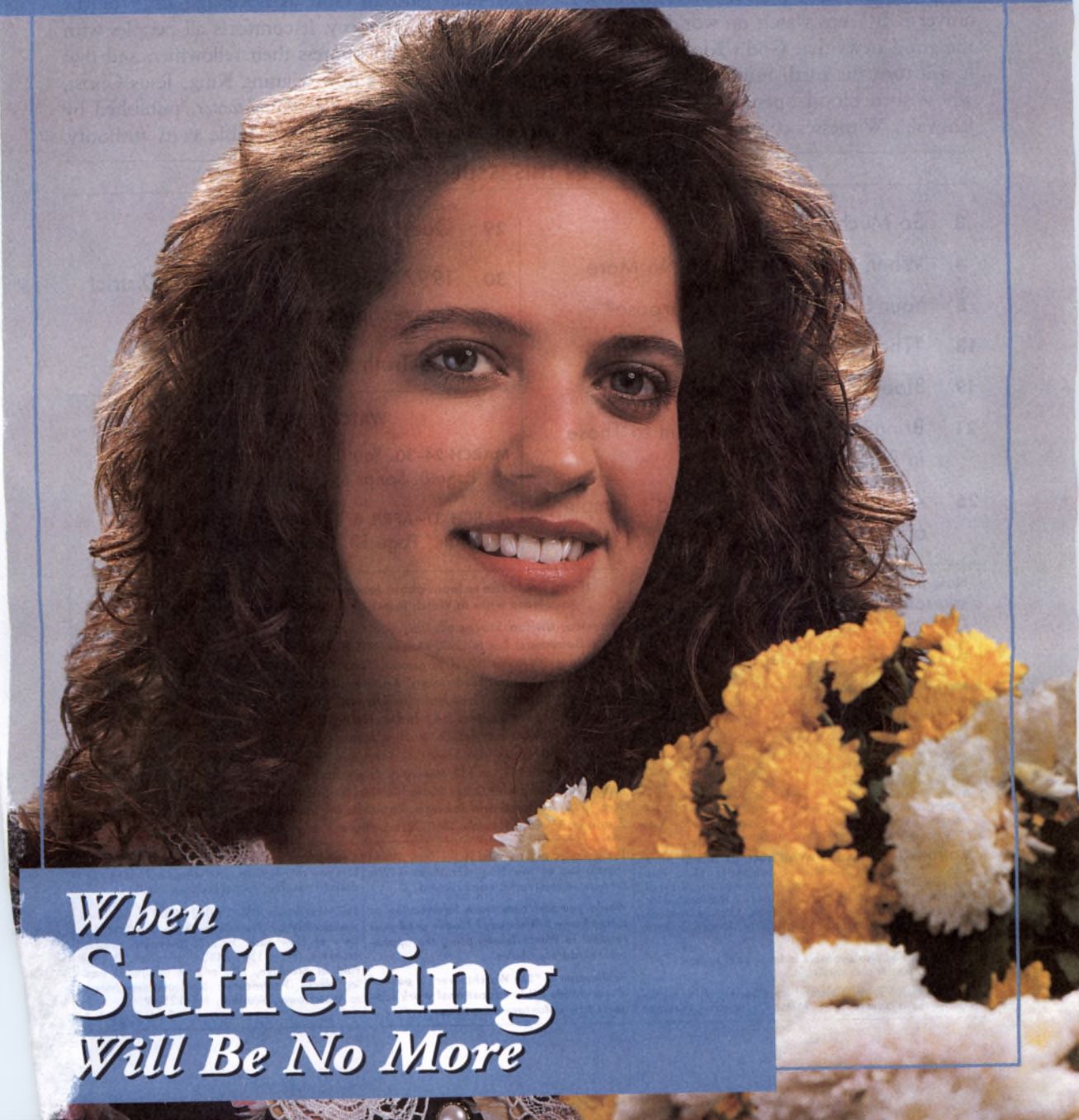


FEBRUARY 15, 1997

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



When
Suffering
Will Be No More

THE WATCHTOWER[®]

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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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.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 So Much Suffering
- 4 When Suffering Will Be No More
- 8 Your Life—What Is Its Purpose?
- 13 "The Whole Obligation of Man"
- 19 Bioethics and Bloodless Surgery
- 21 Bringing Spiritual Freedom to Those in Prison
- 25 Agreement Between "God's Temple" and Idols in Greece?

- 29 Questions From Readers
- 30 1997 "Faith in God's Word" District Convention Locations
- 32 The Truth About Hell

WATCHTOWER STUDIES

MARCH 24-30: Your Life—What Is Its Purpose? Page 8. Songs to be used: 42, 131.

MARCH 31-APRIL 6: "The Whole Obligation of Man." Page 13. Songs to be used: 214, 55.

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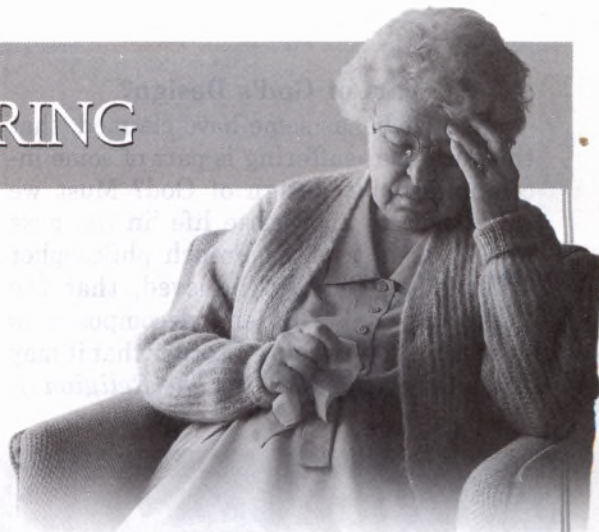
SO MUCH SUFFERING

“WHY is there all this terrible individual and collective suffering . . . ? God is supposed to be the embodiment of all meaning and yet there is so much that is pointless in this world, so much meaningless suffering and senseless sin. Is this God perhaps what Nietzsche accused him of being: a despot, impostor, swindler, executioner?”—*On Being a Christian*, by Hans Küng.

You can see that Catholic theologian Hans Küng is simply presenting a problem that perplexes many—why does an all-powerful, loving God allow so much suffering? Have you not heard people ask such a question? Anyone with compassion grieves at what Küng describes as “an endless stream of blood, sweat and tears, pain, sorrow and fear, loneliness and death.” It is, in fact, more like a torrent, a flood of horror and anguish that has blighted the lives of millions throughout history.—Job 14:1.

Filled With “Trouble and Hurtful Things”

Think of the suffering that results from war, the pain felt not only by the immediate victims but also by those left behind to grieve, such as the parents and relatives of child victims and others who have been brutalized. “Over the last 10 years,” said the Red Cross recently, “1.5 million children were killed in armed conflicts.” In Rwanda in 1994, the Red Cross reports, “hundreds



of thousands of men, women and children had been brutally and systematically slaughtered.”

We also should not overlook the pain caused by pedophile perverts. Stated one grieving mother, who said her son committed suicide after being abused by a child-care worker: “The man who abused my son . . . destroyed him and a number of other boys in the most systematic, perverted way imaginable.” And what of the nightmare of pain felt by the victims of callous murderers or serial killers, like those caught in Britain who “abducted, raped, tortured and killed with impunity for 25 years”? Throughout history there seems to have been no limit to what men and women have inflicted on one another in the way of pain and suffering.—Ecclesiastes 4:1-3.

Add to this the suffering caused by emotional and physical illnesses and the terrible pain of grief that ravages families when loved ones die prematurely. There is also the anguish felt by the victims of famine or other so-called natural disasters. Few will argue with Moses’ statement that our 70 or 80 years are filled with “trouble and hurtful things.”—Psalm 90:10.



WHO photo by P. Almasy

Part of God's Design?

