

The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

April 1, 1991



**IS IT
LATER
THAN
YOU
THINK?**

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these 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 God's 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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IT WAS LATER THAN THEY THOUGHT!

THE year, 609 B.C.E. The place, Jerusalem. The speaker, Jeremiah the prophet. He foretold destruction for his beloved holy city, Jerusalem, a destruction to come because the Jews had turned their back on Jehovah and had submerged themselves in the worship of false gods. They engaged in lewd sex worship on the high places, offered drink offerings to heathen gods, worshiped the sun and moon and stars, burned incense to Baal, and sacrificed their children to Molech.—1 Kings 14:23, 24;

Jeremiah 6:15; 7:31; 8:2; 32:29, 34, 35; Ezekiel 8:7-17.

In their eyes Jeremiah was a calamity howler, a fanatic, a malcontent against everything and everybody. For 38 years Jeremiah had been warning them; for 38 years the inhabitants of Jerusalem had been mocking him. Up to this time, the people had been dismissing Jehovah, saying he was not a force to be concerned with. They said: "Jehovah will not do good, and he will not do bad" and, "Jehovah has left the land, and Jehovah is not seeing." —Zephaniah 1:12; Ezekiel 9:9.

The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel had been preaching the destruction of Jerusalem, but nothing had happened. So the Israelites ruled out any such vision's being fulfilled in their day, saying: "The days are prolonged, and every vision has perished." But Jehovah's reply to this was: "The days have drawn near . . . For I myself, Jehovah, shall speak what word I shall speak, and it will be done. There will be no postponement anymore, for in your days, O rebellious house, I shall speak a word and certainly do it."—Ezekiel 12:22-25.

In 609 B.C.E., the time had arrived for Jehovah to fulfill his word. After Jeremiah had been sounding the warning for nearly four decades, the city of Jerusalem was besieged by Babylonian armies. Eighteen months later the walls were breached, the temple was burned, and most of the people were carried into exile to Babylon. As foretold, the city was destroyed by sword and famine and pestilence.—2 Kings 25:7-17; 2 Chronicles 36:17-20; Jeremiah 32:36; 52:12-20.

Jeremiah was right. The people were wrong. It was later than they thought! The vision was not for years far off. It was for their day.

This is not mere history. What happened to Jerusalem was prophetic. It foreshadowed something to come. Present-day Christendom takes the name of Christ and claims to be in a covenant relationship with God; yet she walks in the footsteps of the inhabitants of Jerusalem of old. By and large, Christendom's churches teach pagan doctrines, are contaminated with sexual immorality, champion political schemes, support the wars of the world, embrace evolution and set aside God as Creator, wink at the sacrifice of millions of the unborn on the altar of conve-

nience, and generally adopt human philosophies, claiming that the Bible is myth and legend.

As the people of Jerusalem scoffed at Jeremiah, so Christendom scoffs at Jehovah's Witnesses today. The Witnesses' warning of a coming destruction at Armageddon is dismissed as worthless. 'God is not interested in the earth,' says Christendom. 'Let him run heaven; we'll run the earth. And if Armageddon comes, it won't be in our generation. We've heard that story before. We're not going to be taken in by that!'

Is this to be a repeat of history? Is it to be another time when millions will discover that it was later than they thought?

IS IT LATER THAN YOU THINK?

THREE days before his death, Jesus had a very busy day in Jerusalem, a day that turned out to be of the utmost significance for Christians living now. He taught in the temple, turning back many trick questions with which the Jewish religious leaders tried to trap him. Finally, he leveled at the scribes and Pharisees a scathing denunciation that tagged them as hypocrites and vipers headed for Gehenna. —Matthew, chapters 22, 23.

As he was leaving the temple area, one of his disciples said to him: "Teacher, see! what sort of stones and what sort of buildings!" Jesus, unimpressed, said to him: "Do you behold these great buildings? By no means will a stone be left here upon a stone and not be thrown down." (Mark 13:1, 2) Jesus then left the temple for the last time, descended into the Kidron Valley, crossed

over, and climbed the slopes of the Mount of Olives.

As he sat bathed in the late afternoon sunlight there on the mount, with the temple in view on Mount Moriah across the valley, Peter, James, John, and Andrew came to him privately. Heavy on their minds were the words he had uttered about the temple's being thrown down. They asked: "Tell us, When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?" (Matthew 24:3; Mark 13:3, 4) The answer he gave to their question that afternoon on the Mount of Olives is of vital importance to us. It can keep us from waiting too long before thinking about "the conclusion of the system of things."

Their question was twofold. One part was about the end of the temple and the Jewish

system; the other concerned Jesus' future presence as King and the conclusion of this present system of things. Both of these questions were covered in Jesus' answer, as given in Matthew 24 and 25, Mark 13, and Luke 21. (See also Revelation 6:1-8.) Regarding the conclusion of this present world, or system of things, Jesus described several features that, taken together, would be a composite sign identifying the last days. Is that composite sign being fulfilled? Does it put us in the last days spoken of in the Bible? Does its fulfillment warn us that it may be later than we think?

One feature of Jesus' composite sign is: "*Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.*" (Matthew 24:7) In 1914, World War I started. Jehovah's Witnesses of that decade were immediately on the alert. And why? In December 1879, some 35 years earlier, the *Watch Tower* magazine had said, based on Bible chronology, that 1914 would be a pivotal year in human history. Could this war, the first war on a truly worldwide scale, in which 28 nations were eventually involved and 14 million persons were killed, be the beginning of events fulfilling Jesus' composite sign of the end? Would the other features of the sign follow?

In "a revelation by Jesus Christ," this same bloodbath is foretold. Here a fiery-colored horse and its rider "take peace away from the earth." (Revelation 1:1; 6:4) That certainly happened from 1914 to 1918. And World War I was only the beginning. In 1939, World War II followed. Fifty-nine nations were sucked into that conflict, and some 50 million people were killed. During the 45 years following World War II, more than 125 wars have been fought, killing more than 20 million people.

Another feature of the sign is: "*There will be food shortages.*" (Matthew 24:7) There was widespread famine during and after World War I. One report lists more than 60 major famines since 1914, costing

many millions of lives. Moreover, even now 40,000 children die each day from malnutrition and preventable diseases.

"*There will be great earthquakes.*" (Luke 21:11) They shook the earth after World War I began. In 1915 an earthquake took 32,610 lives in Italy; in 1920 another one killed 200,000 in China; in 1923 in Japan, 99,300 died; in 1935 in what is now Pakistan, 25,000 lost their lives; in 1939 in Turkey, 32,700 perished; in 1970 in Peru, 66,800 were killed; in 1976 in China, 240,000 (some say 800,000) died; in 1988 in Armenia, 25,000 lost their lives. Certainly, there have been great earthquakes since 1914!

"*In one place after another pestilences.*" (Luke 21:11) During 1918 and 1919, some 1,000,000,000 people were sick with Spanish influenza, and more than 20,000,000 died. But that was only the beginning. In the developing world, malaria, snail fever, river blindness, acute diarrhea, and other ailments continue to cripple and kill hundreds of millions. In addition, heart disease and cancer claim millions more lives. Sexually transmitted diseases are ravaging mankind. Striking terror into hearts today is the deadly scourge of AIDS, estimated to be infecting a new victim every minute, with no cure in sight.

"*Increasing of lawlessness.*" (Matthew 24:12) Lawlessness has run wild ever since 1914, and today it is explosive. Murders, rapes, robberies, gang wars—they make newspaper headlines and radio and television newscasts. Pointless violence rages on unchecked. In the United States, a gunman sprays a hundred rounds from a rapid-fire assault rifle into a crowd of schoolchildren—5 dead, 29 wounded. In England a crazed man slaughters 16 people with an AK-47 assault rifle. In Canada a man who hates women goes to Montreal University and kills 14 of them. Such people are like wolves, lions, wild beasts, unreasoning animals born to be caught and destroyed.

—Compare Ezekiel 22:27; Zephaniah 3:3; 2 Peter 2:12.

"Men become faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth." (Luke 21:26) Shortly after the explosion of the first atom bomb, atomic scientist Harold C. Urey said of the future: "We will eat fear, sleep fear, live in fear and die in fear." To the fear of nuclear war has been added fear of crime, famine, economic instability, moral collapse, family decay, pollution of the earth. In fact, the bad times paraded before us by daily newspapers and television newscasts spread fear everywhere.

The apostle Paul also wrote of the conditions to prevail in the last days of this system of things. Reading his words is like reading the day's news. "But know this," he wrote, "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.

All Things Continuing "as From Creation's Beginning"?

The apostle Peter foretold another feature of the last days: "In the last days there will come ridiculers with their ridicule, proceeding according to their own desires and saying: 'Where is this promised presence of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as from creation's beginning.'" —2 Peter 3:3, 4.

Today, when the subject of the last days comes up, many people fulfill Peter's prophetic words by scoffing and saying: 'Oh, all those things have happened before. It's just

history repeating itself.' So they dismiss the warnings and continue "proceeding according to their own desires." It is "according to their wish" that they brush aside the fulfillment of prophecies that so clearly identify the last days.—2 Peter 3:5.

