the Law contained 'shadows' or foregleams of God's future purposes and the means for carrying these out.—Gal. 3:19; Rom. 3:19, 20, 24.

[20] Even while that Law code was still in force, however, Jehovah foretold his making a new covenant with persons who would have his law put "within them," not through some engraved or printed law code, but 'written on their hearts.' (Jer. 31:33) That new covenant was made with spiritual Israel, the Christian congregation. They are not under the Law code given Israel. (Gal. 4:4, 5; Heb. 8:7-13) Does this absence of such a detailed law code allow for a lower standard of morality among Christians? No, to the contrary, Christianity calls for even higher standards, as Jesus' own teachings showed. (Matt. 5:21, 22, 27, 28, 31-48) And it clearly calls for *greater exercise of conscience.* As Christians we are tested as to whether we have God's ways 'written on our hearts' or not. Our not being placed under a detailed law code puts us to the

19. What several purposes did the Law covenant given to Israel serve?

20. (a) How does the new covenant differ from the Law covenant? (b) Why does the absence of a detailed law code not allow for lower standards among Christians?

test as to what is really in our hearts.

[21] Of course, as Christians we have both the inspired Hebrew and Greek Scriptures giving us splendid insight into God's personality, his ways and standards, purposes and will. In them we have the records of the words and deeds of God's Son who came to earth and revealed or "explained" his Father to men, that through him we can "fully know the Father." (John 1:18; Matt. 11:27) So, then, even though the specific laws and commands given to us as Christians may be few as compared with the Law covenant and its hundreds of statutes and regulations, we are far better equipped to know how to act in the 'likeness and image of God.' In reality, we are responsible for ALL that we know about God, and ALL such knowledge should have its effect on our conscience, whether it is stated as a direct command, law or prohibition for Christians or not.

SHOULD RULES REPLACE INDIVIDUAL CONSCIENCE?

[22] But many persons are not satisfied with this. They still want to have explicit rules made, precise lines drawn, beyond what God's Word sets forth. So, should the governing body of the Christian congregation today assume the responsibility for supplying an exhaustive set of rules to cover every conceivable situation? No, for this would be complying with a wrong point of view, a view similar to that which prevailed among the Jews during Jesus' earthly ministry, though not beginning nor ending then.

[23] It was the Pharisees and other religious leaders who fostered such attitude. Above and beyond the Law covenant they built up a supplementary code of traditions and rules, attempting to cover every minor aspect of the application of the Law covenant. Each restriction contained in the Law was thereby split into a multitude of lesser restrictions.

[24] For example, the sabbath law forbade the doing of work on the seventh day. But what is included in "work"? These religious leaders tried to define with extreme precision what such "work" embraced. Plucking of grain to eat (such as the apostles did on a sabbath day) was ruled to be a form of reaping, hence "work" forbidden on the sabbath. (Mark 2:23, 24) One tradition ruled that even to catch a flea on the sabbath was wrong because it was a form of hunting. Technicalities were abundant. One ruling held that 'if a man tore garments or set fire to objects with the sole intention of destroying them, he was not guilty of violating the sabbath. But if he destroyed them with a view to later improvement (as in destroying a building in order to rebuild it) he was to be punished.'—*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1909, Vol. X, p. 599; compare Matthew 15:4-6; 23:16-19.

[25] What was the dangerous, damaging effect of trying to spell out with such hairline precision the application of each law? M'Clintock and Strong's *Cyclopœdia* recognizes the real menace this course of the religious leaders presented, saying that they "sought to observe painfully the letter of the law, and *to confide as little as possible to the judgment and conscience of individuals.*" (Vol. IX, p. 191; italics ours.) What the religious leaders did was, in effect, to superimpose their own conscience, scruples and personal preferences and prejudices on all the rest of the people. Jesus likened this adding of traditions to

21. As Christians, what knowledge should form the basis for the testimony our conscience gives us? Must scriptures be in the form of a direct command, prohibition or specific law to have a molding effect on our conscience?

22. What would some like the governing body of the Christian congregation to do, and why is this not complied with?

23, 24. Who had a similar concern for specific rulings? Give examples.

25. (a) What was dangerous about setting down such complex set of rulings? (b) What did Jesus say about this course?

the Mosaic law to placing "heavy loads" on the shoulders of men and he warned that this elevating of human traditions to a par with the Scriptures resulted in making God's Word invalid. (Matt. 15:1-9; 23:1-4) Jesus told the religious leaders who condemned his disciples for plucking grain on the sabbath, "If you had understood what this means, 'I want mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless ones."—Matt. 12:1-7.

[26] Later, in a synagogue, Jesus appealed to their consciences in applying God's law. The Law covenant said nothing about efforts made to care for the sick on the sabbath, but Jewish tradition allowed this only where the person's life was in danger. Confronted with a man having a withered hand and having the question thrown at him by the religious leaders as to whether it was 'lawful to cure on the sabbath' or not, Jesus asked, 'What man among you having one sheep would not lift it out of a pit if it fell therein on the sabbath? Really, of how much more worth is a man than a sheep! Is it lawful to do a good deed, a fine deed, on the sabbath?' But they refused to exercise their consciences; they remained silent. Jesus then became indignant, "being thoroughly grieved at the *insensibility of their hearts,*" and he proceeded to heal the man.—Matt. 12:9-13; Mark 3:1-5.

[27] To want someone, an elder or body of elders in a congregation, or the governing body of the Christian congregation to set forth a code of laws beyond what the Bible contains, therefore betrays a wrong attitude. In matters where God's Word calls on us to exercise the faculty of conscience—of judgment, insight, discernment and wisdom—we should not try to put the responsibility on someone else by getting him to issue a 'ruling.' We may wisely seek counsel and guidance—yet what is said cannot go beyond that nor should we wish it to. But how can we have assurance that this "witness-bearer" within us is giving right testimony? How can we keep its voice strong and clear? Read the next article for the answers to these questions.