Might it be, as some have claimed, that this incessant suffering is part of some incomprehensible design of God? Must we suffer now to appreciate life 'in the next world'? Is it true, as French philosopher Teilhard de Chardin believed, that the "suffering that kills and decomposes, is necessary to the being in order that it may live and become spirit"? (*The Religion of*

Teilhard de Chardin; italics ours.) Surely not!

Would a considerate designer deliberately create a deadly environment and then claim to be compassionate when he rescued people from its effects? Hardly! Why would a loving God do such a thing? So why does God permit suffering? Will suffering ever end? The next article will discuss these questions.

WHEN SUFFERING WILL BE NO MORE

SUFFERING was not part of God's original purpose for the human family. He did not design it, nor does he want it. 'If that is so,' you may ask, 'how did it start, and why has God allowed it to continue till now?'—Compare James 1:13.

The answer is found in the earliest record of man's history, the Bible, particularly the book of Genesis. It says that our first parents, Adam and Eve, followed Satan the Devil in his rebellion against God. Their actions raised fundamental issues that struck at the very foundation of universal law and order. When they claimed the right to decide for themselves what was good and what was bad, they challenged God's sovereignty. They questioned his right to rule and to be the sole arbiter of "good and bad."—Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-5.

Why Not Immediately Enforce His Will?

'Why, then, did God not immediately enforce his will?' you may ask. To many, the

matter seems so simple. 'God had the power. He should have used it to destroy the rebels,' they say. (Psalm 147:5) But ask yourself this, 'Do I unhesitatingly applaud all who use superior power to enforce their will? Do I not instinctively feel a sense of revulsion when a dictator uses death squads to eliminate his enemies?' Most reasonable people recoil at such a thing.

'Ah,' you say, 'but if God wielded that power, no one would question his actions.' Are you sure? Is it not true that people do question God's exercise of power? They question *why he has not used it* at times, as in his tolerance of evil. And they question *why he has used it* at other times. Even faithful Abraham had a problem with God's use of power against His enemies. Remember when God decided to destroy Sodom. Abraham mistakenly feared that good people would die with the bad. He cried out: "It is unthinkable of you that you are acting in this manner to put to death the righteous man with the wicked one." (Genesis

18:25) Even right-minded people like Abraham need assurance that absolute power will not be abused.

Of course, God could instantly have destroyed Adam, Eve, and Satan. But think how that could have affected the other angels or future creations, who might later

to abuse? Do we condone any government's or ruler's attempts to take that away?

What alternative was there, then, to God's immediate use of power to enforce the law? Jehovah God determined that the rebellion would best be dealt with by allowing a temporary period of independence from his rule for those who rejected his laws. This would allow the human family, descended from Adam and Eve, a limited

SOME RULERS HAVE PRACTICED
MIND CONTROL, ROBBING
THEIR VICTIMS OF FREE WILL



UPI/Bettmann

become aware of his actions. Might this leave them with nagging questions about the rightness of God's rule? Would it not expose God to the charge that he was, in fact, some kind of totalitarian despot, as Nietzsche described him, a God who ruthlessly eliminates anyone who opposes him?

Why Not Make People Do What Is Right?

'Could not God just make people do what is right?' some may ask. Well, consider this also. All through history, governments have tried to make people conform to their way of thinking. Some governments or individual rulers have practiced various forms of mind control, perhaps using drugs or surgery, robbing their victims of the wonderful gift of free will. Do we not treasure being free moral agents, even if that gift is open

time in which to govern themselves without being subject to God's law. Why did he do this? Because he knew that, in time, incontrovertible evidence would build up, proving that his way of ruling is always right and just, even when he uses his limitless power to enforce his will, and that any rebellion against him will result, sooner or later, in calamity.—Deuteronomy 32:4; Job 34:10-12; Jeremiah 10:23.

What About All the Innocent Victims?

'In the meantime, what about all the innocent victims?' you may ask. 'Is it really worth their pain to prove some point of law?' Well, God has not allowed evil to exist just to prove some obscure point of law. On the contrary, it is to establish once and for all the fundamental truth that he alone is sovereign and that obedience to his laws is essential for the continued peace and happiness of all his creations.

One crucial thing to keep in mind is that

God knows that he can undo completely any harm that this may bring to the human family. He knows that in the long term, the temporary period of pain and suffering will have a beneficial outcome. Think of the mother who holds her child firmly while the doctor inflicts the pain of injecting a vaccine to give protection against some disease that would otherwise kill the child. No mother wants her child to feel pain. No doctor wants to cause distress to his patient. At the time, the child does not appreciate the reason for the pain, but later he will understand why it was permitted.

Real Solace to Those Suffering?

Some may feel that just knowing these things may be of little solace to those who are suffering. Hans Küng makes the point that a rational explanation for the existence of suffering is "about as helpful to the sufferer as a lecture on the chemistry of food-stuffs to a starving man." He asks: "Can all the shrewd reasoning really give new heart to man, almost overwhelmed by suffering?" Well, all the "shrewd reasoning" of men who ignore God's Word, the Bible, has not given heart to those who are suffering. Such human reasoning has only added to the problem by suggesting that God meant for man to suffer and that the earth was designed as a valley of tears or a testing ground for those who will eventually gain life in heaven. What a blasphemy!

Yet, the Bible itself does give real solace. It not only provides a consistent explanation for the existence of suffering but also builds confidence in God's sure promise that he will undo all the harm that this temporary permission of suffering has caused.

The "Restoration of All Things"

Very soon now God will restore things to the way he meant them to be before

his first human creations rebelled. His appointed time for man's independent rule has nearly run out. We are living at the time when he will send forth "Jesus, whom heaven, indeed, must hold within itself until the times of restoration of all things of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets of old time."—Acts 3:20, 21.

What will Jesus Christ do? He will rid the earth of all God's enemies. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10) This will be no summary execution, such as is meted out by human dictators. The mountain of evidence proving the catastrophic consequences of man's misrule will show that God is fully justified in soon using his limitless power to enforce his will. (Revelation 11:17, 18) Initially this will mean "tribulation" such as the earth has never experienced before, similar to but much greater than the Flood of Noah's day. (Matthew 24:21, 29-31, 36-39) Those who survive this "great tribulation" will experience "seasons of refreshing" when they see the fulfillment of all God's promises given "through the mouth of his holy prophets." (Acts 3:19; Revelation 7:14-17) What has God promised?

Well, God's prophets of old say that there will be an end to the suffering caused by war and bloodshed. For example, Psalm 46:9 tells us: "He is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth." No more innocent victims and tragic refugees, those raped, crippled, and killed in cruel wars! Says the prophet Isaiah: "Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore."—Isaiah 2:4.

The prophets also foretell an end to the suffering caused by crime and injustice. Proverbs 2:21, 22 promises that "the upright are the ones that will reside in the earth" and that those who cause pain and suffering "will be torn away from it." No



When suffering is no more, all will enjoy life to the full

longer will 'man dominate man to his injury.' (Ecclesiastes 8:9) All the wicked will be removed forever. (Psalm 37:10, 38) Everyone will be able to live in peace and security, free from suffering.—Micah 4:4.

Moreover, the prophets also promise that there will be an end to suffering caused by physical and emotional maladies. (Isaiah 33:24) Isaiah promises that the blind, the deaf, the disabled, and all those afflicted with sickness and disease will be cured. (Isaiah 35:5, 6) God will even reverse the effects of death. Jesus foretold that "all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out." (John 5:28, 29) In his vision of "a new heaven and a new earth," the apostle John was told that "God himself . . . will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore." (Revelation 21:1-4) Imagine that! No pain,

no tears, no outcry, no death—no suffering anymore!

Whatever tragedies may have occurred during this temporary toleration of evil will all be remedied. Even the memories of human pain and suffering—never purposed by God—will be totally erased. "The former distresses will actually be forgotten . . . The former things will not be called to mind," Isaiah prophesied. (Isaiah 65:16, 17) God's original purpose for a perfect human family living in total peace and happiness on a paradise earth will be fully realized. (Isaiah 45:18) Confidence in his sovereignty will be absolute. What a privilege to be living at the time when God will end all human suffering, a time when he shows that he is not some kind of "despot, impostor, swindler, executioner," as Nietzsche charged, but that he is always loving, wise, and just in his exercise of absolute power!

