

A movie poster for 'The Watchtower'. The background is a dark, textured brick wall with a large, arched opening. A man in a red and black plaid shirt over a white t-shirt and blue jeans stands in the center, looking down at another man lying on the ground. The man on the ground is wearing a light-colored t-shirt and dark pants, and appears to be in pain or unconscious. A large, dark, rectangular object, possibly a trash can or a piece of debris, is on the ground near the man lying down. The title 'The Watchtower' is at the top in a large, white, serif font, with a small graphic of a watchtower above the 'W'. Below the title is the subtitle 'Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom'. The date 'November 1, 1991' is in the top right corner. The main title 'Is Vengeance Wrong?' is in the center in a large, white, serif font.

The **Watchtower**
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

November 1, 1991

Is
Vengeance
Wrong?

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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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Is Vengeance Wrong?

MANY people feel justified in retaliating when they think they have been wronged. In one way or another, they follow the motto: "Don't get mad, get even." Today, love of neighbor is at a low ebb, and the spirit of vengeance is on the rise.—Matthew 24:12.

How do you, though, view vengeance? If you believe the Bible, perhaps you feel that in principle vengeance is wrong. But living as we do in an ungodly world, you may feel that forgiveness, the opposite of vengefulness, is often unrealistic. How would you react if you were cheated or mugged? Do you become vindictive if someone ignores you or speaks disparagingly about you to others? Are you vengeful or forgiving?

A Vindictive Attitude Hurts

Of course, there are degrees of offense. But most people who want to get back at someone have not been mugged or criminally assaulted. The "offenses" quoted at the beginning of this article were rather insignificant, although they loomed large in the minds of the ones who decided to get even.

The Bible says that we should not cultivate a vengeful attitude. Proverbs 24:29 counsels: "Do not say: 'Just as he did to me, so I am going to do to him.'" Why not? For one thing, such an attitude is emotionally and physically damaging. Vengeful thoughts take away peace of mind and hinder sound reasoning. Consider this news report: "Two farmers shooting from their pickup trucks killed each other in a parking lot, ending a 40-year feud that began

On a freeway in the United States, a car was slow to pull over and let another one pass. The driver of the second car retaliated by shooting at the offending vehicle, killing an innocent passenger.

A teenage girl lost a part in a school play to another girl. She got back at her by telling the girl's boyfriend that the girl was seeing a boy in another school. She thus ruined the girl's relationship with the boyfriend.

when they were children." Imagine, throughout their lives the thinking of these two men had been poisoned by a festering, vengeful spirit!—Proverbs 14:29, 30.

Another reason not to cultivate a vengeful spirit is that erring ones—even seriously erring ones—can change. The apostle Paul, for example, at one time 'approved of the murder' of the disciple Stephen and 'breathed threat and murder against the disciples of the Lord.' But he changed. Years later the apostle Peter—whose life had been in danger from Paul during that earlier time—called him "our beloved brother Paul." (Acts 8:1; 9:1; 2 Peter 3:15) Christians could have tried to take revenge on Paul, especially when he was waiting, blind, in Damascus. (Acts 9:3-15) What a tragic mistake that would have been!

Paul could well counsel, therefore, at Romans 12:20: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink." Why? Because if we avenge ourselves on an enemy, we harden his attitude and cement the enmity between us. But if we do good to one who offends or hurts us, we may soften his

attitude and make a former enemy into a friend.

Recognizing our own weaknesses also helps in overcoming the bitterness that leads to a desire for revenge. The psalmist asked: "If errors were what you watch, O Jah, O Jehovah, who could stand?" (Psalm 130:3) All of us have hurt or offended others. Were we not glad if they did not try to get even? Should we not, then, act with similar restraint? Jesus counseled: "All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them."—Matthew 7:12.

True, the Bible says: "Hate what is bad." (Psalm 97:10; Amos 5:15) But it does not tell us to hate the one doing the bad. In fact, Jesus commanded us: "Continue to love your enemies and to pray for those persecuting you." (Matthew 5:44) If we repay injury for injury, we copy the spirit of the wrongdoer. The ancient proverb says: "Do not say: 'I will pay back evil!' Hope in Jehovah, and he will save you." (Proverbs 20:22) What a wise attitude! How much better to show ourselves the winners by resisting the temptation to imitate wrongdoers.—John 16:33; Romans 12:17, 21.

To control sentiments of vengeance, remember that

- ☐ God is concerned with justice
- ☐ harboring a vindictive attitude is harmful
- ☐ being kind often reduces problems with others
- ☐ many of our own trespasses have been overlooked
- ☐ erring ones may change
- ☐ we conquer the world by resisting its ways

Punishment—By Whom?

Of course, some acts are more serious than personal affronts or hurts. What if we are the victim of a crime? Naturally, we feel that in the name of justice, something should be done. But what? In some societies it has not been unusual to handle things personally and get revenge. But such societies have often ended up riven by blood feuds. Today, neither God's laws nor in most cases man's laws allow individuals to take personal vengeance for crimes, and for good reason. Such personal violence only breeds more violence.

Should a crime victim, then, sit back and passively take the abuse? Not necessarily. When our person or property is violated, there are authorities to turn to. You may wish to call the police. At work, go to the supervisor. At school, you may wish to see the principal. That is one reason they are there—to uphold justice. The Bible tells us that governmental authorities are “God’s minister, an avenger to express wrath upon the one practicing what is bad.” (Romans 13:4) Justice requires that the government exercise its authority, stop wrongdoing, and punish the wrongdoers.

True, at times justice is slow in coming. One world-weary writer said: “Justice is like a train that’s nearly always late.” Sometimes, indeed, the train never arrives. Doers of injustice may be so powerful that the authorities cannot control them. Still, the wise course is self-restraint. “All his spirit is what a stupid one lets out, but

he that is wise keeps it calm to the last,” says the Bible.—Proverbs 29:11.

Vengeance—By Whom?

Restraining ourselves from revenge will thus bring benefits to us, and we can wait calmly, knowing that if justice has to be meted out, God will do it at the proper time. Jehovah is aware that wrongdoing unchecked leads to iniquity. (Ecclesiastes 8:11) He will not allow the hardened wicked to oppress mankind forever. That is why the apostle Paul counseled us: “Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but yield place to the wrath; for it is written: ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says Jehovah.’” (Romans 12:19) Indeed, the Bible speaks of a day of vengeance on the part of the Creator. What will this day of vengeance be? And who will be the objects of God’s vengeance? We will discuss this in the next article.

God’s Day of Vengeance

AS WE saw in the previous article, there are several reasons why it is wrong for us to seek vengeance. It is wrong because in the long run, it does not solve anything. It is wrong because it cements enmity instead of building bridges of friendship. And it is wrong because it is bad for the one who harbors vengeful thoughts.

The most important reason, however, why human vengeance is wrong is seen in Moses’ words to Israel: “Jehovah your God

is a merciful God.” (Deuteronomy 4:31) Since God is merciful, we should be merciful like him. Jesus told his followers: “Continue becoming merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”—Luke 6:36.

Nevertheless, the Bible also describes Jehovah as a “God of acts of vengeance.” (Psalm 94:1) The prophet Isaiah speaks about “the year of goodwill on the part of Jehovah” and also “the day of vengeance on the part of our God.” (Isaiah 61:2) How can God be both merciful and vengeful? And if

we are to imitate God's mercy, why may we not imitate him in taking vengeance?

To answer the first question, God is merciful because he loves mankind, and he forgives as much as he can for as long as he can in order to give humans the opportunity to mend their ways. Many, like the apostle Paul, have taken advantage of this mercy. But God is also vengeful—in the sense of exacting justice—because such mercy can continue only so long. When some have demonstrated that they will never change their ways, God will execute judgment in what is called his day of vengeance.

In answer to the second question, no, we are not justified in being vengeful because God exacts vengeance. Jehovah is perfect in justice. Humans are not. God sees all sides of a matter and always makes a righteous decision. We cannot be relied on to do the same. That is why Paul counseled: "Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but yield place to the wrath; for it is written: 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says Jehovah.'" (Romans 12:19) For our own sakes, we must leave vengeance in the hands of Jehovah.

Why a Day of Vengeance?

Nevertheless, the Bible in many places acknowledges the need for an accounting with unrepentant wrongdoers. For example, the apostle Paul foretold that God, through Jesus, would bring "vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus." (2 Thessalonians 1:8) We have good reasons to take those words seriously. Why?

For one thing, because the majority today persist in defying the Creator's sovereignty, they disregard his righteous laws. Whether they claim to believe in God or not, their conduct clearly shows that they do not

feel accountable before God. The psalmist's words apply to all such: "Why is it that the wicked one has disrespected God? He has said in his heart: 'You will not require an accounting.'" (Psalm 10:13) Surely, Jehovah will not forever allow himself to be taunted in this manner. Although he is a God of love, he is also a God of justice. He will heed the cries of those truly concerned with justice: "Do arise, O Jehovah. O God, lift up your hand. Do not forget the afflicted ones."—Psalm 10:12.