26. What example shows how traditional rulings hindered the Jews from exercising their consciences correctly? And what effect did it have on their hearts?

27. (a) Why is it wrong to want someone else to make our personal decisions for us in moral matters? (b) What questions now arise, to be considered in the following article?

"RECOMMENDING OURSELVES TO EVERY HUMAN CONSCIENCE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD"

ONE'S having the faculty of conscience is not enough. Of itself it is not a sure guide in life. This is because it is part of us, closely tied in with our hearts and is affected by the interaction of both heart and mind. So according to what we ourselves are, what we have in our heart and mind, the voice of this "witness-bearer" will be either muffled or clear, its testimony will either be sound, reliable

1. Why is the faculty of conscience not a sure guide in itself?

and true or be defective, misleading, even downright false.

[2] Christ Jesus, for example, warned his disciples that "the hour is coming when everyone that kills you will imagine he has rendered a sacred service to God." (John 16:2) Saul of Tarsus was one of these. In his zeal for what he conscientiously believed to be right, Saul 'committed many acts of opposition against the name of Jesus,' persecuting the disciples, and 'when they were to be executed, he cast his vote against them.' (Acts 26:9, 10; compare Galatians 1:13, 14.) Yet later, when experiencing persecution himself as the Christian apostle Paul, he could say in court: "I have behaved before God with a perfectly clear conscience down to this day." (Acts 23:1) Though his conscience had been "clear" at the time of his fighting against Christianity, its testimony had been defective, woefully false and had led him into fighting against God. What was wrong?

NEED FOR KNOWLEDGE AND GOD'S SPIRIT

[3] "I was ignorant and acted with a lack of faith," Paul answers. (1 Tim. 1:13) If our conscience is to aid us on the way to life everlasting, we need to study diligently God's Word, the Sacred Scriptures. Why? Because through knowledge of the Bible and by application of it in our lives we can come to know Jehovah God, know his personality, ways and purposes. Without a clear vision of Him we cannot possibly reflect his qualities and standards, and the voice of our conscience will be blurred, indistinct and confused.

[4] We also need to seek continually Jehovah God's spirit, praying unceasingly for it. The apostle spoke of his conscience as 'bearing witness with him in holy spirit,' and it is by the spirit of God operating on our enlightened and Scripture-trained minds and hearts that we can be assured of correct testimony from the witness-bearer within us. (Rom. 9:1) We can illustrate this by a child who has been brought up by a loving father, one who carefully instilled in his son certain principles and standards, not only by word, but also by example. Now suppose, on an occasion when the child is away from his father, someone endeavors to get the child to engage in an act contrary to his father's principles. Perhaps the precise act suggested was never mentioned by the child's father. The person tempting the child to perform the act may even say, "Did your father ever specifically say you couldn't do this?" The answer may be, "No, he did not." And yet the child may reject the proposal, saying, "Even though my father never mentioned it, I *just know* he wouldn't want me to do it—I *know* he wouldn't like it!" Even without a specific command, the boy knows what to do. Why? Because he has the spirit of his father, he knows his father's attitude on the matter. In similar ways we can come to know Jehovah's attitude with the help of his Word and that of his Son and by the holy spirit.—Compare 1 Corinthians 2:16; also the example of Paul's "spirit" as guiding the congregation at Corinth, as recorded at 1 Corinthians 5:3-5.

[5] Of the person led by God's spirit, the apostle says: "If you are being led by spirit, you are not under law . . . the fruitage of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control. Against such things

2. What examples illustrate how the conscience can bear wrong testimony?
3. Why is Bible knowledge essential for the conscience to bear good witness?
4. (a) What other help is needed? (b) Illustrate this. (c) What do we learn from the scriptures cited at the end of this paragraph?
5, 6. (a) Why are Christians led by God's spirit "not under law"? (b) What, then, is included in the 'law written on Christian hearts'?

there is no law." (Gal. 5:18, 22, 23) How is it that they are "not under law"?

6 Christ Jesus showed that the entire Law code given to Israel rested on two basic commands: Love of God with all one's heart, mind, soul and strength, and love of one's neighbor as of oneself. (Matt. 22:36-40) The apostle Paul also says that the laws against adultery, murder, stealing, covetousness, "and whatever other commandment there is, is summed up in this word, namely, 'You must love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does not work evil to one's neighbor; therefore love is the law's fulfillment." (Rom. 13:9, 10) Are we governed by that love of God and neighbor and do we have accurate knowledge of God's Word and strong faith? Then even without an extensive code of regulations, rules and restrictions, we can stay on the pathway of righteousness, because we have God's law 'written on our hearts.' (Heb. 10:16) "Law" means, basically, a 'rule of conduct.' All that we learn about God, both by study and by his dealings with us, becomes our rule of conduct or "law." When this is so, then our conscience bears good, reliable testimony to guide us.

THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Facing Up to Questions of Conscience.**
- **Will the Needs of the Poor Ever Be Satisfied?**
- **Do You Look to Science for a Better World?**

WEAK CONSCIENCES AND STRONG ONES

7 But even with baptized Christians, this is not always the case. Some have 'strong' consciences, others have 'weak' ones, as is seen in Paul's first letter to the congregation at Corinth. In that city, meat that had been offered to an idol by the pagan Corinthians was commonly sold in the city's meat markets. The conscience of some Christians would not let them eat such meat without feeling guilt. Was this testimony of their conscience correct? If not, why not?

8 Those Christians lacked accurate knowledge and discernment of righteous principles. Paul explained that the pagan idols were really "nothing" since there is "no God but one," the Creator. Therefore the meat could not really come to belong to the idol since it had no genuine living existence and hence no power to receive or possess such meat. The meat remained under the ownership of the One who rightfully 'owns the earth and all that is in it,' Jehovah God.—1 Cor. 8:1-6; compare 10:25, 26.