YOUR LIFE—WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?

"I was leading my heart with wisdom . . . until I could see what good there was to the sons of mankind . . . for the number of the days of their life."—ECCLESIASTES 2:3.

YOU are interested in yourself, are you not? That is normal. Thus we eat each day, we sleep when we are tired, and we like to be with friends and loved ones. At times we play games, swim, or do other things that we enjoy, reflecting a balanced interest in ourselves.

² Such self-interest harmonizes with what God moved Solomon to write: "With a man there is nothing better than that he should eat and indeed drink and cause his soul to see good because of his hard work." Based on experience, Solomon added: "This too I have seen, even I, that this is from the hand of the true God. For who eats and who drinks better than I do?" —Ecclesiastes 2:24, 25.

³ Yet you know that life is more than eating, drinking, sleeping, and doing some good. We have pains, disappointments, and worries. And we seem too busy to reflect on the meaning of our life. Is that not the case with you? Vermont Royster, former editor of *The Wall Street Journal*, after noting our expanded knowledge and



skills, wrote: "Here is a curious thing. In the contemplation of man himself, of his dilemmas, of his place in this universe, we are little further along than when time began. We are still left with questions of who we are and why we are and where we are going."

⁴ How would you answer the questions: Who are we? Why are we here? And where are we going? Last July, Mr. Royster died. Do you suppose that he had by then found satisfying answers? More to the point, Is there a way that you can do so? And how can this help you to enjoy a happier, more meaningful life? Let us see.

A Prime Source of Insight

⁵ If we were on our own looking for the purpose of our life, we might have little or no success, as has been true of most men and women, even those with vast learning and experience. But we are not left on our own. Our Creator has provided help. When you think about it, is he not the ultimate Source of insight and wisdom, being "from

1, 2. Why is it not wrong to have a reasonable interest in oneself?

3. What puzzling questions do most find unanswerable?

4. Why should each of us want to be able to answer questions that involve us?

5. Why ought we look to God when we are seeking insight into questions about the meaning of life?

time indefinite to time indefinite" and having complete knowledge of the universe and history? (Psalm 90:1, 2) He created humans and has observed the whole human experience, so he is the One to whom we should look for insight, not to imperfect humans, with their limited knowledge and perceptions.—Psalm 14:1-3; Romans 3:10-12.

⁶ While we cannot expect the Creator to whisper into our ear a revelation on the meaning of life, he has provided a source of insight—his inspired Word. (Psalm 32:8; 111:10) The book of Ecclesiastes is particularly valuable in this regard. God inspired its writer, so that "Solomon's wisdom was vaster than the wisdom of all the Orientals." (1 Kings 3:6-12; 4:30-34) "The wisdom of Solomon" so impressed a visiting monarch that she said that the half had not been told and that those listening to his wisdom would be happy indeed.* (1 Kings 10:4-8) We too can gain insight and happiness from the divine wisdom our Creator provided by means of Solomon.

⁷ Ecclesiastes reflects God-given wisdom, which affected Solomon's heart and brain. Having the time, resources, and insight to do so, Solomon examined "everything that [had] been done under the heavens." He saw that most of it "was vanity and a striving after wind," which is an inspired assessment that we should bear in mind when thinking about our purpose in life. (Ec-

* "The narrative about the Queen of Sheba emphasizes Solomon's wisdom, and the story has often been called a legend (1 K. 10:1-13). But the context indicates that her visit to Solomon was really connected with trade and as such is intelligible; its historicity need not be doubted."—*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (1988), Volume IV, page 567.

6. (a) How has the Creator provided needed insight? (b) How is Solomon involved?

7. (a) What did Solomon conclude about most activities under the heavens? (b) What illustrates Solomon's realistic evaluations?

clesiastes 1:13, 14, 16) Solomon was being frank, realistic. For example, reflect on his words found at Ecclesiastes 1:15, 18. You know that over the centuries men have tried various forms of government, sometimes sincerely attempting to solve problems and to better people's lot. Have any, though, really straightened out all the "crooked" things of this imperfect system? And you may have seen that the greater a person's knowledge, the more keenly he realizes that in a short life span, it is impossible to correct things fully. Such awareness brings frustration to many, but not necessarily to us.

⁸ Another point to consider is the repetitious cycles affecting us, such as the rising and setting of the sun or the movements of wind and water. They existed in the days of Moses, Solomon, Napoléon, and our great-grandfathers. And they continue. Similarly, "a generation is going, and a generation is coming." (Ecclesiastes 1:4-7) From a human viewpoint, little has changed. People ancient and modern have had comparable activities, hopes, ambitions, and accomplishments. Even if in a human way, some individual made a notable name or was outstanding in beauty or ability, where is that person now? Gone and probably forgotten. That is not being morbid. Most people cannot even name their great-grandparents or tell where they were born and buried. You can see why Solomon realistically saw vanity in human undertakings and efforts.—Ecclesiastes 1:9-11.

⁹ Rather than making us frustrated, this divine insight into mankind's basic situation can have a positive effect, moving us to avoid attaching unwarranted values to goals or pursuits that will soon be gone and

8. What cycles have long existed?

9. How may we be helped by gaining realistic insight into mankind's situation?



How does your life differ significantly from those of animals?

forgotten. It ought to help us evaluate what we are getting out of life and what we are trying to accomplish. To illustrate, rather than being ascetics, we can find joy in balanced eating and drinking. (Ecclesiastes 2: 24) And, as we shall see, Solomon reaches a very positive and optimistic conclusion. Briefly, it is that we should deeply appreciate our relationship with our Creator, who can help us have an eternally happy, purposeful future. Solomon stressed: "The conclusion of the matter, everything having been heard, is: Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man."—Ecclesiastes 12:13.

Purpose in View of Life's Cycles

¹⁰ The divine wisdom reflected in Ecclesiastes can further help us in considering our purpose in life. How so? In that Solomon focused realistically on other truths that we may seldom think about. One involves similarities between humans and animals. Jesus likened his followers to sheep, yet people generally do not enjoy being compared to animals. (John 10:11-16) Still Solomon brought up certain undeniable facts: "The true God is going to select [the sons of mankind], that they may see that they themselves are beasts. For there is an eventuality as respects the sons of mankind and an eventuality as respects the beast, and they have the same eventuality. As the one

10. In what way did Solomon compare animals and humans?

dies, so the other dies; . . . so that there is no superiority of the man over the beast, for everything is vanity. . . . They have all come to be from the dust, and they are all returning to the dust."—Ecclesiastes 3:18-20.

¹¹ Think of an animal that you enjoy watching, maybe a rock badger or a rabbit. (Deuteronomy 14:7; Psalm 104:18; Proverbs 30:26) Or you may picture a squirrel; there are over 300 kinds around the world. What is its life cycle? After it is born, its mother nurses it for some weeks. Soon it has fur and can venture outside. You may see it scampering about learning to find food. But often it seems just to be playing, enjoying its youthfulness. After growing for a year or so, it locates a mate. Then it must build a nest or den and care for offspring. If it finds enough berries, nuts, and seeds, the squirrel family may grow plump and have time to enlarge their home. But in just a few years, the animal becomes old and more prone to accident and disease. About age ten it dies. With slight differences between squirrel types, that is its life cycle.

¹² Most people would not object to that cycle for an animal, and they hardly expect a squirrel to have a thought-out purpose in life. However, the life of many humans does

11. (a) How may the typical life cycle of an animal be described? (b) How do you feel about such an analysis?