Furthermore, law-defying people are ruining the very earth we live on. They befoul the air, the land, and the water; they fill the earth with injustice and cruelty. And they stockpile enough chemical, nuclear, and other deadly weapons to threaten the survival of humankind. Divine intervention is imperative in order to ensure a secure future for obedient mankind. (Revelation 11:18) This intervention is what Isaiah referred to as the day of vengeance.

What Will God's Day of Vengeance Accomplish?

According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, in the Greek Scriptures, the word for vengeance, when used in connection with God, literally means "that which proceeds out of justice," not, as often with human vengeance, out of a sense of injury or merely out of a feeling of indignation." Thus, God's vengeance against his enemies will not be a time of uncontrolled bloodshed, like a personal vendetta. "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial, but to reserve unrighteous people for the day of judgment to be cut off," the Bible tells us.—2 Peter 2:9.

Servants of God look forward to God's day of vengeance as a time when right

conduct will be vindicated and the righteous delivered from the oppression of the wicked. This does not mean that they are malicious or vindictive. "He that is joyful at another's disaster will not be free from punishment," the Bible warns. (Proverbs 17:5) On the contrary, they cultivate mercy and compassion, leaving any decisions about vengeance to God.

True, it is not easy for angry individuals to act in this way. But it is possible, and many have done so. For example, Pedro had an unhappy childhood and was often beaten by his older brother. So he grew up violent, constantly in trouble with the police and taking out on his wife and children the anger he felt toward his brother. Finally, he listened to one of Jehovah's Witnesses and later started to study the Bible. "With Jehovah's help," he relates, "I changed, and now, instead of fighting people, I help them as a Christian elder." With the help of the Bible and holy spirit, countless others have similarly changed from being spiteful or vengeful to showing love and patience toward others.

What Will You Do?

Keeping in mind the coming of God's day of vengeance will help us to take advantage of Jeho-

vah's patience. But the opportunity to do so is not unlimited. Soon that day will arrive. The apostle Peter showed why it has not already come: "Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance."—2 Peter 3:9.

It is urgent, then, to prepare now for God's day of accounting by studying the Scriptures and applying their counsel. This will help us to follow the psalmist's words: "Let anger alone and leave rage; do not show yourself heated up only to do evil. For evildoers themselves will be cut off, but those hoping in Jehovah are the ones that will possess the earth."—Psalm 37:8, 9.



After God's day of vengeance, 'those hoping in Jehovah will possess the earth'



ENDURANCE THAT GAINS THE VICTORY

"You have need of endurance, in order that, after you have done the will of God, you may receive the fulfillment of the promise."—HEBREWS 10:36.

THIS whole world is lying in the power of a seditious god. Its unseen ruler, Satan the Devil, is concentrating all his efforts on opposing Jehovah and fighting against the vindication of Jehovah's universal sovereignty by the Messianic Kingdom. This makes it unavoidable that anyone who dedicates himself to God and takes His side of the issue of sovereignty will be continually opposed by this world. (John 15:18-20; 1 John 5:19) Hence, each of us must brace himself to endure until this world goes down in utter

defeat at Armageddon. To be among God's victorious ones who overcome the world by their faith and integrity, we must hold on doggedly until the end. (1 John 5:4) How can we do that?

² For one thing, we can look for encouragement to two outstanding examples of endurance. Who are these? One is Jesus Christ, "the firstborn of all creation," who has faithfully persevered in God's service ever since he was brought into existence at an unknown time in the past. In his persistence in serving God faithfully, Jesus

1. Why is endurance a must for everyone who serves Jehovah God today?

2, 3. How are Jehovah God and Jesus Christ the greatest examples of endurance?

became an example to all intelligent creatures who were afterward brought into existence in heaven and on earth. (Colossians 1:15, 16) However, the greatest example of endurance is Jehovah God, who has long endured rebellion against his universal sovereignty and will continue to do so until he acts to settle the issue of sovereignty with finality.

³ Jehovah has endured in an exemplary way in matters where his dignity and his keenest personal feelings are concerned. He has restrained himself in the face of great provocation and has restricted himself from taking action against those who have reviled him—including Satan the Devil. We are grateful for God's endurance and for his mercy. Without these, we would not have enjoyed even the briefest existence. Indeed, Jehovah God has distinguished himself beyond all compare by his endurance.

⁴ The apostle Paul points both to the endurance and to the mercy of God when he says: "Does not the potter have authority over the clay to make from the same lump one vessel for an honorable use, another for a dishonorable use? If, now, God, although having the will to demonstrate his wrath and to make his power known, tolerated with much long-suffering vessels of wrath made fit for destruction, in order that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he prepared beforehand for glory, namely, us, whom he called not only from among Jews but also from among nations, what of it?" —Romans 9:21-24.

⁵ As these words show, during this present period of his endurance, Jehovah proceeds with his glorious purpose and shows

mercy upon certain human vessels. He prepares these vessels for everlasting glory and thus defeats the wicked purposes of his great opposer, Satan the Devil, and of all Satan's cohorts. Not all of humankind have turned out to be vessels of wrath, deserving of destruction. That speaks well of the patient endurance of Almighty God. His mercy will not be in vain. It will result in (1) a glorious Kingdom family in the heavens under Jehovah's beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and (2) a recovered and perfected race of human creatures on a paradise earth, all inheritors of everlasting life.

Enduring to the End

⁶ With such a marvelous hope ahead, Jesus' bracing words should constantly ring in our ears, namely: "He that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved." (Matthew 24:13) It is important to start out well in the course of Christian discipleship. But what ultimately counts is how we endure, how well we *finish* the course. The apostle Paul stressed this when he said: "You have need of endurance, in order that, after you have done the will of God, you may receive the fulfillment of the promise." (Hebrews 10:36) The Greek word here translated "endurance" is *hypo-mo-ne'*. This usually denotes courageous, steadfast, or patient endurance that does not lose hope in the face of obstacles, persecutions, trials, and temptations. If we hope to win eventual salvation, we must submit to a test of endurance as part of the necessary preparation for that salvation.

⁷ We should not delude ourselves by the self-pleasing idea that we can get the test over with in a hurry. In order that the

4. 5. (a) How does Paul's illustration of a potter show God's endurance and his mercy? (b) How will God's mercy prove not to have been mispent?

6. (a) Why can Christians not avoid a test of endurance? (b) What does the Greek word for "endurance" usually denote?

7. What delusion must we avoid, and whose example will help us endure?

issues of universal sovereignty and of man's integrity could be decisively answered, Jehovah did not spare himself. He has endured unpleasant things even though he could have blotted them out instantly. Jesus Christ also was a model of endurance. (1 Peter 2:21; compare Romans 15:3-5.) With these shining examples before us, surely we too are willing to endure down to the finish.—Hebrews 12:2, 3.

A Needed Qualification

⁸ No servant of God, even from the earliest times, has been exempted from the need to prove his integrity by enduring. Very prominent individuals in Bible history who remained faithful to the death and qualified for everlasting life in the heavens had to prove their steadfastness. For example, the former Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, said to the Corinthians: "I did not prove to be inferior to your superfine apostles in a single thing, even if I am nothing. Indeed, the signs of an apostle were produced among you by all endurance, and by signs and portents and powerful works." (2 Corinthians 12:11, 12) Despite the burdens of the work, Paul prized his ministry so highly that he endured much and earnestly tried not to bring any reproach on it.—2 Corinthians 6:3, 4, 9.

⁹ In more modern times, anointed Christians who were serving God prior to the first world war knew that 1914 would mark the end of the Times of the Gentiles, and many of them expected to receive their heavenly reward in that memorable year. But this did not happen. As the facts now show, they had decades of years added to them. During this unexpected extension of

their earthly life course, they underwent refinement at the hand of Jehovah God. (Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:2, 3) Continued endurance worked out for their betterment. As servants of Jehovah, they rejoiced to be designated as his name people. (Isaiah 43:10-12; Acts 15:14) Today, having been brought through two world wars and numerous smaller conflicts, they thrill to be aided in the spreading of the good news by a growing great crowd of other sheep, now numbering more than four million. The spiritual paradise that they enjoy has spread over all the earth, even to the most distant islands of the sea. This favored treatment, which we appreciate more and more the longer we live, has served as an incentive to carry on faithfully in divine service until Jehovah's will and purpose are fully accomplished.

¹⁰ Since our reward depends on our steadfastness, we constantly need exhortation on this vital matter. (1 Corinthians 15:58; Colossians 1:23) In order that there be no weakening among Jehovah's people, we must be regularly encouraged to hold on to the truth and to the precious privilege of spreading the truth, just as the newly formed congregations were in the first century by return visits from Paul and Barnabas. (Acts 14:21, 22) Let it be our firm resolve and determination that, as the apostle John put it, the truth will remain in us, "and it will be with us forever."—2 John 2.

