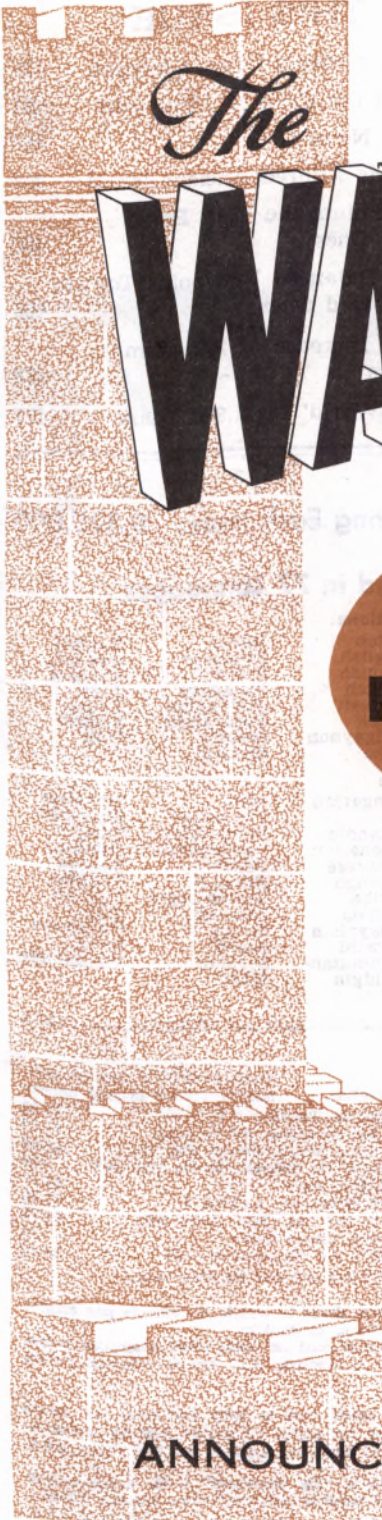




The **WATCHTOWER**

Divine Mercy
**POINTS THE WAY BACK
FOR
ERRING ONES**

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

ALCOHOLISM

-THE CAUSE AND THE CURE

AUGUST 1, 1974

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

The WATCHTOWER

August 1, 1974
Vol. 95, Number 15

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

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

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

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A PROBLEM

That Rivals Drug Addiction

WHAT is it that enslaves many millions more persons than heroin addiction?

What causes persons to be seven times as susceptible to accidental death as the rest of the population?

What ranks next to heart disease and cancer as a major health problem in the United States and many countries of Europe?

The answer: chronic alcohol abuse.

The use of alcoholic beverages goes back to the earliest times of man's history. The *abuse* of these beverages is just about as old. Millions of people today enjoy wine, beer and other alcoholic beverages without any damage to their health, or to their mental effectiveness or personal safety. Yet, today, in the United States, about one out of every ten persons who drink is either a full-blown alcoholic or a "problem drinker," that is, one whose drinking causes trouble for himself (or herself) and for those around him.

In France, where there is a café or bar for about every 250 persons, a poll indicated that nearly one out of every four men and one out of every twelve women has a problem with alcohol abuse. The toll of persons dying from alcohol-caused disease is estimated at 30,000 a year. Last year French Health Minister Michel Poniatowski said: "Let's not beat about the bush—alcoholism is a national scourge."

One of the saddest aspects of the rise of alcoholism is its invasion of the ranks of young people. A *London Times* report shows drunkenness rising sharply among British teen-agers, particularly among

girls. A survey revealed some children slipping drinks from the family cabinet before heading for school; others were missing the school lunch to step out for a drink at a nearby pub.

In the United States, the director of the National Institute on Alcohol and Alcohol Abuse, Dr. Morris Chafetz, said: "It's not uncommon to see severe alcoholism problems in kids 9, 10, 11, 12 years old. It's a far more serious problem than we ever imagined." The Alcoholics Anonymous organization has started "Junior AA" chapters for those ten to twenty years old. In New York city alone there are an estimated 66,000 youngsters twelve to eighteen years of age with serious drinking problems.

FAR-REACHING EFFECTS ON HUMAN LIVES

The Bible says that "wine itself makes life rejoice." (Eccl. 10:19; compare Psalm 104:15; Ecclesiastes 9:7.) But it also warns that wine can be "a ridiculer, intoxicating liquor is boisterous, and everyone going astray by it is not wise." (Prov. 20:1) Consider some of the ways that excess in the use of alcohol can make a mockery of human lives.

Some persons are able to drink surprisingly large quantities of alcoholic beverages and still not give the appearance of being "drunk." A poll by the French paper *Le Monde* shows most alcoholics in France drinking from four to five quarts of wine a day, yet often showing little outward sign of intoxication. Nevertheless, as

When one drinks alcohol, it is quickly taken into the bloodstream, soon reaches the central nervous system, and starts to slow down brain activity.

Several drinks may be required before motor centers of the brain are affected, resulting in faltering steps. But be on guard! Before that, the barriers of self-control come down. As Hosea 4:11 says, "Wine and sweet wine are what take away good motive."

Excessive amounts of alcohol irritate the tissues of the mouth, throat and stomach. Some French medical authorities believe that 90 per-

Many persons can eliminate $\frac{1}{3}$ ounce of pure alcohol per hour.

A very small amount may affect you adversely; others may drink more, with no observable effect; do not conclude that you can drink freely because others do.



Proverbs 23:32 says of excessive drinking,

"at its end it bites just like a serpent, and it secretes poison just like a viper." An early sign of this poisoning may be the well-known "hangover" with its nausea, headache, restlessness, trembling, sweating, stomach upset and tremendous thirst (due to the shift of water from the cells to areas outside the cell walls).

The long-range effects, though less dramatic, are much more grave in their consequences. Alcoholic beverages are high in calories. But these are "empty" calories, lacking vitamins and minerals and amino acids in any quantity. The heavy drinker often neglects normal eating, and then nutritional deficiencies begin to develop. These play a large part in the diseases accompanying alcoholism. Particularly the liver, already heavily worked in metabolizing ("burning up" or oxidizing) the alcohol, suffers, and in time cirrhosis of the liver sets in, a prime source of death among long-term alcoholics.

cent of the cancer cases in that country involving the mouth, throat and larynx are due to alcoholism. In time, the drinker may develop delirium tremens—with its violent shaking, frightening hallucinations and forms of paralysis—and, though only lasting from three to ten days, this often proves fatal.

Even more serious—and more immediate—is the effect of alcohol abuse on personal conduct. This is because alcohol, when absorbed into the bloodstream, affects first of all the highest functions of the brain—thinking, learning, remembering and the vital making of decisions and judgments. A small amount of alcohol for most persons has little effect. But where one takes several drinks in a relatively short time, his ability to remember, to concentrate and to solve problems drops rapidly. The brain finds difficulty in processing more than one kind of incoming information at a time. (Ps. 107:27) Vision becomes impaired; the person has trouble in seeing things off to one side and may have the feeling of looking through unfocused binoculars. Yet, because of alcohol's somewhat hypnotic effect, the one overindulging may feel he still has full command of his senses.—Isa. 28:7.

Since alertness and reflex responses, triggered by the brain, diminish with high alcohol concentrations, driving becomes extremely hazardous. Alcohol abuse is involved in at least half of the 55,000 deaths and one million major injuries occurring each year on United States highways. Where states have lowered the legal age for

drinking to eighteen years, a dramatic rise in fatal road accidents caused by drunken teen-age drivers has occurred.

The greatest tragedy lies in alcoholism's effect on family life. For the alcoholic's mate and children, life can become a nightmare. Youthful lives may be blighted or permanently scarred. The separation or divorce rate for alcoholics in the United States is seven times as high as that of the rest of the population. In France, alcoholism figures in one fourth of all suicides and one half of all homicides. (Compare Proverbs 4:17.) Research has shown that chronically alcoholic mothers may produce defective children—children born with abnormally small heads, lopsided faces, having stunted growth ability and subnormal intelligence.

The chronic alcoholic is a poor employee; he cannot perform anywhere near what his normal capacities would allow. He has

a far higher rate of absenteeism, takes twice as much sick leave as other employees, is involved in more work accidents. Besides his own inefficiency he generally impairs the efficiency of those whose work ties in with his. (Compare Proverbs 21:17; 23:20, 21.) Estimates place alcoholism's cost to business and industry in the United States alone at \$12,000,000,000 annually. Alcohol abuse leads to a breakdown in morality and the growth of crime. Surveys show it often is a stepping-stone to drug addiction.

Nations today are searching for remedies for this major problem. This means finding out why and how people become alcoholics, so as to know what protective measures can be taken or how a cure can be effected where the person is already a victim of alcoholism. What have the results in this regard shown and where does the real solution lie?

The CAUSE *and The* CURE OF ALCOHOLISM

WHAT causes persons to become virtual slaves of alcohol, even to the point of ruining their lives and the lives of their families?

Alcohol itself is not the problem. Unlike tobacco or heroin, it is not inherently addictive. The difficulty lies with the users. The factors involved are multiple. Yet they all point to a basic lack or need, and this, in turn, points to the real remedy.

Research shows that children whose parents are heavy drinkers are far more likely to be drawn into the same habit. On the other hand, a report from the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Wel-

fare shows that alcoholism is low where there is "early exposure to small, diluted quantities of alcoholic beverages within a strong family or religious group," and where alcoholic beverages are considered mainly as foods and consumed with meals.

Many persons who did not have the benefit of sound parental training regarding alcoholic beverages may get into danger owing to lack of knowledge. They may not realize that different beverages have different strengths as to alcohol content. Beer, for example, contains about 5 percent alcohol, most table wines from 10 to 14 percent, while fortified wines such

as sherry and port contain from 16 to 20 percent. Distilled drinks (such as rum, gin, whiskey) contain from 40 to 50 percent alcohol. Even if individuals know this they may not realize that they take just as much alcohol into their system by drinking a sixteen-ounce bottle of beer as if they drank one and a half ounces of whiskey.

A person's body size also generally has its effect—the larger one is, the greater the quantity of blood and number of cells and hence the more diffused the alcohol is on absorption. Yet, even though of the same build, individuals may differ tremendously, one being made dizzy by only a small quantity of alcohol while another feels little effect with double the amount. An empty stomach will allow the alcohol to be absorbed into the blood rapidly, whereas food slows down the process. And, since the body is able to eliminate alcohol at the rate of only about one third of an ounce per hour, the time between drinks also is a vital factor.

Associations play a strong role. If heavy drinking is viewed as proof of being a "real man" or as "smart" and sophisticated, there is pressure to conform. Young men and women often are initiated into heavy drinking in this way and fall into a pattern of "telescoped" drinking—periodically getting "high" at parties or Saturday-night drinking bouts. Gradually the drinking may spread over into more and more days of the week. The process may be deceitfully slow. Studies show that the making of an alcoholic takes an average of sixteen years in men, only eight in women.