12. (a) Realistically, why is the life cycle of many humans like that of the average animal? (b) What might we think about the next time we see the animal that we had in mind?

not differ very much from that, does it? They are born and cared for as babies. They eat, grow, and play as youths. Before long they are adults, find a mate, and seek a place to live and a means to provide food. If they succeed, they may grow plump and expand their home (nest) in which to raise offspring. But the decades quickly pass, and they grow older. If not before, they may die after 70 or 80 years filled with "trouble and hurtful things." (Psalm 90:9, 10, 12) You might think about these sobering facts the next time you see a squirrel (or other animal you had in mind).

¹³ You can see why Solomon compared the lives of people to animals. He wrote: "For everything there is an appointed time, . . . a time for birth and a time to die." That latter eventuality, death, is similar for man and beast, "as the one dies, so the other dies." He added: "They have all come to be from the dust, and they are all returning to the dust."—Ecclesiastes 3:1, 2, 19, 20.

¹⁴ We need not find this realistic evaluation to be negative thinking. Granted, some try to change the situation, such as by working extra to improve their material situation beyond what their parents had. They may pursue more years of education to provide for a higher standard of living, while trying to broaden their understanding of life. Or they may concentrate on exercise or diet regimens to gain better health and a slightly longer life. And these efforts may bring certain benefits. But who can be sure that such efforts will prove successful? Even if they do, for how long?

¹⁵ Solomon asked: "Because there exist

13. What outcome proves true for both animals and humans?

14. How do some humans try to alter the common life cycle, but to what effect?

15. What frank assessment of the lives of most people is valid?

many things that are causing much vanity, what advantage does a man have? For who is there knowing what good a man has in life for the number of the days of his vain life, when he spends them like a shadow? For who can tell man what will happen after him?" (Ecclesiastes 6:11, 12) Since death rather quickly ends a person's efforts, is there really much advantage in struggling to gain more material things or in pursuing long years of schooling primarily to get more possessions? And since life is so brief, passing like a shadow, many grasp that there is no time to redirect efforts toward another human goal when they sense failure; nor can a man be certain what will happen to his children "after him."

Time to Make a Good Name

¹⁶ Unlike animals, we humans have the capacity to ponder, 'What is the meaning of my existence? Is it just a fixed cycle, with a time to be born and a time to die?' In that regard, recall the truth in Solomon's words about man and beast: "They are all returning to the dust." Does that mean that death absolutely ends one's existence? Well, the Bible shows that humans do not possess an immortal soul that survives the body. Humans are souls, and the soul that sins dies. (Ezekiel 18:4, 20) Solomon elaborated: "The living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all, neither do they anymore have wages, because the remembrance of them has been forgotten. All that your hand finds to do, do with your very power, for there is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol, the place to which you are going."—Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10.

16. (a) What should we do that animals cannot? (b) What other truth should have a bearing on our thinking?

¹⁷ In view of that unavoidable fact, consider this statement: "A name is better than good oil, and the day of death than the day of one's being born. Better is it to go to the house of mourning than to go to the banquet house, because that is the end of all mankind; and the one alive should take it to his heart." (Ecclesiastes 7:1, 2) We must agree that death has been "the end of all mankind." No human has been able to drink any elixir, eat any vitamin mix, follow any diet, or engage in any exercise resulting in eternal life. And usually "the remembrance of them has been forgotten" not long after their death. So why is a name "better than good oil, and the day of death than the day of one's being born"?

¹⁸ As noted, Solomon was realistic. He knew of his ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who certainly had made a good name with our Creator. Being well acquainted with Abraham, Jehovah God promised to bless him and his seed. (Genesis 18:18, 19; 22:17) Yes, Abraham had a good name with God, becoming his friend. (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23) Abraham knew that his life and the life of his son were not simply part of a never-ending cycle of birth and death. There positively was more to it than that. They had the assured prospect of living again, not because they possessed an immortal soul, but because they would be resurrected. Abraham was convinced that "God was able to raise [Isaac] up even from the dead."—Hebrews 11:17-19.

¹⁹ That is a key to understanding how "a name is better than good oil, and the day

17. What should Ecclesiastes 7:1, 2 cause us to ponder?

18. Why can we be sure that Solomon believed in the resurrection?

19. What insight can we gain from Job as to the meaning of Ecclesiastes 7:1?

of death than the day of one's being born." As Job before him, Solomon was convinced that the One who created human life can restore it. He can bring back to life humans who have died. (Job 14:7-14) Faithful Job said: "You [Jehovah] will call, and I myself shall answer you. For the work of your hands you will have a yearning." (Job 14:15) Think of that! For his loyal servants who have died, our Creator has "a yearning." ("You would want to see the work of your hands once more."—*The Jerusalem Bible*.) Applying the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Creator can resurrect humans. (John 3:16; Acts 24:15) Clearly, humans can differ from mere animals that die.

²⁰ This means that the day of death can be better than the day of one's being born, *if one has by then built up a good name with Jehovah, who can resurrect faithful ones who die*. The Greater Solomon, Jesus Christ, proved that. For instance, he raised back to life the faithful man Lazarus. (Luke 11:31; John 11:1-44) As you can imagine, many of those who witnessed Lazarus' com-

20. (a) When is it that the day of death is better than the day of birth? (b) How must Lazarus' resurrection have affected many?

Do You Recall?

- ☐ In what ways are animals and humans comparable?
- ☐ Why does death emphasize that much of human effort and activity is vanity?
- ☐ How can the day of death be better than the day of birth?
- ☐ Our having a meaningful purpose in life depends on what relationship?

ing back to life were greatly affected, putting faith in God's Son. (John 11:45) Do you think that they felt without purpose in life, having no idea who they were and where they were going? On the contrary, they could see that they need not be mere animals that are born, live for a time, and then die. Their purpose in life was directly and intimately tied up with knowing Jesus' Father and doing His will. What about you? Has this discussion helped you to see, or

to see more clearly, how your life can and should have real purpose?

²¹ Yet, having genuine and meaningful purpose in living means far more than thinking about death and living again thereafter. It involves what we are doing with our lives on a day-to-day basis. Solomon also made that clear in Ecclesiastes, as we will see in the following article.

21. What aspect of finding meaning in our life do we yet want to examine?

“THE WHOLE OBLIGATION OF MAN”

“Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man.”—ECCLESIASTES 12:13.

“WHAT is Jehovah asking back from you?” An ancient prophet posed that question. Then he specified what Jehovah required—exercise justice, love kindness, and walk modestly with God.—Micah 6:8.

² In this day of individuality and independence, many are uncomfortable with the idea that God requires something of them. They do not want to be obliged. But what of the conclusion that Solomon reached in Ecclesiastes? “The conclusion of the matter, everything having been heard, is: Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man.”—Ecclesiastes 12:13.

1, 2. Why is it appropriate to consider our obligation to God?

³ Whatever our circumstances and outlook on life, we can be greatly benefited if we consider the background of that conclusion. King Solomon, the writer of this inspired book, considered some of the very things that are part of our day-to-day life. Some might hastily conclude that his analysis is basically negative. Yet it was divinely inspired and can help us to evaluate our activities and priorities, with increased joy as a result.

Meeting Life's Principal Concerns

⁴ Solomon profoundly examined ‘the occupation of the sons of mankind.’ “I set my

3. Why should we give serious thought to the book of Ecclesiastes?

4. What did Solomon examine and discuss in Ecclesiastes?

heart to seek and explore wisdom in relation to everything that has been done under the heavens." By "occupation" Solomon did not necessarily mean a job, or employment, but rather the whole scope of what men and women are occupied with throughout their lives. (Ecclesiastes 1:13) Let us consider some principal concerns, or occupations, and then compare our own activities and priorities.

⁵ Certainly money is at the core of many human concerns and activities. No one can justly say that Solomon had the nonchalant view of money that some wealthy people have. He readily acknowledged the need for some money; having adequate finances is better than having to live austere or in poverty. (Ecclesiastes 7:11, 12) But you must have seen that money, with the possessions it buys, can become the prime goal in life—for the poor as well as the rich.