Nevertheless, the different features of the composite sign foretold by Jesus have never before been fulfilled all together in such a short period of time with such intensity and with such far-reaching consequences. (Review, for example, Matthew 24: 3-12; Mark 13:3-8; Luke 21:10, 11, 25, 26.) And we would like to draw your attention especially to still another foretold feature of the last days, described in Revelation.

Let us turn to Revelation 11:18. It says that when Christ's Kingdom begins to reign and the nations are angry and the time for judgment arrives, then Jehovah will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth." Is not pollution ruining the environment today? True, men have always exploited the resources of the earth to enrich themselves. But in doing so, they have never been in a position to destroy it as a habitable planet. Now, because of the scientific technology developed since 1914, men do have that power, and by grabbing greedily for wealth, they are indeed ruining the earth, polluting the environment and endangering the earth's ability to sustain life.

An avaricious, materialistic society is now doing this at an alarming rate. Here are some of the atrocities resulting: acid rain, global warming, holes in the ozone layer, garbage glut, toxic dumps, dangerous herbicides and pesticides, nuclear waste, oil spills, raw-sewage dumping, species endangerment, dead lakes, polluted groundwater, destroyed forests, polluted soil, lost topsoil, and smog causing damage to trees and crops as well as to human health.

Professor Barry Commoner says: "I believe that continued pollution of the earth, if unchecked, will eventually destroy the fitness of this planet as a place for human

In Jeremiah's day it was later than they thought

life. . . . The difficulty lay not in scientific ignorance, but in willful greed." The book *State of the World 1987* says on page 5: "The scale of human activities has begun to threaten the habitability of the earth itself." A major series for public television aired in the United States in 1990 was entitled "Race to Save the Planet."

Man will never stop the polluting; God will when he destroys those who are destroying the earth. God and his heavenly Field Marshal, Christ Jesus, will do this by executing judgment on the materialistic nations at the final war of Armageddon.—Revelation 16:14, 16; 19:11-21.

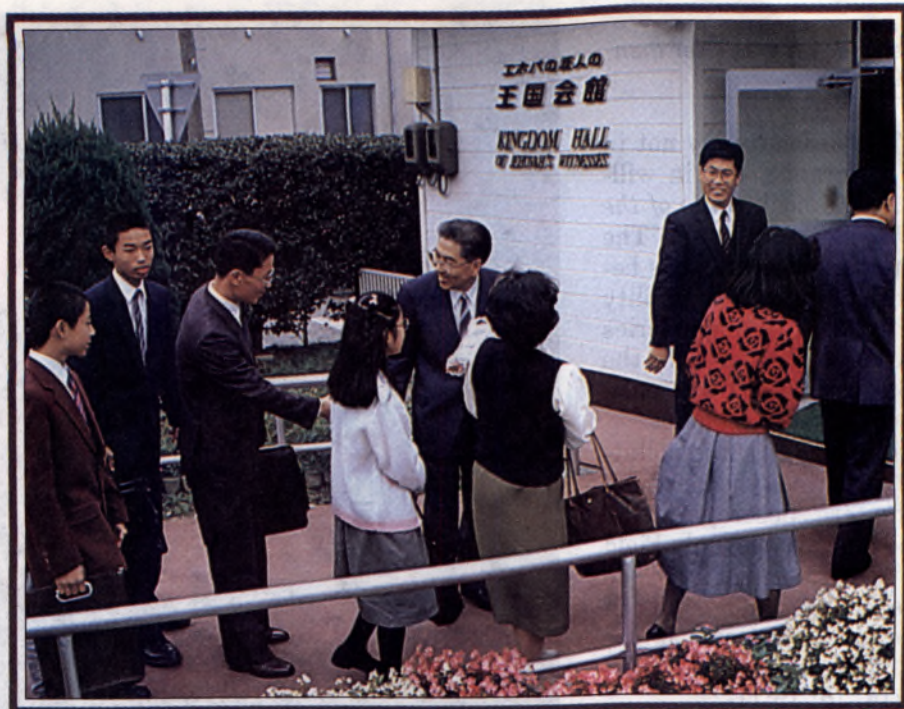
Finally, note the following outstanding feature of Jesus' prophecy about the last days: "*This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth.*" (Matthew 24:14) This good news tells that God's Kingdom is now reigning in the heavens and will soon act to destroy this wicked system and restore Paradise to earth. The gospel has been preached before but never covering the entire inhabited earth. Since 1914, however, Jehovah's Witnesses have done that, in spite of the persecution Jesus foretold—government bans, mob violence, imprisonments, torture, and many deaths.

In 1919 there were 4,000 of Jehovah's Witnesses preaching this good news. Their numbers have kept increasing, so that last year over 4,000,000 were preaching in 212 lands, in some 200 languages, distributing hundreds of millions of Bibles, books, and magazines, conducting millions of Bible studies in people's homes, and holding conventions in large stadiums in all parts of the



world. Never could this tremendous volume of gospel-preaching have been done prior to 1914. Its accomplishment on the scale that has been achieved required the modern high-speed printing presses, the travel facilities, the computers, the fax machines, and also the shipping and communications facilities that are uniquely available in our time.

The Jerusalem of Jeremiah's day was warned of its coming destruction; its inhabitants only scoffed, but it was later than they thought. Today, a much greater warning of Armageddon's destruction is being sounded, with overwhelming supporting evidence. (Revelation 14:6, 7, 17-20) Millions turn a deaf ear. But time is running out; it is later than they think. Is it later than you think?



NOW IS THE TIME TO SEEK JEHOVAH

"As for Jehovah, he has looked down from heaven itself upon the sons of men, to see whether there exists anyone having insight, anyone seeking Jehovah."—PSALM 14:2.

TODAY, the true God, Jehovah, is rejected by atheists, agnostics, worshippers of false gods, and millions who claim to believe in God but deny him by their works. (Titus 1:16) Many believe like the 19th-century German philosopher Nietzsche that "God is dead." Is Jehovah unaware of this crass indifference? No, for he inspired David to write: "The senseless

1, 2. (a) How do many view the true God, Jehovah? (b) How do we know that Jehovah is aware of mankind's indifference?

one has said in his heart: 'There is no Jehovah.' They have acted ruinously, they have acted detestably in their dealing. There is no one doing good."—Psalm 14:1.

² David continued: "As for Jehovah, he has looked down from heaven itself upon the sons of men, to see whether there exists anyone having insight, anyone seeking Jehovah." Yes, the Sovereign Lord is aware of those who seek to know and serve him. Thus, our earnestly seeking him *now* is vital. It will mean the

difference between everlasting life and everlasting extinction.—Psalm 14:2; Matthew 25:41, 46; Hebrews 11:6.

³ Therefore, we can see why it is so important that we help others to seek Jehovah now. There are still millions of people who have never met one of Jehovah's Witnesses or heard the "good news of the kingdom." And how much greater in number the "great crowd" will turn out to be before "the great tribulation," we do not know. But there is certainly the potential for more to seek and find Jehovah God in the immediate future before it is too late. The question now is, What can we do to help myriads more to find God?—Matthew 24:14; Revelation 7:9, 14.

⁴ Many people in the world today are searching, but searching for what? Very few are really seeking the one true God, Jehovah. Scores prefer a god who fits their own personal desires and prejudices. As U.S. pollster George Gallup, Jr., stated: "You really don't find much difference between the church and unchurch in terms of cheating, tax evasion, and pilferage, largely because there is a lot of social religion." He adds that "many are just putting a religion together that is comfortable for them and titillates them . . . Somebody called it religion à la carte."

⁵ Others will say, "My religion is good enough for me." Of course, the question really should be, "Is my religion good enough for God?" True, the majority in Christendom and Hinduism are content to venerate their images and idols. Most so-called Christians find that a nameless Trinitarian god is sufficient for them. And over 900 million Muslims believe in Allah. On the other hand, millions of atheists say there is no God.

3. What potential exists for the future?

4, 5. In their search for a god, what do many prefer?

Those Who Need Help

⁶ But what about those of us who regularly read this magazine? We have searched for the true God and have found him. We have proved true the words of James 4:8: "Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you." By active association with the Christian congregation, we have drawn closer to God, and we have experienced for ourselves how Jehovah draws closer to us.—John 6:44, 65.

⁷ However, we know that there are still many who are happy to associate occasionally with Jehovah's people but as yet have not taken positive action to draw close to Jehovah by dedication and baptism. How do we know this? In 1990 nearly ten million people attended the Memorial of Jesus' death. But how many are actively publishing the good news of the Kingdom? Just over four million. That means we have about six million who are friendly toward the truth and who sometimes enjoy associating with us but who have not yet started to recommend the pure language of the truth by preaching the good news of the Kingdom. Without a doubt, on incidental occasions many speak up in behalf of Jehovah and his Kingdom rule. However, they have not yet clearly identified themselves as Jehovah's Witnesses. These too we want to help.—Zephaniah 3:9; Mark 13:10.