Waiting With Unwavering Endurance

¹¹ It takes time for the test concerning us to be completed. (James 1:2-4) Wait! Wait! Wait! seems to have been God's rule with his servants of old when they were

8. What quality that all of us need did the apostle Paul demonstrate?

9. (a) How have the anointed remnant shown endurance, and with what result? (b) What serves as an incentive for us to carry on faithfully in divine service?

10. Lest there be any weakening by us, what is regularly needed?

11. What seems to be God's rule with his servants, and how was this illustrated in the case of Joseph?



God's people, like these Witnesses in Port of Spain, Trinidad, have always been willing to wait on Jehovah

tested as to their determination to continue in the faith. But the wait, in the end, always proved to be a rewarding one for those faithful servants. Joseph, for instance, had to wait 13 years as a slave and a prisoner, but the experience refined his personality.—Psalm 105:17-19.

¹² Abraham was already 75 years old when God called him out of Ur of the Chaldees to go to the Promised Land. He was about 125 years old when he received the oath-bound confirmation of God's promise—which happened immediately after Abraham demonstrated the strength of his faith by going to the point of offering up his beloved son, Isaac, stopping only when Jehovah's angel restrained his hand and prevented the sacrifice. (Genesis 22:1-18) Fifty years was a long time for Abraham to wait as a sojourner in a strange land, but he held on yet another 50 years until he died at 175 years of age. In all that time, Abraham was a faithful witness and prophet of Jehovah God.—Psalm 105:9-15.

12, 13. (a) How was Abraham an example of faithful endurance? (b) In what way are Abraham's faith and endurance held up as a pattern for us?

¹³ Abraham's faith and endurance are held up as a pattern to all servants of God who want to receive the promised blessings through Jesus Christ, the Seed of Abraham. (Hebrews 11:8-10, 17-19) Regarding him, we read at Hebrews 6:11-15: "We desire each one of you to show the same industriousness so as to have the full assurance of the hope down to the end, in order that you may not become sluggish, but be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made his promise to Abraham, since he could not swear by anyone greater, he swore by himself, saying: 'Assuredly in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply you.' And thus after Abraham had shown patience, he obtained this promise."

¹⁴ Already the anointed remnant have seen 77 years pass since the end of the Gentile Times in 1914, when some of them expected the glorification of the true Christian congregation to heaven. How much longer the remnant must wait we do not know. Should we then waver and think that the wait is endless and the reward an elusive will-o'-the-wisp? No! That would never vindicate God's sovereignty or honor his name. He would not be justified before the world when conferring on us the victory and the resultant prize of everlasting life. Regardless of the length of time, the remnant, along with their faithful sheep-like companions, are determined to wait for Jehovah to act in his own time. In showing such exemplary perseverance, they follow the course of Abraham.—Romans 8:23-25.

14. Why should we not think that the test of endurance is endless and the reward elusive?

¹⁵ The watchword, then, is still unwavering endurance in doing God's will. (Romans 2:6, 7) In the past he has borne us up through severe afflictions, including imprisonments and concentration camps, and he has brought us through triumphantly with glory to his name and purpose.* During the time that yet remains for the completion of our test, Jehovah will continue to do the same. Paul's exhortation remains fitting for our day: "For you have need of steadfast patience and endurance, so that you may perform and fully accomplish the will of God, and thus receive and carry away and enjoy to the full what is promised."—Hebrews 10:36, *The Amplified Bible*; Romans 8:37.

* For example, Christine Elizabeth King wrote: "Only against the Witnesses was the [Nazi] government unsuccessful, for although they had killed thousands, the work went on and in May 1945 the Jehovah's Witness movement was still alive, whilst National Socialism was not. The Witnesses' numbers had increased and no compromises had been made. The movement had gained martyrs and had successfully waged one more battle in Jehovah God's war."—*The Nazi State and the New Religions: Five Case Studies in Non-Conformity*, page 193.

15. (a) What is our watchword, and through what experiences has God sustained us triumphantly? (b) What exhortation by Paul remains fitting for our day?

How Would You Respond?

- ☐ Why can we not avoid having our endurance tested?
- ☐ What delusion do we want to avoid?
- ☐ To avoid any weakening by us, what is needed?
- ☐ What is our watchword?
- ☐ In times of stress, what will help us endure?

¹⁶ As long as Jehovah has work for us to do amid this wicked world, then, following Jesus' example, we want to be engaged in that work till it is finished. (John 17:4) Our dedication to Jehovah was not on the understanding that we would serve him for just a short time and then Armageddon would come. Our dedication was forever. God's work for us will not end with Armageddon's battle. However, it is only after we have accomplished the work that is to be done before Armageddon that we shall see the grand things to come beyond that great war. Then, in addition to the happy privilege of continuing to do his work, we will be rewarded with the long-hoped-for blessings that he promised.—Romans 8:32.

Love for God Helps Us Endure

¹⁷ Perhaps, when times are stressful, we may ask: 'How can we endure any longer?' The answer? By loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. "Love is long-suffering and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, does not get puffed up. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails." (1 Corinthians 13:4, 7, 8) Unless we endure out of love for God, our endurance does not count. But if we bear up under burdens because of our devotion to Jehovah, then our endurance has the effect of deepening our love for him. Love for God, his Father, enabled Jesus to endure. (John 14:30, 31; Hebrews 12:2) If our true motive is love for God, our Father, what is there that we cannot endure?

¹⁸ It is our unwavering love for Jehovah

16. Why should we not view our dedication to Jehovah in just a limited way or with reservations?

17, 18. (a) In times of stress, what will help us endure with God's approval? (b) What will help us to gain the victory, and what do we not say about the time remaining?

God that has enabled us to remain victorious over the world during this most critical time of testing. And Jehovah, through Jesus Christ, will continue to give us the help we need no matter how much longer this old system of things is permitted to exist. (1 Peter 5:10) Of course, we make no prediction as to how much time is still left, and we are not fixing any specific date. We leave that to the Great Timekeeper, Jehovah God.—Psalm 31:15.

¹⁹ However, the generation that was foretold to witness and experience “the conclusion of the system of things” is now well advanced in years. (Matthew 24:3, 32-35) So let us never forget that each passing day we endure is one day less for

19, 20. (a) How should we view each passing day that we endure? (b) What foolishness do we want to avoid, and why?

Satan and his demons to pollute the universe with their very existence and one day closer to the time when Jehovah will no longer endure the existence of “vessels of wrath made fit for destruction.” (Romans 9:22) Soon, when the long-suffering of Jehovah comes to an end, he will vent his wrath on ungodly men and women. Thus, he will reveal his divine disapproval of their course of action, even though he allowed them to continue for all this period of time.

²⁰ It would be most foolish for us to discontinue our loving efforts to gain the glorious prize that is held out to us through Jesus Christ. Rather, we are determined to carry on faithfully as Witnesses for Jehovah in this most vital time when Jehovah is about to vindicate himself as Universal Sovereign.

RUNNING THE RACE WITH ENDURANCE

“Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”—HEBREWS 12:1.

WHEN we dedicated ourselves to Jehovah through Jesus Christ, God set before us, figuratively speaking, a race. At the end of the race, a prize will be bestowed upon all those who finish successfully. What prize? Everlasting life! To win this magnificent prize, the Christian runner needs to be prepared,

1. (a) What is set before us when we make a dedication to Jehovah God? (b) What kind of race must a Christian prepare for?

not for just a short, fast sprint, but for a long-distance run. So he will need endurance. He will have to endure both the long toil of the race itself and the obstacles that present themselves during the race.

² What will help us run such a race to the finish? Well, what helped Jesus to endure while he was a man on earth? He

2, 3. (a) What will help us in running the Christian race to the finish? (b) How did joy help Jesus run the race with endurance?

drew inward strength from the quality of joy. Hebrews 12:1-3 reads: "So, then, because we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also put off every weight and the sin that easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, as we look intently at the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus. For the joy that was set before him he endured a torture stake, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Indeed, consider closely the one who has endured such contrary talk by sinners against their own interests, that you may not get tired and give out in your souls."

³ All through his public ministry, Jesus was able to keep running the race because of the joy of Jehovah. (Compare Nehemiah 8:10.) His joy helped him endure even an ignominious death on the torture stake, after which he experienced the inexpressible joy of rising from the dead and ascending to his Father's right hand, there to see God's work through to its finish. By his endurance as a man on God's side, he held on to his right to everlasting life. Yes, as Luke 21:19 says: "By endurance on your part you will acquire your souls."

