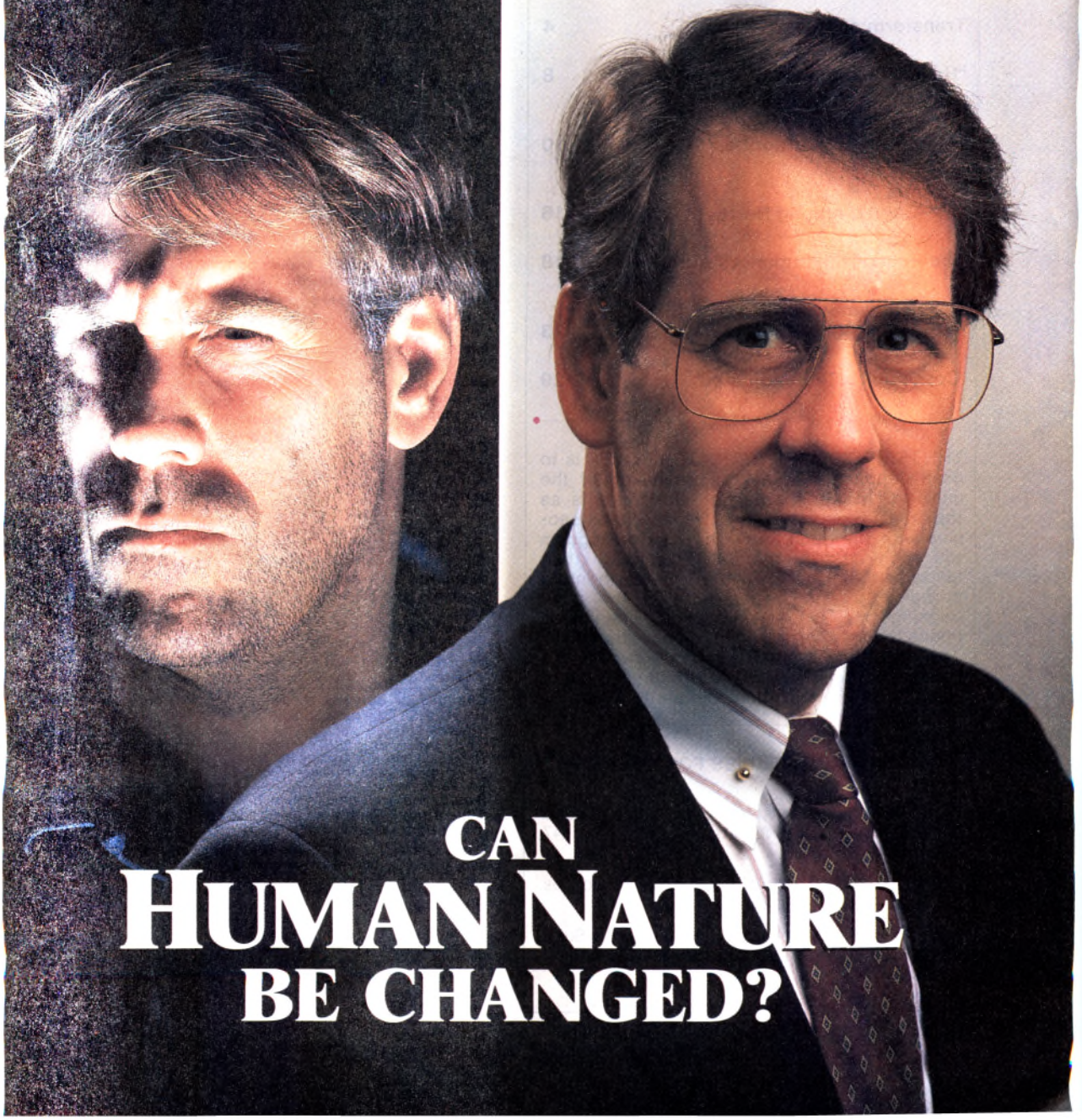
November 1, 1990

The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



CAN HUMAN NATURE BE CHANGED?

The Watchtower®
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

November 1, 1990
Vol. 111, No. 21

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

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Average Printing Each Issue: 13,950,000

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The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201. Second-class postage paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. ***Postmaster:*** Send address changes to Watchtower, ***Wallkill, N.Y. 12589.*** Printed in U.S.A.

What has happened to human nature?

"Why is it that we have child cruelty in this age? Why is it that we have animal cruelty? Why is it that we have violence? . . . Why is it that people take to terrorism? Why is it that people take to drugs? . . . Why, when you have got everything, do some people turn to those fundamental things which undermine the whole of civilization?"

THOSE questions were asked out loud by Britain's prime minister. You have perhaps asked similar questions many times. Have you found any satisfying answers?

Putting her questions into perspective, the prime minister said: "For years when I was young and in politics with all my hopes and dreams and ambitions, it seemed to me and to many of my contemporaries that if we got an age where we had good housing, good education, a reasonable standard of living, then everything would be set and we should have a fair and much easier future. We know now that that is not so. *We are up against the real problems of human nature.*" —Italics ours.

Human nature can be defined as "the complex of fundamental dispositions and traits of human beings." Obviously, conflicting dispositions and traits can cause problems on a personal, national, or even an international level. But to what extent is human nature really to blame for today's dangerous trends in violence, terrorism, drug trafficking, and the like?

Is human nature solely to blame for the conditions that threaten to "undermine the whole of civilization"? Or are there other factors we should take into account to explain why people so easily gravitate to degrading, selfish practices when they could aspire to higher, nobler pursuits? Let us see.

Transforming human nature

"MEN do not live only by fighting evils," said philosopher Sir Isaiah Berlin. "They live by positive goals, individual and collective." But how many can find such "positive goals"? All too often human nature gravitates toward what is negative and destructive.

In Britain, for instance, crimes of violence recently jumped 11 percent. "Our job," says Britain's prime minister, "is to try to find constraints so that great civilization can go on." But can laws and political pressure, however well-meaning, really change the tendency of people to do what is wrong? The fact that lawlessness exists *and increases* in the face of legislation, and even in the face of stringent law enforcement, speaks for itself. Something more than legal restraint is needed. The very nature of people has to change.

The Bible, taking an honest, down-to-earth view of life, describes man's bad traits. For example, the apostle Paul wrote to his fellow Christians in Galatia about "immoral, filthy, and indecent actions . . . People become enemies and they fight; they become jealous, angry, and . . . are envious, get drunk, have orgies, and do other things like these." According to *Today's English Version,* quoted here, all these degrading practices are "what human nature does."—Galatians 5:19-21.

The Root of the Problem

Today's English Version, however, is a free translation and the expression "what human nature does" is merely a

paraphrase of what Paul actually said. The Greek word used by Paul, *sarx,* means "flesh," not "human nature." For this reason, literal translations speak here of "the works of the flesh" to convey Paul's expression accurately in our modern tongue.*

The Bible account of sin's entry onto the human scene is clear and simple—in fact, so simple that most choose not to believe it. This is how Paul described it: "Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned." (Romans 5:12) Paul is here alluding to Genesis, the first book of the Bible, and to the creation of the first man, Adam, and his wife, Eve. Their willful disobedience is well-known. On account of it, they were sentenced to death. Their offspring inherited their imperfections and likewise died. So then, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." For this basic reason, human nature today is at best a muddied reflection of what it was when God originally created man perfect.—Romans 3:23; Genesis, chapters 2 and 3.

Human Nature Transformed!

It is possible, however, to overcome many of the worst traits of human nature. Indeed, the Bible says that we can change our nature in the sense of changing our personality. How? With the aid of God's holy spirit.—Romans 8:9.

Paul, in his letter to fellow Christians at Colossae, put it this way: "Strip off the old personality with its practices, and clothe yourselves with the new personality, which through accurate knowledge is being made new according to the image of the One who created it." Among the practices of the old personality, he lists some of the traits that move people to gravitate toward what is destructive: hurtful desire, wrath, anger, and badness.—Colossians 3: 5-10.

Writing similarly to the Christians at Ephesus, Paul again mentions the need for a "new personality," which he tells them was "created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." He develops his discussion by saying: "Let all malicious bitterness and anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech be taken away from you along with all badness. But become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate."—Ephesians 4:24, 31, 32.

Were Paul's words realistic? Can personalities really be changed? Well, the evidence is that those early Christians did make radical changes in their lives. As a group of people, they stood apart from the world around them. Justin Martyr, a historian in early Christian times, wrote: "We who hated and destroyed each other, and, on account of the difference of manners, refused to live with men of a different tribe, now, since the appearance of Christ, live on terms of familiar intercourse with them, and pray for our enemies, and endeavour to persuade those who hate us without a cause to live conformably to the perfect precepts of Christ."

What about today? Is it still possible to make such radical changes in the nature of a person? Yes! Tens of thousands of examples show that dramatic changes are still taking place. The following is just one of them.

Stephen was brought up in one of the industrial centers of England. His father was an atheist. At the age of 12, Stephen was sentenced to three years in a reform school. He had confessed 64 cases

* Compare: *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures; The Holy Bible,* by Robert Young; *The Emphasised Bible,* by Joseph B. Rotherham; *The Holy Bible in Modern English,* by Ferrar Fenton; *The Modern Reader's Bible,* by Richard G. Moulton.

"THE LAST DAYS"

The Bible's Description

"But know this, that in the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power; and from these turn away." —2 Timothy 3:1-5.

of burglary! He soon lost respect for any authority, and as he grew up, his crimes became more serious. They included fraud, drunkenness, disorderly conduct, and assault on the police, for which last offense Stephen was sent to prison. His nature became very violent. "There is no crime a godless man will not commit if his needs are great enough," he said.

What could change such a hardened criminal? Stephen eventually accepted help from his brother who had become one of Jehovah's Witnesses. After having studied the Bible for a short period of time, Stephen started to put on a "new personality." The changes he made were truly dramatic. Now, five years later, he is happily married and a responsible member of a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, in which he serves as a ministerial servant.