⁶ Recall Jesus' illustration of the rich man who, never satisfied, worked to acquire more. God judged him unreasonable. Why? Because our 'life does not result from the things we possess.' (Luke 12:15-21) Solomon's experience—probably more extensive than ours—confirms Jesus' words. Read the description at Ecclesiastes 2:4-9. For some time Solomon applied himself to gaining riches. He built exquisite homes and gardens. He could afford and obtained beautiful female companions. Did wealth and what it enabled him to do bring deep satisfaction, a sense of true accomplishment, and meaning in his life? He answered frankly: "I, even I, turned toward all the works of mine that my hands had done and toward the hard work that I had worked hard to ac-

5. What is one of the chief occupations of humans?

6. What can we learn about money from one of Jesus' illustrations and from Solomon's own experience?

complish, and, look! everything was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing of advantage under the sun."—Ecclesiastes 2:11; 4:8.

⁷ That is realistic, a truth borne out in many lives. We must admit that having more money just does not solve all problems. It could solve some, such as making the obtaining of food and clothing easier. But a person can wear only one outfit at a time and enjoy only a certain amount of food and drink. And you have read of rich people whose lives are plagued by divorce, alcohol or drug abuse, and feuds with relatives. Multimillionaire J. P. Getty said: "Money doesn't necessarily have any connection with happiness. Maybe with unhappiness." For good reason, Solomon classed the loving of silver with vanity. Contrast that fact with Solomon's observation: "Sweet is the sleep of the one serving, regardless of whether it is little or much that he eats; but the plenty belonging to the rich one is not permitting him to sleep."—Ecclesiastes 5:10-12.

⁸ Money and possessions also do not bring a sense of contentment as to the future. If you had more money and possessions, you would likely have added anxiety about protecting them, and you still would not know what tomorrow will bring. Might you lose it all, along with your life? (Ecclesiastes 5:13-17; 9:11, 12) This being so, it should not be difficult to see why our life, or occupation, should have a higher, more lasting meaning than money and possessions.

Family, Fame, and Power

⁹ Solomon's analysis of life included the

7. (a) Experience proves what as to the value of money? (b) What have you personally seen that bears out Solomon's conclusion?

8. What reason is there not to overestimate the importance of money?

9. Why did family life rightly come up in Solomon's examination?



**Money and possessions do
not ensure contentment**

matter of preoccupation with family. The Bible highlights family life, including the joy of having and rearing children. (Genesis 2:22-24; Psalm 127:3-5; Proverbs 5:15, 18-20; 6:20; Mark 10:6-9; Ephesians 5:22-33) Is that, though, the ultimate aspect of life? It seems that many think so, given the emphasis in some cultures on marriage, children, and family ties. Yet Ecclesiastes 6:3 shows that even having a hundred children is not a key to satisfaction in life. Imagine how many parents have made sacrifices for the sake of their children in order to give them a good start and make their life easier. Noble as that is, surely our Creator did not mean that the central object of our existence is merely to pass life to the next generation, as animals instinctively do to continue the species.

¹⁰ Solomon perceptively brought up some realities of family life. For example, a man may focus on making provision for his children and grandchildren. But will they prove to be wise? Or will they be foolish with what he strove to accumulate for them? If the latter occurs, what a “vanity and a big calamity” it would be!—Ecclesiastes 2:18-21; 1 Kings 12:8; 2 Chronicles 12:1-4, 9.

¹¹ At the other extreme, many have subordinated normal family life to their determination to achieve fame or power over others. This may be a fault more common among males. Have you seen this in your schoolmates, workmates, or neighbors? Many

10. Why may undue focus on the family prove to be vanity?

11, 12. (a) On what pursuits in life have some concentrated? (b) Why can it be said that seeking prominence is “a striving after the wind”?

struggle desperately to be noticed, to become somebody, or to wield authority over others. But how truly meaningful is this?

¹² Think how some struggle to become famous, whether on a small or a large scale. We see it in school, in our neighborhood, and in various social groups. It also is an impelling force in those wanting to become known in the arts, entertainment, and politics. Is it not, though, an essentially vain effort? Solomon correctly called it “a striving after the wind.” (Ecclesiastes 4:4) Even if a youth became prominent in a club, on a sports team, or in a musical group—or some man or woman gained repute in a company or community—how many really know of it? Do most people on the other side of the globe (or even of the same country) know that the person exists? Or do they just continue in life totally unaware of what little fame he or she has? And the same can be said of any power or authority a person achieves on the job, in a town, or among a group.

¹³ What does such prominence or authority amount to in the long run? As one generation goes and another comes, the prominent or powerful people pass off the scene and are forgotten. That is true of builders, musicians and other artists, social reformers, and so on, just as it is true of most politicians and military leaders. Of those occupations, how many specific individuals do you know of who lived between the years 1700 and 1800? Solomon rightly assessed matters, saying: “A live dog is better off than a dead lion. For the living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all, . . . the remembrance of them has been forgotten.”

13. (a) How does Ecclesiastes 9:4, 5 help us to have a proper view of striving for prominence or power? (b) What facts should we face if this life is all there is? (See footnote.)

(Ecclesiastes 9:4, 5) And if this life is all there is, then striving for prominence or power really is vanity.*

Our Focus and Obligation

¹⁴ Solomon did not comment on many activities, goals, and pleasures on which humans focus their lives. Yet, what he wrote is sufficient. Our consideration of the book need not seem grim or negative, for we have realistically reviewed a book of the Bible that Jehovah God deliberately inspired for our benefit. It can help each of us set straight our outlook on life and what we focus on. (Ecclesiastes 7:2; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17) That is especially so in view of the conclusions that Jehovah helped Solomon reach.

¹⁵ One point that Solomon repeatedly raised was that servants of the true God should find joy in their activities before Him. “I have come to know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good during one’s life; and also that every man should eat and indeed drink and see good for all his hard work. It is the gift of God.” (Ecclesiastes 2:24; 3:12, 13; 5:18; 8:

* *The Watchtower* once made this insightful comment: “We should not waste this life on vanities . . . If this life is all there is, there is nothing important. This life is like a ball thrown into the air that soon falls into the dust again. It is a fleeting shadow, a fading flower, a blade of grass to be cut and soon withered. . . . On the scales of eternity our life span is a negligible speck. In the stream of time it is not even a healthy drop. Certainly [Solomon] is right when he reviews life’s many human concerns and activities and pronounces them vanity. We are so soon gone we might as well have never come, one of billions to come and go, with so few ever knowing we were here at all. This view is not cynical or somber or morose or morbid. It is truth, a fact to face, a practical view, if this life is all there is.”—August 1, 1957, page 472.

14. Why should the book of Ecclesiastes help us personally?

15, 16. (a) What was Solomon’s view of enjoying life? (b) What appropriate qualification did Solomon put on enjoying life?



Young people can be assured that it will turn out well with them if they fear God

15) Notice that Solomon was not encouraging revelry; nor did he endorse an attitude of 'Let's eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.' (1 Corinthians 15:14, 32-34) He meant that we should find enjoyment in normal pleasures, such as eating and drinking, as we 'do good during our life.' That unquestionably focuses our life on the will of the Creator, who determines what is truly good. —Psalm 25:8; Ecclesiastes 9:1; Mark 10:17, 18; Romans 12:2.

¹⁶ Solomon wrote: "Go, eat your food with rejoicing and drink your wine with a good heart, because already the true God has found pleasure in your works." (Ecclesiastes 9:7-9) Yes, the man or woman who really has a rich and fulfilling life is active in works in which Jehovah finds pleasure. That calls on us to take him into consideration constantly. How different this outlook is from that of the majority of people, who approach life based on human reasonings!