⁴ Jesus Christ set the finest of examples for his fellow runners, and his example assures us that we too can be winners. (1 Peter 2:21) What Jesus asks us to do, we can do. As he endured, so can we. And as we hold on in steadfast imitation of him, we must keep our minds on our reasons to be joyful. (John 15:11, 20, 21) Joyfulness will strengthen us to persist in running the race in Jehovah's service until the glorious prize of everlasting life is attained.—Colossians 1:10, 11.

4. What kind of example did Jesus set for his fellow runners, and what should we keep our minds on?

⁵ To help us persist in the race, Jehovah provides power beyond what is normal. When we are persecuted, that power and the knowledge of why we are privileged to undergo persecution strengthens us. (2 Corinthians 4:7-9) Anything undergone for the sake of honoring God's name and upholding his sovereignty is a reason for a joy that no one can take away from us. (John 16:22) This explains why the apostles, after being beaten by the order of the Jewish Sanhedrin for bearing witness to the wonderful things Jehovah God had accomplished in connection with Jesus, rejoiced "because they had been counted worthy to be dishonored in behalf of his name." (Acts 5:41, 42) Their joy did not come from the persecution itself but from the deep inner satisfaction of knowing they were pleasing Jehovah and Jesus.

⁶ Another sustaining power in our lives is the hope that God has set before us. As Paul put it: "Let us enjoy peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have gained our approach by faith into this undeserved kindness in which we now stand; and let us exult, based on hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but let us exult while in tribulations, since we know that tribulation produces endurance; endurance, in turn, an approved condition; the approved condition, in turn, hope, and the hope does not lead to disappointment."—Romans 5:1-5.

⁷ Tribulations in themselves are not joyous, yet the peaceable fruits that they yield afterward are. These fruits are endurance, an approved condition, hope, and

5. How can we be joyful and strengthened for the race before us?

6, 7. Why can the Christian runner exult even while he has tribulations, and with what outcome?



As if in a long-distance race, Christians must endure

the fulfillment of that hope. Endurance by us will lead to our receiving divine approval. When we have God's approval, we can confidently hope for the realization of the promises he has made. This hope holds us true to our course and buoys us up under tribulation until the hope is fulfilled.—2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

Happy Are Those Who Endure!

⁸ While awaiting the divinely set time for distributing the prizes to the runners, there are changes we experience. These are spiritual improvements in us that result from meeting trials successfully, and they win us great favor with God. They prove what we are and give us the opportunity to exercise the same fine qualities that the faithful ones of old time, especially our Exemplar, Jesus Christ, displayed. Says the disciple James: "Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you meet with various trials, knowing as you do that this tested quality of your faith works out en-

we will stay in this race until the prize is won, no matter what obstacles we encounter.

⁹ No wonder, then, that James said: "Happy is the man that keeps on enduring trial, because on becoming approved he will receive the crown of life, which Jehovah promised to those who continue loving him"! (James 1:12) Let us consistently face up to trials, armed with the godly qualities that will strengthen us to overcome them.—2 Peter 1:5-8.

¹⁰ Remember that the way God is dealing with us is not new or novel. The faithful "cloud of witnesses" of old times were dealt with in the same way as they proved their constancy to God. (Hebrews 12:1) God's approval of them is recorded in his Word, and we count all of them happy because they held out under test. James says: "Brothers, take as a pattern of the suffering of evil and the exercising of patience the prophets, who spoke in the

8. Why is this waiting period not a waste of time for us?

9, 10. (a) Why are those who endure trials happy, and how should we face up to trials? (b) Who were the happy ones of old, and how can we be counted among them?

name of Jehovah. Look! We pronounce happy those who have endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome Jehovah gave, that Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful." (James 5:10, 11) It was foretold that during these critical last days, some would appear on the world scene who would serve Jehovah with integrity, just as those prophets did in ancient centuries. Are we not happy to be the ones doing so?—Daniel 12:3; Revelation 7:9.

Drawing on Jehovah's Encouraging Word

¹¹ Paul pointed to another aid in endurance when he said that "through patient endurance, and through the encouragement drawn from the Scriptures, we might hold fast to our hope." (Romans 15:4, *The Twentieth Century New Testament*) The truth, God's Word, must become deeply rooted within us so as to draw out from us a proper response at all times. We do not benefit at all by being like that rocky ground described in Jesus' parable of the sower: "These are the ones sown upon the rocky places: as soon as they have heard the word, they accept it with joy. Yet they have no root in themselves, but they continue for a time; then as soon as tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, they are stumbled." (Mark 4:16, 17) The truth from God's Word does not become deeply rooted in such ones; hence, in times of tribulation, they are unable to draw on it as the true source of strength and hope.

¹² Anyone who accepts the Kingdom

11. How can God's Word help us to endure, and why should we not be like the rocky places of Jesus' parable?

12. Of what should we not be deluded when accepting the good news?

good news should not delude himself about what will follow. He is taking up a course of life that will incur tribulation or persecution. (2 Timothy 3:12) But he should count it "all joy" to have the privilege of undergoing various trials for holding fast to God's Word and speaking about it to others.—James 1:2, 3.

¹³ In the first century, opposers at Thessalonica rioted because of the preaching of Paul. When Paul went to Beroea, these persecutors followed him there in order to stir up more trouble. To those faithful ones who stayed behind in Thessalonica, the persecuted apostle wrote: "We are obligated to give God thanks always for you, brothers, as it is fitting, because your faith is growing exceedingly and the love of each and all of you is increasing one toward the other. As a result we ourselves take pride in you among the congregations of God because of your endurance and faith in all your persecutions and the tribulations that you are bearing. This is a proof of the righteous judgment of God, leading to your being counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are indeed suffering." (2 Thessalonians 1:3-5) Notwithstanding their sufferings at enemy hands, Thessalonian Christians grew in Christlikeness and in numbers. How was that possible? Because they drew strength from Jehovah's encouraging Word. They obeyed the Lord's orders and ran the race with endurance.—2 Thessalonians 2:13-17.

For the Salvation of Others

¹⁴ Primarily for the sake of God's vindi-

13. How and why did Paul rejoice over the Christians in Thessalonica?

14. (a) For what reasons do we joyfully remain in the ministry despite hardships? (b) For what do we pray, and why?



In reaching out for "the crown of life," runners must practice self-control

less restricted life of the nonmilitary civilian. Likewise, we must not entangle ourselves with the affairs of those who are not in the Lord's army but who are, in fact, on the opposing side. Thus, Paul further wrote Timothy: "No man serving as a soldier involves himself in the commercial businesses of life, in order that he may gain the approval of the one who enrolled him as a soldier. Moreover, if anyone contends even in the games, he is not crowned unless he has contended according to the rules." (2 Timothy 2:4, 5) In striving for victory in the race for "the crown of life," runners must practice self-control and avoid useless weights and entanglements. In this way they can concentrate on bringing the good news of salvation to others.—James 1:12; compare 1 Corinthians 9:24, 25.

cation, we faithfully and uncomplainingly put up with hardships and persecutions. But there is another unselfish reason why we submit to such things: in order that we may pass along the Kingdom tidings to others so that more publishers for God's Kingdom may be raised up to make "public declaration for salvation." (Romans 10:10) Those at work in God's service should pray that the Master of the harvest bless their work by providing more publishers of the Kingdom. (Matthew 9:38) Paul wrote Timothy: "The things you heard from me with the support of many witnesses, these things commit to faithful men, who, in turn, will be adequately qualified to teach others. As a fine soldier of Christ Jesus take your part in suffering evil."—2 Timothy 2:2, 3.

¹⁵ A soldier separates himself from the

¹⁶ Because we love God and the sheep-like ones seeking to find him, we gladly put up with much in order to reach others with the good news of salvation. Enemies may bind us for preaching God's Word. But God's Word cannot be bound, and the speaking of it for the salvation of others cannot be chained. Paul described to Timothy why he was so willing to encounter trial: "Remember that Jesus Christ was raised up from the dead and was of David's seed, according to the good news I preach; in connection with which I am suffering evil to the point of prison bonds as an evildoer. Nevertheless, the word of God is not bound. On this account I go on enduring all things for the sake of the chosen ones, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in union with Christ

15. Why must we conduct ourselves like soldiers and contenders "in the games"?

16. What cannot be bound, and for whose benefit do we endure?

Jesus along with everlasting glory.” (2 Timothy 2:8-10) Today we have in mind not only the small remnant of those in line for the heavenly Kingdom but also the great crowd of other sheep of the Fine Shepherd, Jesus Christ, the great crowd who gain the earthly Paradise under Christ’s Kingdom.—Revelation 7:9-17.

¹⁷ If we were quitters, we would not help ourselves or anybody else to salvation. By enduring in the Christian race, regardless of the obstacles encountered, we keep ourselves constantly in line for the prize and can directly help others to salvation, while being a forceful example of strength to others. Whatever our hope, heavenly or earthly, Paul’s attitude of “pursuing down toward the goal for the prize” is a fine one to imitate.—Philippians 3:14, 15.