So human nature can be changed in individual cases. But are human weaknesses the sole reason for the 'undermining of civilization' today?

"The Devil of Scripture"

The apostle Paul wrote a remarkable prophecy regarding these "last days." His words are reproduced in the above box. Notice that the crescendo of violence and evil brings "critical times hard to deal with." Is human nature solely responsible for all of this?—2 Timothy 3:1.

No, there is something else, a sinister force for evil that is manipulating human weaknesses. Just as people find it difficult to believe that man has inherited sin, they likewise find it hard to accept that there is a power superior to man that seeks to manipulate him. But the Bible says that such a power does exist: Satan the Devil.

The word "Devil" (meaning, "slanderer") occurs 33 times in the Bible, and "Satan" (meaning, "resister") 52 times. Most of these references have to do with the same wicked spirit person. Some, though, deny the existence of a personal Satan, preferring to say: "Human nature with its propensity to sin is the devil of Scripture."* Interestingly, though, in the account of Jehovah's faithful servant Job, the Hebrew text uses the expression *has-Sa·tan', the* Satan, and at Luke 4:2, we read that it was *the* Devil (Greek, *ho di·a'bo·los*) who tempted Jesus. (Job 1:6) In both instances, a particular person is grammatically designated. Human nature does not enter in.

The apostle Paul adds to our understanding of how powerful Satan is when, in writing to the Ephesians, he speaks about "the world rulers of this darkness, . . . the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:12) Along with

* An official statement of belief of Christadelphianism, a sect of Christendom.

Soon, human nature will fully reflect the glory of God

Satan the Devil, those "world rulers" are demons, invisible wicked spirit creatures. They are "misleading the entire inhabited earth," exploiting man's fallen condition to the greatest extent possible. (Revelation 12:9) It is for this reason that Paul strongly urges each Christian to "stand firm against the machinations of the Devil." He is a major cause of the deterioration of humanity that we see around us. —Ephesians 6:11.

Restoration

Peter, Paul's contemporary, assures us that Satan and his demons will not be around forever to prey on humankind. He says: "There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell." (2 Peter 3:13) Indeed, soon now, evil in all its manifestations will no longer be part of the human scene. Satan and his demons will be destroyed. (Romans 16:20; Revelation 20:1-3) Then, indeed, human nature will reflect "the glory of God," with everlasting life the sure prospect for the human family.—Romans 3:23.

"I have always said and always will say," asserted American president Thomas Jefferson, "that the studious perusal of the Sacred Volume will make better citizens . . . The Bible makes the best people in the world." As we have seen, our nature can be transformed if we give the Bible's powerful message a chance to influence our lives. (Romans 12:2) We can choose to reach out to embrace what is noble and godly. And to strengthen us in our effort to improve, we can choose to associate with those who sincerely want to do the same. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) Jehovah's Witnesses are willing to help you in every way possible. Why not contact them now!

"He Is Liable to Death"

JESUS, bound as a common criminal, is led to Annas, the influential former high priest. Annas was high priest when Jesus as a 12-year-old lad amazed the rabbinic teachers at the temple. Several of Annas' sons later served as high priest, and presently his son-in-law Caiaphas holds that position.

Jesus is probably first led to the home of Annas because of that chief priest's longtime prominence in Jewish religious life. This stopover to see Annas allows time for High Priest Caiaphas to assemble the Sanhedrin, the 71-member Jewish high court, as well as to gather false witnesses.

Chief priest Annas now questions Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. However, Jesus says in reply: "I have spoken to the world publicly. I always taught in a synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret. Why do you question me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them. See! These know what I said."

At this, one of the officers standing near Jesus slaps him in the face, saying: "Is that the way you answer the chief priest?"

"If I spoke wrongly," Jesus replies, "bear witness concerning the wrong; but if rightly, why do you hit me?" After this exchange, Annas sends Jesus away bound to Caiaphas.

By now all the chief priests and the older men and the scribes, yes, the whole Sanhedrin, are beginning to assemble. Their place of meeting is evidently the home of Caiaphas. However, to hold such a trial on the night of a Passover is clearly against Jewish law. But this does not deter the religious leaders from their wicked purpose.

Already, weeks before when Jesus resurrected Lazarus, the Sanhedrin had determined among themselves that he must die. And just two days earlier, on Wednesday, the religious authorities took counsel together to seize Jesus by crafty device to kill him. Imagine, he had actually been condemned before his trial!

Efforts are now underway to find witnesses who will provide false evidence so that a case may be built against Jesus. However, no witnesses can be found who are in agreement in their testimony. Eventually, two come forward and assert: "We heard him say, 'I will throw down this temple that was made with hands and in three days I will build another not made with hands.'"

"Do you say nothing in reply?" Caiaphas asks. "What is it these are testifying against you?" But Jesus remains silent. Even in this false charge, to the humiliation of the Sanhedrin, the witnesses cannot make their stories agree. So the high priest tries a different tactic.

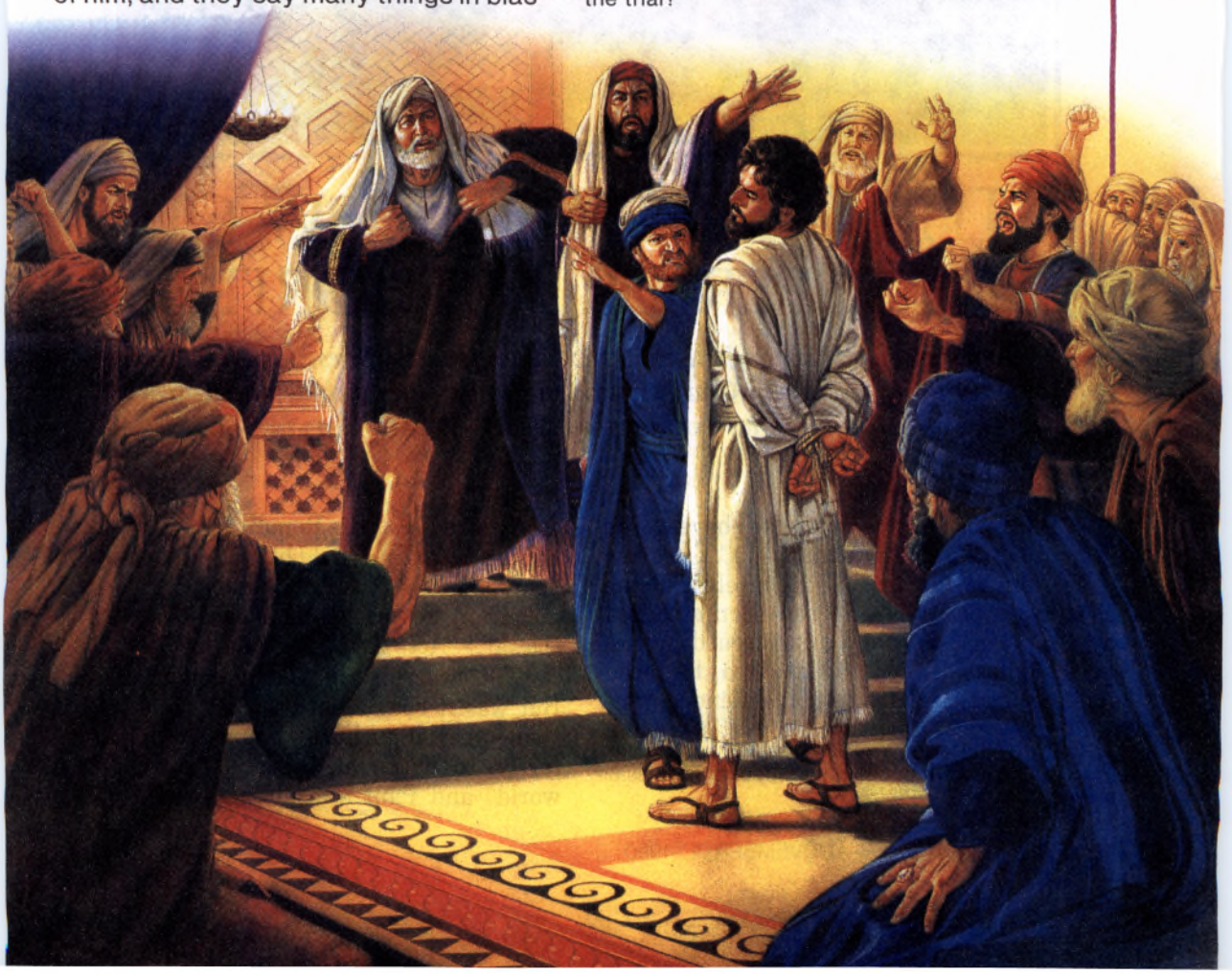
Caiaphas knows how sensitive Jews are about anyone claiming to be the very Son of God. On two earlier occasions, they had rashly labeled Jesus a blasphemer worthy of death, once having mistakenly imagined that he was asserting that he was equal to God. Caiaphas now craftily demands: "By the living God I put you under oath to tell us whether you are the Christ the Son of God!"

Regardless of what the Jews think, Jesus really is the Son of God. And to remain silent could be construed as a denial of his being the Christ. So Jesus courageously replies: "I am; and you persons will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven."

At this, Caiaphas, in a dramatic display, rips his garments and exclaims: "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? See! Now you have heard the blasphemy. What is your opinion?"

"He is liable to death," the Sanhedrin proclaims. Then they begin to make fun of him, and they say many things in blasphemy against him. They slap his face and spit into it. Others cover his whole face and hit him with their fists and say sarcastically: "Prophesy to us, you Christ. Who is it that struck you?" This abusive, illegal behavior occurs during the nighttime trial. **Matthew 26:57-68; 26:3, 4; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54, 63-65; John 18:13-24; 11:45-53; 10: 31-39; 5:16-18.**

- Where is Jesus led first, and what happens to him there?
- Where is Jesus next taken, and for what purpose?
- How is Caiaphas able to get the Sanhedrin to proclaim that Jesus is deserving of death?
- What abusive, illegal behavior occurs during the trial?