In later life, personal circumstances become a principal factor. Family problems, marital difficulties, heavy debts, illness, disappointments, failures and the resulting mental depression—these are often the things that initiate the dependence on alcohol. Men in executive positions, or other

work that involves stress and pressure, may become reliant on alcohol for a measure of relief from tension. Persons involved in selling and buying often use it to "oil" the wheels of their business associations. Men with monotonous jobs may spend their free time in seeking the synthetic fellowship to be found with workmates in a bar.

The modern increase in alcoholism is especially strong among women. In the United States about half the women alcoholics have experienced broken marriages and a third are married to alcoholics. Some have well-paying jobs but have found life less than satisfying, lacking in meaning. Those who have the role of homemaker may experience boredom or find the responsibilities of caring for small children burdensome. A housewife's greater privacy from public attention may enable her to develop and conceal a drinking habit for some time. Hormonal changes accompanying the menstrual cycle may be all that is needed to trigger a spell of very heavy drinking.

WHERE THE SOLUTION IS TO BE FOUND

All these things point in a principal direction: people who become compulsive drinkers (unable to control their drinking habits) rely on alcohol to *supply an emotional need*. True, in time the cells of their body may become so adjusted to high concentrations of alcohol that cessation of drinking produces a violent reaction, and thus there is also a physical enslavement. The physical-enslavement point, however, would doubtless never be reached if emotional dependence had not come first. Yet alcohol solves no emotional problems; it only creates more serious ones. It is a false source of comfort, courage, fellowship, or escape from life's problems. Only if persons recognize this can they find the real solution to their dependence on alcohol.

This brings us to the most difficult problem in effecting a cure for alcoholism. What is that? Getting the person to recognize that he or she really does have the problem. Yes, strangely enough, the alcoholic is often the last one to face up to the fact of his or her dependence on alcohol. A man may take a small drink in the morning, two or three at noon, another during the afternoon, another on arriving at home, and two more during the evening and still tell himself he is not an alcoholic. Only if for some reason he is deprived of his drinks and then undergoes the terrible reaction associated with delirium tremens may he be jolted into a recognition of his true situation.

The first step, then, in solving the problem is for the person to recognize his or her enslavement to alcohol. The Bible associates truth with freedom, and lies with slavery. (John 8:32; 2 Pet. 2:18, 19) The clerk who keeps a bottle in the bottom drawer of his desk, and the housewife who secretly works her way through a series of drinks each day, and yet who deny they have a problem, will never find the way to become free.

Then, instead of using alcohol as a personality "crutch" or emotional medicine, the person must look to the right source for satisfying the emotional needs he or she has. Companionship and fellowship should be sought with those who have a healthful outlook on life and a right attitude toward drinking. True, previous associates may mock you when you "do not continue running with them in this course [of 'excesses with wine' and 'drinking matches'] to the same low sink of debauchery," but whatever unpleasantness that brings you is well worth it in the escape from degradation that you gain. —1 Pet. 4:3, 4; 1 Cor. 15:33.

To make the cure effective, you need to 'make your mind over,' developing new

and right standards of conduct. (Rom. 12: 2) It is not enough to know that most persons disapprove of alcoholism or that one's mate, children or relatives disapprove. Knowing God's viewpoint is what can make the difference and give the determination and endurance needed for lasting success and victory over the problem. His Word assures us that drunkards will have no share in his promised Kingdom and the life-giving benefits it will bring. —1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:19-21.

Above all, one needs something genuine to put hope and faith in, a solid basis for confidence as to a happy solution to life's problems. The Bible is the unique source that can supply these needs. Some circumstances in life are beyond our making any real change—certain cases of poor health, the general hardness of present world conditions and the daily pressures these bring—but the Bible shows that these things are not beyond God's changing. That prophetic Word foretold the very things we now see and sets out the sure hope that "the creation itself also will be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God." This will come in a new order of God's making that will bring this earth into a peaceful, healthful state for all those who love righteousness and truth.—Rom. 8:20-22.

Increasing numbers of persons have found wholesome companionship through association with Jehovah's witnesses in their Kingdom Halls, have gained a solid hope for the future and learned sound principles for handling their day-to-day problems. Among them, there are many who have suffered from alcoholism and other equally severe problems, but who have now conquered these. All persons are encouraged to feel free and welcome to avail themselves of the Bible-based assistance they provide.

Insight on the News

- Among world shortages is one affecting the churches—a shortage of ministers and priests. A recently published Vatican report shows that in 1973 only 3,009 new priests were ordained world wide, while in that same year 4,025 priests died.

Rome—A Missionary Field?

Rome itself is particularly hard hit. The Italian newspaper "Il Mondo" recently reported that, in that city of three million people, only six new priests were ordained in 1971. The newspaper warns that, if the trend continues, Rome could be a "missionary field" in another quarter century.

There are, of course, many thousands of priests in Rome, but most are occupied with office work or activity in the Vatican. So, "Il Mondo" says the Church has had to bring in foreign priests to care for regular parish activity. Three fifths of Rome's churches are now assigned to such 'emergency priests' drawn from Spain, England, Germany, India and various African lands. Fifteen churches in Rome now have parish priests or assistant parish priests who are Chinese.

Strange situations, indeed, appear on the world stage today. Bible prophecy, however, gives discernment as to how they fit into an overall pattern. The problems now troubling the world's religions are but forerunners of a coming devastation, prophetically pictured as the destruction of "Babylon the Great," the world empire of all false religion.—Rev. 17:1, 16.

- In Russia, alcoholism is a serious problem. The official publication "Literaturnaya Rossiya"

Disease or Personality Problem?

recently urged that it be confronted directly as a "disease," not just a 'hangover from Czarist times.' Labeling alcoholism as a "disease" is popular elsewhere, approved even by Alcoholics Anonymous and the American Medical Association. Such designation supposedly frees the alcoholic from considerable shame and causes others to show greater sympathy. In the United States, it lets organizations treating alcoholics obtain federal funds—allocated for disease, not personality problems. Not all doctors, however, go along with labeling alcoholism a "disease."

In his newspaper column, Dr. Theodore R. Van Dellen agrees that anyone drinking in excess and damaging his liver, brain or heart is indeed "sick." "However," he says, "somewhere along the line, habit, personality, character, and responsibility enter."

Similarly, Dr. David M. Gimlett, writing in the "American Medical News," warns that, in calling alcoholism a disease, "one runs the real risk of implying to patients and the treating personnel that the individual has no responsibility for his condition and that therefore assuming individual responsibility is not a necessary part of the 'treatment.'"

In the first century, a doctor named Luke quoted Christ Jesus as saying: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and suddenly that day [of Jehovah's judgment] be instantly upon you as a snare." (Luke 21:34, 35) Yes, the heart is the key to the problem, and where there is a true heart determination alcoholism can be overcome.

- In one East African country, a principal newspaper ran a front-page article relating that many of Jehovah's witnesses were leaving tobacco farm employment, on account of their religious beliefs. A government official was quoted as saying that this was "apparently a deliberate attempt to cause dislocation in the [national] economy."

Courage for Principle

A few days later, under the heading "Courage to stand by their principles," the newspaper carried a letter from a person not associated with Jehovah's witnesses in any respect. This reader pointed out that, after revelations linking tobacco with cancer, one internationally known digest magazine cut all tobacco advertisements. Yet no one questioned this as being a matter of honest principle. In conclusion, the reader said of Jehovah's witnesses: "There are so few people who would be ready to stand by an inconvenient principle (and pulling up stakes and looking for a new home with new employment must be a fraction inconvenient) that those who have the courage to do so deserve some credit even though it may be so inconvenient to ourselves."

HOW FALSE GODS *Allured* ANCIENT ISRAEL

CAN a degraded form of worship be alluring? What motives would cause a people to contaminate pure worship with false? The answer to these questions is seen in what happened to ancient Israel. The Israelites were warned beforehand that this would take place: "[The Canaanite] gods will serve as a lure to you."—Judg. 2:3.

But why was this so? To find out, we must first examine the nature of Baalism, the religion of Canaan.

THE NATURE OF BAALISM

The most prominent of the Canaanite gods was Baal. Each locality in Canaan and in other lands where Baalism existed had its own Baal or, as the name "Baal" signifies, its own "lord," "master" or "owner." The local Baal was often given a name denoting his being attached to a specific locality. One example of this is the "Baal of Peor." This deity took his name from Mount Peor. Although there were many of such local Baals, the Canaanites and neighboring peoples understood that the local Baals were all merely manifestations of the one god Baal.

Ancient texts discovered at Ras Shamra on the Syrian coast reveal that Baalism was a fertility cult centered around agriculture. Baal worshipers attributed the changes in the seasons and their effects to the warring of the deities. They believed that the end of the rainy season and the death of vegetation marked the god Mot's triumph over Baal, forcing Baal to withdraw to the depths of the earth.



But when the rainy season started, Baal worshipers took this to mean that Baal was again alive, his sister Anath having defeated Mot. They thought that Baal's mating with his wife Ashtoreth at this time ensured fertility in crops, flocks and herds for the coming year.

Baal worshipers believed that their engaging in prescribed rituals at their religious festivals would serve to stimulate the gods to follow the same pattern. Hence, to celebrate Baal's awakening to life, to be mated with Ashtoreth, they engaged in sexual orgies of unrestrained debauchery. This was a sort of sympathetic magic, carried out in the hope that the gods would imitate their worshipers and thereby guarantee a fertile and prosperous agricultural year.

Throughout Canaan could be found sanctuaries in honor of Baal, where male and female prostitutes served and priests officiated. Near the altars outside the sanctuaries there were stone pillars, sacred poles (representing the goddess Asherah) and incense stands. Both the sacred pillars and the sacred poles were sex symbols.

References in the Ras Shamra texts and archaeological discoveries show that Baalism was a most degrading form of worship. The goddesses Ashtoreth, Anath and Asherah symbolized both sexual lust and sadistic violence and warfare. Figurines of Ashtoreth found in the Middle East depict her as a nude woman with rudely exaggerated sex organs. In one of the Ras

Shamra texts, when Anath's father refuses a request of hers, Anath is portrayed as responding with the words: 'I'll truly smash your pate, make your gray hair flow with blood, the gray hair of your beard with gore.' Of her lust for bloodshed, we read: 'Much battle she does and beholds; her fighting contemplates Anath: Her liver swells with laughter, her heart fills up with joy, Anath's liver exults; for she plunges knee-deep in knights' blood, hip-deep in the gore of heroes.' Indeed, a revolting picture!