9 But something else was causing their consciences to give incorrect testimony. After saying, "Nevertheless, there is not this knowledge in all persons," Paul adds, "but some, *being accustomed until now to the idol,* eat food as something sacrificed to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled." (1 Cor. 8:7) This shows that our background, environment, the customs, beliefs and attitudes of the people among whom we grew up—all these can also affect the testimony of our conscience. Many Corinthians had practiced idol worship before becoming Christians. Evidently from force of habit they still felt a consciousness of worship associated with meat that had been offered in idolatrous sacrifice. So, for them to eat would, as Paul said, 'defile their conscience.' In time, knowledge could have a healthful, enlightening effect on their conscience, 'read-

7, 8. In what way was the conscience of certain Corinthian Christians 'weak,' and what was a basic cause?

9. (a) What other factors can produce a weak conscience? (b) Why would eating meat offered to idols 'defile' the consciences of such ones?

justing' their outlook, aiding them to overcome their past prejudices, fears, wrong beliefs and viewpoints.—2 Cor. 13:11.

'WE OUGHT NOT TO BE PLEASING OURSELVES'

10 But meanwhile what should those Christians do whose consciences were not weak, who had knowledge of right principles and the correct viewpoint of the matter? Should they belittle the doubts of those with a weak conscience? Should they go ahead and do whatever their consciences allowed with no concern for the weak consciences of others, assuming that their own boldness in the matter would serve to strengthen the others' weak consciences? Paul says that love should dictate to us, for "knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" the ones showing it. (1 Cor. 8:1) They should guard lest exercising their "authority" or right (to eat such meat as no longer having a worshipful connection) should "somehow become a stumbling block to those who are weak." Yes, if they ate meat known to have been sacrificed it could have the effect of 'building up' the conscience of weak ones, building them up, not in a healthful way, but so that their conscience swung to the opposite extreme. What? That of actually eating meat in religious ceremony connected with idolatry, or at least eating it in spite of a consciousness of worship. This the governing body of the Christian congregation had condemned, by guidance of the holy spirit.—1 Cor. 8:9, 10; Acts 15:28, 29.

11 Even if the conscience of a person is overly restrictive, no one should presume to override that conscience or try to argue the person into going against it. As the apostle's corresponding discussion in his letter to the Romans shows, if a person were to eat meat while having doubts as to the rightness of the act, "he is already condemned . . . because he does not eat out of faith." The Christian who acts according to faith has a clean conscience; but if he acts without faith that what he is doing is proper, then his conscience is not clean, for, though feeling that the act is contrary to God's will, he does it anyway.—Rom. 14:5, 14, 23.

12 A strong faith makes for a good conscience, one that speaks up boldly, correctly, not failing to bear needed witness at critical times. Faith not only gives confidence; it produces loyalty to truth and righteousness. The Christian who has built up strong faith by knowledge and sincere application of it, by genuine appreciation and trust, will be loyal. While his conscience may permit him to do things that those with weak faith scruple against doing, at the same time he will not be excusing himself in wrongdoing.—Gal. 5:13.

13 But love must always control. This governing principle is stressed by Paul when he says: "We, though, who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those not strong, and not to be pleasing ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor in what is good for his upbuilding." (Rom. 15:1, 2) Showing how serious a matter it is for the one with strong faith to fail to show consideration for those who are weak in matters of conscience, Paul warns: "If because of food your brother is being grieved, you are no longer walking in accord with love. Do not by your food ruin that one for whom Christ died." "When you people thus sin against your brothers and wound their conscience that is weak, you are sinning against Christ." (Rom. 14:15; 1 Cor. 8:11, 12) What is

10. How could those with strong consciences 'build up' the consciences of the others in a wrong way?
11. Why is the person "already condemned" who does not act according to faith?
12. Why, then, is faith so essential for us to have a conscience that will give proper guidance?
13. Why is it so vitally important for us to show love in considering the consciences of others and governing our conduct thereby?

said regarding eating and drinking can be said regarding matters of dress, entertainment, employment and all other facets of human living.—Rom. 14:21.

[14] Just as it is wrong for the one with strong faith to belittle those who are overscrupulous or try to superimpose his conscience on theirs, so it is also wrong for the scrupulous one to judge or censure those exercising Christian freedom. "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God," says Paul, and then "each of us will render an account for himself to God." "Why should it be that my freedom is judged by another person's conscience?" (Rom. 14:3-12; 1 Cor. 10:29, 30) Yet, though convinced of certain 'rights' or "authority" on the basis of God's Word, the Christian guided by love will not 'look for his own interests,' insisting on his rights and pleasing himself to the hurt of others, but will imitate Christ, who "did not please himself" in a selfish, inconsiderate way.—1 Cor. 8:9; 13:4, 5; Rom. 15:3.

DEFILED CONSCIENCES

[15] It is one thing to have a conscience that is weak due to lack of knowledge. It is quite another thing to have a defiled conscience because of rejecting truth or following a course that goes contrary to one's conscience.

[16] Paul called for loving considerateness toward overscrupulous Christians in Rome and Corinth, those manifesting 'weakness of faith.' But he instructed Titus to 'reprove with severity' men in Crete who were not "healthy in the faith." Why? Because they were not just being overscrupulous due to lack of knowledge. These men were setting themselves up as teachers of their views, contradicting the spirit-directed decision of the governing body on circumcision. Both their minds and their consciences were defiled. Their works manifested this.—Rom. 14:1; Titus 1:9-15.

[17] To follow a deliberate course of wrong can lead to one's conscience becoming marked or seared "as with a branding iron." (1 Tim. 4:2) Some of such in Paul's day had "thrust aside" faith and a good conscience and experienced "shipwreck" of their faith, becoming blasphemers of God's faithful servants and His truth. (1 Tim. 1:19, 20) A Christian could go back to being like the people of the world, who are "in darkness mentally, and alienated from the life that belongs to God." Due to their ignorance and the insensibility of their hearts they "come to be past all moral sense," their conscience excuses them in all sorts of loose conduct, uncleanness and greediness. But, as Paul adds, "you did not learn the Christ to be so." (Eph. 4:17-20) God's Son provided us a Model and Example by which our consciences can be trained to bear proper witness.