THE CHRISTIAN'S VIEW OF THE SUPERIOR AUTHORITIES

"Let every soul be in subjection to the superior authorities, for there is no authority except by God; the existing authorities stand placed in their relative positions by God."—ROMANS 13:1.

THE apostle Paul wrote the above words to the Romans about 56 C.E. A few years later, he found himself in Rome as a prisoner. Why? He had been attacked by a mob in Jerusalem and rescued by Roman soldiers. Taken to Caesarea, he faced false accusations, but he ably defended himself before Felix, the Roman governor. Felix, hoping for a bribe, held him in prison for two years. Finally, Paul demanded of the next governor, Festus, that his case be heard by Caesar.—Acts 21:27-32; 24:1-25:12.

[2] This was his right as a Roman citizen. But was it consistent for Paul to appeal to that imperial authority when Jesus had referred to Satan as the real "ruler of the world" and Paul himself had called Satan

1, 2. (a) Why was Paul a prisoner in Rome? (b) What questions does Paul's appeal to Caesar raise?

"the god of this system of things"? (John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:4) Or did the Roman authority occupy some 'relative position' that made it appropriate for Paul to look to that authority for protection of his rights? Indeed, do the earlier words of the apostles, "We must obey God as ruler *rather than men,*" allow for Christian obedience to human rulers whenever disobedience to God is not involved?—Acts 5:29.

3 Paul helps us to answer these questions in his letter to the Romans, where he reveals a mature view of human rulership. At Romans 13:1-7, Paul makes plain the part a Christian's conscience must play in balancing complete obedience to the Supreme Authority, Jehovah God, with relative obedience to "the superior authorities."

Identifying the Superior Authorities

4 For some years, until 1962, Jehovah's Witnesses held that the superior authorities were Jehovah God and Christ Jesus. However, in line with Proverbs 4:18, light increased, and this view was adjusted, which may raise questions in the minds of some. Are we now correct in saying that these authorities are the kings, presidents, prime ministers, mayors, magistrates, and others who wield secular, political power in the world and that we owe them subjection in a relative way?

5 Irenaeus, a writer of the second century C.E., said that according to some in his day, Paul was speaking at Romans 13:1 "in regard to angelical powers [or] of invisible rulers." Irenaeus himself, though, viewed the superior authorities as "actual human authorities." The context of Paul's words shows that Irenaeus was correct. In the closing verses of Romans chapter 12, Paul explains how Christians should conduct themselves before "all men," treating even 'enemies' with love and consideration. (Romans 12:17-21) Clearly, the expression "all men" has application to men outside the Christian congregation. So "the superior authorities," whom Paul then goes on to discuss, must also be outside the Christian congregation. In harmony with this, notice how various translations render the first part of Romans 13:1: "Everyone must obey state authorities" (*Today's English Version*); "everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities" (*New International Version*); "everyone ought to obey the civil authorities."—Phillips' *New Testament in Modern English.*

6 Paul goes on to say that these authorities call for taxes and tribute. (Romans 13: 6, 7) The Christian congregation does not call for taxes or tribute; neither does Jehovah or Jesus or any other "invisible rulers." (2 Corinthians 9:7) Taxes are paid only to secular authorities. In agreement with this, the Greek words for "tax" and "tribute" used by Paul at Romans 13:7 refer specifically to money paid to the State.*

7 Further, Paul's exhortation to be in subjection to the superior authorities is in harmony with Jesus' command to pay back "Caesar's things to Caesar," where "Caesar" represents secular authority. (Matthew 22: 21) It also agrees with Paul's later words to

3. What mature view does Paul reveal, and how is conscience involved?
4. What adjustment of viewpoint was made in 1962, raising what questions?
5. In what way does the context of Romans 13:1 help us to identify the superior authorities, and how do various Bible translations support this identification?

* See, for example, the use of the word "tax" (*pho'ros*) at Luke 20:22. See also the use of the Greek word *te'los,* here translated "tribute," at Matthew 17:25, where it is translated "duties."

6. How do Paul's words about the paying of taxes and tribute show that the superior authorities must be secular authorities?
7, 8. (a) How do various scriptures harmonize with the view that Christians should be subject to the political authorities of this world? (b) When only would the Christian not comply with the orders of the "authority"?

Titus: "Continue reminding them to be in subjection and be obedient to governments and authorities as rulers, to be ready for every good work." (Titus 3:1) Hence, when Christians are ordered by governments to share in community works, they quite properly comply as long as those works do not amount to a compromising substitute for some unscriptural service or otherwise violate Scriptural principles, such as that found at Isaiah 2:4.

[8] Peter also affirmed that we should be subject to the secular authorities of this world when he said: "For the Lord's sake subject yourselves to every human creation: whether to a king as being superior or to governors as being sent by him to inflict punishment on evildoers but to praise doers of good." (1 Peter 2:13, 14) In harmony with this, Christians would also heed Paul's admonition to Timothy: "I therefore exhort, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, offerings of thanks, be made concerning all sorts of men, concerning kings and all those who are in high station; in order that we may go on leading a calm and quiet life."*—1 Timothy 2:1, 2.

[9] In calling the secular authorities "superior," do we somehow detract from the honor due Jehovah? No, because Jehovah is much more than merely superior. He is "the Sovereign Lord," "the Supreme One." (Psalm 73:28; Daniel 7:18, 22, 25, 27; Revelation 4:11; 6:10) In no way does a proper subjection to human authorities detract from our worship of the Supreme Authority, the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. To what extent, then, are these authorities superior? Merely with regard to other humans and in their own sphere of activity. They are responsible to govern and protect human communities, and for this they lay down regulations as to the conduct of public affairs.

"Placed in Their Relative Positions by God"

[10] Jehovah God's supremacy over even the secular authorities is seen in that these authorities "stand placed in their relative positions by God." However, this statement raises a question. Some years after Paul wrote these words, the Roman emperor Nero unleashed a campaign of vicious persecution against Christians. Did God personally place Nero in his position? Far from it! It is not that each individual ruler is selected by God and placed in position 'by the grace of God.' Rather, Satan sometimes maneuvers ruthless humans into position as rulers, and Jehovah permits this, along with the tests that such rulers bring upon his integrity-keeping servants.—Compare Job 2:2-10.

[11] However, Jehovah *has* personally intervened in the case of certain rulers or governments in order to serve his lofty purpose. For example, in Abraham's time the Canaanites were allowed to remain in the land of Canaan. Later, though, Jehovah uprooted them and gave the land to Abraham's seed. During the Israelites' wilderness sojourn, Jehovah did not let them overrun Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir. But he did order them to destroy the kingdoms of Sihon and Og.—Genesis 15:18-21; 24:37; Exodus 34:11; Deuteronomy 2:4, 5, 9, 19, 24; 3:1, 2.

* The Greek noun translated "high station," *hy·pe·ro·khe',* is related to the verb *hy·pe·re'kho.* The word "superior" in "superior authorities" is derived from this same Greek verb, which adds to the evidence that the superior authorities are the secular authorities. The rendering of Romans 13:1 in *The New English Bible,* "Every person must submit to the supreme authorities," is not correct. Humans "in high station" are not supreme, although they may be superior to other humans.

9. Why does it not detract from Jehovah's glory to refer to human authorities as "superior"?

10. (a) Paul's statement about 'placing' the superior authorities proves what about Jehovah's own authority? (b) What has Jehovah permitted as to the 'placing' of certain rulers, and how are his servants thus tested?

11, 12. What cases are on record in which Jehovah personally maneuvered secular authorities into or out of place?

After the burning of Rome, Nero displayed a truly satanic spirit

[12] After Israel settled in Canaan, Jehovah continued to take a direct interest in the authorities that affected his people. At times, when Israel sinned, Jehovah allowed them to come under a pagan authority. When they repented, he removed that authority from the land. (Judges 2:11-23) Eventually, he allowed Judah, along with many other nations, to come under the sway of Babylon. (Isaiah 14:28–19:17; 23:1-12; 39:5-7) After Israel went into exile in Babylon, Jehovah foretold the rise and fall of world powers that would affect his people from the time of Babylon down to our own day.—Daniel, chapters 2, 7, 8, and 11.

[13] Moses sang about Jehovah: "When the Most High gave the nations an inheritance, when he parted the sons of Adam from one another, he proceeded to fix the boundary of the peoples with regard for the number of the sons of Israel. For Jehovah's share is his people; Jacob is the allotment that he inherits." (Deuteronomy 32:8, 9; compare Acts 17:26.) Yes, in order to carry out his purposes, God there decreed which authorities would remain and which would be destroyed. In this way, he allotted Abraham's offspring a land to inherit and later restored them to that land, so that eventually the promised Seed could appear there, just as prophesied.—Daniel 9:25, 26; Micah 5:2.

13. (a) According to Moses' song, why did Jehovah decree the boundary of the peoples? (b) Why did God later restore Israel to its land?

[14] In most cases, however, Jehovah places rulers in their relative positions in the sense that he allows humans to take positions of authority relative to one another but always inferior to himself. Thus, when Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate, he told that ruler: "You would have no authority at all against me unless it had been granted to you from above." (John 19:11) This did not mean that Pilate was personally put in position by God, but it meant that his life-and-death authority over Jesus was only by God's permission.

"The God of This System of Things"

[15] What, though, of the Bible's statement that Satan is the god, or ruler, of this world? (John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4) What, indeed, of Satan's boast to Jesus when he showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and said: "All this authority . . . has been delivered to me, and to whomever I wish I give it." (Luke 4:6) Jesus did not contradict Satan's boast. And Satan's words harmonize with what Paul later wrote to the Ephesians: "We have a wrestling, not against blood and flesh, but against the governments, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places."