⁸ We want to encourage these to become happy, active Witnesses of Jehovah in the final phase of the great work now being accomplished worldwide. Please note Jehovah's loving invitation at Proverbs 1:23:

6. What have many readers of *The Watchtower* discovered?

7. How do we know that there are many persons who are still interested in becoming active in the truth?

8, 9. (a) What does Jehovah encourage us to do? (b) Why is it unwise to neglect Jehovah's counsel?

Many friends of Jehovah's Witnesses who attend the Memorial are potential servants of God

"Turn back at my reproof. Then to you I will cause my spirit to bubble forth; I will make my words known to you." (Compare John 4:14.) How encouraging to know that Jehovah will respond to our taking positive steps to identify ourselves with his name and worship! Certainly, we do not want to be included among those described at Proverbs 1:24, 25: "I have called out but you keep refusing, I have stretched out my hand but there is no one paying attention, and you keep neglecting all my counsel, and my reproof you have not accepted."

⁹ Those who neglect Jehovah's counsel that they search for him while he may be found and who put off their decision until they actually see the great tribulation starting will find they have waited too long. Such a course would indicate a lack of faith and wisdom and would be contemptuous of Jehovah's undeserved kindness.—2 Corinthians 6:1, 2.

¹⁰ To illustrate the need for immediate action, would you follow a doctor's good advice only when you already had double pneumonia? Or, rather, when you noted the first symptoms of sickness? Then why wait any longer to separate yourself from Satan's sick world and to side with Jehovah and his Witnesses? The consequences of apathy, indifference, and neglect are made clear at Proverbs 1:26-29: "I also, for my part, shall laugh at your own disaster, I shall mock when what you dread comes . . . At that time they will keep calling me, but I shall not answer; they will keep looking for me, but they will not find me, for the reason that they hated knowledge, and the fear of Jehovah they did not choose." Let us not be found 'looking for Jehovah' when it is too late!

10. Why are apathy and indifference dangerous?

**1990 Memorial attendance:
9,950,058**

**1990 peak publishers:
4,017,213**



¹¹ Some who read this magazine may still be in the course of searching for the true God. We are glad you are persisting in your search. We pray that your Bible knowledge will motivate you to take further positive action to stand firm for the truth. Be assured that each congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses stands ready to help you in your search.—Philippians 2:1-4.

Time for Zeal and Action

¹² Why is it essential that all of us take action to identify ourselves with Jehovah God and his true worship? Because world events are heading for a climax. The pages of history are turning faster than man can read them. Now is not the time to sit on the fence or be lukewarm. Jesus stated

11. What help is available for those seeking to serve God?

12, 13. Why do we need to take action regarding true worship?

very clearly: "He that is not on my side is against me, and he that does not gather with me scatters." He also said: "Whoever becomes ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of man will be ashamed of this one when he arrives in his glory and that of the Father and of the holy angels."—Matthew 12:30; Luke 9:26.

¹³ Now is the time for zeal and action! We know which way world events are moving, and Armageddon looms on the horizon. Therefore, the call is to seek Jehovah now before the 'day of his anger,' while he may yet be found. At the great tribulation, it will be too late.—Zephaniah 2:2, 3; Romans 13:11, 12; Revelation 16:14, 16.

¹⁴ Really, all mankind should be seeking God's favor now. The apostle Paul expressed it appropriately at Acts 17:26-28: "[God] made out of one man every nation of men, to dwell upon the entire surface of the earth, and he decreed the appointed times and the set limits of the dwelling of men, for them to seek God, if they might grope for him and really find him, although, in fact, he is not far off from each one of us. For by him we have life and move and exist." That last expression, "for by him we have life and move and exist," gives us adequate reason for seeking God. Thanks to Jehovah's undeserved kindness, we exist in the narrow but vital biosphere of this tiny earth. Should we not be grateful to the Sovereign Lord of the universe? And should we not show our gratitude to him in practical terms?—Acts 4:24.

¹⁵ Historian Arnold Toynbee once wrote: "The true purpose of a higher religion is to radiate the spiritual counsels and truths that are its essence into as many souls as it can reach, in order that each of these souls may be enabled thereby to

fulfil the true end of Man. Man's true end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." (*An Historian's Approach to Religion*, pages 268-9) In order to glorify God, we must first seek him and gain accurate knowledge of him and his purposes. Thus, Isaiah's call is so appropriate: "Search for Jehovah, you people, while he may be found. Call to him while he proves to be near. 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."—Isaiah 55:6, 7.

What Practical Help Can We Offer?

¹⁶ The millions of interested people who are not yet active publishers present a challenge to all of us. What are we doing in a practical way as elders, ministerial servants, pioneers, and publishers to help those who are friendly toward the truth to become active participants in true worship with us? One way to offer practical help where needed is to call at their homes and take them to the meetings at the Kingdom Hall so that they too can enjoy the benefits of Jehovah's spirit on a regular basis. Paul's counsel to the Hebrews, in chapter 10, verses 24 and 25, is as urgent today as it was then: "Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near." We encourage all who wish to experience Jehovah's goodwill to associate with Jehovah's Witnesses regularly at their local Kingdom Hall.

¹⁷ If we study the Bible with someone

14. What reasons do we have for seeking God?

15. (a) What did historian Arnold Toynbee feel to be the purpose of higher religion? (b) What must we do in order to be able to glorify God?

16. (a) What challenge faces the Christian congregation? (b) In what practical way can we assist others to serve Jehovah?

17. If we are to help Bible students progress in their search for Jehovah, what questions need answering?



who regularly attends meetings, can we help that one to qualify as a publisher of the good news? (See *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry*, pages 97-9.) And once he or she becomes an unbaptized publisher, is the invitation extended to go along with us regularly in the public preaching work and on some of our studies and return visits? (See the December 1, 1989, issue of *The Watchtower*, page 31.) In other words, once such new ones qualify, do we encourage them by letting them see firsthand some of the positive results of our preaching activity?—Matthew 28: 19, 20.

Jehovah Worthy to Be Sought

¹⁸ Because of the ransom sacrifice of Christ Jesus, Jehovah does not hold our

18. How has Jehovah shown his mercy toward mankind?

In King Asa's day, the nation turned to Jehovah

past sins and neglect against us if we repent and exercise faith. Note the words of David: "He has not done to us even according to our sins; nor according to our errors has he brought upon us what we deserve. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, his loving-kindness is superior toward those fearing him. As far off as the sunrise is from the sunset, so far off from us he has put our transgressions. As a father shows mercy to his sons, Jehovah has shown mercy to those fearing him. For he himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust." —Psalm 103:10-14; Hebrews 10:10, 12-14.

¹⁹ Jehovah is the truly beneficent and merciful God. If we come to him in humil-

19. What encouragement is there for those who may have drifted away from the truth?

ity and repentance, he forgives and forgets. He does not bear an eternal grudge with everlasting hellfire torment as the consequence. No, it is as Jehovah stated: "I—I am the One that is wiping out your transgressions for my own sake, and your sins I shall not remember." What an encouragement that should be for any who may have drifted away from the truth and have neglected their relationship with Jehovah! They too are encouraged to search for Jehovah now and come back into active association with his name people.—Isaiah 43:25.

²⁰ In this respect we have an encouraging example in King Asa in ancient Judah. He rooted out false worship from his kingdom, but vestiges of pagan worship still remained. The account at 2 Chronicles 15, verses 2 to 4, tells us what the prophet Azariah said to Asa as a reminder: "Jehovah is with you as long as you prove to be with him; and if you search for him, he will let himself be found by you, but if you leave him he will leave you. And many were the days that Israel had been without a true God . . . But when in their distress they returned to Jehovah the God of Israel and looked for him, then he let himself be found by them."

²¹ Jehovah did not play hide-and-seek with King Asa but "let himself be found." How did the king react to this message? In the same chapter, verses 8 and 12 answer: "As soon as Asa heard these words . . . , he took courage and proceeded to cause the disgusting things to vanish from all the land . . . and to renew Jehovah's altar that was before the porch of Jehovah. Furthermore, [Judah] entered into a covenant to search for Jehovah the God of their forefathers with all their

20, 21. (a) What encouraging example do we have in ancient Judah? (b) What did the inhabitants of Judah have to do to get Jehovah's blessing?

heart and with all their soul." Yes, they earnestly searched for Jehovah "with all their heart and with all their soul." What was the result for the nation? Verse 15 tells us: "And all Judah gave way to rejoicing over the thing sworn; for it was with all their heart that they had sworn and with full pleasure on their part that *they had looked for him*, so that he let himself be found by them; and Jehovah continued to give them rest all around."

²² Now, is not that an encouragement for all of us to take positive action regarding Jehovah's pure worship? We know that the potential exists for millions more to praise Jehovah. Without a doubt many of these are making changes in their lives in order to meet the Scriptural requirements for Jehovah's service. Others are growing in insight and faith, are seeking Jehovah, and will soon be moved to share the pure language with others by conveying to them an in-depth understanding of the truth about Jehovah and his Kingdom. And why is it so vital that all of us search for Jehovah now when he can be found? Because his promised new world is at hand!—Isaiah 65:17-25; Luke 21:29-33; Romans 10:13-15.

22. What encourages us to be active now in Jehovah's service?

Do You Remember?