Understandably Jehovah God, as a loving Father, wanted to protect his people, the Israelites, from abominable Baal worship. His Law given through Moses made idolatry an offense worthy of death. (Deut. 13:6-10) Jehovah God commanded the Israelites to destroy every appendage of false worship and to keep free from alliances with idolaters. (Deut. 7:2-5) He instructed the Israelites not even to "mention the name of other gods," that is, not to mention them with worshipful regard or in such a way as to credit any existence to them.—Ex. 23:13.

But the Israelites disobeyed and were allured by the worship of Baal, Ashtoreth and Asherah. Why?

WHY ALLURING

Like all other forms of idolatry, Baalism was a work of the "flesh." (Gal. 5:19-21) As such, it appealed to the sinful inclinations of imperfect humans. The Israelites were not immune to the allurements of idolatry and other works of the flesh associated therewith.

Once settled in the Promised Land, the Israelites may have observed that their Canaanite neighbors were having generally good success with the land, perhaps bringing in a fine harvest. Since the Israelites had not had much experience in

cultivating the soil, it would not have been unusual for an Israelite to ask a Canaanite about agriculture. As far as the Canaanite was concerned, Baal had to be appeased in order to enjoy a prosperous agricultural year. If the Israelite was disturbed by the suggestion that he should also appease the local Baal, the Canaanite could have calmed his neighbor's fears by saying that there was no objection to the Israelite's continuing to worship Jehovah. It was merely a matter of acknowledging and pleasing the local Baal also.

Not recognizing that experience and knowledge of the land were the real reasons for whatever success the Canaanites had, an Israelite may have allowed his desire for material gain to become a snare to him. Wanting to get the best yield from his land, he may have justified erecting an altar to Baal in his field and placing a sacred pillar and a sacred pole alongside it. Why, he may have reasoned, 'I'm still worshiping Jehovah.'

Another factor responsible for involvement with false gods was marriage to non-worshippers of Jehovah. Even wise King Solomon deviated from true worship because of marrying women who served false gods and goddesses. (1 Ki. 11:1-8) There is no indication that Solomon wholly abandoned the worship of Jehovah and the sacrifices at the temple on Mount Moriah. He apparently practiced a sort of inter-faith to please his foreign wives, but this displeased Jehovah.

The unrestrained sexual indulgence associated with false worship ensnared still others. At Shittim, on the plains of Moab, thousands of Israelites yielded to this temptation and engaged in false worship. The Bible reports: "The people started to have immoral relations with the daughters of Moab. And the women came calling the people to the sacrifices of their gods,

and the people began to eat and to bow down to their gods.”—Num. 25:1, 2.

Then, too, the religious festivals, with their extensive feasting and drinking, appealed to lovers of pleasure. At Amos 2:8 we read: “On garments seized as a pledge they stretch themselves out beside every altar; and the wine of those who have been fined they drink at the house of their gods.” Of a religious festival at Shechem, the Bible tells us: “They went out as usual into the field and engaged in gathering the grapes of their vineyards and in treading them and in carrying on a festal exultation, after which they went into the house of their god and ate and drank.”—Judg. 9:27.

Furthermore, uncertainty about the future (on account of a lack of faith or a guilty conscience toward Jehovah) prompted many to seek help through false religion, hoping that they might get some assurance that things would go well for them. A case in point is Israelite King Ahaziah, the son of Ahab and Jezebel. Injured in an accident, he sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron, to find out whether he would recover.—2 Ki. 1:2, 3.

A LESSON TO BE HEEDED

When we consider what has happened in Christendom, Israel's being ensnared by idolatry should come as no surprise. Today in Christendom educated people consult fortune-tellers, dabble in the occult, carry lucky charms and, in some parts of the world, even go to medicine men in the hope of gaining relief from sickness. At the same time, like the unfaithful Israelites of old, they claim to be serving the God of the Bible. Moreover, sexual immorality, heavy eating and drinking, dishonesty and other works of the flesh abound in Christendom.

This situation makes it certain that the lawless adherents of Christendom's churches will not escape the execution of God's judgment. Jehovah God did not spare unfaithful Israel and, as the unchangeable One, he again will “become a speedy witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against those swearing falsely, and against those acting fraudulently with the wages of a wage worker, with the widow and with the fatherless boy, and those turning away the alien resident, while they have not feared [him].”—Mal. 3:5, 6.

It is urgent, therefore, that all seeking God's approval avoid being ensnared by idolatry or any other work of the sinful flesh. If that is your desire, cultivate an intense hatred for what God condemns, not allowing your mind to dwell on fleshly desires. By so doing, you can escape the deadly lures of this world. As the apostle John wrote: “Do not be loving either the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him; because everything in the world—the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one's means of life—does not originate with the Father, but originates with the world. Furthermore, the world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever.”—1 John 2:15-17.

IN COMING ISSUES

- **How Merciful Are You?**
- **Will It Ever Be Safe to Live Without Locks?**
- **Is Change Possible for Homosexuals?**

Divine Mercy

POINTS THE WAY BACK FOR ERRING ONES

"There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner that repents than over ninety-nine righteous ones who have no need of repentance."—Luke 15:7.

JEHOVAH is a God of love, a merciful God. All his arrangements and instructions are for the good of those loving righteousness; they never have a selfish or harmful purpose. (Ex. 34:6; 1 John 4:8) He is also a God of righteousness and justice; he does not condone or 'wink at' wrongdoing. (Ps. 33:4, 5; 50:16-21) There is, however, no disharmony among these divine qualities. Genuine love, in fact, requires a holding to, and insisting on, righteousness.

² Thus, among the arrangements found in God's Word is that of disfellowshipping, that is, removing or expelling from the congregation persons who, though claiming to be Christians, engage in serious wrongdoing and who fail to show a genuinely repentant attitude. Their being put out is for the good of the congregation to maintain its purity and to protect its members, loved by God, from contamination through such a 'leavening' influence as the wrongdoers represent.

³ For this reason, the inspired apostle Paul instructed Christians in Corinth to "quit mixing in company with anyone

called a brother that is a fornicator or a greedy person or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or an extortioner, not even eating with such a man. . . . 'Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.'"—1 Cor. 5:6, 7, 11-13.

⁴ Does this, however, rule out thereafter the taking of any *positive* action toward such disfellowshipped ones, action that could contribute toward their repenting, turning around, returning and being restored as approved, clean members of the congregation? Must all positive action wait until such time as the individual formally expresses repentance to the congregation elders, making direct request for reinstatement? Would any giving whatsoever of exhortation to such a one to 'turn around' and seek restoration constitute a "mixing in company" with him and an engaging in spiritual fellowship with him? Let us see the answer the Bible indicates.

THE EXAMPLE OF THE CHIEF ELDER

⁵ Consider the example of Jehovah God's dealings with those who were once his name people, Israel. They alone of all the peoples on earth were in a covenant relationship with him and they only had been given his word and law. (Ps. 147:19, 20; Rom. 3:1, 2) They frequently proved unfaithful to him, however, and eventually reached the state described in the prayer

1, 2. How are Jehovah God's qualities harmoniously balanced, and how is this seen in the disfellowshipping arrangement?

3, 4. What instructions does the apostle Paul give as to disfellowshipping, and what questions need to be answered?

5, 6. (a) What special relationship did the nation of Israel at one time enjoy with Jehovah God? (b) What course, however, did they take, and with what grave results?

recorded at Daniel 9:4-19: "We have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled; and there has been a turning aside from your commandments and from your judicial decisions. And we have not listened to your servants the prophets, who have spoken in your name to our kings, our princes and our forefathers and to all the people of the land."

⁶ Because of this turning aside and gross disobedience, Daniel says that Jehovah "poured out upon us the curse and the sworn oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of the true God . . . bringing upon us great calamity, such as was not done under the whole heavens." Yes, God took strong judicial action against them, casting first the northern tribes and then the southern tribes out of their land into exile, finally allowing the whole national structure to be overthrown by Babylon. Jehovah, in effect, 'divorced' himself from the national organization as if it were a "wife" of his and the "mother" of the individual members of the nation.—Compare Isaiah 50:1; 54:5, 6; Jeremiah 3:8.

⁷ Having taken this strong judicial action against them, did Jehovah thereafter refuse to do anything whatsoever that might contribute toward their being restored to his favor? No, but, instead, he directed words of reproof to them, exhorting them to abandon the wrong course that had led to their disaster. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God said, evidently to those of the rejected northern kingdom of Israel: "Do return, O renegade Israel, . . . I shall not stay resentful to time indefinite. Only take note of your error, for it is against Jehovah your God that you have transgressed. . . . Return, you renegade sons. I shall heal your renegade condition."—Jer. 3:12, 13, 22; compare Lamentations 3:31-33; Isaiah 57:16-18.

7. After cutting Israel off from his favor, did Jehovah thereafter maintain a strictly negative attitude toward them? Give evidence.

⁸ This expression harmonizes with Jehovah's statement through the prophet Ezekiel, where he expresses his attitude toward those who still show possibility of repentance: "Do I take any delight at all in the death of someone wicked, . . . and not in that he should turn back from his ways and actually keep living? . . . Throw off from yourselves all your transgressions in which you have transgressed and make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit, for why should you die, O house of Israel? For I do not take any delight in the death of someone dying . . . So cause a turning back and keep living, O you people."—Ezek. 18:23, 30-32.

⁹ By exhorting these wrongdoers in this way, was Jehovah God having spiritual fellowship with them, a "sharing" of spiritual good things together as among friends? (Compare 1 John 1:3, 6, 7.) To the contrary, as Jehovah had earlier told them by the prophet Isaiah, if they wanted his friendship again they would have to change. He would not lower himself to walk in their wrong ways and adopt their wrong thoughts. He said: "Search for Jehovah, you people, . . . Let the wicked man leave his way, and the harmful man his thoughts; and let him return to Jehovah, who will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will forgive in a large way. 'For the thoughts of you people are not my thoughts, nor are my ways your ways,' is the utterance of Jehovah. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.'" (Isa. 55:6-9) To enjoy sweet fellowship with God again, they would have to raise their thoughts and ways back up to the righteous levels to which God adheres and which his Word teaches. Thus they would heed his urging to 'come and let us set

8. How did Jehovah reveal his attitude toward erring ones by means of the prophet Ezekiel?

9. By such exhortation, was Jehovah God having spiritual fellowship with wrongdoers?

matters straight between us,' so that their gross sins might be viewed by him as blotted out.—Isa. 1:18, 19.

¹⁰ The parable of the prodigal son provides further insight into Jehovah's admirable attitude of mercy and considerateness. (Luke 15:11-32) The reaction of the father in the parable upon the return of his wayward son exemplifies in a very appealing way what the heavenly Father, Jehovah, is like. In the parable, the son had left home, gone far off and squandered his time and money in a debauched life, including keeping company with harlots. He came into poverty and hunger and, jolted to his senses, he decided to return

10, 11. What qualities of Jehovah are exemplified by the parable of the prodigal son, and how?