14. For the most part, in what sense does Jehovah put human authorities into their relative positions?

15. In what way does Satan wield authority in this world?

(Ephesians 6:12) Moreover, the book of Revelation depicts Satan as a great dragon that gives to a beastly symbol of the world's political system "its power and its throne and great authority."—Revelation 13:2.

[16] Notice, though, that Satan's statement to Jesus, "All this authority . . . has been *delivered* to me," shows that he too exercises authority only by permission. Why does God grant this permission? Satan's career as world ruler began back in Eden when he publicly accused God of lying and unjustly exercising His sovereignty. (Genesis 3:1-6) Adam and Eve followed Satan and disobeyed Jehovah God. At that point Jehovah could, with perfect justice, have executed Satan and his two new followers. (Genesis 2: 16, 17) But Satan's words were really a personal challenge to Jehovah. So God in his wisdom allowed Satan to live on for a while, and Adam and Eve were permitted to multiply children before they died. In this way, God provided time and opportunity for the falsity of Satan's challenge to be demonstrated.—Genesis 3:15-19.

[17] Events since Eden have shown that Satan's accusations were downright lies. Adam's descendants have not found happiness either under Satan-rule or under man-rule. (Ecclesiastes 8:9) On the other hand, God's dealings with his own people have demonstrated the superiority of divine rule. (Isaiah 33:22) But since most of Adam's offspring do not accept Jehovah's sovereignty, knowingly or unknowingly they serve Satan as their god.—Psalm 14:1; 1 John 5:19.

[18] Soon, the issues raised in Eden will be resolved. God's Kingdom will fully take over the administration of mankind's affairs, and Satan will be abyssed. (Isaiah 11: 1-5; Revelation 20:1-6) Meanwhile, though, some kind of arrangement, or structure, has been necessary among mankind so that an ordered life might be possible. Jehovah is "a God, not of disorder, but of peace." (1 Corinthians 14:33) Hence, he has allowed authority structures to come into existence in the communities that developed outside Eden, and he has permitted humans to exercise authority in this arrangement. In this way "there is no authority except by God."

16. (a) How can it be seen that Satan's authority is limited? (b) Why does Jehovah permit Satan to have authority among mankind?

17, 18. (a) Why can we say that Satan is the god of this world? (b) In what way is there "no authority" in this world "except by God"?

Fair-Minded Authorities

[19] Since Eden, Satan has had wide freedom among mankind, and he has used this freedom to maneuver events on earth, in line with his boast to Jesus. (Job 1:7; Matthew 4:1-10) This does not mean, however, that every ruler in this world submits directly to the control of Satan. Some—like Nero in the first century and Adolf Hitler in ours—have manifested a truly satanic spirit. But others have not. Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of Cyprus, was "an intelligent man" who "sought to hear the word of God." (Acts 13:7) Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, refused to be pressured by the Jewish accusers of Paul. (Acts 18:12-17) Many other rulers have in an honorable way exercised their authority conscientiously.—Compare Romans 2:15.

19. Is every human ruler under Satan's direct control?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ Who are the superior authorities?
- ☐ How can we say that "there is no authority except by God"?
- ☐ Why does Jehovah allow the world to be under Satan's authority?
- ☐ In what way does God place human authorities "in their relative positions"?

Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of Cyprus, sought to hear the word of God

[20] The book of Revelation foretold that during "the Lord's day," starting in 1914, Jehovah would even maneuver human authorities to thwart Satan's purposes. Revelation describes a flood of persecution, unleashed by Satan against anointed Christians, that would be swallowed up by "the earth." (Revelation 1:10; 12:16) Elements within "the earth," the human society now existing on earth, would protect Jehovah's people from Satan's persecution.

[21] Has this actually happened? Yes. In the 1930's and 1940's, for example, Jehovah's Witnesses in the United States were under great pressure, suffering mob attacks and frequent unjust arrests. They received relief when the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a number of decisions recognizing the legality of their work. In other places too, the authorities have come to the aid of God's people. Some 40 years ago in Ireland, a Roman Catholic mob attacked two Witnesses in the city of Cork. A local policeman came to the aid of the Witnesses, and a court of law disciplined the attackers. Just last year in Fiji, a meeting of high chiefs heard a proposal to ban the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses. One chief spoke up boldly for the Witnesses, and the proposal was easily defeated.

20, 21. What events in the 20th century demonstrate that human rulers do not always do Satan's will?

[22] No, secular authorities do not always serve Satan's ends. Christians can be subject to the superior authorities without being subject to Satan himself. Indeed, they will be subject to these authorities as long as God permits the authorities to exist. What, though, does such subjection mean? And what may Christians expect in return from the superior authorities? These questions will be discussed in the study articles starting on pages 18 and 23 of this magazine.

22. What questions will be discussed next?

Scenes From the Promised Land

SAMARIA

Capital Among Northern Capitals

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BABYLON, Nineveh, and Rome. They were capital cities in Bible times. Yet, Biblically speaking, aside from Jerusalem itself, the most noteworthy capital was likely not one of them but, rather, Samaria. For about 200 years, it was the capital of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, and many prophetic messages focused on Samaria. But what do you know of Samaria? And why was it a capital among northern capitals?

Referring to the map, recall some history after ten Israelite tribes broke from Jehovah's king and temple at Jerusalem. Jeroboam, who led in forming the northern kingdom, reigned briefly from Shechem, on the north-south mountain route. Jeroboam later moved his capital to Tirzah, which was at the head of Wadi Far'ah. A route from the Jordan Valley passed Tirzah and joined the mountain road. Did you know that Tirzah was the capital of the ten-tribe kingdom during the reigns of Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and even Omri?—Genesis 12:5-9; 33:17, 18; 1 Kings 12:20, 25, 27; 14:17; 16:6, 15, 22.

After six years, though, Omri created a new capital. Where? He purchased the mountain you see to the left, Samaria. (1 Kings 16:23-28) Though it now has abundant terraces for agriculture, Omri likely chose it because the flat-topped hill jutting up from the plain was easily defended. His son Ahab continued building Samaria, evidently extending its fortifications with thick walls. He also built a temple to Baal and a palace for himself and his Phoenician wife, Jezebel. Excavations have revealed the ruins of Ahab's palace, shown on the next page. That palace was known for luxury and exceeding wickedness. (1 Kings 16:29-33) Picture the prophet Elijah climbing to this city and walking the broad road to the palace, there to denounce Ahab's Baal-centered evil.—1 Kings 17:1.

In 1910 archaeologists found there potsherds with writing on them, re-

Based on a map copyrighted by Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est. and Survey of Israel.

Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

cording wine and olive-oil shipments or taxes paid. But many of the personal names on them had the component *ba'al*. It may be of interest to you that archaeologists also discovered fragments of ivory inlay or panels, as shown here. Remember that 1 Kings 22:39 long ago mentioned that Ahab built a "house of ivory." Perhaps this included furniture with carved ivory inlays, such as the splendid "couches of ivory" that the prophet Amos referred to a century later. (Amos 3:12, 15; 6:1, 4) Among the motifs on them were winged sphinxes and other symbols from Egyptian mythology.

Mention of Ahab and Jezebel may bring to your mind how they died. Ahab lost his life in a foolish war with Syria. When his chariot was washed out near "the pool of Samaria . . . the dogs went licking up his blood," true to Elijah's word. (1 Kings 21:19; 22:34-38) Queen Jezebel was thrown to her death from a palace window. Was it from this palace in Samaria? No.

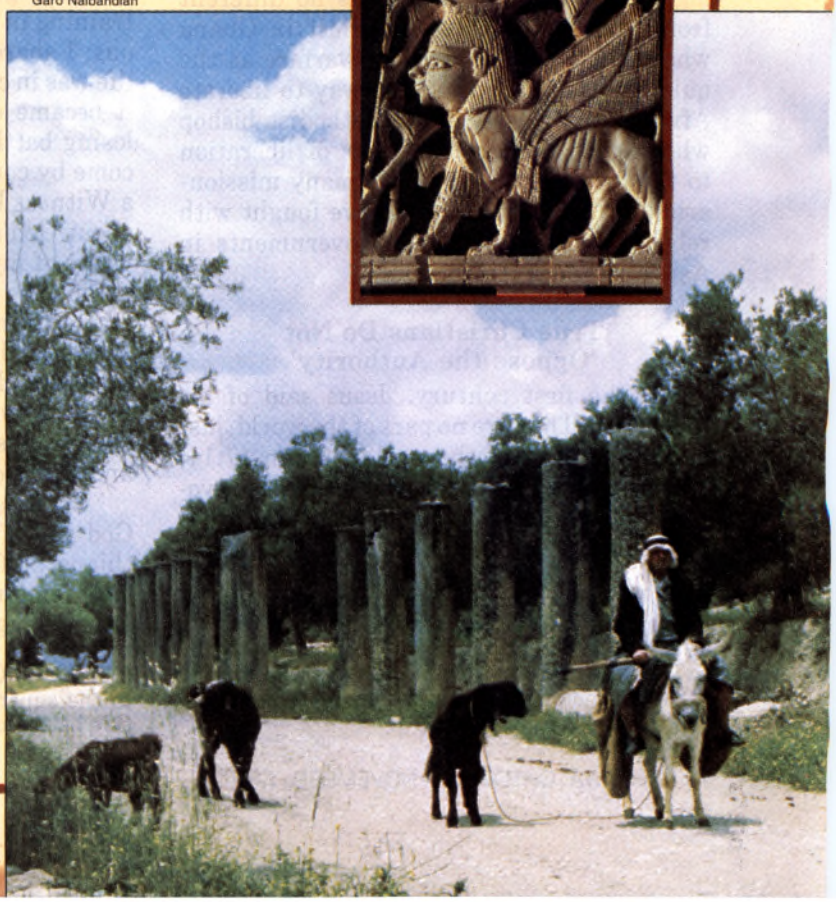
Inset: Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums; photograph from Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Ahab also had a palace up north in the valley of Jezreel. He coveted the nearby vineyard of Naboth. From the height of that palace, watchmen looking eastward saw Jehu riding furiously up the valley. And there the former queen of Samaria splattered to her horrible but justified end. —1 Kings 21:1-16; 2 Kings 9:14-37.