¹⁷ Though some religions teach about a hereafter, many people believe that this

17, 18. (a) How do many people react to the realities of life? (b) What result should we always bear in mind?

life is really all they can be sure of. You may have seen them react as Solomon described: "Because sentence against a bad work has not been executed speedily, that is why the heart of the sons of men has become fully set in them to do bad." (Ecclesiastes 8:11) Even those who do not become steeped in vile deeds show that they are principally concerned with the here and now. That is one reason why money, possessions, prestige, authority over others, family, or other such interests take on exaggerated importance to them. Solomon did not leave the thought there, however. He added: "Although a sinner may be doing bad a hundred times and continuing a long time as he pleases, yet I am also aware that it will turn out well with those fearing the true God, because they were in fear of him. But it will not turn out well at all with the wicked one, neither will he prolong his days that are like a shadow, because he is not in fear of God." (Ecclesiastes 8:12, 13) Clearly, Solomon was convinced that it will turn out well for us if we 'fear the true God.' How well? We can find the answer in the contrast he drew. Jehovah can 'prolong our days.'

¹⁸ Those who are still relatively young especially ought to ponder the absolutely reliable fact that *it will turn out well with them if they fear God*. As you personally may have seen, the fastest runner may stumble and lose the race. A powerful army may go down in defeat. A smart businessman may find himself in poverty. And many other uncertainties make life quite unpredictable. But you can be absolutely certain of this: The wisest and surest course is to enjoy life while you do good within God's moral laws and according to his will. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) This includes learning from the Bible what God's will is, dedicating one's life to him, and becoming a baptized Christian.—Matthew 28:19, 20.

¹⁹ The Creator will not force youths or others to follow his guidance. They can immerse themselves in education, perhaps even becoming life-long students of books of human learning without number. That will eventually prove wearisome to the flesh. Or they can walk in the ways of their imperfect human heart or follow what appeals to the eyes. That will assuredly bring vexation, and a life thus spent will in time prove to be mere vanity. (Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:12; 1 John 2:15-17) So Solomon makes an appeal to youths—an appeal that we should seriously consider, whatever our age: “Remember, now, your Grand Creator in the days of your young manhood, before the calamitous days proceed to come, or the years have arrived when you will say: ‘I have no delight in them.’”—Ecclesiastes 12:1.

²⁰ What shall we conclude, then? Well, what about the conclusion that Solomon reached? He saw, or examined, “all the works that were done under the sun, and, look! everything was vanity and a striving after wind.” (Ecclesiastes 1:14) We do not

19. How can youths use their lives, but what is the wise course?

20. What is the balanced view of the message in Ecclesiastes?

find in the book of Ecclesiastes the words of a cynic or a disgruntled man. They are part of God's inspired Word and worthy of our consideration.

²¹ Solomon surveyed human toiling, struggles, and aspirations. He reflected on how things turn out in the normal course of affairs, the frustrating and empty outcome that so many humans experience. He considered the reality of human imperfection and resulting death. And he factored in God-given knowledge of the state of the dead and the prospects for any future life. All this was evaluated by a man who had divinely enhanced wisdom, yes, one of the wisest humans who ever lived. Then the conclusion he reached was incorporated in the Holy Scriptures for the benefit of all who want a truly meaningful life. Should we not agree?

²² “The conclusion of the matter, everything having been heard, is: Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man. For the true God himself will bring every sort of work into the judgment in relation to every hidden thing, as to whether it is good or bad.”—Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14.

21, 22. (a) What aspects of life did Solomon take into consideration? (b) What wise conclusion did he reach? (c) How has examining the contents of Ecclesiastes affected you?

Do You Recall?

- ☐ What is the wise evaluation of the place of possessions in your life?
- ☐ Why should we not put undue emphasis on family, on fame, or on authority over others?
- ☐ What divine attitude toward enjoyment did Solomon encourage?
- ☐ How have you benefited from considering the book of Ecclesiastes?

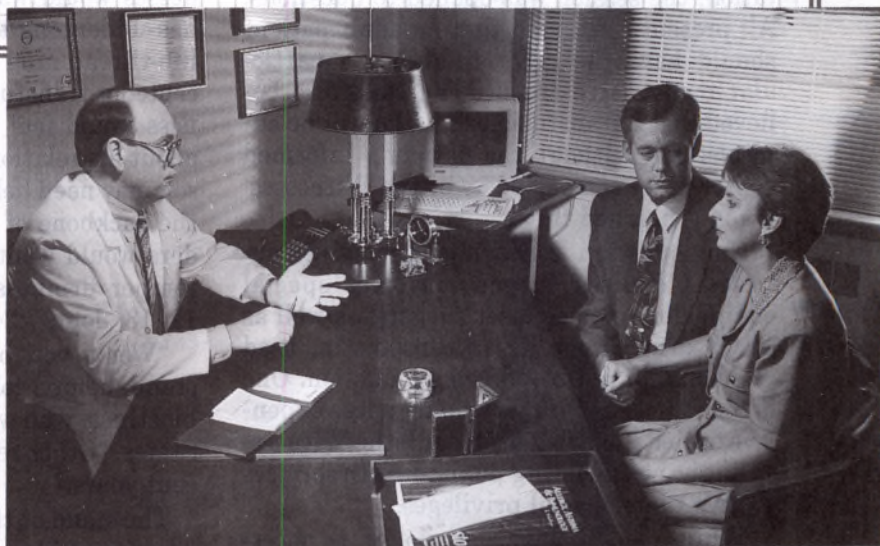
Bioethics and Bloodless Surgery

RECENT years have seen unprecedented progress in the field of medicine. However, while solving medical problems, some advances have created ethical ones.

Doctors have to ponder such dilemmas as: Should aggressive medical treatment sometimes be abandoned so that a patient can die with dignity? Should a doctor overrule a patient's decision if he feels it is in the patient's best interests? How should health care be rationed when expensive treatment is not available for everyone?

Such complex issues have brought into focus the medical discipline called bioethics. This speciality aims to help doctors and scientists to deal with the ethical implications of biological research and medical advances. Since many of the most difficult decisions arise in hospitals, many hospitals have established bioethical committees. Usually the committee members—including doctors and lawyers—attend seminars on bioethics, where ethical problems in medicine are analyzed.

Some questions frequently raised in such seminars are: To what extent should doctors respect the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses who, primarily for religious reasons, refuse to accept blood transfusions? Should a doctor transfuse a patient against the pa-



tient's will if that seems medically "advisable"? Would it be ethical to do so without the patient's knowledge, as if 'what the patient doesn't know won't hurt him'?

To handle such issues appropriately, doctors need an objective understanding of the Witnesses' viewpoint. On their part, Jehovah's Witnesses are eager to explain their position to doctors, realizing that mutual understanding can serve to avoid confrontation.

A Meeting of Minds

Professor Diego Gracia, a prominent Spanish authority in bioethics, wanted his class to have such a dialogue. "It is only right that you [Jehovah's Witnesses] be given an opportunity to express your concerns . . . in view of the difficulties you have had in connection with blood transfusions," the professor said.

Thus, on June 5, 1996, three representatives of Jehovah's Witnesses were invited to the Complutense University in Madrid,

Spain, to explain their viewpoint. Some 40 doctors and other professionals were present.

After the Witnesses made a brief presentation, the session was opened to questions. All present concurred that an adult patient should have the right to refuse a particular medical treatment. The class also believed that a transfusion should never be administered without the patient's informed consent. Yet some aspects of the Witnesses' stand concerned them.

One question concerned money. Sometimes bloodless surgery involves special equipment, such as laser surgery, as well as costly drugs, such as erythropoietin, used to stimulate red blood cell production. One doctor wondered if by refusing a less expensive option (homologous blood), the Witnesses might be expecting public-health services to give them special privileges.

While recognizing that money is necessarily a factor that doctors have to consider, a Witness representative referred to published studies that analyze the hidden costs of homologous blood transfusions. These include the cost of treating transfusion-related complications, as well as the loss of income resulting from such complications. He quoted a comprehensive study from the United States that indicated that the average unit of blood, although initially costing only \$250, actually generated expenses of over \$1,300—more than five times the original sum. Hence, he pointed out, when all factors are taken into account, bloodless surgery is cost-effective. Furthermore, much of the so-called extra cost of bloodless surgery is equipment that is reusable.

Another question on the minds of several doctors related to group pressure. What would happen, they wondered, if a Witness wavered and accepted a blood transfusion? Would he be ostracized by the Witness community?