APPEALING TO THE CONSCIENCES OF OTHERS

[18] Certainly we should want to avoid defiling our consciences, to the injury of ourselves and others. Like the apostle Paul we should be able to say: "Our conscience bears witness, that with holiness and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but with God's undeserved kindness, we have conducted ourselves in the world, but more especially toward you."—2 Cor. 1:12.

[19] Review some of the ways Paul appealed to the consciences of those he

14. How must there be a balance in the attitude of both those whose consciences are very restrictive and those whose consciences are not so restrictive? What principles should both classes always keep in mind?
15, 16. What is the difference between a weak conscience and one that is defiled? Illustrate this from the Scriptures.
17. (a) What grave consequences can result from failing to keep a clean conscience toward God? (b) How does Ephesians 4:20 present another aid to our reflecting Jehovah's 'image and likeness'?
18-20. (a) Describe some of the ways in which Paul appealed to the consciences of those he served. (b) According to what he wrote the Thessalonians and Corinthians, was he satisfied simply to believe that 'God knows my heart is right in the things I do'?

served. He sought neither prominence, praise nor power over them. None of the apostles worked harder than he, yet he was far from assigning himself special privileges or seeking the best in material comforts as being 'what was due him.' He even refrained from making use of his due rights in many ways.—1 Cor. 9:3-18; 15:10.

[20] His attitude was not, 'I am the apostle to the Gentiles appointed by God's own Son so I am not concerned about what anyone thinks. What I do is between me and God. I know I'm right; so let others accept it and not question it.' Having authority, he was not authoritarian. Rather than showing off a powerful personality to persuade, he appealed to people's consciences in love. He reminds those in Thessalonica that he and his companions were 'gentle as a nursing mother,' in tender affection imparting "not only the good news of God, but also our own souls, because you became beloved to us." He and his associates willingly labored in secular work night and day so as not to put an expensive burden on others. The Thessalonians, he says, thereby became "witnesses, God is also, how loyal and righteous and unblamable we proved to be." (1 Thess. 2:5-10) While confident that his heart was manifest to God, Paul told those in Corinth, "I hope that we have been made manifest also to your consciences."—2 Cor. 5:10-12.

[21] In this same letter to the Corinthians, Paul states that he and his companions had "renounced the underhanded things of which to be ashamed, not walking with cunning, neither adulterating the word of God, but by making the truth manifest *recommending ourselves to every human conscience in the sight of God.*" Along with a clean conscience toward God and our brothers, as Christians we should also seek to have a clean conscience toward "every human conscience," including those in the world of mankind. (2 Cor. 4:2) Are we doing this?

[22] We should never doubt that the progress and success of the preaching of the good news of God's kingdom depend greatly on our "recommending ourselves to every human conscience" by maintaining a good conscience ourselves, both congregationally and individually. It is not enough to preach and teach Bible truths to others. Along with this—in fact, as part of our preaching and teaching—we must appeal to their consciences. They cannot see our hearts as God can, but we can endeavor to make manifest what is in our hearts—our sincerity, our honesty, our purity of motive, our unselfish love. However, can we do this if we ourselves fail to practice what we preach?

[23] How concerned are we for the everlasting welfare of those around us, not only our families and our spiritual brothers, but also our neighbors, our fellow townspeople and countrymen? Paul wrote: "I am telling the truth in Christ; I am not lying, since my conscience bears witness with me in holy spirit, that I have great grief and unceasing pain in my heart . . . in behalf of my brothers, my relatives according to the flesh, who, as such, are Israelites." (Rom. 9:1-4) He showed his concern by striving to maintain conduct that would appeal to their conscience, by seeking never to be needlessly repugnant to the Jewish conscience. (Compare Romans 10:1; 1 Corinthians 9:20.) How deep is our desire to aid those of our nation to gain life? How far are we willing to go to avoid being 'causes for stumbling to others'?—1 Cor. 10:32, 33.

21, 22. (a) Is it enough to recommend ourselves to God and the consciences of our brothers? (b) Why is it vital to appeal to the consciences of those to whom we bear the good news of the Kingdom?

23. What should move us to seek never to be a cause for stumbling toward those to whom we preach and teach?

[24] Concern for maintaining a good conscience before God and all men has caused many of God's servants in modern times to make major changes in their lives—in their daily conduct and speech, their attitudes and treatment of others, their employment and business practices. They are 'exercising themselves continually to have consciousness of committing no offense against God and men.' (Acts 24:16) Are you doing this? What are some of the things that raise questions of conscience for God's servants today? Where an appeal to the consciences of others calls for certain changes, do they need some specific law or command or regulation to cause them to make such change? These are questions we leave for the next issue of *The Watchtower* to answer.

24. (a) What have many of God's servants in modern times done in order to recommend themselves to every human conscience in the sight of God? (b) What questions arise for our future consideration?

WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF *Dancing?*

MANY are the new dances spawned in recent years by the age of rock 'n' roll music. They tend to last a short time and are soon replaced by others. Though fast dancing is preferred by some, others like the slow kind in which the man and woman dance together, holding each other. Among youths in some lands so-called "no touch" rock dances have become popular, the partners not actually touching but making a variety of movements. In view of such a bewildering array of dances today, a Christian may wonder, What is the proper view of dancing in the light of the Bible?

In ancient Israel, dancing was performed mostly in groups, particularly by women. When men joined in the dance, they apparently were in separate companies. There is no direct mention of mingling of the sexes in their dances.

In God's Word there is no outright condemnation of dancing in itself. When divine disapproval came upon dancers, as in the case of the Israelites dancing before a golden calf, it was the idolatry associated with the dancing that was wrong, although there may also have been a factor of abandon in the dancing. Such idolatry and dancing brought dishonor to Jehovah. —Ex. 32:1-35.

Among the ancient pagan nations, fertility dances were common. These were dances designed to stimulate the sexual passions of both participants and observ-

ers. The Canaanites performed circle dances around their idols and sacred poles honoring the fertility forces. The worship of Baal was associated with wild, unrestrained dances.