While Samaria continued as a capital, it did not have God's approval or blessing. Rather, it displayed rivalry and hostility toward his capital to the south, Jerusalem. To no avail, Jehovah sent many prophets to warn Samaria's rulers and its people about their idolatry, immorality, and disrespect for his laws. (Isaiah 9:9; 10:11; Ezekiel 23:4-10; Hosea 7:1; 10:5; Amos 3:9; 8:14; Micah 1:1, 6) So in 740 B.C.E., Samaria was called to account, being devastated by the Assyrians. Many of its people were taken away captive, and they were replaced with foreigners. —2 Kings 17:1-6, 22-24.

Later, especially in the time of Herod the Great, the Greeks and the Romans restored some prominence to Samaria. So even Jesus and the apostles were familiar with this capital among northern capitals. —Luke 17:11; John 4:4.

Garo Nalbandian



THE ROLE OF THE SUPERIOR AUTHORITIES

"It is God's minister to you for your good. But if you are doing what is bad, be in fear."—ROMANS 13:4.

TWO years ago a gathering of bishops in London provoked an indignant editorial in the *New York Post*. The gathering was the Lambeth Conference, attended by more than 500 bishops of the Anglican communion. The indignation was sparked by a resolution passed by the conference expressing understanding for people "who, after exhausting all other means, choose the way of armed struggle as the only way to justice."

[2] The *Post* said that this was, in effect, an endorsement of terrorism. However, the bishops were merely following a growing trend. Their attitude was no different from that of the Catholic priest in Ghana who recommended guerrilla warfare as the quickest, surest, and safest way to liberate Africa; or of the African Methodist bishop who vowed to carry "the war of liberation to the bitter end"; or of the many missionaries of Christendom who have fought with rebels against established governments in Asia and South America.

True Christians Do Not 'Oppose the Authority'

[3] In the first century, Jesus said of his followers: "They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world." (John 17:14) Any so-called Christian who promotes revolution is very much a part of the world. He is not a follower of Jesus; nor is he "in subjection to the superior authorities." (Romans 13:1) He would do well to heed the warning of the apostle Paul that "he who opposes the authority has taken a stand against the arrangement of God; those who have taken a stand against it will receive judgment to themselves."—Romans 13:2.

[4] In contrast with many in Christendom, Jehovah's Witnesses have no dealings with armed violence. A man in Europe discovered this. He writes: "At seeing what religion and politics have produced, I became dedicated to overthrowing the established social order. I joined a group of terrorists and received training in the handling of all types of weapons; I shared in many armed robberies. My life was in constant danger. As time went by, it became evident that we were fighting a losing battle. I was a frustrated man, overcome by complete hopelessness in life. Then a Witness knocked at our door. She told me about God's Kingdom. Insisting this was a waste of my time, I suggested that my wife listen. She did, and a home Bible study was started. Finally, I agreed to attend the study. Words fail to convey the relief I felt in understanding the driving force impelling mankind toward evil. The marvelous Kingdom promise has given me a sustaining hope and a purpose in life."

[5] Christians are ambassadors or envoys of God and of Christ. (Isaiah 61:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 6:19, 20) As such, they remain neutral in this world's conflicts. Even though some political systems appear

1, 2. How have many in Christendom become involved in revolutionary activities?

3, 4. (a) What principles are being violated by so-called Christians who promote revolution? (b) What did one individual discover about Jehovah's Witnesses?

5. Why do Christians remain peacefully subject to the superior authorities, and until when will this be the case?

to be economically more successful than others, and some allow more freedom than others, Christians do not promote or rank one system above another. They know that all systems are imperfect. It is "the arrangement of God" that these continue to exist until his Kingdom takes over. (Daniel 2:44) Hence, Christians remain peacefully subject to the superior authorities while promoting the eternal welfare of others by preaching the good news of the Kingdom.—Matthew 24:14; 1 Peter 3:11, 12.

Obeying the Law

[6] National governments set down systems of laws, and most of these laws are good. Should this surprise us, in view of the fact that "the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one"? (1 John 5:19) No. Jehovah gave our original father, Adam, a conscience, and this innate sense of right and wrong is reflected in many ways in human laws. (Romans 2:13-16) Hammurabi, an ancient Babylonian lawgiver, prefaced his law code as follows: "At that time [they] named me to promote the welfare of the people, me, Hammurabi, the devout, god-fearing prince, to cause justice to prevail in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil, that the strong might not oppress the weak."

[7] Most governments would say that the purpose of their laws is similar: to promote the welfare of citizens and good order in society. Hence, they penalize antisocial acts, such as murder and theft, and lay down regulations, such as speed limits and parking laws. Any who deliberately break their laws take a stand against the authority and "will receive judgment to themselves." Judgment from whom? Not necessarily from God. The Greek word here translated judgment can refer to civil procedures rather than judgments by Jehovah. (Compare 1 Corinthians 6:7.) If anyone acts unlawfully, the superior authority has the right to punish him.

[8] Jehovah's Witnesses have a good reputation for not opposing human authorities. If it happens that an individual in the congregation does break the law, the congregation will not help him evade lawful punishment. If anyone steals, murders, libels, cheats on his taxes, rapes, defrauds, uses illegal drugs, or in any other way opposes lawful authority, he will face severe discipline from the congregation—and he should not feel persecuted when he is punished by the secular authority.—1 Corinthians 5:12, 13; 1 Peter 2:13-17, 20.

An Object of Fear

[9] Paul continues his discussion of the superior authorities, saying: "For those ruling are an object of fear, not to the good deed, but to the bad. Do you, then, want to have no fear of the authority? Keep doing good, and you will have praise from it." (Romans 13:3) It is not loyal Christians who should fear punishment from the authority but wrongdoers, those who commit 'bad deeds,' criminal acts. When threatened by such lawless elements, Jehovah's Witnesses may properly accept from the authority police or military protection.—Acts 23:12-22.

[10] To the Christian who keeps the law of the superior authority, Paul says: "You will have praise from it." As an example of this, consider some letters received by Jehovah's Witnesses in Brazil after their district conventions. From the chancellor of a municipal sports department: "The highest praise is deserved for your peaceful conduct. It is comforting in today's troubled world to know that so many still believe in and worship

6. Why are many human laws good even though "the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one"?
7. If someone breaks the law, who has the right to punish him, and why?
8. How will the congregation respond if a member commits a serious crime?
9. What recourse do Christians properly have if threatened by lawless elements?
10. How have Jehovah's Witnesses 'received praise' from the authority?

God." From the director of a municipal stadium: "In spite of the very large number in attendance, no incident was recorded to tarnish the event, thanks to the impeccable organization." From a mayor's office: "We want to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your orderliness and marvelous, spontaneous discipline, and we wish you every success in future events."

[11] The term "good deed" refers to acts in obedience to the laws of the superior authorities. In addition, our preaching work, which is commanded by God, not man, is not a bad deed—a point that the political authorities should recognize. It is a public service that uplifts the moral caliber of those who respond. Therefore, it is our hope that the superior authorities will protect our right to preach to others. Paul appealed to the authorities in order to establish legally the preaching of the good news. (Acts 16: 35-40; 25:8-12; Philippians 1:7) Recently, Jehovah's Witnesses have similarly sought and obtained legal recognition of their work in East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Benin, and Myanmar (Burma).

"It Is God's Minister"

[12] Speaking of the secular authority, Paul continues: "It is God's minister to you for your good. But if you are doing what is bad, be in fear: for it is not without purpose that it bears the sword; for it is God's minister, an avenger to express wrath upon the one practicing what is bad."—Romans 13:4.

[13] National authorities have sometimes served as God's minister in specific ways. Cyrus did so when he summoned the Jews to return from Babylon and rebuild God's house. (Ezra 1:1-4; Isaiah 44:28) Artaxerxes was God's minister when he sent Ezra with a contribution for the rebuilding of that house and later when he commissioned Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. (Ezra 7:11-26; 8:25-30; Nehemiah 2:1-8) The Roman superior authority served thus when it delivered Paul from the mob in Jerusalem, protected him during shipwreck, and arranged for him to have his own house in Rome.—Acts 21:31, 32; 28:7-10, 30, 31.

[14] Similarly, secular authorities have served as God's minister in modern times. In 1959, for example, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that one of Jehovah's Witnesses accused in Quebec of publishing seditious and defamatory libel was not guilty—thus counteracting the prejudice of the then premier of Quebec, Maurice Duplessis.

[15] Further, in a general way, national governments serve as God's minister by preserving public order until God's Kingdom takes over that responsibility. According to Paul, to this end the authority "bears the sword," symbolizing its right to inflict punishment. Usually, this involves imprisonment or fines. In some lands it may also include the death penalty.* On the other hand, many nations have chosen not to have the death penalty, and that also is their right.

[16] The fact that the superior authorities are God's minister explains why Daniel, the three Hebrews, Nehemiah, and Mordecai were able to accept responsible positions in the Babylonian and Persian governments. They could thus appeal to the authority of the State for the good of God's people. (Nehemiah 1:11; Esther 10:3; Daniel 2:48, 49; 6:1, 2) Today some Christians also work in government service. But since they are separate

* The divinely given Law code in ancient Israel included the death penalty for gross crimes.—Exodus 31:14; Leviticus 18:29; 20:2-6; Numbers 35:30.