- ☐ Who show indifference toward the true God, Jehovah?
- ☐ To what degree does religion often affect conduct?
- ☐ What potential is there for increase in active Witnesses?
- ☐ Why is now the time for zeal and action?
- ☐ Why is Jehovah worthy of being sought?

Jesus' Further Appearances

THE disciples are still downhearted. They do not comprehend the significance of the empty tomb, nor do they believe the reports of the women. So later on Sunday, Cleopas and another disciple leave Jerusalem for Emmaus, a distance of about seven miles.

En route, while they are discussing the events of the day, a stranger joins them. "What are these matters that you are debating between yourselves as you walk along?" he asks.

The disciples stop, their faces downcast, and Cleopas replies: "Are you dwelling as an alien by yourself in Jerusalem and so do not know the things that have occurred in her in these days?"

"What things?" he asks.

"The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene," they answer. "Our chief priests and rulers handed him over to the sentence of death and impaled him. But we were hoping that this man was the one destined to deliver Israel."

Cleopas and his companion explain the astounding events of the day—the report about the supernatural sight of angels and the empty tomb—but then confess their bewilderment regarding the meaning of these things. The stranger reprimands: "O senseless ones and slow in heart to believe on all the things the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?" He then interprets for them passages from the sacred text that pertain to the Christ.

Finally they arrive near Emmaus, and the stranger makes as if to journey on. Wanting to hear more, the disciples urge:

"Stay with us, because it is toward evening and the day has already declined." So he stays for a meal. As he says a prayer and breaks bread and hands it to them, they recognize that he is really Jesus in a materialized human body. But then he disappears.

Now they understand how the stranger knew so much! "Were not our hearts burning," they ask, "as he was speaking to us on the road, as he was fully opening up the Scriptures to us?" Without delay, they get up and hurry all the way back to Jerusalem, where they find the apostles and those assembled with them. Before Cleopas and his companion can say a thing, the others excitedly report: "For a fact the Lord was raised up and he appeared to Simon!" Then the two relate how Jesus also appeared to them. This makes four times during the day that he has appeared to different ones of his disciples.

Even though the doors are locked because the disciples are in fear of the Jews, Jesus suddenly makes a fifth appearance. He stands right in their midst and says: "May you have peace." They are terrified, imagining that they are seeing a spirit. So, explaining that he is not an apparition, Jesus says: "Why are you troubled, and why is it doubts come up in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; feel me and see, because a spirit does not have flesh and bones just as you behold that I have." Still, they are reluctant to believe because his being alive seems too good to be true.

To help them grasp that he really is Jesus, he asks: "Do you have something there to eat?" After accepting a piece of broiled fish and eating it, he begins teaching them, saying: "These are my words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you [before my death], that all the things written in the law of Moses and in the Prophets and Psalms about me must be fulfilled."

Continuing what, in effect, amounts to a Bible study with them, Jesus teaches: "In this way it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from among the dead on the third day, and on the basis of his name repentance for forgiveness of sins would be preached in all the nations—starting out from Jerusalem, you are to be witnesses of these things."

For some reason Thomas is not present at this vital Sunday evening meeting. So during the days that follow, the others joyfully tell him: "We have seen the Lord!"

"Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails," Thomas protests, "and stick my finger into the print of the nails and stick my hand into his side, I will certainly not believe."

Well, eight days later the disciples are again meeting indoors. This time Thomas is with them. Although the doors are locked, Jesus once more stands in their midst and says: "May you have peace." Then, turning to Thomas, he invites: "Put your finger here, and see my hands, and take your hand and stick it into my side, and stop being unbelieving but become believing."

"My Lord and my God!" Thomas exclaims.

"Because you have seen me have you believed?" Jesus asks. "Happy are those who do not see and yet believe." **Luke 24:11, 13-48; John 20:19-29.**

♦ What inquiries does a stranger make of two disciples on the road to Emmaus?

♦ What does the stranger say that causes the hearts of the disciples to burn within them?

♦ How do the disciples discern that the stranger is Jesus?

♦ When Cleopas and his companion return to Jerusalem, what exciting report do they hear?

♦ What fifth appearance does Jesus make to his disciples, and what occurs during it?

♦ What happens eight days after Jesus' fifth appearance, and how is Thomas finally convinced that Jesus is alive?



MANKIND'S SEARCH FOR GOD

WHY have we, as Jehovah's Witnesses, been given the "pure language"? Certainly, it is not to keep it to ourselves. And it is not so that we can enjoy a comfortable life-style similar to Christendom's soft, compromising course of action. Rather, it is so that 'all may call upon the name of Jehovah, in order to serve him shoulder to shoulder.' (Zephaniah 3:9) Yes, the pure language involves activity side by side with millions of our Christian brothers and sisters—from all races, nations, and languages—who are faithfully preaching the good news before the end comes.—Mark 13:10; Romans 13:11; Revelation 14:6, 7.

Our preaching today sometimes presents unusual challenges. Why is that? During this 20th century, there have been mass movements of people as a result of wars, oppression, economic pressures, and for other reasons. As a consequence, people of many languages and religions have moved into cultures other than their own. Thus, large communities of Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims have moved into the Western

world. As we share the pure language from house to house, we meet these people. Sometimes we are baffled because we know so little about their religious background. What can we do about it?—Compare Acts 2:5-11.

How do we share the truth with a Muslim or a Jew? How do they differ one from the other? What does a Hindu really believe? Why do Sikhs wear turbans? What is their holy book? How is a Buddhist different from a Hindu? What do Japanese Shintoists believe? Do Chinese Taoists or Confucianists believe in God? How does an Orthodox Jew differ from a Reform Jew or a Conservative Jew? In order to reach this great diversity of people, we must first of all understand their viewpoint and then know how to direct them in a kind and tactful way to the true God, Jehovah.—Acts 17:22, 23; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Colossians 4:6.

To help us to have a clearer understanding of other religions, their teachings, and their historical background, the Watch Tower Society released around the world during the 1990 "Pure Language" Conventions a new publication entitled *Mankind's Search for God*. Equipped with this instrument, we will be better able to preach to people of the non-Christian world as well as to those of Christendom.

A Practical Instrument

This 384-page book contains 16 chapters that relate the history of mankind's search for God over the past six thousand years. It answers hundreds of questions about the world's religions. Here is a sample of some of them: What factors usually determine a person's religion? Why is it not wrong to examine other faiths? What similarities are there between Roman Catholicism and Buddhism? What role do myths play in many religions? Why do many people believe in magic, spiritism, and astrology? Why do Hindus have so many

* "Taoist" is pronounced *dow-ist*; rhymes with *now*.

gods and goddesses? How do Sikhs differ from Hindus? Who was the Buddha, and what did he teach? Why is Shinto mainly a Japanese religion? Why do Jews have an oral as well as a written law? How do we know that Christ is not a myth? How does the Koran differ from the Bible? Why do Catholics say that Peter was the first pope? Why did Catholic priest Luther break away from the Roman Catholic Church?

The questions are almost endless, and this publication packs in the answers so that we can more effectively preach to people with these varied religious backgrounds. The book recognizes that many people have their own religion and that religion is a very personal matter. Yet, on page 8, it states: "Virtually from birth religious or ethical ideas are implanted in

our mind by our parents and relatives. As a consequence, we usually follow the religious ideals of our parents and grandparents." That means that "in many cases others have chosen our religion for us. It has simply been a matter of where we were born and when."—Compare Philippians 3:4-6.

The book then raises the logical question. "Is it reasonable to assume that the religion imposed at one's birth is necessarily the whole truth?" Thus, every person is encouraged to examine other religions with an open mind. As is stated on page 10: "Understanding one another's viewpoint can lead to more meaningful communication and conversation between people of different faiths." It continues: "True, people may strongly disagree about their religious beliefs, but there is no basis for hating a person just because he or she holds a different viewpoint."—Matthew 5:43, 44.

One fundamental question that arises throughout the book is, Does man have an immortal soul that survives his death and goes on to an afterlife? In one form or another, nearly every religion teaches that concept. As *Man-kind's Search for God* states (page 52): "In his search for God, man has clutched at straws, deluded by the illusion of immortality. . . . Belief in an immortal soul or variations



Sincere Catholics turn to Mary



Harry Burdich, Transglobe Agency, Hamburg

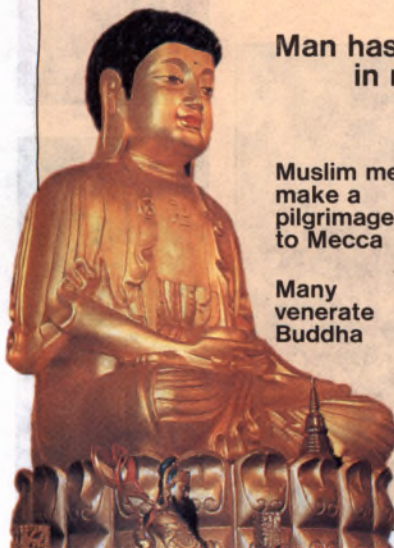
Hindus revere the river Ganges



GPO, Jerusalem

Some devout Jews wear phylacteries

Man has sought for God in many ways



Muslim men make a pilgrimage to Mecca

Many venerate Buddha

Camerapix



thereof is a legacy that has come down to us through the millenniums." Other questions are: Is there such a place as hell where souls are tormented? What is the true hope for the dead? Is there one God, or are there many gods? —Genesis 2:7; Ezekiel 18:4.