Steadfast Continuance in the Race

¹⁸ Finishing our Christian course victoriously to Jehovah’s vindication and winning the prize he reserves for us depends on our steadfast continuance throughout the full length of the race. We cannot, therefore, hold out to the end if we load

17. Why should we not quit the race, and what results if we continue in the race to the end?

18. Winning the prize depends on what, but to hold out to the end, what must be avoided?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ What kind of race must a Christian prepare for?
- ☐ Why is joy so important in running the race?
- ☐ For what main reasons do we remain in the ministry despite hardships?
- ☐ Why should we not quit the race God has set before us?

ourselves down with things not serving the cause of righteousness. Even when stripped of such things, the requirements are still exacting enough to call for all the fortitude that we can muster. Therefore, Paul counsels: “Let us also put off every weight and the sin that easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.” (Hebrews 12:1) Like Jesus we should not overemphasize the sufferings to be borne but consider them a small price to pay for the joyous prize.—Compare Romans 8:18.

¹⁹ Near the end of his life, Paul was able to say: “I have fought the fine fight, I have run the course to the finish, I have observed the faith. From this time on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness.” (2 Timothy 4:7, 8) We are in this race of endurance to gain the prize of eternal life. If our endurance peters out just because the race is somewhat longer than we expected when we started it, we shall fail when we are close to gaining the promised reward. Make no mistake. There is no question that the reward is there.

²⁰ So may our eyes not grow weary with watching for the great tribulation to begin, bringing destruction first to Babylon the Great and then to the rest of the Devil’s organization. (2 Peter 3:11, 12) In view of all the telling signs round about us, may we look ahead in faith. May we gird up the loins of our powers of endurance, and may we carry on valiantly in the race that Jehovah God has set before us, until the end is reached and the joyous prize is gained, to Jehovah’s vindication through Jesus Christ.

19. (a) What confidence did Paul express near the end of his life? (b) As we near the end of the race of endurance, what confidence should we have about the promised reward?

20. What should be our determination until the end of the race is reached?

DID THE EARLY CHURCH TEACH THAT GOD IS A TRINITY?

Part 1

Did Jesus and his disciples teach the Trinity doctrine?

Did Jesus and his disciples teach the doctrine of the Trinity? Did church leaders of the next several centuries teach it? How did it originate? And why is it important to know the truth about this belief? Beginning with Part 1 in this issue, *The Watchtower* will discuss these questions in a series of articles. Other articles in the series will appear periodically in later issues.

THOSE who accept the Bible as God's Word recognize that they have a responsibility to teach others about the Creator. They also realize that the substance of what they teach about God must be true.

God rebuked Job's "comforters" for not doing that. "Jehovah proceeded to say to Eliphaz the Temanite: 'My anger has grown hot against you and your two companions, for you men have not spoken concerning me what is truthful as has my servant Job.'"—Job 42:7.

The apostle Paul, when discussing the resurrection, said that we would be "found false witnesses of God" if we were to teach something about God's activities that was not true. (1 Corinthians 15:15) This being so with the resurrection teaching, how careful we ought to be when we approach our teaching about who God is!



Church at Tagnon, France

The Trinity Doctrine

Nearly all churches of Christendom teach that God is a Trinity. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* calls the Trinity teaching "the central doctrine of the Christian religion," defining it this way:

"In the unity of the Godhead there are Three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, these Three Persons being truly

distinct one from another. Thus, in the words of the Athanasian Creed: 'the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God.' . . . The Persons are co-eternal and co-equal: all alike are uncreated and omnipotent."¹

The Baptist Encyclopædia gives a similar definition. It says:

"[Jesus] is . . . the eternal Jehovah . . . The Holy Spirit is Jehovah . . . The Son and

Spirit are placed on an exact equality with the Father. If he is Jehovah so are they."²

Anathemas Pronounced on Opposers

In 325 C.E., a council of bishops in Nicea in Asia Minor formulated a creed that declared the Son of God to be "true God" just as the Father was "true God." Part of that creed stated:

"But as for those who say, There was [a time] when [the Son] was not, and, Before being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or is created, or is subject to alteration or change—these the Catholic Church anathematizes."³

Thus, anyone who believed that the Son of God was not coeternal with the Father or that the Son was created was consigned to everlasting damnation. One can imagine the pressure to conform that this put on the mass of ordinary believers.

In the year 381 C.E., another council met in Constantinople and declared that the holy spirit should be worshiped and glorified just as the Father and Son were. One year later, in 382 C.E., another synod met in Constantinople and affirmed the full divinity of the holy spirit.⁴ That same year, before a council in Rome, Pope Damasus presented a collection of teachings to be condemned by the church. The document, called the Tome of Damasus, included the following statements:

"If anyone denies that the Father is eternal, that the Son is eternal, and that the Holy Spirit is eternal: he is a heretic."

"If anyone denies that the Son of God is true God, just as the Father is true God, having all power, knowing all things, and equal to the Father: he is a heretic."

"If anyone denies that the Holy Spirit . . . is true God . . . has all power and knows all things, . . . he is a heretic."

"If anyone denies that the three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are

true persons, equal, eternal, containing all things visible and invisible, that they are omnipotent, . . . he is a heretic."

"If anyone says that [the Son who was] made flesh was not in heaven with the Father while he was on earth: he is a heretic."

"If anyone, while saying that the Father is God and the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God, . . . does not say that they are one God, . . . he is a heretic."⁵

The Jesuit scholars who translated the foregoing from Latin added the comment: "Pope St. Celestine I (422-32) apparently considered these canons law; they may be considered definitions of faith."⁶ And scholar Edmund J. Fortman asserts that the tome represents "sound and solid trinitarian doctrine."⁷

If you are a member of a church that accepts the Trinity teaching, do these statements define your faith? And did you realize that to believe in the Trinity doctrine as taught by the churches requires you to believe that Jesus was in heaven while he was on earth? This teaching is similar to what fourth-century churchman Athanasius stated in his book *On the Incarnation*:

"The Word [Jesus] was not hedged in by His body, nor did His presence in the body prevent His being present elsewhere as well. When He moved His body He did not cease also to direct the universe by His Mind and might. . . . He is still Source of life to all the universe, present in every part of it, yet outside the whole."⁸

What the Trinity Doctrine Means

Some have concluded that simply ascribing deity or godship to Jesus is all that the Trinity teaching means. For others, belief in the Trinity simply means belief in Father, Son, and holy spirit.

However, a close examination of Christendom's creeds exposes how woefully inadequate such ideas are in relation to the formal

doctrine. Official definitions make it clear that the Trinity doctrine is not a simple idea. Instead, it is a complex set of separate ideas that have been brought together over a long period of time and interlocked into one another.

From the picture of the Trinity doctrine that appeared after the Council of Constantinople in 381 C.E., from the Tome of Damasus in 382 C.E., from the Athanasian Creed that came some time later, and from other documents, we can clearly determine what Christendom means by the Trinity doctrine. It includes the following definite ideas:

1. There are said to be three divine persons—the Father, the Son, and the holy spirit—in the Godhead.
2. Each of these separate persons is said to be eternal, none coming before or after the other in time.
3. Each is said to be almighty, with none greater or lesser than the other.
4. Each is said to be omniscient, knowing all things.
5. Each is said to be true God.
6. However, it is said that there are not three Gods but only one God.

Clearly the Trinity doctrine is a complex set of ideas including at least the above vital elements and involving even more, as revealed when the details are examined. But if we consider only the above basic ideas, it is apparent that if any are removed, what remains is no longer Christendom's Trinity. To have the complete picture, all these pieces must be present.

With this better understanding of the term "Trinity," we can now ask: Was it a teaching of Jesus and his disciples? If so, it should have appeared fully formed in the first century of our Common Era. And since what they taught is found in the Bible, then the Trinity doctrine is either a Bible teaching or it is not. If it is, it should be clearly taught in the Bible.

It is not reasonable to think that Jesus and his disciples would teach people about God and yet not tell them who God is, especially when some believers would be asked to give up even their lives for God. Hence, Jesus and his disciples should have given the highest priority to teaching others about this vital doctrine.

Examine the Scriptures

At Acts chapter 17, verse 11, people are called "noble-minded" because they were "*carefully examining the Scriptures daily as to whether these things were so,*" things taught by the apostle Paul. They were encouraged to use the Scriptures to confirm the teachings even of an apostle. You should do the same.

Keep in mind that the Scriptures are "inspired of God" and are to be used for "setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, that the man of God may be fully competent, *completely* equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) So the Bible is complete in doctrinal matters. If the Trinity doctrine is true, it should be there.