11. Why can the preaching of the good news in no way be said to be a bad deed?

12-14. How have the superior authorities acted as God's minister (a) in Bible times? (b) in modern times?

15. In what general way do the authorities act as God's minister, and what right does this give them?

16. (a) Since the authority is God's minister, what have some of God's servants considered it proper to do? (b) What kind of employment would a Christian not accept, and why not?

from the world, they do not join political parties, seek political office, or accept policy-making positions in political organizations.

The Need for Faith

[17] What, though, if the authority tolerates corruption or even oppression? Should Christians try to replace the authority with one that seems better? Well, governmental injustice and corruption are nothing new. In the first century, the Roman Empire countenanced injustices such as slavery. It also tolerated corrupt officials. The Bible speaks of tax collectors who cheated, an unrighteous judge, and a provincial governor who looked for bribes.—Luke 3:12, 13; 18:2-5; Acts 24: 26, 27.

17. What situations may provoke some non-Christians to resist the authority?

[18] Christians could have tried to bring an end to such abuses back then, but they did not. For example, Paul did not preach an end of slavery, and he did not tell Christian slave owners to release their slaves. Rather, he counseled slaves and slave owners to show

18, 19. (a) How do Christians react if there are abuses or corruption on the part of government officials? (b) How have Christians improved the lives of individuals, as indicated by a historian and the box below?

A Letter From a Police Chief

A LETTER bearing the insignia "Public Service for the State of Minas Gerais" came to the branch office of the Watch Tower Society in Brazil. It was from the police chief of the town of Conquista. Was there something wrong? Let the letter explain. It states:

"Dear Sir:

"It is a pleasure to introduce myself to you by means of this letter. I have been the chief of police in the town of Conquista, Minas Gerais, for approximately three years. At work, I always try to be conscientious, but I used to have problems in keeping the peace in the jail. The inmates, although given training in certain jobs, were restless.

"Some months ago, Senhor O—— came to our town and introduced himself as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. He began to preach the Bible to some of the prisoners, teaching them to read and write and showing them the basics of hygiene and social skills as well as telling them about the Holy Bible. The way this preacher worked showed dedication, love, and self-sacrifice. The behavior of the inmates soon changed noticeably for the better, much to the astonishment and appreciation of those observing.

"In view of what happened in our jail, I wish officially to notify the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of our appreciation for the fine work done in our community by the worthy preacher."

Regarding governmental authority, the apostle Paul said: "Keep doing good, and you will have praise from it." (Romans 13:3) This was certainly true in the above case. What a testimony to the transforming power of God's Word that the good news accomplished in a matter of months what the penal system could not do in years! —Psalm 19:7-9.

Christian compassion when dealing with one another. (1 Corinthians 7:20-24; Ephesians 6:1-9; Philemon 10-16; see also 1 Peter 2:18.) Similarly, Christians did not get involved in revolutionary activity. They were too busy preaching "the good news of peace." (Acts 10:36) In 66 C.E., a Roman army besieged Jerusalem and then withdrew. Rather than stay with the rebellious defenders of the city, Hebrew Christians 'fled to the mountains' in obedience to Jesus' direction.—Luke 21: 20, 21.

19 The early Christians lived with things as they were and tried to improve the lives of individuals by helping them to follow Bible principles. Historian John Lord, in his book *The Old Roman World,* wrote: "The true triumphs of Christianity were seen in making good men of those who professed her doctrines, rather than changing outwardly popular institutions, or government, or laws." Should Christians today act any differently?

When the State Will Not Help

20 In September 1972, vicious persecution broke out against Jehovah's Witnesses in a country in central Africa. Thousands were robbed of all their belongings and subjected to other atrocities, including beatings, torture, and murder. Did the superior authority fulfill its duty to protect the Witnesses? No! Rather, it encouraged the violence, forcing these harmless Christians to flee to neighboring lands for safety.

21 Should not Jehovah's Witnesses rise up in anger against such tormentors? No. Christians should patiently endure such indignities, acting humbly in imitation of Jesus: "When he was suffering, he did not go threatening, but kept on committing himself to the one who judges righteously." (1 Peter 2:23) They remember that when Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane, he rebuked a disciple who came to his defense with a sword, and later he told Pontius Pilate: "My kingdom is no part of this world. If my kingdom were part of this world, my attendants would have fought that I should not be delivered up to the Jews. But, as it is, my kingdom is not from this source."—John 18:36; Matthew 26:52; Luke 22:50, 51.

22 With Jesus' example in mind, those African Witnesses had the courage to follow Paul's counsel: "Return evil for evil to no one. Provide fine things in the sight of all men. If possible, as far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men. Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but yield place to the wrath; for it is written: 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says Jehovah.'" (Romans 12: 17-19; compare Hebrews 10:32-34.) What a stimulating example our African brothers are for all of us today! Even when the authority refuses to act honorably, true Christians do not abandon Bible principles.

23 What, though, can the superior authorities expect from Christians? And are there any limits to the demands they can rightfully make? This will be discussed in the next article.

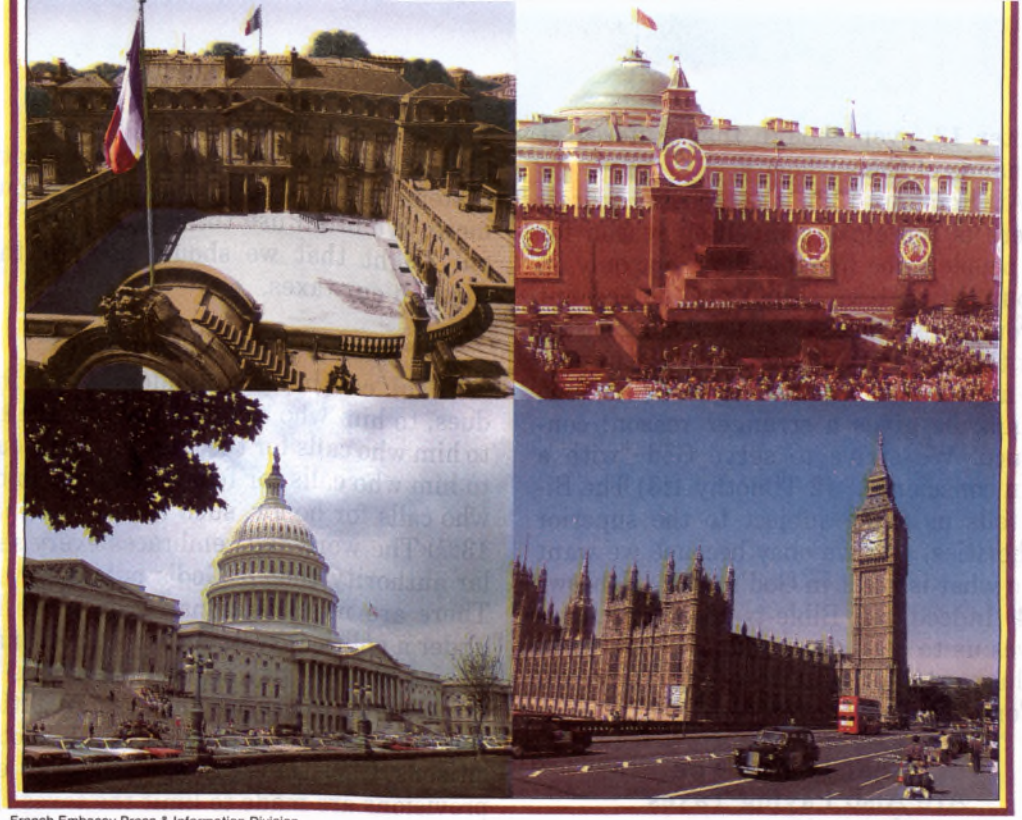
20, 21. (a) How did one secular authority fail to act as God's minister for good? (b) How should Jehovah's Witnesses react when persecuted with the complicity of the State?

22. What fine example did some Witnesses in Africa set when they suffered severe persecution?

23. What questions remain to be discussed?

Can You Explain?

- ☐ What are some ways that an individual can 'take a stand against' the superior authorities?
- ☐ What is "the arrangement of God" with respect to governmental authority?
- ☐ In what way are the authorities "an object of fear"?
- ☐ How do human governments serve as "God's minister"?



French Embassy Press & Information Division

USSR Mission to the UN

OUR RELATIVE SUBJECTION TO THE SUPERIOR AUTHORITIES

"There is therefore compelling reason for you people to be in subjection."
—ROMANS 13:5.

ON JANUARY 7, 1940, Franz Reiter and five other young Austrians were executed by guillotine. They were *Bibelforscher,* Jehovah's Witnesses, and they died because they could not conscientiously take up arms for Hitler's Reich. Reiter was one of thousands of Witnesses who died for their faith during the second world war. Many more endured long years in concentration camps. Did all of these suffer by "the sword" of the Nazi superior authorities because of "doing what is bad"? (Romans 13:4) Absolutely not! Paul's further words show that these Christians obeyed God's commands in Romans

1. What hard experiences did Jehovah's Witnesses have at the hands of the Nazi superior authorities, and was this because of "doing what is bad"?

chapter 13, even though they suffered at the hands of the authority.

[2] At Romans 13:5, the apostle writes: "There is therefore compelling reason for you people to be in subjection, not only on account of that wrath but also on account of your conscience." Previously, Paul said that the authority's bearing of "the sword" was a good reason to be subject to it. Now, though, he gives a stronger reason: conscience. We strive to serve God "with a clean conscience." (2 Timothy 1:3) The Bible tells us to be subject to the superior authorities, and we obey because we want to do what is right in God's eyes. (Hebrews 5:14) Indeed, our Bible-trained conscience moves us to obey the authority even when no human is present to check up on us. —Compare Ecclesiastes 10:20.