In Jesus' parable of the prodigal son, the father warmly received his wayward but repentant son.

This calls to mind God's warm mercy, and sets the example for us

to his father. Note, now, what the parable says: "While he was *yet a long way off*, his father caught sight of him and was moved with pity, and he ran and fell upon his neck and tenderly kissed him."—Luke 15:20.

¹¹ Thus, when catching sight of his son in the distance, the father did not say: 'I am not going to move an inch or say one word until that sinner comes right to my feet and formally requests to be accepted back.' No, but seeing his son heading toward him and, in effect, discerning what was in his son's mind, the father went to meet him. It was—not before—but after this fatherly expression of pity that the son's formal asking of forgiveness took place.

¹² This calls to mind the apostle Paul's reference to "the kindly quality of God [that] is trying to lead you to repentance." (Rom. 2:4) Yes, Jehovah God expresses righteous anger at wrongdoing. But he does not remain angry forever if the wrongdoing ceases. He knows that warm mercy has marvelous drawing qualities to bring repentant wrongdoers back to the point where they can be healed.—Hos. 6:1; 14:1, 2, 4.

¹³ We today therefore do not want to be like the elder brother of the parable who at first was not at all happy with the way his errant brother was received back. (Luke 15:25-32) Rather, we will seek to 'prove ourselves sons of our heavenly Father' by imitating Jehovah's compassionate example. (Matt. 5:44-48) He, as the God of eternity and the "An-

12. By what means does Jehovah draw repentant wrongdoers back? How does Hosea's prophecy illustrate this?

13. (a) Why should we not imitate the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son? (b) To whom should all those serving as elders, overseers and shepherds look as their example in dealing with erring ones? (c) What do the Psalms show as regards the example of this Chief Elder?

cient of Days," is the Chief Elder, the Great Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. (1 Pet. 2:25) His example is always the right one to follow. We will see later in our discussion how that example can guide us in many practical ways.—Ps. 77:7-9; 103: 9, 10, 13.

**ONE'S BEING VIEWED AS
"A MAN OF THE NATIONS AND
AS A TAX COLLECTOR"**

¹⁴ Paul, when writing his apostolic counsel to Corinth regarding disfellowshipping, had earlier inspired information on which to base his instructions. Christ Jesus himself had supplied this. Matthew 18:15-17 records his instructions for handling sins (clearly not just petty trespasses but sins of genuine gravity) committed against individuals. He set out the possibility of a disfellowshipping action where no repentance was manifested on the part of the sinning one. After describing progressive efforts made to 'gain' such a one through getting him to acknowledge his wrong and repent of it, Jesus said: "If he does not listen even to the congregation, let him be to you just as a man of the nations and as a tax collector."

¹⁵ At this time (32 C.E.) the Christian congregation had not been formed and so the "congregation" referred to by Jesus must relate to the Jewish arrangement then existing, with its bodies of elders, including those serving as judges and representing the congregation locally in such capacity. (Ezra 10:14; Luke 7:3) Nevertheless, Jesus' instructions certainly provided a guiding principle that would aid the future Christian congregation. Of particular interest to us is knowing what the unrepentant sinner's being viewed "as a man of the nations and as a tax collector" would imply. To find out we need to

consider how such ones were properly viewed by the Jewish congregation. This will aid us to understand better the apostle's instructions at 1 Corinthians 5:11-13 as to how Christians should view those disfellowshipped by the Christian congregation.

¹⁶ In considering the Jewish attitude toward those of the nations, we cannot be guided entirely by rabbinical writings that were composed after the time Jesus was on earth. Some of these writings display an extreme attitude, one of virtual hatred and contempt toward "Gentiles," people of the nations. Some rabbinical writings held that a Jew should not come to the rescue of a Gentile even when such a one was in peril of death. (Maimonides, *Rozeach*. iv, 12; *McClintock and Strong's Cyclopaedia*, Vol. III, p. 789) Rather, we can find reliable information in God's inspired Scriptures to guide us in ascertaining the attitude of first-century Jews.

¹⁷ When sent to the home of the Gentile Cornelius in Caesarea, the apostle Peter said to those there gathered: "You well know how unlawful it is for a Jew to join himself to or approach a man of another race; and yet God has shown me I should call no man defiled or unclean." (Acts 10: 27, 28) When Peter later went to Jerusalem, supporters of circumcision in the Christian congregation there contended with him, "saying he had gone into the house of men that were not circumcised and had eaten with them." (Acts 11:2, 3) Thus, the basic position of the Jews was that they were not to fraternize with the Gentiles, viewing them as spiritually unclean. They were such due to being "alienated from the state of Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise," hence having no real standing or approved re-

14. What earlier basis did the apostle Paul have for his instructions on disfellowshipping?

15. (a) To what "congregation" was Jesus referring at Matthew 18:17? (b) Why, then, are his words of concern to us in the Christian congregation?

16. Why can we not rely implicitly on Jewish rabbinical writings as to the Jewish attitude toward Gentiles, and where do we find the needed information?

17. What do the Scriptures show was the Jewish attitude toward 'men of the nations' in the first century, and why did this attitude prevail?

lationship with Jehovah God. (Eph. 2:11, 12) To fraternize with them, entering their homes and eating with them, would bring spiritual defilement on the Jews.—Compare John 18:28; Galatians 2:11-14.

¹⁸ Jesus Christ adhered to this basic rule of refraining from fraternizing with people of the nations. And he instructed his disciples that in their preaching activity they should “not go off into the road of the nations [Gentiles], and do not enter into a Samaritan city; but, instead, go continually to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Matt. 10:5, 6) Yet, notwithstanding all of this, Jesus showed no approval of, or conformity to, the extreme view found in rabbinical writings that counted all Gentiles as enemies to be treated with virtual contempt—even as he did not let such attitudes control his dealings with Samaritans. (John 4:4-40) Far from this, Jesus cited his Father’s prophetic Word to show that people of the nations would accept the Messiah, that the temple was to be a house of prayer for all nations, and that the Messiah would prove to be a light to the nations. (Matt. 12:18, 21; Mark 11:17; compare Luke 2:27-32; Acts 13:47.) When a Gentile army officer, who had shown great kindness to the Jews, asked Jesus to heal a sick slave, Jesus did so. (Luke 7:2-10) So, while never going contrary to the admonition of the Mosaic law concerning fraternizing with those not of God’s congregation (Gentiles), Jesus did not become unbalanced, extreme or rigidly hard, adopting an antagonistic attitude toward these. He wisely discerned the principles contained in God’s instructions and was guided by them.

¹⁹ So, too, with the tax collectors, usually not Gentiles but Jews. Because they

were so often dishonest, tax collectors were generally viewed by their fellow Jews as persons of bad reputation, to be classed with known sinners and harlots. (Matt. 9:10, 11; 21:31, 32) While not condoning their wrong ways, Jesus did not hold back from helping such ones when they showed an inclination toward righteousness, as did such tax collectors as Matthew Levi and Zacchaeus. Because he aided such to make spiritual progress, Jesus was falsely accused of being a “friend of tax collectors and sinners.” There was a difference, however, between friendship and Jesus’ efforts to heal those who were spiritually sick and to direct them to repentance and into the path of righteousness.—Matt. 11:19; Luke 5:27-36; 19:2-10.

²⁰ Thus, Jesus’ own example protects us against adopting the extreme view of certain rabbinical writers in this matter of dealing with persons as “a man of the nations and as a tax collector.” We see, too, a close similarity between the treatment accorded these and the treatment set forth in the apostle Paul’s instructions regarding those disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation, namely, not “mixing in company” with such ones nor “even eating” with them. (1 Cor. 5:11) Clearly, treating an unrepentant sinner as “a man of the nations and as a tax collector” means there should be no fraternizing with such a one. But, as Jesus’ example shows, this does not require our treating such a one as an enemy or refusing to show common courtesy and consideration. Nor does it rule out the giving of help to those who want to correct a wrong course and gain or regain God’s favor.

18. What evidence do we have that Jesus did not conform to the extreme view toward Gentiles expressed in some rabbinical writings?

19. (a) How were tax collectors viewed by Jews generally? (b) How did Jesus manifest proper balance in his dealings with them?

20. How does this information regarding the proper Jewish view toward ‘men of the nations and tax collectors’ aid us to understand better the apostle’s instructions on disfellowshipping, and to what conclusions does it lead?

GETTING THE SENSE OF 2 JOHN 9-11

²¹ In his second letter, the apostle John gives this exhortation: "Everyone that pushes ahead and does not remain in the teaching of the Christ does not have God [that is, is not in union with him, has no fellowship with him; compare 1 John 1:6]. He that does remain in this teaching is the one that has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, never receive him into your homes or say a greeting to him. For he that says a greeting to him is a sharer in his wicked works." (2 John 9-11) Do the apostle's words here necessarily apply to *all* persons who are put out of the congregation for wrongdoing? Or do they necessarily rule out any speaking of words of reproof or exhortation to a disfellowshipped person designed to move him toward repenting, turning around and being restored to the congregation? By considering the context of those words of the apostle we can have a clearer understanding of the sense of his exhortation.

²² Note that in verse seven the apostle John says that "many deceivers have gone forth into the world, persons not confessing Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist." Then John gives the warning to be on guard and not to receive such ones into one's home, for these are active propagandists of false teachings, deceitful advocates of wrong conduct. They should be given no foothold from which to make further infiltration. One should not even greet them, so as to avoid being a sharer in their wicked works. In this regard, we may note that the common greeting among

Jews in apostolic times was an expression meaning "May you have peace." The Christian certainly would not want to wish peace to the man who was a deceiver and an antichrist. There is, however, nothing to show that Jews with a balanced and Scriptural viewpoint would refuse to greet a "man of the nations" or a tax collector. Jesus' counsel about greetings, in connection with his exhortation to imitate God in his undeserved kindness toward "wicked people and good," would seem to rule against such a rigid stand.—Matt. 5:45-48.

²³ Are, then, all who have been disfellowshipped like the persons described in John's second letter? At the time that they had to be disfellowshipped they were apparently following a course like such ones or at least manifesting a similar sentiment. As the publication *Organization for Kingdom-preaching and Disciple-making* says on page 172: "Any baptized person who deliberately pursues a course of immoral conduct is actually rejecting the teachings of the Bible, just as much so as one who teaches others contrary to what the Scriptures say about the identity of God, the provision of the ransom, the resurrection, and so forth. (Compare Titus 3:10, 11; 2 Timothy 2:16-19.)" And, if after being disfellowshipped a person tried to justify his immorality before others and sought to sway others to his perverted thinking, he certainly would fit the description given by the apostle John in his second letter.