We invite you to search the Bible, especially the 27 books of the Christian Greek Scriptures, to see for yourself if Jesus and his disciples taught a Trinity. As you search, ask yourself:

1. Can I find any scripture that mentions "Trinity"?
2. Can I find any scripture that says that God is made up of three distinct persons, Father, Son, and holy spirit, but that the three are only one God?
3. Can I find any scripture that says that the Father, Son, and holy spirit are equal in all ways, such as in eternity, power, position, and wisdom?

Search as you may, you will not find one scripture that uses the word Trinity, nor will you find any that says that Father, Son, and holy spirit are equal in all ways, such as in eternity, power, position, and wisdom. Not

even a single scripture says that the Son is equal to the Father in those ways—and if there were such a scripture, it would establish not a Trinity but at most a “duality.” Nowhere does the Bible equate the holy spirit with the Father.

What Many Scholars Say

Many scholars, including Trinitarians, admit that the Bible does not contain an actual doctrine of a Trinity. For example, *The Encyclopedia of Religion* states:

“Exegetes and theologians today are in agreement that the Hebrew Bible does not contain a doctrine of the Trinity . . . Although the Hebrew Bible depicts God as the father of Israel and employs personifications of God such as Word (*davar*), Spirit (*ruah*), Wisdom (*hokhmah*), and Presence (*shekhinah*), it would go beyond the intention and spirit of the Old Testament to correlate these notions with later trinitarian doctrine.

“Further, exegetes and theologians agree that the New Testament also does not contain an explicit doctrine of the Trinity. God the Father is source of all that is (Pantokrator) and also the father of Jesus Christ; ‘Father’ is not a title for the first person of the Trinity but a synonym for God. . . .

“In the New Testament there is no reflective consciousness of the metaphysical nature of God (‘immanent trinity’), nor does

the New Testament contain the technical language of later doctrine (*hupostasis*, *ousia*, *substantia*, *subsistentia*, *prosōpon*, *persona*). . . . It is incontestable that the doctrine cannot be established on scriptural evidence alone.”⁹

Regarding the historical facts on this matter, *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* states:

“Neither the word Trinity nor the explicit doctrine appears in the New Testament . . .

“The doctrine developed gradually over several centuries and through many controversies. . . .

“It was not until the 4th century that the distinctness of the three and their unity were brought together in a single orthodox doctrine of one essence and three persons.”¹⁰

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* makes a similar statement regarding the origin of the Trinity:

“There is the recognition on the part of exegetes and Biblical theologians, including a constantly growing number of Roman Catholics, that one should not speak of Trinitarianism in the New Testament without serious qualification. There is also the closely parallel recognition on the part of historians of dogma and systematic theologians that when one does speak of an unqualified Trinitarianism, one has moved from the period of Christian origins to, say, the last quadrant of the 4th century. It was only then that what might be called the definitive Trinitarian dogma ‘one God in three Persons’ became thoroughly assimilated into Christian life and thought. . . .

“The formula itself does not reflect the immediate consciousness of the period of origins; it was the product of 3 centuries of doctrinal development.”¹¹

Is It “Implied”?

Trinitarians may say that the Bible “implies” a Trinity. But this claim is made long after the Bible was written. It is an attempt

In Our Next Issue

- Does Devotion to Relics Please God?
- Self-Control
—Why So Important?
- How Was Jesus Christ
a Prophet Like Moses?

to read into the Bible what clergymen of later times arbitrarily decided should be doctrine.

Ask yourself: Why would the Bible only "imply" its most important teaching—who God is? The Bible is clear on other basic teachings; why not on this, the most important one? Would not the Creator of the universe author a book that was clear on his being a Trinity if that were the case?

The reason the Bible does not clearly teach the Trinity doctrine is simple: It is not a Bible teaching. Had God been a Trinity, he would surely have made it clear so that Jesus and his disciples could have taught it to others. And that vital information would have been included in God's inspired Word. It would not have been left to imperfect men to struggle with centuries later.

When we examine texts offered by Trinitarians as evidence that the Bible "implies" a Trinity, what do we find? An honest appraisal reveals that the scriptures offered do not speak of Christendom's Trinity. Instead, theologians try to force into the scriptures their preconceived ideas of a Trinity. But those ideas are not in the scripture texts. In fact, those Trinitarian ideas conflict with the clear testimony of the Bible as a whole.

An example of such texts is found at Matthew 28:19, 20. There the Father, the Son, and the holy spirit are mentioned together. Some claim that this implies a Trinity. But read the verses yourself. Is there anything in those texts that says that the three are one God equal in eternity, power, position, and wisdom? No, there is not. It is the same with other texts that mention the three together.

As for those who see Trinitarian implications at Matthew 28:19, 20 in the use of "name" in the singular for the Father, Son, and holy spirit, please compare the use of "name," singular, for Abraham and Isaac at Genesis 48:16.—*King James Version; New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.*

Trinitarians also point to John 1:1 in some translations, where "the Word" is spoken of

as being "with God" and as being "God." But other Bible translations say that the Word was "a god" or was "divine," meaning not necessarily God but a powerful one. Furthermore, that Bible verse says that "the Word" was "with" God. That would reasonably exclude him from being that same God. And no matter what is concluded about "the Word," the fact is that only two persons are mentioned at John 1:1, not three. Over and over again, all texts used to try to support the Trinity doctrine utterly fail to do so when examined honestly.*

Another factor to consider is this: If the Trinity doctrine had been taught by Jesus and his disciples, then surely leading churchmen who came immediately after them would also have taught it. But did those men, today called the Apostolic Fathers, teach the Trinity doctrine? This question will be discussed in Part 2 of this series in a later issue of *The Watchtower*.

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* For a more complete discussion of such scripture texts, see the brochure *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

Kingdom Proclaimers Report

Truth Seekers Respond to Informal Witnessing

THE Bible informs us that sheeplike persons will respond to the Fine Shepherd's voice. (John 10:27) This has been the case in many lands, including Britain.

□ For example, in 1988, just before Christmas, Pamela, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, answered the telephone in the office where she worked and spoke to a salesman working for the same company in another part of England. At the conclusion of the call, the man asked: "Are you ready for Christmas yet?" Pamela said: "No!" "Aren't you a bit late?" the caller inquired. "I don't celebrate Christmas," Pamela replied. The man said that was unusual and asked why. Pamela told him that she was one of Jehovah's Witnesses and went on to explain that there was no command in

the Bible to celebrate Jesus' birthday, and besides, Jesus was not born on December 25. Moreover, Christmas was originally a pagan celebration. The caller said that it all sounded very interesting.

Three months later Pamela answered the phone, and the caller said: "Do you remember speaking to me before Christmas and telling me that you didn't celebrate Christmas? Well, I have found the truth!" It was the same man, and he explained that two weeks after Christmas, two Witnesses called at his home. He invited them in, and a Bible study was started. He related that he had made rapid progress in his studies. He told his live-in girlfriend that their life-style was not pleasing to Jehovah, so they sep-

arated, and now they were both attending meetings at the Kingdom Hall.

At the end of the year, they were accepted as unbaptized publishers, and early in 1990 they married. Then they were baptized together. A splendid result from a brief, informal witness over the telephone!

□ Jehovah blessed another sister who witnessed informally in England. When an insurance man came to her door, the sister asked him if he would like to be guaranteed good health, happiness, and everlasting life. He said yes and asked her which insurance policy she was talking about. Being shown from the Bible God's promise of everlasting life in Paradise on earth, he accepted a copy of the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* and read the whole publication in one evening. When he visited the sister again, he told her that the information was marvelous—if only he had the faith to believe it. The sister explained that he needed to study the Bible and attend meetings at the Kingdom Hall. A Bible study was arranged, and he began attending meetings. He was baptized in the fall of that same year. Just one year later, he married the daughter of the sister who had first witnessed to him. "So," the sister says, "I gained both a brother and a son-in-law through my informal witnessing!"

It is a fact that truth seekers respond when Bible truth is conveyed by informal witnessing. As Jesus said, his sheep listen to his voice.





‘JEHOVAH IS MY GOD, IN WHOM I WILL TRUST’

AS TOLD BY WILLI DIEHL

“Why do you want to go to Bethel?” This was my father’s question in the spring of 1931 when I told him of my wish to start Bethel service. My parents, who lived in Saarland, had been in the truth for ten years or so, and they had set us three boys a good example. The truth was their whole life, and I wanted to make it my whole life too.

BUT how had my parents learned about Jehovah and his sacred will? Dissatisfied with established religion, they had long searched for the truth. They tried a variety of churches and sects, discovering each, in turn, not to be the right one.

One day a handbill was left at our door announcing a talk with pictures and a film about God’s purpose called “Photo-Drama of Creation.” Father had to work when the “Photo-Drama” was to be shown, but he encouraged Mother to go. “Perhaps,” he said “there may be something to it.” After seeing it that evening, Mother was enthusiastic.