Basis for Bible Studies

In more or less chronological order of their appearance on the world scene, the book discusses the development of the major religions of mankind—Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, Judaism, Christianity, Christendom, and Islam. In each chapter the holy books of these religions are quoted so that any sincere believer can check out the quotes for himself. For the chapter on Islam, three different English translations of the Koran are used. The latest Jewish Publication Society translation of the *Tanakh—A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* is quoted in the chapter on Judaism. —Compare Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12.

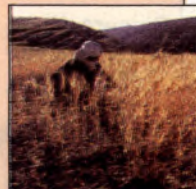
What is there for the atheist and the agnostic? Chapter 14 deals with modern disbelief in God and why Jehovah's Witnesses know that God exists. In every chapter, the reader is directed to the Bible. Thus, using this publication, *Mankind's Search for God*, we are better equipped to start Bible

studies with people of every faith or with those who profess no faith at all. It treats each religion respectfully and tactfully, but it raises questions that can lead a person to Jehovah and the truth. For those who are earnestly searching for God, this book will be a real blessing. —Psalm 83:18; John 8:31, 32; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

Instructive teaching boxes are included in every chapter. For example, on pages 226 and 227, there is a box on "Judaism—A Religion of Many Voices" that explains the major divisions found in the Jewish faith. Under "Hinduism—A Search for Liberation," there is a box on pages 116 and 117, "Hinduism—Some Gods



**Jesus used parables
to help people
find the true God**



Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.



Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.



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and Goddesses.” This gives a listing of just a few of the more than 330 million gods worshiped by Hindus. Do Buddhists believe in God as the Western world understands that term? The box “Buddhism and God” on page 145 answers that question. The book also has a practical index for quick reference to major themes. The bibliography of principal sources used in research is also a basis for further reading if one wants more detail.

The book has more than 200 photographs and illustrations, but they are not there just for adornment. Each illustration has a teaching point to make that further clarifies the religion under discussion. For example, on page 238 there is a series of photographs that illustrate some of the parables that Jesus taught. Elsewhere, there is a series of five pictures that also illustrate different aspects of Christ’s ministry—his miracles, his transfiguration, his sacrificial death, and his commissioning his disciples to preach in all the world.

On page 289 there is a sequence of photos that will interest Muslims. It takes the viewer into Mecca, into the great mosque where the Kaaba is located and then to the actual black stone that Muslims revere. Buddhism’s varied worship is illustrated on page 157. Hindus will be interested to see pictures of their popular gods Ganesa and Krishna on pages 96 and 117.

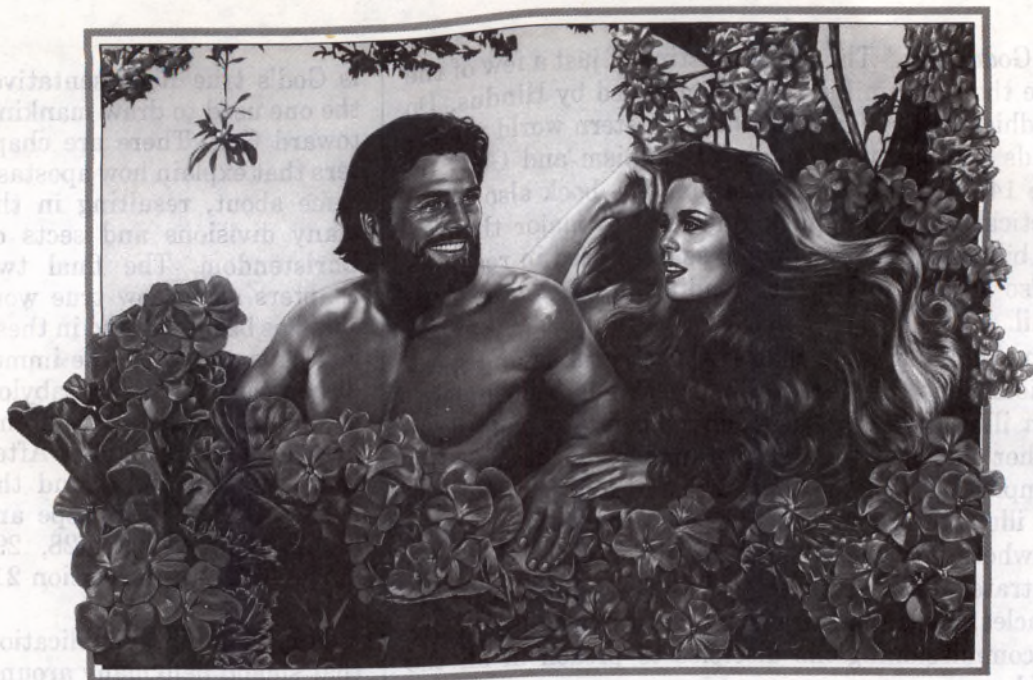
Qualified Christian ministers throughout the world were consulted in order to achieve a specialized approach to each main religion. For example, valuable material came from Israel for the chapters on Judaism and the Baha’i faith. Witnesses in Muslim countries carefully checked out the contents of the chapter on Islam. Useful orientation came from India on the Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains. Ministers in the Orient made sure that the chapter on Shinto was accurate, and they also gave advice on Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism.

Because of the book’s careful coverage of each religion, those who possess it in their language will be able to start Bible studies in the chapter appropriate to each person’s religious background. Then they may wish to move into the chapter dealing with the rise of early Christianity and the reasons for believing that Christ

is God’s true Representative, the one used to draw mankind toward God. There are chapters that explain how apostasy came about, resulting in the many divisions and sects of Christendom. The final two chapters show how true worship has been restored in these last days and what the immediate future holds for Babylon the Great, Satan’s world empire of false religion. After that, the new world and the Bible’s resurrection hope are highlighted.—John 5:28, 29; 12:44-46; 14:6; Revelation 21:1-4.

This is truly a publication that should help many around the world to draw close to God, as James stated in chapter 4 of his letter, verse 8: “Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you indecisive ones.” Yes, as Isaiah states: “Search for Jehovah, you people, while he may be found. Call to him while he proves to be near.” —Isaiah 55:6; John 6:44, 65.

Let all of us continue to be turned in the right direction, toward the Sovereign Lord of the universe, Jehovah God. And with the aid of this publication, *Mankind’s Search for God*, let us help thousands more to worship Jehovah “with spirit and truth.” (John 4:23, 24) May we persevere in finding the truth seekers and tell them about the God of truth, for, indeed, he can be found!



A PURE LANGUAGE FOR ALL NATIONS

"Then I shall give to peoples the change to a pure language, in order for them all to call upon the name of Jehovah, in order to serve him shoulder to shoulder."

—ZEPHANIAH 3:9.

JEHOVAH GOD is accomplishing in our day a work that is truly marvelous. He is uniting people out of all nations. As he long ago foretold in his Holy Word, he is doing it by teaching them a new language.—Zephaniah 3:9.

² What is that language? Why is it necessary? What does learning it require of us personally?

1, 2. (a) In fulfillment of Zephaniah 3:9, what is Jehovah doing in our day? (b) To understand how the prophecy of Zephaniah affects us, what questions need to be answered?

The Gift of Speech

³ The ability to communicate by means of speech is a divine gift that sets human-kind apart from all the animal creation. The first human, Adam, was created with a mind that was capable of intelligent thought. He was endowed with vocal cords, a tongue, and lips that could be used for speech, as well as a vocabulary and the ability to coin new words. Adam

3. (a) With what marvelous gift was Adam endowed? (b) What was the language that Adam spoke?

could understand when Jehovah spoke to him, and Adam, in turn, could put his thoughts into words. (Genesis 1:28-30; 2:16, 17, 19-23) The language given to Adam was evidently the one that later came to be known as Hebrew. For at least the first 1,757 years of human existence, all mankind evidently continued to speak that one language.—Genesis 11:1.

⁴ Then, in the days of Nimrod, in order to frustrate the efforts of wicked men, Jehovah confused the language of all who had allowed themselves to be regimented to share in building the tower of Babel. (Genesis 11:3-9) It appears that Jehovah first blotted out all memory of their previous common language and then introduced new languages into their minds. This involved not only new vocabularies but also new grammars and new patterns of thought. From the languages that Jehovah originated at Babel, others gradually developed until today, according to language academies, some three thousand tongues are spoken throughout the earth.

⁵ For people who are speaking all these languages, would “the change to a pure language” require that they abandon their native tongue and learn the original language that God gave to Adam? The circumstances that surrounded the giving of the prophecy help to answer that question.

Need for a Pure Language

⁶ The kingdom of Judah had recently been ruled over first by Manasseh and then by Amon, who had set up altars to Baal, employed divination, and promoted spiritistic practices. (2 Kings 21:1-6;

4. How did events in the days of Nimrod affect human language?

5. How can we determine what “the change to a pure language” involves?

6-8. (a) What religious situation had developed in Judah before the giving of the prophecy of Zephaniah 3:9? (b) In the nations surrounding Judah, what attitude prevailed?