²⁴ However, not all who are disfellowshipped thereafter follow the course of such 'deceivers and antichrists.' They do not all engage in actively promoting wrongdoing, opposing the truth and endeavoring to deceive others into following the wrong

21. What exhortation does the apostle John give in verses 9 to 11 of his second letter, and what questions does this raise?

22. (a) According to the context, to what kind of persons was the apostle there referring? (b) Why would a greeting to such ones be inappropriate? (c) Is there a difference in the attitude recommended toward those described by John and the attitude commonly and properly shown toward 'a man of the nations or a tax collector'?

23. To what extent or under what circumstances could 2 John 9-11 rightly be applied to a person who is disfellowshipped?

24, 25. (a) What evidence is there that not all who undergo disfellowshipping fit the description given at 2 John 9-11? (b) What reaction should this produce in us, and what vital question will we go on to consider?

course that led to their disfellowshipping. This is seen by the number who repentantly seek and receive reinstatement as approved members of the congregation. Thus, in the United States (where there are now more than half a million Christian witnesses of Jehovah), during the ten-year period from 1963 to 1973, 36,671 persons had to be disfellowshipped for various kinds of serious wrongdoing. Yet, in that same period 14,508 persons were reinstated, accepted back into the congrega-

tions owing to their sincere repentance. This is nearly 40 percent of the total. Certainly we on earth should rejoice with Jehovah and his heavenly family over this fact.—Luke 15:7.

²⁵ What, if anything, can be done to aid yet more of those who have been disfellowshipped—but who are not following the course of the ‘antichrists’ described by John—to be restored to the congregation? Let us see how the Scriptural principles considered apply in a practical way.

Maintaining a

A LITTLE leaven can ferment a whole lump of dough. So too can immoral influence infiltrate and corrupt a whole congregation. Rightly, any congregation should want to protect itself against such influence, and the elders of the congregation especially should be concerned with doing this.—1 Cor. 5:6; Acts 20:28-30.

² There is real danger in being lax in this matter, as the congregation in Corinth was lax toward a wrongdoer in their midst, failing to take action to clear out such ‘leavening’ influence. But there is a parallel danger. What? That of going too far in the other direction, going from laxity to rigidity and hardness.

³ We may note the warning given by the apostle Paul in his second letter to the

1, 2. (a) Why does a Christian congregation rightly take action toward those exercising an immoral influence among them, and who bear a special responsibility in this regard? (b) What parallel dangers exist in handling such matters?

3, 4. What is the meaning of Paul’s words at 2 Corinthians 2:11?

BALANCED VIEWPOINT TOWARD

DISFELLOWSHIPPED ONES

Corinthians, evidently (according to the context) in connection with the sinner described in his first letter whom it had been necessary to ‘remove from among them.’ (1 Cor. 5:1-5, 13) In that case this wrongdoer apparently had repented. After speaking of the congregation’s forgiving this one for the sadness he had caused them congregationally, Paul went on to say, “that we may not be overreached by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his designs.” (2 Cor. 2:5-11) What did the apostle mean by this?

⁴ Satan’s “designs” are to devour any of God’s servants that he can, and he goes

about "like a roaring lion" to accomplish that aim. (1 Pet. 5:8) The man who had been disfellowshipped in Corinth had been 'handed over' to Satan in the sense that he had been put out of the congregation and thus was thrust out into the world under Satan's domain. (1 Cor. 5:5; Acts 26:18; 1 John 5:19) Like a "little leaven" in the "whole lump" of dough, this man had been "the flesh" or fleshly element inside the congregation; and by removing this incestuous man the spiritually minded congregation had destroyed the "flesh" from the midst of it. Now Satan's design or aim would be to hold on to such prey until succeeding in completely swallowing up the man, destroying him spiritually. If the congregation, though in all good conscience, were to be overly cautious and reluctant about receiving the now truly repentant wrongdoer back, delaying unnecessarily his reinstatement, this would suit the Adversary's purpose. (Compare 2 Corinthians 2:7.) So, other translations of 2 Corinthians 2:11 read: "For Satan must not be allowed to get the better of us; we know his wiles all too well." (*New English Bible*) "And so we will not be outwitted by Satan—we know well enough what his intentions are [what he is after, *Goodspeed*]."—*Jerusalem Bible*.

⁵ Congregational elders, as well as individual members of a congregation, therefore, ought to guard against developing an attitude approaching that which some Jewish rabbinical writers fomented toward Gentiles in viewing them as virtual enemies. It is right to hate the wrong committed by the disfellowshipped one, but it is not right to hate the person nor is it right to treat such ones in an inhumane way. As noted earlier, some rabbinical writings held that, even if in peril of death, no assistance should be extended to Gentiles.

5, 6. (a) As regards persons who have been disfellowshipped, what wrong attitude do Christian elders and congregation members need to avoid? (b) Illustrate this.

Suppose, then, a member of a Christian congregation boating on a lake were to see another boat containing a disfellowshipped person capsize, throwing the disfellowshipped one into the water where he struggled to stay afloat. Could the Christian ignore that one's peril, row away and feel free from guilt before God—inasmuch as the one in danger of drowning was disfellowshipped, viewed as "a man of the nations"? Certainly not. That would be cruel and inhumane. We cannot imagine Christ Jesus doing so; nor would any other Jew of the first century who had a balanced viewpoint have reacted that way toward a Gentile or a tax collector in such a plight.

⁶ But consider a less extreme situation. What if a woman who had been disfellowshipped were to attend a congregational meeting and upon leaving the hall found that her car, parked nearby, had developed a flat tire? Should the male members of the congregation, seeing her plight, refuse to aid her, perhaps leaving it up to some worldly person to come along and do so? This too would be needlessly unkind and inhumane. Yet situations just like this have developed, perhaps in all good conscience, yet due to a lack of balance in viewpoint.

⁷ If we imitate our heavenly Father we will remember that he even showed certain considerateness toward the first human pair after their disfellowshipping in Eden, providing them with clothing. (Gen. 3:21) This was an undeserved kindness toward them. As Jesus reminded his disciples, Jehovah God "makes his sun rise upon wicked people and good and makes it rain upon righteous people and unrighteous." (Matt. 5:45) The apostle Paul showed that, despite the independent course the Gentile nations took contrary to God's way, Jehovah "did not leave himself without witness in that he did good,

7. What can we learn from Jehovah God's own example in this regard?

giving [them] rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling [their] hearts to the full with food and good cheer." (Acts 14:16, 17) So, not "mixing in company" with a person, or treating such one as "a man of the nations," does not prevent us from being decent, courteous, considerate and humane.

WHAT SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP INVOLVES

⁸ The Greek expression used by Paul for "mixing in company with" is the verb *syn-anamigny-mi*, meaning "to mix or mingle together." The basic verb involved (*mi'gny-mi*) is used at Matthew 27:34 to describe the mixing of wine with gall and at Luke 13:1 to describe Pilate's mixing blood with sacrifices. So it involves a real merging or blending, a uniting into a combination or compound. For us to 'mix in company' with others would imply a fellowship existing among us. The English term "fellowship" has the sense of "comradeship; companionship; friendliness," there being a "community [or, common and mutual sharing] of interest, sentiment, etc." (*The World Book Dictionary*) So, to fellowship with another means accepting the other person as on an equal standing with oneself, being interested in and entertaining his views, sharing these with an open and favorable attitude. To have spiritual fellowship with another would be, in effect, to have a spiritual 'good time' together. But when we exhort a person to repentance we are not uniting ourselves with him in an amicable union; we are not sharing with him any improper attitude and sentiment he may have shown but, rather, are dealing with him as a person in need of correction.

8. (a) What does the Greek expression for "mixing in company with," used by the apostle Paul at 1 Corinthians 5:9, 11, imply? (b) What does it mean to have "fellowship" with another? (c) Is it having fellowship with wrongdoers if we exhort them to repentance?

⁹ What, then, if a congregation elder were to meet up with a person who had been disfellowshipped, perhaps in the elder's daily routine, on the street, in his secular work or similar activity? Would the elder be acting out of harmony with the congregation's disfellowshipping action if he spoke to this one, urging him or her to 'turn around' and seek reconciliation again with his heavenly Father? Circumstances would govern. Of course, if the disfellowshipped one were following a course like those false teachers and propagandists described at 2 John 7-11, deliberately trying to influence others into false beliefs or immoral practices, the elder would want nothing to do with such a one. But not all who slip into a sinful way become 'deceivers and antichrists.' So, if that one is not of that class, would not Jehovah God's own example allow for the elder to speak words exhorting the disfellowshipped one to seek to regain a good standing with God? Rather than being out of harmony with the disfellowshipping, by his words of exhortation the elder actually would show his *support* of such disfellowshipping action as having been right and needed.

¹⁰ We may note, too, that at 1 Corinthians 5:11 the apostle warns against mixing in company with one who "is" a fornicator or practicer of some other kind of serious wrongdoing. What, however, of the one who has been disfellowshipped for being that kind of person but who thereafter, either at an early point or at a later point in time, gives consistent evidence of discontinuing such wrong practice, stopping

9. (a) What would determine whether it would be proper for a congregation elder to speak words of exhortation to a disfellowshipped person with whom he meets up? (b) Why could the elder rightly exhort one who had been disfellowshipped but who was not following the course described at 2 John 7-11?

10-12. (a) Do all persons who are disfellowshipped continue to manifest the traits or ways that made them like "leaven"? Illustrate. (b) What circumstances therefore need to be given due weight in determining the right attitude toward those disfellowshipped? (c) How does the parable of the prodigal son illustrate this understanding of matters?

it? Can it be said that he or she still "is" a fornicator or whatever type of wrongdoer such a one was that caused him or her to be as "leaven" toward the congregation?

¹¹ For example, a young person disfellowshipped for fornication may thereafter marry, raise a family and live a respectable life. Or one who was disfellowshipped for drunkenness may abandon such practice and, if drinking at all, may do so in moderation only. By such changes these individuals may now regain the respect of the community. Such ones may not yet have come and formally sought reinstatement by the congregation. Is there, however, not an evident difference between these and others who continue right on in the wrongdoing that brought their disfellowshipping? Those giving up the wrong practice may still manifest some appreciation for Christian truth, perhaps even defending the true Christian congregation when someone speaks evil against it. Should not such circumstances be given due weight and have an effect on our attitude as a congregation toward such ones?

¹² Surely if the prodigal son of the parable had returned home in a drunken state, perhaps dragging along one of his harlot companions, the father's reaction would not have been the same. But the father had reason to believe that the son was approaching with a right motive and, rather than suspect the worst, the father hoped the best and went out to meet his errant son.