"That Is Why You Are Also Paying Taxes"

[3] In Nigeria some years ago, there were riots over the payment of taxes. Several lives were lost, and the authorities called in the army. The soldiers entered a Kingdom Hall where a meeting was in progress and demanded to know the purpose of the gathering. Upon finding that it was a Bible study meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses, the officer in charge told the soldiers to leave, saying: "Jehovah's Witnesses are not tax agitators."

[4] Those Nigerian Witnesses had a reputation for living in harmony with Paul's words: "For that is why you are also paying taxes; for they are God's public servants constantly serving this very purpose." (Romans 13:6) When Jesus gave the rule, 'Pay back Caesar's things to Caesar,' he was speaking about paying taxes. (Matthew 22: 21) Secular authorities supply roads, police protection, libraries, transportation systems, schools, postal services, and much more. We often use these provisions. It is only right that we should pay for them through our taxes.

2. What is the compelling reason for being subject to the superior authorities?

3, 4. What reputation do Jehovah's Witnesses have, and why should Christians pay taxes?

"Render to All Their Dues"

[5] Paul continues: "Render to all their dues, to him who calls for the tax, the tax; to him who calls for the tribute, the tribute; to him who calls for fear, such fear; to him who calls for honor, such honor." (Romans 13:7) The word "all" embraces every secular authority that is God's public servant. There are no exceptions. Even if we live under a political system that we personally do not like, we pay taxes. If religions are tax exempt where we live, congregations can take advantage of this. And like other citizens, Christians can use whatever legal provisions are made to limit the taxes they pay. But no Christian should illegally evade paying taxes.—Compare Matthew 5:41; 17: 24-27.

[6] Suppose, though, that a tax seems unjust. Or what if part of the tax money is used to finance something we *disagree* with, such as free abortions, blood banks, or programs that conflict with our neutral views? We still pay all our taxes. It is the authority that must take responsibility for how it uses the tax money. We are not commissioned to judge the authority. God is the "Judge of the earth," and in his own time, he will hold an accounting with the governments as to how they have used their authority. (Psalm 94:2; Jeremiah 25:31) Until that happens, we pay our taxes.

[7] What if the authority persecutes us?

5. What is meant by the expression "render to *all* their dues"?

6, 7. Why should we pay taxes even if the money is used to finance something we disagree with or even if the authority persecutes us?

We still pay taxes because of the everyday services that are rendered. Regarding Witnesses suffering persecution in one African country, the San Francisco *Examiner* said: "You might regard them as model citizens. They pay taxes diligently, tend the sick, battle illiteracy." Yes, those persecuted Witnesses paid their taxes.

"Fear" and "Honor"

[8] The "fear" of Romans 13:7 is not a cowardly fear but, rather, a respect for secular authority, a fear of breaking its law. This respect is given because of the position involved, not always because of the individual filling the position. The Bible, when speaking prophetically of the Roman emperor Tiberius, calls him "one who is to be despised." (Daniel 11:21) But he was the emperor, and as such, a Christian would have owed him fear and honor.

[9] As regards honor, we follow Jesus' command not to give titles based on religious position. (Matthew 23:8-10) But when it comes to secular authorities, we are happy to address them by whatever title may be required in honoring them. Paul used the term "Your Excellency" when speaking to Roman governors. (Acts 26:25) Daniel called Nebuchadnezzar "my lord." (Daniel 4:19) Today, Christians may use expressions such as "Your Lordship" or "Your Majesty." They may stand when a judge enters the courtroom or respectfully bow before a ruler if that is the custom.

Relative Subjection

[10] Since Jehovah's Witnesses are subject to human authority, why did Franz Reiter and so many others suffer as they did? Because our subjection is relative, and the authority does not always recognize that there are Biblically set limits to what it can demand. If the authority demands something that offends a trained Christian conscience, it is going beyond its God-given limit. Jesus indicated this when he said: "Pay back . . . Caesar's things to Caesar, but God's things to God." (Matthew 22: 21) When Caesar demands what belongs to God, we must acknowledge that God has the prior claim.

[11] Is this position subversive or treacherous? Not at all. It is, in fact, an extension of a principle recognized by most civilized nations. In the 15th century, a certain Peter von Hagenbach was put on trial for initiating a reign of terror in the area of Europe over which he had authority. His defense, that he was merely following the orders of his lord, the Duke of Burgundy, was rejected. The claim that a person committing atrocities is not accountable if he is following the orders of a superior authority has been made a number of times since then—most notably by the Nazi war criminals before the International Tribunal at Nuremberg. The claim has usually been rejected. The International Tribunal said in its judgment: "Individuals have international duties which transcend the national obligations of obedience imposed by the individual state."

[12] God's servants have always recognized that there are limits to the subjection that they conscientiously owe to the superior

8. What is the "fear" that we give to the authority?
9. What are some ways that we render honor to human authorities?
10. How did Jesus show that there are limits to what a human authority can demand of a Christian?
11. What principle demonstrating that there are limits to what a human authority can demand is widely accepted?
12. What are some Scriptural examples of servants of God who refused to obey unreasonable demands by the authority?

authorities. About the time that Moses was born in Egypt, Pharaoh commanded two Hebrew midwives to kill all newborn Hebrew boys. The midwives, however, preserved the babies alive. Were they wrong to disobey Pharaoh? No, they were following their God-given conscience, and God blessed them for it. (Exodus 1:15-20) When Israel was in exile in Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar demanded that his officials, including the Hebrews Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, bow before an image that he had placed on the plain of Dura. The three Hebrews refused. Were they wrong? No, since following the king's command would have meant disobeying God's law.—Exodus 20:4, 5; Daniel 3:1-18.

"Obey God as Ruler"

13 Similarly, when the Jewish authorities commanded Peter and John to stop preaching about Jesus, they replied: "Whether it is righteous in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, judge for yourselves." (Acts 4:19; 5:29) They could not keep silent. The magazine *The Christian Century* draws attention to another conscientious stand taken by the early Christians when it says: "The earliest Christians did not serve in the armed forces. Roland Bainton notes that 'from the end of the New Testament period to the decade A.D. 170-180 there is no evidence whatever of Christians in the army' (*Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace* [Abingdon, 1960], pp. 67-8). . . . Swift says Justin Martyr 'takes it as a matter of course that Christians refrain from violent acts.'"

14 Why did the early Christians not serve as soldiers? Doubtless, each one carefully studied God's Word and laws and made his personal decision on the basis of his Bible-trained conscience. They were neutral, "no part of the world," and their neutrality forbade them to choose sides in this world's conflicts. (John 17:16; 18:36) Further, they belonged to God. (2 Timothy 2:19) Laying down their lives for the State would have meant giving to Caesar what belonged to God. Moreover, they were part of an international brotherhood bound together in love. (John 13:34, 35; Colossians 3:14; 1 Peter 4:8; 5:9) They could not in good conscience take up arms with the possibility of killing a fellow Christian.

15 In addition to this, Christians could not go along with popular religious observances, such as emperor worship. As a result, they were viewed as "peculiar and dangerous people, and the rest of the population naturally suspected them." (*Still the Bible Speaks,* by W. A. Smart) Although Paul wrote that Christians should 'render to him who calls for fear, such fear,' they did not forget their greater fear of, or respect for, Jehovah. (Romans 13:7; Psalm 86:11) Jesus himself said: "Do not become fearful of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; but rather be in fear of him that can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna."—Matthew 10:28.

16 As Christians, we face up to similar challenges today. We cannot take part in any modern version of idolatry—be it worshipful gestures toward an image or symbol or the imputing of salvation to a person or an organization. (1 Corinthians 10:14; 1 John 5:21) And like the early Christians, we cannot compromise our Christian neutrality.—Compare 2 Corinthians 10:4.

13. What example did the early Christians furnish in the matter of relative obedience to the superior authorities?

14, 15. What are some Bible principles that governed the relative obedience of the early Christians to human authorities?

16. (a) In what areas do Christians have to weigh carefully their subjection to the superior authorities? (b) What does the box on page 27 illustrate?

Respect, not worship

One morning during class, Terra, a young Canadian Witness of Jehovah, noticed that her teacher took a fellow student out of the classroom for a few moments. Shortly thereafter, the teacher quietly asked Terra to accompany him to the principal's office.

Upon arriving there, Terra noticed a Canadian flag draped across the principal's desk. The teacher told Terra to spit on the flag! He suggested that since Terra did not sing the national anthem or salute the flag, there was no reason why she could not do such a thing. Terra refused, explaining that although Jehovah's Witnesses do not worship the flag, they do respect it.

Back in the classroom, the teacher announced that he had just conducted an experiment. He had taken two students one at a time to the principal's office and instructed them to spit on the flag. The first took part in patriotic ceremonies, but she spit on the flag when she was told to do so. In contrast, Terra did not sing the anthem or salute the flag; nevertheless, she refused to dishonor the flag in this way. The teacher pointed out that Terra was the one who showed proper respect.—*1990 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses.*

"A Mild Temper and Deep Respect"

17 The apostle Peter wrote of our conscientious stand and said: "If someone, because of conscience toward God, bears up under grievous things and suffers unjustly, this is an agreeable thing." (1 Peter 2:19) Yes, it is agreeable to God when a Christian stands firm despite persecution, and there is the additional benefit that the Christian's faith is strengthened and refined. (James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6, 7; 5:8-10) Peter also wrote: "If you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are happy. However, the object of their fear do not you fear, neither become agitated. But sanctify the Christ as Lord in your hearts, always ready to make a defense before everyone that demands of you a reason for the hope in you, but doing so together with a mild temper and deep respect." (1 Peter 3: 14, 15) Helpful counsel indeed!

18 When persecution arises because the authority misunderstands the Christian position or because Christendom's religious leaders have misrepresented Jehovah's Witnesses to the authority, presenting the

17. What counsel did Peter give to those suffering because of conscience?

18, 19. How can an attitude of deep respect and reasonableness help if the authority places limits on our freedom of worship?

facts to the authority might result in an easing of the pressure. Having a mild temper and deep respect, a Christian does not fight back physically against persecutors. He does, however, use every legal means available to defend his faith. Then he leaves matters in Jehovah's hands.—Philippians 1:7; Colossians 4:5, 6.