2 Chronicles 33:21-23) As a result, during the reign of Amon’s son and successor, Josiah, Jehovah commissioned his prophet Zephaniah to warn that divine judgment was going to be executed on the land.—Zephaniah 1:1, 2.

⁷ Even though the Judeans knew from their own history and from the inspired Scriptures that Jehovah is the true God, they were indulging in the immoral rites of Baal worship. They bowed down to the sun and the moon and the constellations of the zodiac, which was in direct violation of God’s law. (Deuteronomy 4:19; 2 Kings 23:5) On top of all of this, they were participating in a form of interfaith, acting as if all religion were the same, by making sworn oaths both to Jehovah and in the name of the false god Malmam. Their attitude was that “Jehovah will not do good, and he will not do bad.” (Zephaniah 1:4-6, 12) As for the nations around Judah, all of them had a record of opposition to Jehovah and his people, so they too were in line to have divine justice executed upon them.—Zephaniah 2:4-15.

⁸ It is against such a background of events that Jehovah foretold that he would “give to peoples the change to a pure language, in order for them all to call upon the name of Jehovah, in order to serve him shoulder to shoulder.” (Zephaniah 3:9) What, then, is that pure language?

⁹ Is it the Hebrew language? No; the people of Judah already had that, but the things they were saying and doing were obviously not pure and upright in Jehovah’s eyes. And the pure language is not simply the written Word of God. They also had that. But what they needed was a *proper understanding of the truth about*

9. (a) Why is the pure language not Hebrew or simply the written Word of God? (b) What is that pure language, and how does it affect the lives of those who speak it?

God and his purposes, and only Jehovah could provide that by means of his spirit. When they learned to speak that pure language, their thinking, their speech, their conduct, would all center on recognition of the fact that Jehovah is the only true God. (Zephaniah 2:3) They would put their trust in him and give full support to his sovereignty. This is of special interest to us today. Why?

Those Who Are Given the Pure Language

¹⁰ Pointing to fulfillment of the prophecy at a particular period of time, Zephaniah 3:9 says: "For *then* I shall give to peoples the change to a pure language." When is that? Verse 8 answers that it is during the time that Jehovah is 'gathering the nations,' before he 'pours out upon them his burning anger,' that he gives to meek ones of the earth the change to a pure language.

¹¹ During the days of King Josiah, before Jehovah allowed the Babylonian armies to execute judgment, many forsook false worship and, instead, served Jehovah. (2 Chronicles 34:3-33) Again, in the first century C.E., before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, thousands of people learned the truth about God and his purpose and became united in his service. At that time the language of truth was greatly enriched by the things that Jesus Christ did in fulfillment of Jehovah's purpose. But it is in our own day that Zephaniah's prophecy is being fulfilled on a global scale. All nations are now being gathered to the war of the great day of God the Almighty at Armageddon. (Revelation 16:14, 16) That gathering has been

10. During what period of time was the prophecy of Zephaniah 3:9 due to be fulfilled?

11. (a) What two fulfillments did Zephaniah 3:9 have before modern times? (b) How is its fulfillment today different?

under way since the birth of the Kingdom in 1914. And it is during this same period that Jehovah has been giving to peoples worldwide the change to a pure language in fulfillment of this prophecy. Learning that language is of vital importance because the survivors of the coming great tribulation will be people who have truly made that pure language *their* language. —Joel 2:32.

¹² In accord with this, it was early in the era following World War I that Jehovah began to open the eyes of understanding of his anointed servants to the marvelous vision that is recorded at Isaiah chapter 6. (Verses 1-4) This vision emphasizes the importance of our having clean lips in order to serve Jehovah acceptably. It shows that, in the superlative sense, Jehovah is holy. His servants must also reflect that quality. (1 Peter 1:15, 16) But the anointed remnant needed help in this regard. During World War I, they had to some extent allowed themselves to get spotted up with involvement in the affairs of the world. "The fear of Jehovah is pure," or clean, but they had let fear of man and of human organizations affect their lips, silencing their proclamation of God's Word to a large extent. (Psalm 19:9) Through contact with Christendom, the remnant were still soiled by some of her traditions and practices.

¹³ Realizing their situation, the remnant said, as did the prophet Isaiah: "Woe to me! For I am as good as brought to silence, because a man unclean in lips I am, and in among a people unclean in lips I am

12. (a) What bearing does the vision recorded at Isaiah 6 have on the prophecy regarding a pure language? (b) Why did the anointed remnant need help if they were to continue to be acceptable for Jehovah's service?

13, 14. (a) How did the remnant show the right attitude, and what action did Jehovah take in their behalf? (b) In what way did Jehovah give the remnant a pure language?



Those who know the pure language share it with others

of man and replaced it with a burning zeal to use their lips to honor Jehovah. Thus Jehovah was fulfilling his promise to “give to peoples the change to a pure language [literally, a clean lip], in order for them all to call upon the name of Jehovah.” —Zephaniah 3:9.

¹⁵ So when the Isaiah class in modern times began to hear the voice of Jehovah asking, as recorded at Isaiah 6:8: “Whom shall I send,

dwelling; for my eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of armies, himself!” (Isaiah 6:5) They recognized that their condition was unacceptable. They did not weakly persist in a wrong course or stubbornly refuse to accept Jehovah’s reproof. They did not join the clergy when these paid mere lip service to God’s Kingdom and then endorsed the League of Nations as if it were that Kingdom.

¹⁴ Because of the repentant attitude of that humble remnant, Jehovah in his undeserved kindness proceeded to cleanse their lips. Isaiah 6:6, 7 tells us: “At that, one of the seraphs flew to me, and in his hand there was a glowing coal that he had taken with tongs off the altar. And he proceeded to touch my mouth and to say: ‘Look! This has touched your lips, and your error has departed and your sin itself is atoned for.’” It was the cleansing message from God’s Word that destroyed as by fire the traditions and teachings of men. It purged from their hearts the fear

and who will go for us?” they gladly responded: “Here I am! Send me.” It was not easy for all of them to get started in the public ministry, but they wanted to be used by God as a people for his name. His spirit strengthened them. Their numbers grew.

¹⁶ In time it became evident that their preaching was yielding unexpected results. Through them, Jehovah was helping another group to learn the pure language. (Isaiah 55:5) These did not share the hope of heavenly life, but they counted it a privilege to be companions of the remnant of Kingdom heirs and to serve shoulder to shoulder with them as proclaimers of God’s Kingdom. Progressively, these have come out of “all nations and tribes and

15. How was the response of the remnant in harmony with the reason for which Jehovah gave them the pure language?

16. (a) What unexpected results did the preaching of the remnant yield? (b) How do the great crowd give evidence that they too now speak the pure language?

peoples and tongues" until they now make up "a great crowd" numbering into the millions. The speech that issues forth from their mouths is not the sort that would identify them with any of the divisive elements of the world. They are not pinning their hopes on any man or any human organization. Instead, "they keep on crying with a loud voice, saying: 'Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb.'"—Revelation 7:9, 10.

What Learning the Language Requires of Us

¹⁷ Regardless of how long we have been in touch with Jehovah's organization, there is much that we can do to improve our knowledge of the pure language and our ability to use it well. It is important to put forth the effort to do that. Why? Because this is an indication of our love for the truth.

¹⁸ At the outset, such love helps to open a person's mind and heart so that he is able to understand scriptures that are pointed out to him; it moves him to draw close to Jehovah and to appreciate His organization. Thus, love of the truth is a key to breaking free from the shackles of false religion. Some people profess an interest in the Bible's message but never really let go of all the appendages of false religion and its permissive way of life. Why not? As explained at 2 Thessalonians 2:10, they do not "accept the love of the truth that they might be saved." How vital that we have that love!

¹⁹ Once we embrace the truth, our nourishing that love is a major factor in our

17. Why is it important that we learn the pure language well and improve in our ability to use it?

18, 19. (a) Right from the outset, why is it important to cultivate a strong love for the truth? (b) Why is it important to continue to nourish that love?

spiritual development. Keep in mind that Jehovah refers to the truth as a "language." When a person learns a new language, he has to put forth diligent effort to build his vocabulary, pronounce words correctly, learn the details of grammar, and so forth. Love of the new language and of the people who speak it will help him to keep making progress. He may be able to speak the language to some extent in a few months, but it takes years of conscientious effort to speak it like a native. That same sort of effort is needed in order to master the pure language.