¹³ Today, too, we want to realize that one of the best evidences of repentance is not just in words, formally stated, but in actions. (Compare 1 John 3:18.) Thus, when certain ones came to John the Baptist (who was baptizing persons in symbol of repentance for forgiveness of sins),

John did not view their formal action as the most important factor or all that was needed. Rather, he told them to go and "produce fruits that befit repentance," citing for them examples of such fruit or good works, such as showing merciful generosity, abandoning cheating and extortion, abstaining from harassment or false testimony against others. (Matt. 3:7, 8; Luke 3:7-14) The apostle Paul similarly exhorted people to "repent and turn to God by doing works that befit repentance." (Acts 26:20) Thus, when a person who was disfellowshipped ceases the wrong practice that caused the congregation to remove him as "leaven," this change may be viewed as at least some indication that he is 'turning around' and repenting of his previous course.—Acts 3:19.

¹⁴ The one who was disfellowshipped may also give some evidence of 'fruit befitting repentance' by coming to Christian meetings that are open to the public. Again, if he or she comes there to argue in favor of or justify a wrong course and to try to win others over to an unscriptural viewpoint, such a one fits the description at 2 John 7-11. But where there is no attempt to do this, it would not be out of harmony with Scriptural counsel for an elder to approach such a one (perhaps on noting his or her presence at meetings a number of times) and to speak words of exhortation with a view to effecting a spiritual healing and full restoration as an approved member of the congregation.—Jas. 5:19, 20.

¹⁵ In some cases the one who was disfellowshipped may have a real handicap in getting to such Christian meetings, though having the desire to do so. The meeting place may be a considerable distance away

14. In what other way may one who was disfellowshipped manifest 'fruit befitting repentance,' and under what circumstances might an elder feel it good to approach such a one?

15. When one who has been disfellowshipped is seriously handicapped as to carrying out his or her desire to attend meetings, what might properly be done?

13. (a) What evidence of repentance surpasses that of words, as shown by statements of John the Baptist and the apostle Paul? (b) How does this principle then apply in the case of a person who has been disfellowshipped?

and may not be served by public transportation. Or other personal or perhaps physical circumstances may prove a severe obstacle to attending meetings. In one case, a woman who had been disfellowshipped spent eight dollars in taxi fare to get to one meeting. She informed the elders that she wanted to attend but was financially unable to continue coming at such expense. She even demonstrated the genuineness of her desire one Sunday by walking the entire distance. If members of the congregation were to see such a one walking such a long distance to the meeting place and had space in their automobile to accommodate her, would it not be the humane thing to assist her?

¹⁶ Of course, where there is no evidence of "fruits that befit repentance" and the individual is still known to be carrying on in an immoral course, this would alter matters, inasmuch as the providing of transportation or similar regular aid to such a one could prove a cause of reproach to the congregation with the community. For that reason, where congregation members know of someone who has been disfellowshipped and who apparently needs and desires assistance to be able to attend meetings, they would do well to seek the counsel of the congregation elders before arranging for such themselves.—1 Pet. 2:12; 3:16.

WITHIN THE FAMILY CIRCLE

¹⁷ Since blood and marital relationships are not dissolved by a congregational disfellowshipping action, the situation within the family circle requires special consideration. A woman whose husband is disfellowshipped is not released from the Scriptural requirement to respect his husbandly headship over her; only death or Scrip-

tural divorce from a husband results in such release. (Rom. 7:1-3; Mark 10:11, 12) A husband likewise is not released from loving his wife as "one flesh" with him even though she should be disfellowshipped. (Matt. 19:5, 6; Eph. 5:28-31) Parents similarly remain under the injunction to 'go on bringing up their children in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah' even though a baptized son or a daughter yet a minor is disfellowshipped. (Eph. 6:4) And sons and daughters, of whatever age, remain under the obligation to 'honor their father and mother' although one or both of these may be disfellowshipped. (Matt. 15:4; Eph. 6:2) This is not difficult to understand when we consider that, according to the Scriptures, even political officials of this world are to be shown due honor by Christians.—Rom. 13:1, 7.

¹⁸ Family members can carry out these Scriptural obligations and yet not show themselves out of harmony with a congregational action disfellowshipping one of the family circle. This they do by not spiritually fellowshiping with such a one. But how, then, can parents carry out the injunction to discipline their children in harmony with God's Word when one of their children is disfellowshipped? They can still use God's Word or other publications that discuss the Bible in training the son or daughter, but they use these in a corrective manner, not as though having a spiritual 'good time' with such a one in the way they could with the other children. How this is handled is for the parents to decide. This does not call for unkindness, but they do not accord such disfellowshipped son or daughter the same approved spiritual relationship granted the others. The disfellowshipped son or daughter should

16. Why is caution necessary in such arrangements, and therefore whose counsel should wisely be sought?
17. What Scriptural obligations and relationships remain in effect within the family circle despite disfellowshipping actions?

18. How can parents carry out their obligation to bring up their children in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah and still respect the disfellowshipping action of the congregation?

be encouraged to attend the family study of the Bible in order to receive the "mental-regulating of Jehovah."

¹⁹ Similarly, when one's mate is disfellowshipped, the other mate, as "one flesh" with such a one, may rightly do what he or she can to lead such a one to repentance and restoration in the congregation. The refraining from spiritual fellowship would not rule out use of the Bible or publications explaining the Bible, for, as we have seen, fellowshiping implies a mutuality of sentiment and viewpoint, a comradely equality. If the mate in good standing uses God's Word or publications based on it as a purely restorative and corrective means, this would not constitute such fellowship. Thus a husband who was planning to do some reading of Scriptural material might encourage a disfellowshipped wife to listen to his reading thereof. Or a wife whose husband was disfellowshipped might ask him if he would be willing to listen while she did such reading. Of course, discussion may result from such reading. If so, the refraining from fellowship in a spiritual way is maintained by seeing to it that there is no sharing of any wrong sentiment or attitude manifested by the disfellowshipped one nor any willingness to accept any condoning of the wrong action that led to his or her being disfellowshipped. (See the book *Organization for Kingdom-preaching and Disciple-making*, page 173.)

²⁰ In some cases a minor son or daughter may be disfellowshipped for some immoral course and may leave home. Later, such a one may reconsider and ask for permission to return home. Whether this will be allowed is for the parents, particularly the

father, to decide. Where the son or daughter expresses willingness to respect parental headship, the father may decide to allow such return and use it as a means for attaining the possible rehabilitation of the son or daughter. If the father is an elder or ministerial servant, this would not necessarily require his being removed from such position as long as he still maintains the respect of the congregation. Of course, if the son or daughter wanted to return and still continue in the immoral practice that led to the disfellowshipping, the father would hardly be looking well to the spiritual interests of his family if he allowed such a source of spiritual contamination to come back into the family circle. This would properly place in doubt his qualifications for any position of responsibility in the congregation.—1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12.

²¹ As to disfellowshipped family members (not minor sons or daughters) living outside the home, each family must decide to what extent they will have association with such ones. This is not something that the congregational elders can decide for them. What the elders are concerned with is that "leaven" is not reintroduced into the congregation through spiritual fellowshiping with those who had to be removed as such "leaven." Thus, if a disfellowshipped parent goes to visit a son or daughter or to see grandchildren and is allowed to enter the Christian home, this is not the concern of the elders. Such a one has a natural right to visit his blood relatives and his offspring. Similarly, when sons or daughters render honor to a parent, though disfellowshipped, by calling to see how such a one's physical health is or what needs he or she may have, this act in itself is not a spiritual fellowshiping.

19. How can a married Christian contribute to the restoration of his or her disfellowshipped marriage partner without being out of harmony with the congregation's disfellowshipping action?

20. (a) Would permitting a disfellowshipped minor son or daughter to return home necessarily require the father's removal from a position of congregational responsibility? What is involved? (b) What would call into question the advisability of his continuing on in such a position of responsibility?

21. Who rightly must determine the extent of association had with disfellowshipped relatives living outside the home? When only would the congregation elders become involved?

²² In some cases where a disfellowshipped parent is aged or in bad health and needs care, the son or daughter might feel it advisable to bring such a parent into the home to fulfill proper filial obligations. So, too, Christian parents of a disfellowshipped son or daughter who is no longer a minor might decide to take such a one back into the home due to that one's having a grave health problem or having been incapacitated in an accident or being in a destitute state financially. These are humanitarian decisions that Christian families must make and the congregational elders are not required to intervene where there is no sound evidence of a reintroduction of a corrupting influence within the congregation.

²³ Even where relatives are involved, however, when a disfellowshipped one uses his or her family ties as a means to carry on activity like that described at 2 John 7-11, his Christian relatives properly deny such a one entrance to their homes, informing the disfellowshipped one instead that he or she is not welcome since the visit is for the purpose of advancing wrong beliefs or conduct.—Jude 3, 4; compare Deuteronomy 13:6-8.

²⁴ Where fleshly relationships are not involved, congregation members will do well to appreciate the advisability of letting the elders, as shepherds of the flock, bear the prime responsibility for exhorting or working toward the rehabilitation of disfellowshipped ones who, though in a sense still 'quite a way off' like the returning prodigal son, nevertheless, give evidence of desiring to take a right course. In some cases the elders may feel that certain ones could

aid in the rehabilitation of a disfellowshipped one, perhaps owing to their having been instrumental in originally aiding that one to come to a knowledge of Bible truth.

BENEFITS OF A BALANCED VIEWPOINT

²⁵ Holding to the Scriptures, neither minimizing what they say nor reading into them something they do not say, will enable us to keep a balanced view toward disfellowshipped ones. We will ever keep in mind the reason for disfellowshipping, to keep the congregation pure and approved by God, free from corrupting influence. Such "leaven" would cause the whole "lump," the congregation, to 'ferment' spiritually. So the congregation in effect "destroys" this sinful fleshly influence from its midst by putting the unrepentant wrongdoer outside in the world dominated by Satan, doing so in order that the "spirit," the dominant outlook, feeling and motivation, of the congregation may be preserved, saved.—1 Cor. 5:5.

²⁶ At the same time a balanced viewpoint will keep us reflecting harmoniously the divine qualities of our heavenly Father, who is both righteous and merciful. Those who may have been disfellowshipped and whose hearts sincerely move them to want to return will therefore feel no reason to be hesitant or doubtful as to the way their efforts to return will be received. They will not fear being rebuffed in coldness or indifference. They will realize that their situation is not hopeless and that the congregation elders will helpfully show them what they need to do to regain an approved standing in the congregation of

22. In addition to minor sons or daughters, why might other disfellowshipped family members possibly be accepted into a Christian home as residents, and with whom does this decision rest?

23. Under what circumstances would even family members rightly not be granted entrance to visit a Christian home?

24. Where fleshly relationships are not involved, to whom should congregation members wisely look to take the lead in any restoring of disfellowshipped ones?