[19] Deep respect also leads a Christian to go as far as he can, without violating his conscience, to obey the authority. If, for example, congregation meetings are banned, Christians will find some less obvious way to continue feeding at Jehovah's table. The Supreme Authority, Jehovah God, tells us through Paul: "Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as some have the custom." (Hebrews 10:24, 25) But such gatherings can be held discreetly. Even if just a few are present, we can be confident that God blesses such arrangements.—Compare Matthew 18:20.

[20] Similarly, some authorities have forbidden the public preaching of the good news. Christians living under them remember that, through Jesus himself, the Supreme Authority said: "In all the nations the good news has to be preached first." (Mark 13:10) Hence, they obey the Supreme Authority at whatever cost to themselves. Where possible, the apostles preached publicly and from house to house, but there are other ways of reaching people, such as informal witnessing. (John 4:7-15; Acts 5:42; 20:20) Often the authorities will not interfere with the preaching work if just the Bible is used—which highlights the need for all Witnesses to be well trained in reasoning from the Scriptures. (Compare Acts 17:2, 17.) By being bold, yet respectful, Christians may often find a way to obey Jehovah without inviting the wrath of the superior authorities.—Titus 3:1, 2.

[21] Sometimes, though, the authority is relentless in persecuting Christians. Then, in clear conscience, we can only endure in doing what is right. Young Franz Reiter faced a choice: compromise his faith or die. Since he could not stop worshiping God, he courageously went to his death. The night before he died, Franz wrote to his mother: "I will be executed tomorrow morning. I have my strength from God, the same as it always was with all true Christians away back in the past . . . If you will stand firm until death, we shall meet again in the resurrection."

[22] Some day all mankind will be under just one law, that of Jehovah God. Until then, we must in good conscience observe the arrangement of God and maintain our relative subjection to the superior authorities while at the same time obeying our Sovereign Lord Jehovah in all things.—Philippians 4:5-7.

20. If the public preaching of the good news is banned, how may Christians deal with the situation?

21. If Caesar is relentless in his persecution, what course must Christians choose?

22. What hope do we have, and how should we proceed meantime?

Do You Remember?

- ☐ What is the compelling reason for being subject to the superior authorities?
- ☐ Why should we not hesitate to pay the taxes imposed by Caesar?
- ☐ What kind of honor should we render to the authority?
- ☐ Why is our subjection to Caesar only relative?
- ☐ If we are persecuted because Caesar demands what belongs to God, how should we respond?

'Continue to be readjusted'

"ARE you sure we are not going to miss it?" The passenger directed her question to the ship's first officer. As the tiny ship swayed and pitched in the grip of the notorious Cape rollers of the South Atlantic, it seemed to her that it would be just short of a miracle for them to reach the tiny dot on the map that was their destination.

So the first officer invited her to the bridge and explained the workings of navigational devices—gyro compasses, radar, satellite signal receivers, and even the ordinary sextant. Although the technical explanations were a bit beyond her comprehension, she did come to understand a basic principle of navigation: course correction. Aided by his navigational gear, the captain could offset the influences of sea currents and wind by making constant readjustments. Without such readjustments, they would miss their destination by many, many miles.

Christians are like ships in the ocean of humanity. Our goal is to be "found finally by [Jehovah] spotless and unblemished and in peace." (2 Peter 3:14) But as with a ship, there are forces—internal and external—that tend to move us off course. How appropriate, then, the words of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians: "For this we are praying, your being readjusted. . . . Continue to . . . be readjusted."—2 Corinthians 13:9, 11.

What Readjustment Involves

The Greek term here translated "readjust" refers to bringing something "into proper alignment." (See footnote of the *Reference Bible.*) In some Bible texts, it is used to describe restoring something to a proper condition. For instance, at Matthew 4:21, a similar term is used to describe "repairing" nets. (*Kingdom Interlinear*) What, then, does it mean for Christians to be readjusted?

Well, consider the Christians at Corinth to whom Paul was writing. In a previous letter to them, Paul had pointed out a number of improper situations that existed in the congregation: sectarianism, toleration of sexual immorality, lawsuits among brothers, disrespect for the Lord's Evening Meal, and even disorderly meetings. (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 5:1; 6:1; 11:20, 21; 14: 26-33) The Corinthians thus needed to "repair" the situation there, that is, bring it "into proper alignment" with godly principles.

Paul's second letter to them indicates that they did just that. (2 Corinthians 7:11) However, Paul knew that pressures

from the world, from Satan, and from their own fleshly inclinations would continue to push them off course from time to time. Hence, he appropriately counseled them to 'continue to be readjusted.'

The Need for Readjustment Today

Jehovah's Witnesses today must likewise continue to be readjusted. Satan the Devil is 'waging war' with us, working feverishly to break our integrity. (Revelation 12:17; Ephesians 6:12) We are also surrounded by a worldwide system of things that operates "according to the ruler of the authority of the air." Our workmates and schoolmates may be people who 'conduct themselves in harmony with the desires of their flesh, doing the things willed by the flesh.' (Ephesians 2:2, 3) We also have a constant battle with our inherited sinful tendencies. (Romans 7:18-25) Without constant readjustment, we could easily be driven off course.

An experience of the apostle Peter well illustrates this. After correctly identifying Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," Peter was commended with the words: "Happy you are, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal it to you, but my Father who is in the heavens did." (Matthew 16:16, 17) Clearly, Peter's thinking was on track. Yet, within the space of time covered by the next six verses, he had to be severely rebuked by Jesus! Upon learning that Christ would "suffer many things . . . and be killed," Peter urged Jesus: "Be kind to yourself, Lord; you will not have this destiny at all." Jesus swiftly replied: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, because you think, not God's thoughts, but those of men."—Matthew 16:21-23.

Peter was thinking from a fleshly point of view. His thoughts and attitude needed to be readjusted. Is not the same true of all of us from time to time? Are we not inclined to see things from our own viewpoint instead of from God's? So, occasionally we need to be readjusted. Like a ship at sea, such adjustments at times may be small, almost insignificant. But they may mean the difference between reaching our destination and suffering spiritual shipwreck. Indeed, a small adjustment now may prevent having to make major—perhaps painful—adjustments later on.

Divine Standards

If a ship's navigational instruments are not accurately calibrated, proper course corrections cannot be made. Similarly, if we are to keep our lives on course, we need the accurate guidance of God's Word, the Bible. "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight." (2 Timothy 3:16) That inspired Word sets forth God's standards of conduct and thinking. Regularly reading it is essential to following "the tracks of righteousness."—Psalm 23:3.

Further direction comes from "the faithful and discreet slave" class of anointed Christians. These have been helped by Jehovah's spirit to understand his will progressively. (Matthew 24:45-47; Proverbs 4:18) Thus, when direction comes from Jehovah's organization, we can wisely submit to it, knowing full well that Jehovah will only lead us in a way that will be to our everlasting benefit.—Isaiah 48:17.

At times, though, we need personal help to stay on course. Paul exhorted at Galatians 6:1: "Brothers, even though a man takes some false step before he is aware of it, you who have spiritual qualifications try to readjust such a man in a spirit of mildness." Elders and ministerial servants are among those having such spiritual qualifications. Often they will directly

point out to us some area in which we need to make adjustments.

Effort Required

It is not always easy to make the necessary changes in our lives. Again, consider Peter. Born a Jew, Peter grew up sharing the prevailing negative view of people of other races. As he told the Gentile Cornelius: "You well know how unlawful it is for a Jew to join himself to or approach a man of another race." However, after realizing that it was God's will that he share the Christian truth with this man and his family, Peter concluded: "For a certainty I perceive that God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." —Acts 10:28, 34, 35.

Peter had made a startling change in his thinking and attitude toward other races! But apparently there was a need for him to continue to be readjusted in this regard, for a few years later, Peter yielded to peer pressure and began slighting Gentile believers. The apostle Paul had to reprove him, using the strongest of terms to help him readjust his thinking yet further! —Galatians 2:11-14.

Similarly today, a Christian may have grown up against a background of racial discrimination. After coming into the truth, he may mentally acknowledge that God is not partial but still cling to feelings of racial bias. Though not hostile toward those of another race, he may automatically assume that they have undesirable qualities because of their racial heritage. He may try their patience with racial jokes or remarks that constantly call attention to race, or racial differences. He may even reject spiritual admonition from a fellow Christian who, because of being educationally or socially disadvantaged, fails to express himself in a certain manner. Obviously, it will take real effort for such a one to readjust his thinking in harmony with Jehovah's!*

But whether the issue is racial prejudice, materialism, social involvements at school and work, or the need to attend Christian meetings, we must be responsive to the direction provided through God's Word and his organization. Never should we feel that valid Scriptural counsel is not applicable to us and ignore it. Recall that the unfaithful Israelites said: "The way of Jehovah is not adjusted right." Is it not *we* who must adjust to Jehovah's ways?—Ezekiel 18:25.

We rejoice that Jehovah takes a warm interest in the way that we walk before him, providing constant correction for his people. It is as Isaiah prophesied: "And your own ears will hear a word behind you saying: 'This is the way. Walk in it, you people,' in case you people should go to the right or in case you should go to the left." May we, for our part, be sensitive to such loving direction from Jehovah and be "ready to obey." (Isaiah 30:21; James 3:17) Yes, let us continue to be readjusted so that our course will lead us to the goal of an eternity in God's favor!

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* See the articles on prejudice appearing in the November 8, 1984, issue of our companion journal, *Awake!* See also the May 15, 1988, *Watchtower,* pages 10-20.

In Our Next Issue

- **Can the Poor Afford to Be Honest?**
- **True Love Is Rewarding**
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