²⁰ It is especially noteworthy that the language that God gives his servants is said to be pure. This is true, not because of grammatical construction, but because it gives evidence of moral and spiritual cleanness. There is no allowance in this language for lying, deceit, or a tricky tongue. Those who speak this language must always speak truth. (Zephaniah 3:13; Ephesians 4:25) Their speech must likewise reflect Jehovah's high standards regarding sexual morality. (Ephesians 5: 3, 4) The Scriptures also make us aware that everything connected with Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion, is unclean. (Revelation 18:2-4) The depictions of its gods are called "dungy idols." (Jeremiah 50:2) Appropriately, then, those who learn the pure language must dispose of the physical appendages of false worship, reject its teachings, break free from its celebrations, and also eliminate from their speech expressions that reflect its wrong thinking. Besides this, at Revelation 16:13-16, we are put on notice that the propaganda that is gathering the nations in opposition to God's Kingdom is also unclean, being inspired by demons. So we need to be alert not to

20. (a) What makes the pure language truly pure? (b) Why is great care needed on the part of every one of us?



Whatever their native tongue, Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide speak the pure language

let any of these unclean things infect our speech.

²¹ What we are learning is called a language, and appropriately so, but that does not mean that those who speak it merely learn how to use expressions that are common to Jehovah's people. Tone of voice, facial expressions, and gestures are also important. These may convey messages that words alone do not. They frequently reflect what we truly are inside. They can indicate whether we have rooted out jealousy, contentions, and fits of anger, all of which are works of the sinful flesh. When God's spirit freely operates in our lives, its fruitage becomes manifest in the way that we communicate with others.—Galatians 5:19-23; Ephesians 4:31, 32.

²² Anyone who has learned a new language knows that a real milestone has

21. What is there to the pure language in addition to words spoken?

22. When we learn the pure language well, how does it affect our making of decisions?

principles come to mind to provide needed direction.—Proverbs 4:1-12.

²³ It is true that there are thousands of languages used by mankind, but the pure language can be expressed in all of these. Unitedly, earth wide, Jehovah's Witnesses are making good use of the pure language as they serve shoulder to shoulder giving a public witness that brings honor to Jehovah, our loving God.

23. Regardless of what their native tongue may be, what shows that Jehovah's Witnesses earth wide all speak the pure language?

Questions for Review

- ☐ What is included in the gift of speech?
- ☐ What is the pure language?
- ☐ Toward whom has Zephaniah 3:9 been fulfilled?
- ☐ How can we give evidence that we truly love the pure language?

COUNTING THE COST OF MOVING TO AN AFFLUENT LAND

IT IS a familiar scene at consulates throughout the developing world: a waiting room packed out with people who are nervously anticipating their interview. On the basis of that brief but important discussion, it will be determined whether they can obtain a visa to an industrialized land in the West. Many believe that this will be their ticket to prosperity. "I've been working hard for four years, and I haven't even been able to afford a radio," complained one young West African. "If I were in England or the United States, by now I'd have a car and a place of my own to live."

It is not hard to understand why many in poor, developing nations have such sentiments. For them, jobs are hard to find, and pay is low. Inflation erodes savings. Housing is scarce and overcrowded. People wear clothing that has been cast off by those in wealthier lands. Many feel trapped in economic quicksand.

And how the affluent West beckons! Said one young man in Sierra Leone: "Some who have gone abroad come back and tell us stories that give us the courage to go and see the industrialized lands for ourselves. They say you have to work hard, but you make good money so you can support yourself and even get some luxuries, such as a car. And if you come back here with about two thousand dollars, you can set up a business and get married."

Not surprisingly, some servants of God reason similarly. An African sister said: "We young ones in God's organization listen to conversations about how nicely oth-

ers are doing who have gone abroad. So sometimes I ask myself, 'What about me? Why is it that I am suffering here? Should I go or should I stay?'"

If you live in a poor country, you may likewise wonder if a move would improve the quality of your life. However, immigrating to a foreign land is a huge undertaking, an expensive and serious step. It may involve learning a new language, acquiring new job skills, adjusting to a new culture, enduring the prejudice that many express toward foreigners, and learning a whole new way of life. Yet, many Christians have done so successfully and have proved to be real assets to congregations in their new homelands, serving as exemplary publishers, pioneers, elders, and ministerial servants.

Not all, though, have fared so well. The stresses and strains of emigrating have resulted in spiritual ruin for some. Obviously, then, such a move should not be made without serious, prayerful thought. The Bible counsels at Proverbs 3:5, 6: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." Yes, you want to be sure that you are acting in harmony with Jehovah's will. (James 4:13-15) And Jesus gave some practical advice to help you do this when he urged his listeners to 'count the cost.' (Luke 14:28) This involves more than financial considerations. It means taking into account the possible spiritual costs of emigrating.

The Realities of Life Abroad

Before moving anywhere, you should have a good, realistic idea of what to expect when you get there. If possible, make a preliminary visit and see for yourself what conditions are like. Otherwise, you will have to rely on secondhand information. Warns the Bible: "Anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word, but the shrewd one considers his steps."—Proverbs 14:15.

Some have obtained all their information about life in Western lands from movies and television shows. They thus believe that everyone there is wealthy, drives a new car, and lives in a luxurious home. The reality, though, is quite different. Many affluent lands have alarming levels of poverty, homelessness, and unemployment. And many of the poorest residents are the new immigrants. Explains a consular officer at the U.S. embassy in one poor country: "People just don't realize how difficult it is to get established in America. Some write letters home saying how well they're doing—how they've bought two cars and a house—but in truth they're really struggling."

The situation is similar elsewhere. Mr. Sahr Sorie is a West African educator who has lived and studied in London. He commented: "It's not easy to move from Africa and settle in England. A great many immigrants live a very poor life. You see lines of hardship in their faces. Some find it difficult to scrape together 20 pence to make a phone call. Often they share a single room with many others, with just a small heater to keep them warm. They are able to get only menial jobs, and even then it is not enough to pay their bills. Those who leave Africa to escape poverty frequently find themselves worse off in the slums of Europe."

The financial pressures that accompany getting established in a new land can easily choke one's spirituality. (Matthew 13:22)

True, hard work is commended in the Bible. (Proverbs 10:4; 13:4) But many who go abroad are forced to take on two or three jobs in order to achieve their financial goals—or simply to make ends meet. Little or no time is left to pursue the worship of God. Neglected are Christian meetings, Bible study, and the sharing of Bible truth with others. The words of Jesus Christ prove tragically true: "You cannot slave for God and for Riches."—Matthew 6:24.

Moral Pressures

You should also give consideration to the moral climate of your prospective new land. The Bible tells us that Lot chose to live in the District of the Jordan. From a material standpoint, his decision seemed to be a wise one, for "it was a well-watered region . . . , like the garden of Jehovah." (Genesis 13:10) However, Lot's new neighbors were "gross sinners against Jehovah"—sexual perverts! (Genesis 13:13) As a result, "that righteous man by what he saw and heard while dwelling among them from day to day was tormenting his righteous soul by reason of their lawless deeds."—2 Peter 2:8.

Similarly, today a move to the West might expose you and your family to moral pressures and temptations that are more intense than in your homeland. Additionally, older people may not be honored as they were at home. Respect for parents may not be encouraged. Neighbors may take little interest in one another. How might such pressures affect you and your family? This is something to give prayerful thought to.

Absentee Parents

Some parents have chosen to leave their families behind and travel abroad alone. Their plan is to send for their family once they are settled or perhaps to return home with plenty of money. Is such an arrangement wise?

The Scriptures oblige parents to provide for the material needs of their families, and in some extreme cases, a parent may have little choice but to work abroad in order to make such provision. (1 Timothy 5:8) Still, parents are also obliged to care for the spiritual needs of their families. Says God's Word: "You, fathers, do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah."—Ephesians 6:4.

Can a father effectively do this if he is away from his family for months or years at a time? Not likely. So you must consider if any material advantages gained are worth the effect your absence might have on your children. Besides, immigrants often find that it is by no means as easy to make their "fortune" as they thought. If the immigrant is unable to pay for the family's passage, the separation may drag on for years. This, in turn, may create serious moral dangers. (Compare 1 Corinthians 7:1-5.) Sad to say, some in such trying circumstances have succumbed to sexual immorality.

Confident in God's Provisions

As world economic conditions deteriorate, it is good to remember that servants of God should not fear that they will be forsaken. Jesus said: "Never be anxious and say, 'What are we to eat?' or, 'What

are we to drink?' or, 'What are we to put on?' For all these are the things the nations are eagerly pursuing. For your heavenly Father knows you need all these things. Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you."—Matthew 6:31-33.

Jehovah's Witnesses today serve the interests of God's Kingdom by zealously proclaiming the good news. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) In many poor nations, there is a great need for Kingdom preachers. Particularly is there a need for mature elders and ministerial servants. Rather than going to an economically prosperous land where the need is not so great, many have chosen to remain in their native countries. How have some of such ones fared?

Alethia, a West African who has served in the full-time service for 30 years in her native country, said this: "I had the opportunity to live abroad. The reason I didn't was that I love to be with my own people and relatives. I enjoy helping them learn the truth so that we can serve Jehovah together. I haven't missed out on a single thing by staying here, and I don't regret anything."

Winifred likewise lives in an African country. The physical quality of life there is rated as one of the lowest in the world. But after 42 years in the full-time pioneer service, she says: "It is not always easy to manage economically. Satan tries to make things difficult, but Jehovah has always provided for me and looked after my needs."