Moving forward in time, in the Christian Greek Scriptures we find dancing mentioned with no implication of disfavor. Jesus Christ, in fact, told a parable in which dancing was mentioned as part of a joyous occasion. At the homecoming of the prodigal son, his father rejoiced and prepared a celebration. Dancing took place in conjunction with the feast. (Luke 15:25) It is evident that the Son of God did not disapprove of dancing in itself; otherwise he would not have mentioned it as part of a worthy celebration.

But how should a Christian view modern-day dancing in all its variety? God, in his written Word, has set down principles that should guide a Christian in all his ways. In the light of these principles, the motives and objectives behind the dances themselves, the movements of the dancing bodies and the ideas such movements convey to participants and observers are important things to consider.

"NO TOUCH" DANCING

In virtually all rock 'n' roll dances done by youths, the partners do not touch. The twist is viewed by many as having been the beginning of this type of dancing. An interviewer for *Look* magazine reported awhile back:

> "The characteristic dances of our new age of revelry are all variants of the twist. . . . The dancers do not touch, they do not talk. . . . Each does whatever charade the name of the dance calls for. . . . They look as if their bodies are screaming.
>
> " 'It's a kind of fertility rite, designed to combat the sterility of modern life,' says a young medical student, asked to account for his generation's dancing style. But this is fertility magic without bodily contact. . . . A student nurse . . . says, 'It's sort of sexy . . . all those bodies grinding, but never touching.' "

Though rock dancing varies considerably, the movements in some of them are thus similar to those in fertility dances, and the effect can be the same. To the extent that any modern dance is an imitation of the erotic gestures of some pagan dance, then Scriptural principles would rule it out for Christians, since God's Word warns against "shameful conduct" and "things which are not becoming." (Eph. 5:4) Christian women are counseled by God's Word to dress in a modest manner and to display "chaste conduct," principles that also apply to the conduct of men. (1 Pet. 3:1, 2; Titus 2:4, 5; 1 Tim. 2:9) But many of the "no touch" rock dances are hardly modest or chaste.

It is important to keep in mind that it is not necessary for physical contact to take place for persons to have their passions aroused. Simply observing the movements of dancers may well excite passionate feelings. In particular, the male is powerfully affected in an erotic way by what he sees. That is why almost all pornography is sold to men. Hence, a young girl may not realize that dancing without touching can stimulate a young man tremendously, yet it can.

When there is fast rock dancing, with attention focused on an area of the body where the reproductive organs are, the girl may actually think it is inoffensive. Yet she is laying herself open for trouble. She may think that nothing is happening, but the boy's passions may be whipped up, and he may want the girl in a sexual way.

Therefore, a girl should consider what kind of attraction a boy may feel for her. Is he attracted to her on the basis merely of the sexual arousal he gets from her? But he can get this pleasure from lots of other females who dress in tight clothing, gyrate their hips, and make various erotic gestures. So a girl needs to ask herself:

Do I want to attract a man simply on that basis? Or do I want the kind of man who likes me for what I am? for my conversation? for the things that I feel are important in life? Am I interested in the kind of man who takes pleasure in doing things for me, or only in one who likes me for what he can get from me?

Some Christians may find enjoyment in dancing; but when any dance involves immodest behavior or is sexually suggestive (highlighting erotic movements of the breasts and hips), then they wisely avoid it, instead of feeling that they ought to follow the crowd. (Rom. 12:2) Some may laugh at you because you do not go along with the crowd, but the important thing is that you have a good conscience toward God.—1 Pet. 4:3, 4.

EFFECT OF MUSIC

Another thing to consider is the effect of some rock music. Concerning rock music, *High Fidelity* magazine said:

> "No wonder parents flip at rock—sex is a cornerstone of the rock mystique, . . . 'Let's spend the night together' urge the Stones, and their manager cynically states, 'Pop music is about sex, and you've got to hit them in the face with it.' Which raises the disturbing question, how much of all this is deliberate pandering to adolescent awakening physical desires?"

The dancers to such music may say that they do not listen to the words of a song; 'they just dance.' But if the words are immodest or immoral, or verging on such, these thoughts are still impressed on the youthful minds. In fact, the dancers can often repeat the lines they profess not to listen to. But it is not just the words of such rock music that at times goes beyond the bounds of modesty; it is the effect of the music.

Recently a researcher for the United States President's Commission on Pornography made a study of what arouses the sexual feelings of young girls. In her study, this authority, Mrs. Patricia Schiller, found that young girls are often sexually aroused by pop and rock 'n' roll music, especially when they are with boys. She said: "Music, by playing on girls' emotions to arouse love and affection, frequently serves as a catalyst for love and thereby a stimulus for sexual arousal in the adolescent female. . . . The music surfaces this feeling."—Denver *Post,* July 23, 1971.

So youthful Christians need to be careful as to the kind of music to which they dance. Since females, more so than males, are affected by what they hear, this is particularly important advice for them. Rock music that stirs up passionate feelings or incites to wild abandon is something that wisely should be avoided if they desire God's approval.

OTHER DANCES

What, then, about conventional dances, slower ones, in which the partners hold each other? Here the emphasis is often more on grace of movement. Married persons often enjoy this kind of dancing. A husband and wife who share in "ballroom dancing" together over the years may derive considerable relaxation and pleasure from applying their skill in such dancing, all the while having enjoyable companionship together.

But since unmarried persons might also be involved in this type of "close" dancing, the question comes up as to the extent to which they need to exercise caution. Illustrating why this is a potential source of moral danger, Dr. Fritz Wittels, M.D., comments in his book *Sex Habits of American Women:*

> "The idea of the ball room dance . . . is to give two people of opposite sex a chance to be and to stay for a while closer together than our social habits would otherwise permit. . . . Syncopated dance music has not been favorable to prolonged maintenance of virginity."