25. (a) What will enable us to maintain a balanced viewpoint toward disfellowshipped ones? (b) How is it that one 'is handed over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, in order that the spirit might be saved,' as stated at 1 Corinthians 5:5?

26. (a) What will a balanced viewpoint enable congregation members to reflect, and how can this have a very beneficial and heartening effect on persons desirous of being accepted back into the congregation? (b) What may elders now feel it advisable to do in the case of certain disfellowshipped persons living in the area served by the congregation?

God's people and to enjoy fully all its benefits. Where elders have real reason to believe that some disfellowshipped ones in the area served by the congregation are in ignorance of such provisions, they may feel it advisable to communicate this information to them.

²⁷ True, to regain an approved standing in the congregation will require a genuine manifestation of humility on the part of the one who was disfellowshipped. (Isa.

27. (a) What is essential for one to be restored to an approved standing in the congregation? (b) Why should those desirous of restoration be moved to manifest this quality and take the needed steps, to the rejoicing of all of God's family in heaven and on earth?

57:15; Jas. 4:8-10) But life itself is at stake and, with the "acceptable time" of God's goodwill and tolerance now drawing so short, they certainly will not want to let pride keep them from turning to their heavenly Father and seeking a good standing with him again and full association with his spiritual children or prospective children in their happy family relationship. (2 Cor. 6:1, 2) They will instead be grateful to God that he has made such merciful provisions for forgiveness and restoration and recognize that 'this kindly quality of God is trying to lead them to repentance.'—Rom. 2:4.



Sharing in THE INCREASE OF KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS

As told by George Nisbet

TODAY there are outstanding increases in the number of people who are interested in the worship of Jehovah, the true God. This is evident from the rapidly growing attendance at the meetings of Jehovah's witnesses in nearly every part of the earth.

But, as for myself, during my school days in Edinburgh, Scotland, I never felt moved to take the worship of God seriously. Even when my mother and eldest brother began to associate with Jehovah's Christian witnesses in 1925, I was only slightly curious as to what interested them.

However, my school days having ended, one day I began to read a book published by the Watch Tower Society. What impressed me most was the reasonableness of the explanation from the Bible as to

the condition of the dead and the hope of the resurrection. A study of several more of these increased my interest. The evidence convinced me so that I said: "This is indeed the truth." Prayerfully I dedicated myself to Jehovah.

At this time I was preparing for my examinations to be a seagoing radio operator. And so in September 1930 I went to sea, serving there as a radio operator for over four years.

My first voyage took me from London to India. Sailing regularly out of Bombay for fifteen months, I was in that city for a few days every two or three weeks. Later, I had a day or two each week in New York. The kind assistance and the zeal of my Christian brothers in these places are exceedingly happy memories to me. Even

now, after more than forty years, I never cease to express gratitude to Jehovah and to them for slowly but surely helping me by word and example to set my sights on a greatly expanded share in Christian service.

Since my eldest brother had gone to South Africa in 1931, I decided to join him there in the full-time preaching work.

JOYFUL DAYS DURING EARLY GROWTH IN SOUTH AFRICA

March 1935 found me in Cape Town, South Africa. Here was a vast field for preaching the good news, there being only about 240 proclaimers of God's kingdom throughout the country. I covered the entire length of South Africa from south to north in just four months, preaching in many places along the way.

While preaching the good news in the Eastern Transvaal and Swaziland, in 1936, we witnessed for five months without coming across a single congregation of Jehovah's people. But we had very encouraging experiences.

For example, the area around Barberton had a number of forestry settlements, and on one occasion we suddenly came upon one after sundown. Approaching the settlement, named Coetzeestroom, we reached an elevated spot from where we could cover the whole area with recordings from our transcription machine. A brief musical recording was played, followed by recorded Bible talks. It was a delight to call on the people the next day. They were poor, their houses small. Almost all of them associated our visit with the recorded message that they had heard the previous night. Some, in fact, said: "To us it was like a voice coming from heaven."

A still happier surprise was that we came to the home of a Witness who had been working in isolation. What an animated discussion we had with him and his

family! We felt that his household would greatly appreciate sharing in a Bible study with us. Not only did he and his family join in, but so did six others whose interest he had already developed! This in an area that seemed to be miles away from everywhere.

During our visit to Swaziland we worked from home to home, and in course of time found ourselves in the royal enclosure. King Sobhuza received us very kindly. We put on one of our musical recordings followed by recorded Bible talks. The king was greatly impressed as were the many eager listeners for some distance around. Since we had the equipment on loan from the Society, we had a brief moment of embarrassment when the king expressed the desire to buy the transcription machine and loudspeaker. But, having sympathetically received our explanation as to why we could not accede to his request, he was happy to receive instead a copy of each of the publications of the Society that we had available. In the years that followed, King Sobhuza displayed kindness to those of Jehovah's witnesses who visited him. Not long ago he celebrated the fiftieth year of his enthronement.

From Swaziland we worked our way down through northern Natal to Durban. In the short space of twenty months, I visited all the provinces of the Republic of South Africa. Then, in October 1936, I was invited to work in the Society's branch office in Cape Town.

I had already met my Christian brothers in the branch office, and they all seemed very able and efficient in their work. Just where would I fit in and be of practical help? My four fellow workers, all older in years and more experienced, were very helpful to me. While I was on board ship the pace was slow; in the pioneer ministry it was faster, but in the branch office it was very much faster, almost bewildering at times.

JEHOVAH MAKES IT GROW DESPITE WAR

While taking a walk on the winding main road in Clifton in Cape Town one afternoon, I suddenly became aware that the newspaper boys were calling out: "War special!" "War special!" The second world war was on, with South Africa quickly becoming a participant.

Suddenly a ban was placed on the importation of all Watch Tower literature. One day two detectives arrived at the branch office with a form authorizing them to seize all the literature of the Society. Was this to be the end of our using Bible study helps?

Alertly the branch overseer called the attention of the detectives to the fact that the authorization required that each and every one of the publications be named on the list—otherwise they could not rightly seize them. This proved to be the correct position, and off the detectives went. We knew, however, that they would be back.

Accordingly, without delay, the branch overseer, George Phillips, got busy in the legal defense of the good news. This led to a number of favorable Supreme Court decisions so that in due time thousands of cartons of literature held up in the Cape Town docks were released. Meantime Jehovah blessed the efforts of his people in a remarkable way. Our peak of Kingdom proclaimers moved up from 555 in 1939 to 1,253 in 1941. By the end of the war in 1945 we nearly tripled, reporting 3,466 preachers.

But while the war was still on we received a wonderful booklet called "Peace—Can It Last?" Digesting its contents, we could dimly envision a mighty postwar preaching work. Any lingering doubts we may have had about this were dissipated as we heard of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead getting under way for the

training of missionaries to go to all parts of the world.

JEHOVAH MAKES THINGS GROW STILL MORE AS THE WAR ENDS

In 1946 about a dozen of us from South Africa attended the international assembly in Cleveland, Ohio. Later, our first Gilead graduate arrived in South Africa. Learning much about the Gilead missionary school in New York, I was moved to fill out an application to attend the school. What joy when, in 1950, I was accepted! I left behind in South Africa over 7,600 proclaimers of God's kingdom, twice as many as we had in 1945! En route to Gilead, I enjoyed being reunited in Scotland with my parents and my other two brothers, whom I had not seen for fifteen years.

Attending Gilead was a privilege beyond compare. There was seldom a moment to spare and the whole atmosphere was that of whole-souled giving. The instructors assuredly gave a lead in that direction, and I felt moved to give of myself to the full. We were all counseled on our particular weakness in giving talks, and I still have my Gilead speech counsel slip and have never forgotten that I was marked weak on enthusiasm. Sometimes years go by before one really appreciates the counsel one receives in a particular direction, then one observes the good fruit it bears. How glad one is that the molding process has been applied to oneself!

GROWTH ON MAURITIUS ISLAND

What a pleasant surprise when my eldest brother and I were assigned from Gilead to go to the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean! We were off to our assignment in July 1951. French was the main language that we had to learn in Mauritius, and it proved to be a blessing that I had learned a little of this in school twenty-five years before. I spent many hours relearning French and using it in my ministry.

Two Gilead graduates from Canada

joined us in 1953. It was a joy to me to see the Kingdom work grow. By the year 1958, the number of Gilead missionaries on the island had risen to eight. However, since the government in Mauritius decided to limit the number of missionaries to four, the Watch Tower Society advised that I should carry on in South Africa, where I was enjoying a vacation. I had spent so many happy years in South Africa previously that I was delighted. Two missionary couples carried on in Mauritius, and it has greatly stirred me to hear, from time to time, how the Kingdom work has progressed. They and Mauritius-born Witnesses have spread the Kingdom good news throughout the island.

ENJOYING MORE GROWTH WHILE IN BETHEL

After a year's happy activity in the missionary work in Cape Town during 1959, I was invited to the Society's branch office or Bethel home at Elandsfontein. When I entered Bethel at Elandsfontein in 1959 there were 46 serving there. Now there are 96. While I was in Mauritius, Witnesses in South Africa had grown from 7,658 in 1950 to 16,776 in 1959.

Working with my Christian brothers brings happy memories of the spirit of cooperation so manifest among Jehovah's people. Cooperation manifested hitherto was, however, dwarfed by the manner in which the South African brothers responded when it came time to aid our Christian brothers from Malawi, when they were in a refugee camp in Zambia. In giving of their means, their clothing and of themselves I have never seen anything like it in my life. Tons and tons of canvas and tarpaulins were obtained by the Society for making tents, large and small. What a moving scene it was as two huge lorries and trailers moved out of Bethel with thirty-four tons of canvas and clothing!

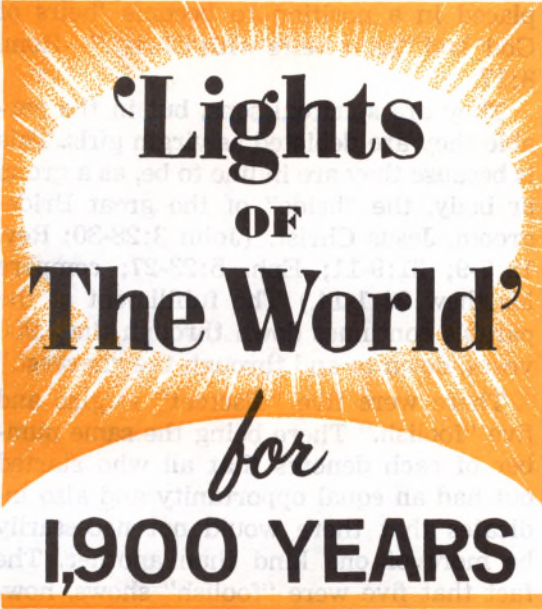
While my main work has been in Bethel,

I have enjoyed working with a congregation and sharing in the witness work. On one occasion a number of Witnesses had been visiting an Italian man who was interested in the Bible. One of them asked me if I would conduct a Bible study with him and I did. He made excellent progress, started to share in the witness work himself, made his dedication to Jehovah and was baptized.