The response would depend on the actual situation, for disobeying God's law certainly is a serious matter, something for the congregation's elders to examine. The Witnesses would want to help any person who has undergone the traumatic experience of life-threatening surgery and who has accepted a transfusion. Doubtless such a Witness would feel very bad and be concerned about his relationship with God. Such a person may need help and understanding. Since the backbone of Christianity is love, the elders would want, as in all judicial cases, to temper firmness with mercy.—Matthew 9:12, 13; John 7:24.

"Won't you be reassessing your ethical stand before long?" asked a professor in bioethics, who was visiting from the United States. "Other religions have done that in recent years."

The stand of the Witnesses respecting the sanctity of blood is a doctrinal belief rather than an ethical viewpoint subject to periodic review, he was told. The clear Biblical command leaves no room for compromise. (Acts 15:28, 29) Violating such a divine law would be as unacceptable to a Witness as condoning idolatry or fornication.

Jehovah's Witnesses appreciate very much the willingness of doctors—like the ones present at the bioethics seminar in Madrid—to respect their decision to seek alternative treatment that accords with their Bible-based convictions. Doubtless, bioethics will play an important role in improving doctor-patient relationships and fostering greater respect for the wishes of the patient.

As a famous Spanish physician is reported to have said, doctors must always remember that they "work with imperfect instruments and fallible means." They therefore need the "conviction that love should always extend to where knowledge cannot reach."



Bringing Spiritual Freedom to Those in Prison

“WE HAVE been waiting for you.” “These past few nights, I have dreamed about your coming.” “Thank you for assigning someone to visit us regularly.” “We want to express our gratitude for each and every blessing that we undeservedly receive from Jehovah and his organization and for the spiritual food given at the right time.”

What was the reason for these expressions of gratitude? These are some expressions from inmates confined in different prisons in Mexico. They appreciate the attention they are receiving from Jehovah’s Witnesses, which has brought them spiritual freedom even while in prison. In Mexico there are 42 jails where Jehovah’s Witnesses regularly minister to the spiritual

needs of inmates. These places are called *Centro Readaptación Social* (Social Rehabilitation Center). In some of these prisons, Christian meetings are even being held regularly with very good results. For example, at one recent count, some 380 persons were attending the meetings in these places. At that point an average of 350 Bible studies were being conducted. Thirty-seven had qualified to begin preaching, and 32 had dedicated their lives to Jehovah, symbolizing this by water baptism.

How the Work Is Done

How do Jehovah’s Witnesses carry on their preaching work in these places? First they go to the officials in charge to request

written authorization to enter the prison, explaining the purpose of the visits—to teach the prisoners how to improve their quality of life and serve God in a way pleasing to him.

In each case the authorities have given their permission. These officials appreciate the Bible instruction that is being offered to the inmates. The prison authorities have observed that Jehovah's Witnesses obey the security regulations established for these places. They have allowed these visiting ministers to use offices, dining rooms, and shops to hold their meetings. In one place the Witnesses were even permitted to build a small Kingdom Hall, as shown in the following experience related by a traveling overseer in southeastern Mexico.

"Early in 1991 we began visiting the prison in Tehuantepec, Oaxaca, where we found great spiritual hunger. We soon started 27 Bible studies. In view of the interest of the prisoners, five congregation meetings were scheduled. One of the prisoners, who showed great love for Jehovah, decided to build a small Kingdom Hall inside the confine so as to have a place to hold meetings. He went to the prison director and asked for permission, and the authorities were very cooperative. At the beginning of December 1992, six prisoners qualified as publishers of the good news. Because of the progress shown, arrangements were made to hold the Memorial inside the prison. We asked the prison director for permission to bring in the emblems—the bread and the wine—and after a four-hour discussion, permission was given.

"It so happened that on April 3, 1993 (three days before the Memorial celebration), some prisoners were released. When one who was a publisher received his release papers, he asked to speak to the prison

director to obtain permission to stay until after the Memorial celebration. This really surprised the director, as this is not a very common request, but in view of the prisoner's great interest in attending the Memorial there in prison, he granted the request. The Memorial was attended by 53 persons, who shed tears of joy at the end of the program. We have agreed to call this group 'Freedom Cereso,' because they are free in a spiritual sense."

The work of Jehovah's Witnesses is very much appreciated in these places. In one of these penitentiaries, the person in charge openly recommends attending the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses as "therapy" for a speedy rehabilitation of inmates.

A Successful Rehabilitation Program

The activity of Jehovah's Witnesses has resulted in the complete rehabilitation of many prisoners. While it is often true that those who have been in prison return to a life of crime once they are released, those who have truly accepted the message of God's Word have changed completely. Their transformation reminds us of the words of the apostle Paul: "Neither fornicators . . . , nor thieves, nor greedy persons, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit God's kingdom. And yet that is what some of you were. But you have been washed clean, but you have been sanctified, but you have been declared righteous in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the spirit of our God."—1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

The outstanding change in their personality is evident when they express their feelings. Miguel, who is in the Campeche prison in Campeche City, put it this way: "Today I can say with joy that I count my-

Many benefited from the Christian truths they learned in prison



self among the other sheep who have the hope recorded at 2 Peter 3:13 and Matthew 5:5." José, who is in the Koben, Campeche prison, commented: "Although I am a prisoner and my crime may be very serious, I understand that Jehovah is very merciful and listens to my prayers and supplications. He can pardon my transgressions and give me the opportunity to spend the rest of my life sharing the good news about the Kingdom of God. Thanks go to our elders for the time they take visiting us in jail so that we may benefit from God's Kingdom promises. What pleasant blessings! Can I say that I am a prisoner? No, Jehovah has given me the spiritual freedom that I needed."

What is it that makes murderers, rapists, arsonists, thieves, and others change to become right-living Christians? According to these same men, it is the transforming

power of God's Word and the good association with truly devout people. The case of Tiburcio, confined to the penitentiary in Mazatlán, Sinaloa, illustrates the success of this rehabilitation program. He had been in the jail in Concordia, Sinaloa, where he had problems because of his violent temper. His wife was one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and he used to treat her very badly, even when she came to visit him in the jail. She was patient and kept coming to visit him, so he asked her to bring him the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, which he began studying by himself.* Then he asked for somebody to come to the jail to study with him. He started to make spiritual progress, and his relations with others began to change for the better. He was

* Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

transferred to the prison in Mazatlán where there is a group studying the Bible, and now he is a publisher. He comments: "Now, along with my wife and children and my inmate companions, I am very grateful to be able to listen to Bible truths in this place, with the hope that in the near future, I will be released and be able to attend all the assemblies and congregation meetings."

Also, there is Conrado, who is very grateful for the changes he has been able to make in his life. He had such marital problems that his wife left him. So he sought refuge in drugs. In time he became a drug dealer. He was arrested and sentenced to prison for transporting a shipment of marijuana and cocaine. In prison there was a group studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, and he was invited to study with them. He expresses his feelings this way: "I was impressed with the orderly way the meetings were conducted, the program of investigation by means of the publications, and the fact that everything was based on the Bible. I immediately asked for a Bible study and began to attend meetings." That was in January 1993. Now Conrado is out of prison and continues progressing in the Christian congregation.

The Islas Marías

In Mexico there is a dreaded prison consisting of four islands called the Islas Marías. The prisoners can travel about the penal islands on which they are incarcerated. Some live there with their wives and children.

A small congregation has been established. Three brothers from Mazatlán travel there once a month, helping to conduct the meetings, provide literature, and give encouragement. Sometimes the circuit over-

seer goes over to visit them. The average attendance is between 20 and 25. There are four baptized and two unbaptized publishers. The traveling overseer reports that "some walk 17 kilometers [10 miles] to attend meetings on Sunday and have to leave the meeting in a hurry in order to get back for roll call. Walking quickly, it takes over two hours to get back." One of the brothers, who learned the truth in that prison, recently said: "I used to be interested in getting out soon, but now it can be whenever Jehovah wills, as in any case I have a lot of work to do here on the inside."