“I’ve found it at last!” she said. “Come and see for yourself tomorrow evening. It is the truth we have been searching for.” That was in 1921.

As spirit-anointed Christians, my parents remained faithful until they died, Father in 1944, after having been incarcerated by the Nazis a number of times, and Mother in 1970. She too spent a long time in prison under the Nazi regime.

My Parents’ Exemplary Zeal

Before they died, my parents were very active in field service. Mother was especially

zealous in distributing the convention resolutions released from 1922 to 1928. *Ecclesiastics Indicted*, embodying a resolution adopted in 1924 contained sharp criticism of the clergy. Distributing it took courage. The publishers were up at four o'clock in the morning, pushing the tracts under the doors. Although I was only 12, my parents allowed me to take part. We often started at five o'clock in the morning, riding on bicycles from three to four hours to reach remote territory. We hid the bicycles in the bushes, and I guarded them while others worked the village. In the afternoon we pedaled home, and in the evening we walked an hour to the meeting.

Later, someone younger was left to guard the bicycles, and I went along with the publishers. But no one thought of training me. They simply told me which street to work! With pounding heart I crept up to the first house, hoping no one would be home. Alas, a man opened the door. I was speechless. Fumbling, I pointed to the book in my bag. "Is it from Judge Rutherford?" he asked. I stuttered a reply. "Is it new, one that I don't have?" "Yes, it's new," I confirmed. "Then I must have it. How much is it?" This gave me the courage to continue.

In 1924 the grown-ups talked a lot about 1925. We once visited a family of Bible Students, and I heard one brother ask: "If the Lord takes us away, what will become of our children?" Mother, positive as ever, replied: "The Lord will know how to take care of them." The subject fascinated me. What did it all mean? The year 1925 came and went, and nothing happened. However, my parents did not let up in their zeal.

Father's Wise Admonition

Finally, in 1931, I told my father what I wanted to do with my life. "Why do you want to go to Bethel?" my father asked in reply. "Because I want to serve Jehovah," I answered. "Suppose you are accepted for

Bethel," he continued. "Do you realize that the brothers there are not angels? They are imperfect and make mistakes. I am afraid that this might cause you to run away and even give up the faith. Be sure to think carefully about it."

I was shocked to hear such a thing, but after weighing matters for some days, I repeated my wish to apply for Bethel. "Tell me again why you want to go," he said. "Because I want to serve Jehovah," I repeated. "My boy, never forget that. If you are invited, remember *why* you are going. If you see something wrong, do not be overly concerned. Even if you are treated wrongly, do not run away. Never forget why you are at Bethel—because you want to serve Jehovah! Just attend to your work and trust in him."

So it was that early on the afternoon of November 17, 1931, I arrived at Bethel in Bern, Switzerland. I shared a room with three others and worked in the printery, learning to operate a small hand-fed printing press. One of the first items I was assigned to print was *The Watchtower* in Romanian.

A Message From Heaven!

In 1933 the Society published *The Crisis*, a booklet containing three radio talks that Brother Rutherford had given in the United States. Brother Harbeck, the branch servant, informed the Bethel family at breakfast one morning that the booklet was to be circulated in a special way. Advertising leaflets would be dropped from a small rented airplane flying over Bern, while publishers would stand on the streets offering the booklet to the public. "Which of you young brothers is prepared to go up in the plane?" he asked. "Hand your names in straightaway." I did, and Brother Harbeck later announced that I had been chosen.

On the big day, we drove with cartons of leaflets to the airport. I seated myself be-



Brother Diehl early in his Bethel career

The Golden Age (now *Awake!*) in Polish. In 1934 we began using phonographs, and I assisted in constructing them. I found great joy in going from house to house with recorded Bible talks. Many householders were curious about this small contraption, and often the whole family would gather to listen, only to disappear one by one. When the whole family had left, I simply moved on.

Staying Active During Wartime

After World War I, my native Saarland was separated from Germany and governed under the auspices of the League of Nations. Thus, the Saarland issued its own identity documents. In 1935 a plebiscite was held to decide whether its citizens desired to be reunited with Germany. I took the opportunity to visit my family, knowing that I would be unable to do so should the Saarland come under Nazi control. And indeed, for many years thereafter, I heard nothing from my parents or my brothers.

Although spared direct involvement in World War II, Switzerland became completely isolated as Germany occupied neighboring countries one by one. We had been printing literature for all of Europe apart from Germany, but now no orders could be filled. Brother Zürcher, then branch servant, told us that we had practically no money left, and he invited us to find work outside Bethel until things normalized. I was allowed to stay, however, as there were a few things to print for the thousand or so local publishers.

The Bethel family will never forget July 5, 1940. Right after lunch a military truck drove up. Soldiers jumped out and burst into Bethel. We were ordered to stand still, and each of us was individually guarded by an armed soldier. We were herded into the dining hall while the rest of the building was searched. The authorities suspected us

hind the pilot and piled the leaflets onto the seat alongside me. My precise instructions were: Roll the handbills into hundreds, and throw each bundle out the window off to one side with as much force as possible. Carelessness could cause the bills to become entangled in the tail of the aircraft, creating problems. But all went well. Brothers later said what a thrill it was to see this 'message from heaven.' It had the desired effect, and many booklets were placed, even if some people did phone to complain that their flower beds were covered with leaflets.

Thankful for Every Privilege of Service

Daily I thanked Jehovah for the joy and satisfaction of Bethel service. In the congregation, I was assigned to open the Kingdom Hall, to arrange the chairs in an orderly way, and to place a glass of fresh water on the speaker's stand. I considered this a great honor.

At Bethel, I eventually worked on the large flatbed printing press used to print

of telling others to refuse military service, but they failed to find any evidence.

During the war years, I was congregation servant in both Thun and Frutigen. That meant that my weekend schedule was very full. Each Saturday, immediately after lunch, I rode my bicycle 30 miles to Frutigen, where I conducted the *Watchtower* Study in the evening. Sunday morning I accompanied the publishers in field service. Then, early in the afternoon, I was off to Interlaken to conduct a Congregation Book Study and later in the afternoon to conduct a Bible study with a family in Spiez. To finish off the day, I conducted the *Watchtower* Study in Thun.

Late at night, with all my activity completed, I sang and whistled my way back to Bern, deeply satisfied. Cars were few and far between. The hilly landscape, draped in the blackout of war, was tranquil and undisturbed, shimmering occasionally in the moonlight. How those weekends enriched my life and renewed my strength!

A Visit With Unexpected Results

In the autumn of 1945, Brother Knorr visited us. One day he entered the factory as I was standing on the rotary press. "Come on down!" he called. "How would you like to attend Gilead School?" I was flabbergasted. "If you think I am up to it, I should be happy to," I replied. Invitations for Brother Fred Borys, Sister Alice Berner, and me arrived in the spring of 1946. But because of having been born in the Saarland, I was stateless and therefore had to apply to Washington, D.C., U.S.A., for a special visa.

Whereas the others left on time, I had to wait for a reply to my application. When school began on September 4, I was still in Switzerland, slowly losing hope. Then the U.S. Consulate called, informing me that my visa had arrived. I immediately tried to

make travel arrangements and finally got a berth on a troopship sailing from Marseilles to New York. What an experience! The *Athos II* was overcrowded. I was allocated a couch in an open room. On the second day out, an explosion in the engine room brought the ship to a standstill. Passengers and crew alike were uneasy, fearing we might sink. This gave me a marvelous opportunity to witness about the resurrection hope.

It took two days to repair the ship, after which we continued at reduced speed. We got to New York 18 days later, only to be stranded on board by a dock strike. After negotiations, we were finally able to leave the ship. I had telegraphed the Society about the situation, and as I left customs and immigration, a man asked: "Are you Mr. Diehl?" He was one of Brother Knorr's assistants, and he put me on the night train to Ithaca, near Gilead School, where I arrived shortly after eight the next morning. How thrilled I was to be there at last, able to attend Gilead's first international class!

Enduring Despite Difficulties

Graduation of the eighth class of Gilead was February 9, 1947, and suspense ran high. Where would we be sent? For me, "the measuring lines" fell on the Society's newly opened printery at Wiesbaden, Germany. (Psalm 16:6) I returned to Bern to apply for necessary papers, but the U.S. occupation forces in Germany were permitting entry only to persons who had lived there before the war. Since I had not, I needed a new assignment from Brooklyn headquarters. It turned out to be circuit work in Switzerland, which I accepted with full trust in Jehovah. But while awaiting this assignment, I was asked one day to show the Bethel premises to three visiting sisters. One of them was a pioneer named Marthe Mehl.