By this time his wife was ready for a study, and I continued it for the benefit of both. In time, she began to share the good news with others and was baptized. They made steady progress and, after a while, he started three home Bible studies in Italian in quick succession. He was ready to start a fourth one, which could be handled in English, but kindly handed it over to me for attention.

All of these four studies were successful, and the number of Italian-speaking ones in our congregation was growing steadily. The circuit overseer, during his next visit, recommended that an Italian congregation be formed. The Society was agreeable, and they are now making use of our hall. Those who attend come from distances of up to fifteen miles, some, on special occasions, over a hundred miles. Great was our joy when the Italian brothers had their first district assembly in Pretoria, in October 1972!

I am happy to have had a small share in the marvelous increase of Kingdom proclaimers in South Africa. Their number has grown from 240 in 1935 to 4,163 in 1947 and now it has reached over 28,000. I cannot think of any work that could in the least compare with thirty-nine years full time in Jehovah's service. What breathtaking events lie before us in the coming years! What a joy it will be to see the continuing fulfillment of the scripture at Isaiah 9:7 concerning God's Messianic kingdom: "To the abundance of the princely rule and to peace there will be no end!"



'Lights OF The World' *for* 1,900 YEARS

WHAT group of people has enlightened the world?

The scientists, some say. Books are written giving the history of science's gradual uncovering of the mysteries of "nature." And their discoveries have brought enlightenment in some respects. We know more about the structure of things—the universe, man's body, the atom. We have more "conveniences," faster communication and transportation.

But we have also the nuclear bomb, chemical and biological war weapons. We have a society built on an economy that would collapse without certain energy sources for electricity, travel, transportation. We have a polluted, ruined natural environment, because man does not have true enlightenment so as to use the discoveries in a way that benefits all mankind.

The question could well be asked, Is the world's population happier by reason of science's "advances" under human administration?

What about religion? Christendom's religions have taken the lead in being a

'light,' its leaders being prominent among the 'lights' of this world. Yet do they give any real guidance to the people or the governments in this time when there are problems on every hand? Have they brought the people nearer to God and to the godlike qualities of love and peace?

WHO ARE THE TRUE 'LIGHTS'?

What did Jesus Christ mean, then, when he said to those giving attention to his words: "You are the light of the world"? (Matt. 5:14) His apostles and disciples were certainly 'lights' during the first century. But who would follow after them as 'lights'? Those who would follow the pattern of Jesus and his apostles. They would give light of understanding to the people about God and his purposes. They would bring people closer to God. Their commission was not to convert the entire world. But the good news of the kingdom of God that they proclaimed would bring peace to those hearing it with obedience, and would enable them to live happy lives now, with full happiness to come to them, and to mankind under that Kingdom rule. These light bearers would themselves have a purpose in life and would impart purpose to the lives of those hearing their message.

In the parable of the wheat and the weeds Jesus showed that there would be some down through the ages who would be living as true Christians. These would not be the prominent men of the world. (1 Cor. 1:26-28) They would be serving the true God, while at the same time there would be a host of false Christians holding themselves forth as 'lights.'—Matt. 13:36-42.

These two classes, Jesus said, would continue, not clearly distinguished from each other, until the time of the "harvest," which is "a conclusion of a system of things." Then a distinct separation would be made. "At that time," he said, "the righteous ones will shine as brightly as the

sun in the kingdom of their Father.” —Matt. 13:43.

So, during that long period of more than 1,900 years since Christ’s ascension to heaven, God has been very selective. He has not been trying to save the world. The saving of all mankind who will obediently give response to God’s commands will be accomplished during Christ’s thousand-year reign over earth. During the past 1,900-year period God has been selecting those who will be kings and priests with Christ and who will rule during that thousand years to bring blessings to mankind. This kingly governing body will be a heavenly group and is restricted in number to 144,000 persons. (Rev. 7:1-8; 14:1-4; 20: 4, 6) To choose these from mankind over a 1,900-year period certainly has required selectivity. These selected ones during that 1,900 years have served as lights to those who heard with understanding and whose hearts were strongly desirous of serving Jehovah God. The understanding ones have, in turn, become members of that select group.

The parable of the “ten virgins” illustrates the course of those who have truly been “the light of the world.” They have been the ones who have accepted the obligation to do as Jesus said: “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your fine works and give glory to your Father who is in the heavens.” (Matt. 5: 16) It therefore becomes evident who the “ten virgins” of the parable at Matthew 25:1-12 are.

The “virgins” being ten, a number representing perfection in earthly things, symbolize, as a class, all the Christians who are in line for or who profess to be in line for the heavenly kingdom in joint heirship with Jesus Christ. The parable began to have its fulfillment on Pentecost day of 33 C.E. How so? It was then that the first ones were spiritually begotten,

placed in a position to become ‘heirs of God’ and “joint heirs with Christ.”—Rom. 8:17.

They are spiritual sons, but in the parable they are depicted as virgin girls. This is because they are in line to be, as a group or body, the “bride” of the great Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. (John 3:28-30; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:9-11; Eph. 5:23-27; compare Matthew 22:1-14.) The fulfillment of the parable continues down through the 1,900 years, down to and through the “harvest.”

There were five “discreet” virgins and five “foolish.” There being the same number of each denotes that all who started out had an equal opportunity and also indicates that there would not necessarily be more of one kind than another. The fact that five were “foolish” shows, however, that not all those setting out as “virgins” would prove worthy finally to be admitted to “the evening meal of the Lamb’s marriage.”—Luke 12:35-38.

THE “LAMPS” AND THE “OIL”

The virgins had lamps (as was the custom in those ancient weddings). They all knew that they would need these lamps burning right down to the end of the wedding procession, to identify them and to permit their access to the marriage feast. For this reason they would need oil enough to last until the bridegroom appeared, which might be hours. This means that Christ’s disciples would themselves be like lighted lamps. They would have to be identified by having and maintaining a true Christian personality and by thus shining as a light in this darkened world. (2 Cor. 4:4; Isa. 60:2) The apostle Paul pointed this out when he wrote to his fellow light bearers: “Keep doing all things free from murmurings and arguments, that you may come to be blameless and innocent, children of God without a blemish in among a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you are shining as il-

luminators in the world, keeping a tight grip on the word of life."—Phil. 2:14-16.

What was symbolized by the "oil"? Well, what is the source of the light that Christians have? It is more than the "word of life" on which they must keep a "tight grip." "Your word is a lamp to my foot, and a light to my roadway," said the psalmist. (Ps. 119:105, 130) The symbolic "oil" includes also the spirit of God, which is essential for understanding God's Word. Furthermore, God's holy spirit produces fruitage, the fruits of the spirit such as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control. Such spiritual "oil" has illuminating power, promoting like Christian qualities in others.

The discreet virgins had oil in their receptacles as well as in their lamps. They wanted to be sure that, in case the bridegroom delayed longer than expected, they would not lose out on the opportunity to accompany the wedding procession and to enter in to the marriage feast. In the fulfillment this means that the "kingdom of the heavens" class has in its possession a supply both of God's Word, with understanding, and of God's holy spirit. The individual members of the virgin class receive a supply in conjunction with all the rest. They need an adequate supply to endure faithfully in this world as they go forth to meet the Bridegroom. They are filled with God's enlightening Word and spirit. This "oil" that they need so much they obtain in abundance by continual study and association with their fellow "virgins" and by getting filled with God's spirit. Also, they exert themselves vigorously in developing the Christian personality and engage zealously in the service of proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom to others. These "discreet" ones are the ones who "keep following the Lamb [Jesus

Christ] no matter where he goes."—Rev. 14:4.

This having a fullness of spiritual "oil" and its power to uphold the Christian as a Christlike personality is evidenced in our time by Christians with the heavenly hope who have undergone years of suffering in concentration camps and prisons, some having experienced many years in solitary confinement. Others have suffered other forms of testing. They have endured, faithful in whatever conditions they found themselves. What kept them spiritually alive and sound? The fact that they had used their opportunity to fill themselves with God's Word and spirit when they were free and in a position to study God's Word and to associate with his people. Also, they kept on praying to God to be "filled with spirit," and God heard their prayers.—Eph. 5:18.

"WHILE THE BRIDEGROOM WAS DELAYING"

How long would the "virgins" have to wait for the Bridegroom? Some may have expected an earlier appearance—in fact, some 'got tired and gave out in their souls' when their personal expectations were disappointed. (Heb. 12:3) The Bridegroom's appearance did not come with the end of the Jewish system of things at Jerusalem's destruction by the Romans in 70 C.E. And the aged apostle John, writing about 96 C.E., said as he was closing the Revelation account: "Come, Lord Jesus." (Rev. 22:20) But the apostles John and Paul had foretold that, before Jesus' presence in Kingdom power, the antichrist, the "man of lawlessness," would flourish for a time.—1 John 2:18; 2 Thess. 2:1-3, 7, 8.

The situation came to be as foretold in the parable of the ten virgins: "While the bridegroom was delaying, they all nodded and went to sleep." (Matt. 25:5) When the hypocritical Constantine the Great was "converted" to Christianity, he made pro-

fessed Christianity the State Religion of the Roman Empire. Thereby it was made to appear that Christ was reigning through the Church and that Christ's return was therefore unnecessary. The professed Christian bishops were asleep to Christian responsibility.

This religious situation seemed to parallel what Jesus foretold in the parable of the wheat and the weeds: "The kingdom of the heavens has become like a man that sowed fine seed in his field. While men were sleeping, his enemy came and oversowed weeds in among the wheat, and left."—Matt. 13:24, 25.

Jesus went on, then, to describe the harvest that would take place at the time of his return. Today, along with the harvest of the true "sons of the kingdom," Christ is performing another work, that of gathering a great crowd of "other sheep," who

will not be heavenly kings, not being invited to the heavenly marriage feast. These will remain on earth as the foundation for the "new earth" of righteous human society during the coming thousand-year period of blessing for humankind. Many persons today can get illumination from the true 'lights of the world' and be gathered with this "great crowd."—John 10:16; Rev. 7:9-17.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

August 25: Divine Mercy Points the Way Back for Erring Ones, ¶1-18. Page 460. Songs to Be Used: 56, 82.

September 1: Divine Mercy Points the Way Back for Erring Ones, ¶19-25, and Maintaining a Balanced Viewpoint Toward Disfellowshipped Ones, ¶1-9. Page 464. Songs to Be Used: 117, 97.

September 8: Maintaining a Balanced Viewpoint Toward Disfellowshipped Ones, ¶10-27. Page 468. Songs to Be Used: 52, 85.