'But is that not rather extreme?' some may wonder. Interestingly, the New York *Times Magazine* of June 18, 1972, mentioned, regarding slow 'contact dancing' at high-school proms, that the boys look on it as "a legitimate excuse to put their arms around a girl and hold her close." Is the delight involved that of graceful foot patterns and other artistic movements of the dance? The article continued: "Slow dances are five-minute hugs, back-rubs, bottom-pats."

That sensual pleasure frequently is involved in many dances is borne out by the fact that a young man, so anxious to dance before marriage, often finds that after marriage his interest in dancing lags. His wife now may have to coax him onto the dance floor to share in the graceful dancing that she so much enjoys.

A young man may enjoy dancing, yet he may not altogether understand why. This is because natural forces in his own body are newly asserting themselves, and the young man knows they bring him a feeling of gratifying pleasure. But he has never experienced the culmination of it because he is not married. So a young man may do this with no bad intention. But if he really understands these things and tries to live by godly principles, he will seek to do as the Bible says: "Deaden, therefore, your body members that are upon the earth as respects fornication, uncleanness, sexual appetite."—Col. 3:5.

So, if you participate in ballroom dances, considerately recognize the possibility that your partner could be stimulated improperly even though you may feel that it is not close enough for you to develop sensual pleasure from the dancing. Some married persons have decided to restrict their dancing to their own mates, thus avoiding any complications.

Each one, then, should examine his own motive in regard to dancing. Some may truly enjoy the dance itself and may have no improper motive. Not all ballroom dancing need involve holding a partner so near that there is close bodily contact. Many dances can be done in either a decent or an indecent manner, depending upon the persons doing them.

AVOIDING CAUSES FOR STUMBLING

Even though a Christian may feel he can participate in a dance with a good conscience before God because of having no wrong motive, there is something more to consider. He should consider the effect upon the onlooker. Is the onlooker likely to feel that the Christian is indulging in immodest behavior? The onlooker knows what may go on in his own mind when he sees a sensual dance, and he assumes that such thoughts are going on in the minds of the dancers. One's saying, "My mind and conscience are clear," is not enough, because the Scriptures are emphatic about the importance of keeping "from becoming causes for stumbling."—1 Cor. 10:32.

No Christian wants to turn people away from God's truth because of his conduct, even when that conduct may not in itself be wrong. But circumstances may make that conduct wrong. What may be acceptable in one place may cause you to be looked down on in another. If people recognize a certain dance as evidence of abandon, they consider all the participants to be alike. So every Christian does well to heed the apostle Paul's counsel: "In *no* way are we giving any cause for stumbling, that our ministry might not be found fault with."—2 Cor. 6:3.

Also, the mature Christian will take the viewpoint of the Holy Scriptures regarding any new dance that may develop. Is such dance conducive to holy conduct? God's Word says: "Become holy yourselves in *all* your conduct." The Bible speaks out against "cravings for sensual pleasure."

It calls upon Christians to show modesty. And they are told to consider and practice whatever things are "chaste."—1 Pet. 1:15; Jas. 4:1; Eph. 5:4; Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 2:9.

So a young person, or an older Christian, in considering the Christian view of dancing, can ask himself or herself: 'How does the dance I have in mind measure up to those Scriptural requirements?' As the moral standards of this wicked system continue to collapse, it will not be surprising that you find quite a number of dances today are not becoming to God's holy people. Therefore, all Christians, regardless of youth or age, should keep in mind what the apostle Paul counseled: "Whether you are eating or drinking or doing anything else, do all things for God's glory."—1 Cor. 10:31.

Christendom —FIGHTER AGAINST GOD

DOES Christendom, that is, the domain of the nations calling themselves Christian, actually fight against God? It sounds paradoxical—the very organizations that bear the name of Christ and that claim to be in a covenant with God are teaching and leading their adherents in disobedience to God!

It is not so strange, however, when you consider that the Christian apostle Paul spoke of some men in the Christian congregation in his day who, he said, were "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder," Paul continued, "for Satan himself keeps transforming himself into an angel of light."—2 Cor. 11:13, 14.

Furthermore, both Paul and the apostle Peter warned of a great apostasy that would take place after the apostles' death. As a result, many professed Christians, they said, would follow "teachings of demons" and hypocritically speak lies. They would have "a form of godly devotion" but would prove "false to its power." They would "speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves." They would "exploit [Christian disciples] with counterfeit words," disowning "even the owner that bought them."—1 Tim. 4:1, 2; 2 Tim. 3:5; Acts 20:30; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 2 Thess. 2:3-12.

Also, by looking at what happened to Israel, a nation that was in a covenant with God, we can see a striking parallel, yes, a pattern of Christendom's condition today. Among the things that constitute "a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived" was what God caused his prophet Ezekiel to see.—1 Cor. 10:11.

Ezekiel, though bodily in Babylon 500 miles away, was transported in vision, to be taken on an inspection tour of Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem. First, he beheld an idolatrous "symbol of jealousy" in

an inner gateway. Then came the exposé of seventy of Israel's leaders, in secret chambers, offering incense to carvings of loathsome beasts and creeping things. This was detestable enough, but Jehovah spoke further to Ezekiel, saying: "You will yet see again great detestable things that they are doing."—Ezek. 8:13.

WORSHIP OF A REBEL AGAINST GOD

Then, in an inner courtyard, Ezekiel reports, "Look! there the women were sitting, weeping over the god Tammuz." —Ezek. 8:14.

Who was this Tammuz? According to the Babylonians and the Syrians, he was the god of vegetation. In southwest Asia, the vegetation grows during the rainy season with its kindly floods and dies during the dry season. Death of the vegetation was viewed as picturing the death of Tammuz, and it was his death that was bewailed annually at the time of the greatest heat, by the idolatrous worshipers of Tammuz. At the return of the rainy season Tammuz was supposed to return from the underworld, as symbolized by the growth again of the vegetation.