In ancient times Abraham was "fully convinced that what [God] had promised he was also able to do." (Romans 4:21) Are you likewise convinced that Jehovah is able to fulfill his promise and care for you if you put Kingdom interests first in your life? Do you agree with the psalmist who wrote: "The law of [God's] mouth is good for me,

In Our Next Issue

■ **When Will Peace Really Come?**

■ **Dead Sea Scrolls — The Prized Find**

■ **Will You Imitate God's Mercy?**

more so than thousands of pieces of gold and silver"? (Psalm 119:72) Or could it be that there is a need for you to apply more fully the counsel of the apostle Paul? At 1 Timothy 6:8, he wrote: "Having sustenance and covering, we shall be content with these things." Could it be that the wise thing to do would be, not to seek new surroundings, but to make the most of your present ones?

The economic conditions in many lands can cause severe hardships for Christians. Thus, if after considering all the factors

involved, a family decides to emigrate, there is no reason for others to be critical. (Galatians 6:5) Those remaining can keep asking for Jehovah's help in bearing the hardships that this system brings, while they rejoice in the spiritual blessings that God gives them. Remember, soon the injustices and inequities of this world will be rectified under God's Kingdom. Then it will be as the psalmist wrote: "You [Jehovah] are opening your hand and satisfying the desire of every living thing."—Psalm 145:16.

Kingdom Proclaimers Report

"Every Scripture She Read Touched My Heart"

"THE word of God is alive and exerts power," said the apostle Paul. (Hebrews 4:12) This proved true in the life of a woman from Vietnam who was raised as a Buddhist. This is her story.

"My parents, who are still in Vietnam, are nominal Buddhists, so I was raised as a Buddhist until my marriage at the age of 22. My husband's family tried to force me to get baptized in the Catholic Church. They said that my dead mother-in-law was being prevented from going to heaven because I was a Buddhist! At first I refused to do so, but later I was baptized in order to please them. However, deep in my heart, I felt ridiculous because I hated the hypocrisy in the Catholic Church. It was no different from the Buddhist religion. It was just as involved in war and politics, and both religions encouraged ancestor worship.

"If I had stayed in Vietnam, I would have had very little

chance of learning the truth. I grew up at the time when political upheavals swept over South Vietnam, and I lived in a town a great distance from Saigon. So it was a blessing to be able to escape to Australia.

"I was one of the more fortunate boat people. With my two-month-old baby in my arms, I had to run in the darkness to escape from the police and get on the small fishing boat. After seven days at sea, we arrived in Malaysia, where we stayed a few months in a refugee camp before coming to Australia.

"After two and a half years in Australia, I was contacted by Jehovah's Witnesses in their house-to-house ministry. On the first call, I accepted a regular Bible study because I saw this as a good opportunity to learn English. But the conduct of the Witness who found me and the truth she taught me impressed me very much. Every

scripture she read touched my heart, and I could see no hypocrisy in Jehovah's organization. After studying the Bible for one and a half years, I dedicated my life to Jehovah and was baptized.

"I must say that the truth has changed my entire view of life. My husband is an unbeliever, but Jehovah has helped and sustained me, together with my little family. He has been my Grand Instructor and has taught me to become a better wife and mother. I continue to thank Jehovah that he has helped me out of spiritual darkness into the light of Bible truth."

Truly, God's inspired Word exerted power for good in this case. Studying the Bible and applying what is learned gives meaning and purpose to life and leads to eternal life in God's new world. As God inspired Moses to state, "it is no valueless word for you, but it means your life." —Deuteronomy 32:47.

POLITICS

A PART OF THE GOSPEL COMMISSION?

ACCORDING to Joachim Meisner, archbishop of Cologne and former prominent East German clergyman, "it is a heresy to call politics dirty, a business with which one soils his hands." In a 1989 interview, he said: "Politics is a reality of life and therefore a part of our gospel commission. We must rise to the challenge. In a positive way, we must infiltrate every political institution, from labor unions and associations to political parties, creating in these movements and parties a foundation of Christian substance out of which individuals can come forth to take the lead in promoting German and European politics."

The following quotations from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a leading German newspaper, show that many European clergymen—both Catholic and Protestant—share Meisner's view.

"Only six days after his election [October 1978], he [the pope] announced that as an East European he did not intend to accept the status quo in Europe. . . . Some took it to be a sermon, but it was a political program."—November 1989.

"In some places [in Czechoslovakia] the church won high esteem as a pioneer in the upheaval. Students at the seminary for priests in Litoměřice, a northern Bohemian cathedral town, . . . led last November's nonviolent revolution."—March 1990.

"The weekly prayer for peace in the [Protestant] Nikolai Church, which for ten years attracted little attention, suddenly became a symbol this year of up-

heaval, of the peaceful revolution in the GDR [German Democratic Republic]. . . . Countless clergymen and congregational laity regularly take part in the demonstrations held afterward."—December 1989.

In his interview Archbishop Meisner also noted: "We cannot wait for Christian politicians to fall from heaven. . . . I never weary of encouraging young Christians . . . to get involved in political life [or of] . . . telling senior citizens: You must not allow an election to pass by without getting involved."

Accordingly, 19 members of the East German Volkskammer (parliament) voted into office in March 1990 were clergymen. Religion was also well represented in the cabinet. Of one of its three clergymen, Minister of Defense Rainer Eppelmann, an avowed pacifist, the newspaper *Nassauer Tageblatt* wrote: "Many consider him one of the fathers of the peaceful revolution."

Jehovah's Witnesses in Eastern Europe, numbering into the hundreds of thousands, rejoice at the increased religious freedom they now have. But they are not using it to get involved in political or social controversies. In harmony with the gospel commission stated at Matthew 24: 14, they are following Jesus' example of shunning human politics, all the while zealously preaching the good news of God's Kingdom as mankind's only hope. The clergy of Christendom—whether in Eastern Europe or elsewhere—would be wise to act similarly.—John 6:15; 17:16; 18:36; James 4:4.

Questions From Readers

■ John 18:15 mentions a disciple known to the high priest. Is this the same disciple who earlier fled "naked," as reported at Mark 14:51, 52?

No, it seems that the person known to the high priest was the apostle John, whereas it was the disciple Mark who fled "naked."

Taking these accounts in time sequence, we start at the garden of Gethsemane. The apostles reacted in fear when Jesus Christ was arrested. "They all abandoned him and fled." The very next verse in Mark's account draws a contrast: "But a certain young man wearing a fine linen garment over his naked body began to follow him nearby; and they tried to seize him, but he left his linen garment behind and got away naked."—Mark 14:50-52.

Thus, the initial response of the 11 apostles is contrasted with that of this unnamed disciple, so it is logical to conclude that he was not one of the apostles. This incident is recorded only in the Gospel written by the early disciple John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. Hence, there is reason to hold that Mark was the "certain young man" who began to follow the arrested Jesus but who fled without his covering garment when the mob tried to apprehend him too.—Acts 4:36; 12:12, 25; Colossians 4:10.

At some point that night, the apostle Peter also followed Jesus, at a safe distance. In this sense there is a similarity; the young disciple (Mark) began to follow Jesus but stopped, whereas later two of the apostles who had fled took up following their arrested Master. In the apostle John's Gospel, we read: "Now Simon Peter as well as another disciple was following Jesus. That disciple was known to the high priest, and he went in with Jesus into the court-

yard of the high priest."—John 18:15.

The apostle John uses the name "John" in reference to John the Baptizer but never refers to himself by name. For instance, he writes of "the disciple that bears witness about these things and that wrote these things." Similarly: "He that has seen it has borne witness, and his witness is true, and that man knows he tells true things." (John 19:35; 21:24) Note also John 13:23: "There was reclining in front of Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, and Jesus loved him." That was shortly before Jesus' arrest. Later that day the impaled Jesus singled out one disciple, whom John mentions in

similar terms: "Seeing his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing by, [Jesus] said to his mother: 'Woman, see! Your son!'" —John 19:26, 27; compare John 21:7, 20.

This same characteristic of not naming himself is evident at John 18:15. Furthermore, John and Peter are linked in the postresurrection account at John 20:2-8. These indications suggest that the apostle John was "that disciple [who] was known to the high priest." The Bible does not provide background information as to how the Galilean apostle (John) might have got to know, and got to be known by, the high priest. But his being known by the household of the high priest enabled John to get past the doorkeeper into the courtyard and to gain entrance for Peter also.





Christendom



Islam



Hinduism



Confucianism
— Taoism
— Buddhism

"MANKIND'S SEARCH FOR GOD"

"This book was so interesting and absorbing I just couldn't put it down," writes a reader from Houston, Texas, U.S.A. He said that in his area there are people of just about every religion discussed in the book, but he admitted: "I did not understand their basic beliefs and how to direct them to the Bible for answers. This book has been an answer to my prayers."

Mankind's Search for God contains a thoroughly researched, in-depth discussion of such religions as Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, Islam, and Judaism. The reader from Texas observed: "This book discusses the beliefs of other people in a reasonable and respectful way, while encouraging them to continue their search for the true God, Jehovah. And the words come across in a very personable way, almost as if someone were sitting next to you carrying on a conversation."



Buddhism



Shinto



Judaism



Tribal
Religions