In May 1949, I informed headquarters in Bern that I planned to marry Marthe and that we desired to remain in full-time service. The reaction? No privileges other than regular pioneering. This we started in Biel, following our wedding in June 1949. I was not permitted to give talks, nor could we look for accommodations for delegates to a forthcoming assembly, even though we had been recommended by our circuit overseer for this privilege. Many no longer greeted us, treating us like disfellowshipped persons, even though we were pioneers.

We knew, however, that getting married was not unscriptural, so we took refuge in prayer and put our trust in Jehovah. Actually, this treatment did not reflect the Society's view. It was simply a result of the misapplication of organizational guidelines.

Brother Knorr Returns

In 1951, Brother Knorr once again visited Switzerland. After he had delivered a talk, I was informed that he wished to speak with me. Although somewhat apprehensive, I was happy that he was pleased to see me. He asked if we would be willing to accept an assignment at a proposed missionary home in Geneva. Naturally we were delighted, although leaving Biel would not be without regrets. The next day a further request from Brother Knorr reached us. Would we be willing to resume circuit work, since this needed additional attention in Switzerland? We agreed immediately. My attitude has always been to accept any assignment offered.

Our activity in circuit work in eastern Switzerland was greatly blessed. We traveled between congregations by train, carrying all our possessions in two suitcases. Brothers often met us at the station with bicycles, for few of them had cars in those days. Years later a brother put a car at our disposal, which made our service somewhat easier.

Some New Surprises

What a thrill when in 1964 my wife and I were invited to the 40th class of Gilead, the last class of the comprehensive, ten-month course, which was now shortened to eight months. Marthe had to learn English quickly, but she managed this admirably. Speculation was rife as to where we would be sent. My attitude was: 'I don't mind where I'm assigned, just as long as it's not behind a desk!'

But that is exactly what happened! On graduation day, September 13, 1965, I was appointed branch servant of Switzerland. Bethel was to be a new experience for Marthe. For me, it meant going back to the "House of God," not to the printery, where I had served from 1931 to 1946, but into the office. I had many new things to learn, but with Jehovah's help I was able to do so.

Looking Back

Throughout 60 years of full-time service, I have trusted in Jehovah completely, just as my father told me I should. And Jehovah has poured out manifold blessings. Marthe has been a source of tremendous encouragement in times of disappointment or when assignments threatened to overwhelm me, truly a loyal companion with absolute confidence in Jehovah.

Jehovah be praised for the many service privileges I have enjoyed! I still serve as the Branch Committee coordinator in Thun, and several times I have traveled as zone overseer. No matter what I have been asked to do, I have always looked to Jehovah for guidance. Despite my many mistakes and shortcomings, I fervently believe that Jehovah has forgiven me through Christ. May I continue to be well pleasing to him. And may he continue to guide my footsteps, as I constantly look to him as "my God, in whom I will trust."—Psalm 91:2.

Do You Appreciate Jehovah's Earthly Organization?

LOOK at a well-cut, magnificent diamond, and what do you see? A jewel that is truly a thing of beauty. Now examine that diamond through a microscope, and what do you see? Likely there are scratches, cracks, inclusions, or other flaws.

Would you destroy or discard the diamond simply because of the way it looks under a microscope? Of course not! Just step away from the microscope, and you can still appreciate the beauty and extraordinary brilliance that makes it stand out among other gems.

Like a diamond, Jehovah's earthly organization stands out in many ways. No other organization on earth enjoys an intimate relationship with the Creator. In a letter to first-century anointed Christians, who cherished a heavenly hope, the apostle Peter referred to this special relationship. He said: "You are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession.'" (1 Peter 2:9) Today a great crowd of "other sheep," with the hope of everlasting life on earth, have joined the remaining ones of that "holy nation" in worshiping God. (John 10:16) Together these two groups form an organization that stands out like a beautiful and extraordinarily brilliant gem.

Avoid Viewing Others With a Critical Eye

But we must recognize that this worldwide organization consists of imperfect humans. So, what would happen if we viewed it through a figurative microscope? Yes, we would find sinful tendencies and personali-

ty flaws in the individuals who are part of it.—Romans 3:23.

The apostle Paul admitted that he had such flaws. He said: "When I wish to do what is right, what is bad is present with me." (Romans 7:21) Every Christian experiences the same conflict. All make mistakes. Moreover, sooner or later many suffer because of someone else's mistakes. Should we be discouraged or disenchanted when the flaws and imperfections of fellow Christians come to light? Should that diminish our appreciation for Jehovah's organization? Of course not! Rather, we should step away from the microscope, as it were, and quit focusing on the imperfections of individuals.

The Scriptures list a number of traits that would identify those upon whom the holy spirit is operative. Some of them are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22, 23) In contrast, the religious, political, and business organizations of this world often display what the Bible refers to as the works of the flesh: "enmities, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, contentions, divisions, sects, envies, drunken bouts, revelries, and things like these." (Galatians 5:20, 21) Thus, like a brilliant diamond among ordinary rocks, Jehovah's people stand out in the midst of a spiritually corrupt world.—Matthew 5:14-16.

"Fitly United in the Same Mind"

One outstanding feature of a diamond is its close-knit, strongly bonded atomic structure. Similarly, *Jehovah's earthly organization* manifests an unmatched unity

in doctrine and brotherhood. Those who are part of that organization apply the admonition found in the Bible at 1 Corinthians 1:10, which states: "Now I exhort you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you should all speak in agreement, and that there should not be divisions among you, but that you may be fitly united in the same mind and in the same line of thought."

Jehovah's Witnesses have also risen above racial prejudice and national pride. Having "the wisdom from above," they do not 'make partial distinctions.' (James 3:17) We give glory to Jehovah for what he has accomplished in this regard in an organization made up of imperfect humans.

In contrast, the magazine *The Christian Century*, speaking of the year 1990, stated that "the world seemed more than ever divided by religious parties and by ethnic and nationalist sentiments intimately tied to religious beliefs. From India to Europe and from the Middle East to the Pacific, religion mingled with ethnic and nationalist allegiances—often with politically volatile results." Clearly, those who desire to serve God can only turn to the one organization that enjoys Jehovah's spirit and blessing.

'Like a Diamond, I Have Made Your Forehead'

The diamond is the hardest naturally occurring substance known to man. The Bible refers to the use of diamonds in scratching or engraving hard materials. (Jeremiah 17:1) Notice, too, Jehovah's words to Ezekiel: "Look! I have made your face exactly as hard as their faces and your forehead exactly as hard as their foreheads. Like a diamond, harder than flint, I have made your forehead." (Ezekiel 3:8, 9) Jehovah gave Ezekiel a diamond-hard determination that enabled him to prophesy to an obstinate people.—Ezekiel 2:6.

Similarly today, Jehovah has granted his people diamondlike hardness in the face of great opposition. Jehovah's Witnesses have endured legal bans, mob actions, lynchings, beatings, unjust imprisonment, torture, even executions. Yet, they have shown their faith to be unbreakable.

"My Own Servants Will Rejoice"

The Bible predicted a time when people would have a "form of godly devotion" but prove "false to its power." (2 Timothy 3:1, 5) One newspaper reports that "Protestants, Roman Catholics and Jews are all concerned with the decline" in their churches and synagogues. Jehovah's Witnesses, on the other hand, are serious students of the Bible. In growing numbers, young and old, men and women, all of them attend several weekly meetings. A letter to a newspaper stated about them that "their religion is the most precious thing they have, and their only concern is to share it with others."

Such an attitude makes Jehovah's organization stand out like a precious diamond. And the credit goes to the One who strengthens and guides imperfect individuals through his holy spirit.

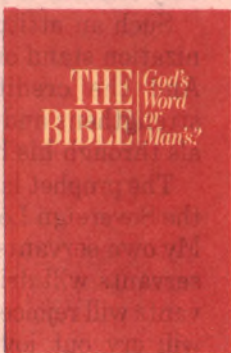
The prophet Isaiah foretold: "This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said: 'Look! My own servants will eat . . . Look! My own servants will drink . . . Look! My own servants will rejoice . . . Look! My own servants will cry out joyfully because of the good condition of the heart.'"—Isaiah 65:13, 14.

Today we see the fulfillment of this prophecy. God cares for his people in an extraordinary way! Hence, if you associate with them, do not allow any negative thinking to rob you of your joy. Look at the whole picture and remember: No other organization on earth enjoys God's special care and protection. Never cease to treasure your privilege of being a part of it.

Searching for Peace of Mind

That is what a woman from Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A., said that she had been searching for in religion for many years. "Up until eight months ago," she writes, "I thought I would never have it. Then the Witnesses came to my door in February. I have been studying for eight months, and I realize that you are the only ones preparing people for God's Kingdom."

This woman added: "One day my Witness friend gave me a book called *The Bible—God's Word or Man's?* I have never enjoyed a book so much as this one. It is definitely one of the Watch Tower Society's best publications."



Daniel's prophecies of the march of the world powers were fulfilled so accurately that modern critics think they were written after the fulfillment