How would the Israelites ever be induced to worship an idol? Why would they follow the practices of such a cult? When we consider the history and background of Tammuz worship it becomes more apparent. In his book *The Two Babylons* Dr. Alexander Hislop identifies Tammuz with Nimrod, the founder of the city of Babylon, about 180 years after the flood of Noah's day.

Nimrod was the great-grandson of Noah. According to Genesis 10:1, 6, 8-12, Nimrod became known as "a mighty hunter in opposition to Jehovah."* He was the leader in building the religious Tower of Babel to counteract God's command that the people spread out and fill the earth. Obedience to this command would have established strongholds of true worship throughout the earth. (Gen. 9:1) But Nimrod appeared as a hero to his followers. According to the Jewish historian Josephus: "[Nimrod] gradually changed the government into tyranny,—seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence upon his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach! . . . Now the multitude were very ready to follow the determination of Nimrod, and to esteem it a piece of cowardice to submit to God; and they built a tower." —*Antiquities of the Jews,* Book I, chap. IV, pars. 2, 3.

Religious tradition recounts that Nimrod was executed for his rebelliousness against Jehovah, the God of Noah. Nimrod's followers considered his violent death a tragedy or calamity, and deified him. Annually they memorialized his death on the first or second day of the lunar month named Tammuz, when the idolatrous women wept over his idol. Thus the reason for this weeping over him by the Babylonian cultists is understood. Also, the fact that Nimrod is recognized by scholars as identified with Marduk, the chief god of the Babylonians, enables us to see why the Jews, then tributary to Babylon, and in danger of being swallowed up by this World Power of the day, might be induced to take up Tammuz worship.

Tammuz was represented by the first letter of his name, which is an ancient *tau,* a cross. The "sign of the cross" was the religious symbol of Tammuz. So there was an attempt to introduce the worship of the idolatrous pagan cross into the temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem.

* See *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures,* 1953 edition, footnote on Genesis 10:9.

But what does this have to do with Christendom? Is Tammuz worship going on there, in opposition to God? Well, first of all, what about the "sign of the cross" in Christendom? The cross, on which Christendom's religions claim Christ was put to death (though it was actually a stake), is considered the foremost symbol of Christianity. It is even bowed to and kissed by some religionists. Among the Jews after their restoration from Babylon, the stake on which a man had been put to death was considered a detestable thing, something to be buried out of sight. Says the Jewish authority, Moses Maimonides, of the twelfth century: "A timber upon which anyone has been hanged is buried; that the evil name may not remain with it and people should say, 'This is the timber on which so-and-so was hanged.' " But Christendom actually honors the very thing that, according to them, was the instrument on which Jesus was tortured to death.

MEDDLING IN POLITICS

But, as Jehovah said would be Ezekiel's experience, we also shall see even more detestable things than these in connection with Tammuz or Nimrod worship in Christendom. The Bible says of Nimrod that "the beginning of his kingdom came to be Babel [or Babylon] and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. Out of that land he went forth into Assyria and set himself to building Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah and Resen between Nineveh and Calah: this is the great city." (Gen. 10:10-12) Thus Nimrod was the founder of cities and of political systems of rule, contrary to the will of Jehovah God. All false religion stemmed from Babylon after the flood of the days of Noah. Genesis 10:8, 9 says that "he [Nimrod] displayed himself a mighty hunter in opposition to Jehovah."

The term "hunting," according to the ancient Babylonian and Assyrian custom, was applied not only to hunting for wild animals but also to military campaigns against human creatures as the prey. So Nimrod made himself a shedder of human blood in warfare.

How well these details about Nimrod also fit Christendom! Like Nimrod, she also has established her own religious systems. These are generally thought of as being in harmony with the Holy Bible but, in actuality, are in harmony with religious teachings of ancient Babylon. Emperor Constantine was the ruler who made Christianity the State Religion of the Roman Empire. According to the ecclesiastical historian Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, Constantine said that "at mid-day when the sun was beginning to decline he saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the Sun, bearing the inscription [in Greek] BY THIS CONQUER." This, of course, would tend to give "holy" sanction to his political aims. This sign, the cross, was then used on the shields of his soldiers, an army of *sun-god worshipers,* who went forth to kill and to conquer.

Like Nimrod, Christendom has not confined herself to religion purely; she has mixed herself in worldly politics, setting up, wherever possible, a union of Church and State, with the Church trying to tell the State what to do. She has claimed that her political emperors and kings have ruled "By the grace of God." Historian H. G. Wells writes of the crowning of Charlemagne as emperor of the "Holy Roman Empire" by Pope Leo: "Leo III (795-816), who invited Charlemagne to be Caesar and crowned him in spite of himself." (*Pocket History of the World,* edition of March, 1944, p. 233)

Not only has Christendom enthroned and dethroned rulers, but even her bish-

ops, archbishops and popes have been honored with material "thrones" and are still said to "reign" over their bishoprics and papal sees. Compare this course with the Christian apostle's words at 1 Corinthians 4:8.

The politicians of this world are given prominent positions and considerations in the church systems. What a contrast, this, to the example of Jesus Christ, who refused to be made a king on earth by men! To the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, he said: "My kingdom is no part of this world. If my kingdom were part of this world, my attendants would have fought that I should not be delivered up to the Jews. But, as it is, my kingdom is not from this source." (John 18:36) To the contrary of this, Christendom insists that it is the duty of her church members to engage in politics. At times, and in some places, she endeavors to dictate to them as to the political candidates for whom they shall cast their election ballots. Members of her clergy have even acted as political rulers, as president, or as prime minister, and so on.

BLOODGUILT

And what about wanton bloodshed as committed by "Nimrod a mighty hunter in opposition to Jehovah"? What Nimrod did was merely a small-scale prototype for Christendom! On a vastly enlarged scale, she too has engaged as a "hunter" in military campaigns with carnal weapons. The most sanguinary wars of all human history have been waged by the members of Christendom, between themselves and with the so-called infidels and pagans. All of this is not Christlike. It is Babylonish and smacks of Nimrod.

The loss of human lives in these wars has caused untold weeping by the womenfolk of Christendom. Memorial days are held annually when the ones bereaved by war go to the graveyards to decorate the burial plots of their slain warriors. The deaths of the mighty war generals and other high-ranking warlords are mourned by the patriotic, nationalistic members of Christendom, these being eulogized in the churches in which the funeral services are held. All of this in full agreement with the notorious fact that churches have been used as recruiting stations and propaganda centers in times of war. Such connecting up of all these political and military doings with the "house of God" (the church) in Christendom well reminds us of those Israelite women sitting and weeping over Tammuz inside the inner court of the temple of the Sovereign Lord God in Ezekiel's day.

Has Christendom's action exalted the name of Jehovah, the God of the Bible? No, rather it has brought reproach, and has caused hatred and enmity toward Christianity on the part of people of non-Christian lands. Christendom's misrepresentation of the God of the Bible, along with her unchristian actions, has prepared a fertile breeding ground for Communism.

Moreover, it is right in the midst of Christendom where evolution has had some of its strongest supporters. Why? Because she has made the Bible seem to be contradictory, ridiculous and inaccurate because of her own ridiculous, false and unreasonable doctrines such as the Trinity, hellfire, predestination and her teachings regarding war, her meddling in politics and, not least, her turning to higher criticism. Many of her prominent clergymen have gone so far as actually to give support to the evolution theory.

The religious organizations of Christendom, in all her nations, have opposed the proclamation of the good news of God's

Messianic kingdom. The religious clergy have conspired to get political rulers to ban the work and have incited arrests and mob action against Jehovah's witnesses, who are calling upon all to study the Bible to find out what it *really* teaches. Christendom, engaging in Nimrod worship, is actually a part of Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion, and to all those connected with her, God's command is: "Get out of her, . . . 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.

Christendom's long history of fighting against God is near its end. She has mocked God by taking his name and the name of his Son upon her and then bringing upon them the greatest defamation. But "God is not one to be mocked. For whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap." (Gal. 6:7) Christendom will pay with loss of her existence for her fight against God.

Are you a member of one of Christendom's churches? Then search the Scriptures for yourself with the help of true Christians, and forsake bloodguilty Christendom. Turn to the true God and his Messianic kingdom for life.

● To what extent does the Jewish law forbidding marital relations during a woman's menstrual period apply to Christians?—U.S.A.

The law governing sexual intercourse during a woman's menstrual period states: "Where a man lies down with a menstruating woman and does lay bare her nakedness, he has exposed her source, and she herself has laid bare the source of her blood. So both of them must be cut off from among their people." (Lev. 20:18; 18:19, 20) The Jewish law also made allowance for the possibility that a wife might begin menstruating during intercourse with her husband. The regulation governing this circumstance is found at Leviticus 15:24: "If a man lies down with her at all and her menstrual impurity comes to be upon him, he must then be unclean seven days, and any bed upon which he might lie down will be unclean." Thus only *deliberate* intercourse during a woman's menstrual period carried the penalty of 'cutting off,' that is, death.

The prohibition on sexual intercourse during a woman's menstrual period was a purposeful restriction. It protected a man from becoming religiously unclean by contact with the blood of a menstruating woman. And it took into consideration the woman's physical and biological limitations. When obeyed, this law evidently contributed to the health of Israelite women. Says Dr. Jacob B. Glenn in his book *The Bible and Modern Medicine:* "The female genital tract, especially during periods of lowered resistance (menstruation), is particularly vulnerable to irritation and stimulation; hence, the strict law among Jewish people forbidding cohabitation during this period."

Christians are not under the Mosaic law. (Rom. 6:14) But they rightly give due consideration to the principles set forth therein and strive to live in harmony with these principles. The fact that deliberate intercourse during a woman's menstrual period carried the death penalty reveals the seriousness with which Jehovah God viewed this matter.

Though under no law that would label him as being ceremonially or religiously "unclean," a Christian is concerned with maintaining a good conscience before God. For instance, Christian women are urged to do what is "fitting" in matters of head covering and mode of dress. The apostle Paul also describes certain practices as "not becoming" and "not fitting" for God's servants. (Compare Ephesians 5:3, 4; Romans 1:28; 1 Corinthians 11:13; 1 Timothy 2:9, 10.) True, marital relations are not a public matter but private. Yet the Christian may rightly ask himself, Do I find it "fitting" and

"becoming" to have sex relations at the time my wife's body is expelling blood and other wastes? Is it the "natural" thing to do? As we may recall, the fact that something *can* be done does not necessarily make it "natural" from a Scriptural standpoint. (Compare Romans 1:26, 27.) Christians should therefore want to consider what is natural, fitting and becoming in deciding what they can personally do in good conscience.

Moreover, Christian husbands are under command to 'continue dwelling with their wives according to knowledge, assigning them honor as to a weaker vessel, the feminine one.' (1 Pet. 3:7) Viewed in the light of the Mosaic law, such dwelling with a wife according to knowledge could include showing consideration to her during her menstrual period. Manifestly, if a man puts satisfying his passions ahead of his wife's best interests, he would not be 'assigning honor' to her. If he failed to take his wife's cycles and vicissitudes into consideration, he would not be 'dwelling with her according to knowledge.' By not controlling himself when the welfare of his marriage mate may be at stake, he would be disregarding the Bible's command: "Each one of you should know how to get possession of his own vessel in sanctification and honor."—1 Thess. 4:4.

The intimacies of a married couple, of course, are not something that is investigated by elders comprising the judicial committee of a Christian congregation. If approached for help about such matters, these elders may give appropriate counsel, but their authority ends there. Like all other Christians, married people will want to strengthen themselves spiritually by heeding their internal sense of what is proper. Also, they will appreciate Jehovah God's interest in how they conduct their marital affairs.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

October 15: The Witness-Bearer Within Us. Page 556. Songs to Be Used: 15, 75.

October 22: "Recommending Ourselves to Every Human Conscience in the Sight of God." Page 561. Songs to Be Used: 8, 45.