We are happy to see that the truth is exercising its power to free sincere ones who are looking for a way to please Jehovah. Over a dozen of these, who learned the truth in prison, have been released, got baptized, and now lead honorable lives as God's servants, some even becoming congregation elders. The power that the Bible has to heal hearts and reform people has been dramatically demonstrated. Once these men who were incarcerated for committing misdeeds enter the path of the light of God's Word, they experience the true freedom that Jesus promised when he said: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." —John 8:32; Psalm 119:105.

In Our Next Issue

**Fundamentalism—What Is It?
Why Is It Spreading?**

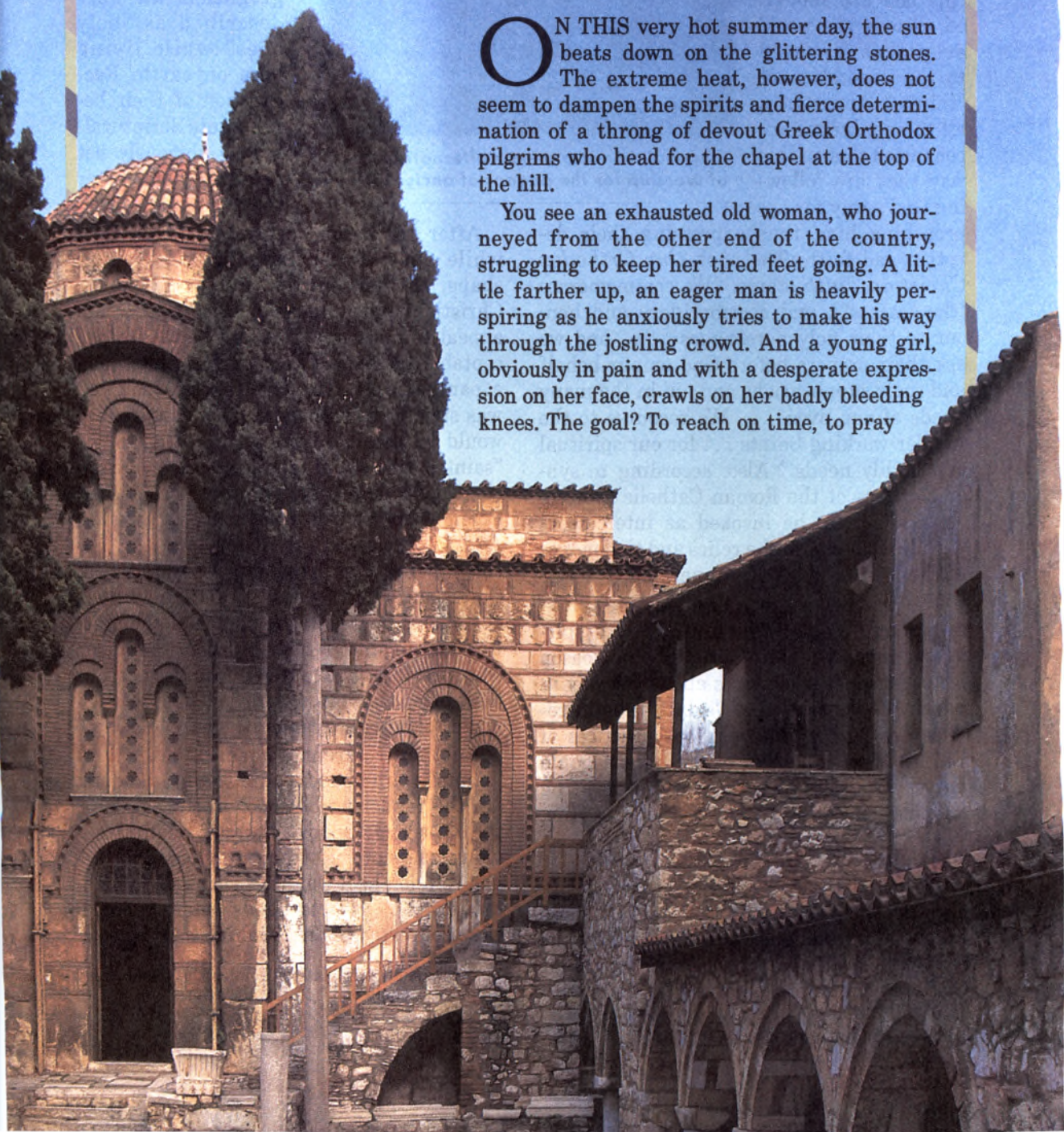
Are You Ready for Jehovah's Day?

Are You Afraid to Trust Others?

AGREEMENT BETWEEN "GOD'S TEMPLE" AND IDOLS IN GREECE?

ON THIS very hot summer day, the sun beats down on the glittering stones. The extreme heat, however, does not seem to dampen the spirits and fierce determination of a throng of devout Greek Orthodox pilgrims who head for the chapel at the top of the hill.

You see an exhausted old woman, who journeyed from the other end of the country, struggling to keep her tired feet going. A little farther up, an eager man is heavily perspiring as he anxiously tries to make his way through the jostling crowd. And a young girl, obviously in pain and with a desperate expression on her face, crawls on her badly bleeding knees. The goal? To reach on time, to pray



before and, if possible, to touch and kiss the icon of the celebrated "saint."

Scenes similar to this one are repeated all over the world at places devoted to the veneration of "saints." Apparently, all these pilgrims are convinced that in this way they are following God's way for approaching him, thus expressing their devotion and faith. The book *Our Orthodox Christian Faith* states: "We commemorate [the "saints"], and ascribe glory and honour to their holy personages . . . , and we ask their prayers before God on our behalf and their supplications and aid in the many needs of our lives. . . . We recourse to the wonder-working Saints . . . for our spiritual and bodily needs." Also, according to synodic canons of the Roman Catholic Church, "saints" are to be invoked as intercessors with God, and both the relics and the images of the "saints" are to be venerated.

The primary concern of a genuine Christian should be to worship God "with spirit and truth." (John 4:24) For this reason let us consider some facts about the way in which the veneration of "saints" was introduced as part of the religious practices of Christendom. Such an examination should be very enlightening for everyone desiring to approach God in a way acceptable to Him.

How "Saints" Were Adopted

The Christian Greek Scriptures designate as "holy ones," or "saints," all those early Christians who were cleansed by the blood of Christ and who were set apart for God's service as prospective joint heirs with



Daphni monastery—an alternative place of worship for the pagans of ancient Athens

Christ. (Acts 9:32; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 13:13)* Men and women, prominent and lowly ones in the congregation, all were described as "holy ones" while living here on earth. Recognition of their being saints Scripturally was obviously not deferred until after they had died.

After the second century C.E., though, while apostate Christianity was taking shape, the tendency was to try to make Christianity popular, a religion that would appeal to pagan peoples and be readily acceptable to them. These pagans worshiped a pantheon of gods, and the new religion was strictly monotheistic. So a compromise would be possible through the adoption of "saints," who would take the place of the ancient gods, demigods, and mythical heroes. Commenting on this, the book *Ekklesiastiki Istoria* (Ecclesiastical History) states: "For those being converted from paganism to Christianity, it was easy to recognize their abandoned heroes in the person of the martyrs and to start rendering them the honor they previously gave to the former ones. . . . Very often, however, the rendering of such honor to the saints came to be pure idolatry."

Another reference work explains how "saints" were introduced into Christendom: "In the rendering of honor to the saints of the Greek Orthodox Church, we find obvious traces of the strong influence that pagan religion had. Qualities that were attributed to the Olympian gods before [people] were converted to Christianity were now as-

* Some Bible translations render the Greek word *ha'gi-os* as "holy one," others as "saint."

cribed to the saints. . . . From the early years of the new religion, we see its adherents replacing the sun-god (Phoebus Apollo) with the Prophet Elijah, building churches on, or next to, the ruins of ancient temples or shrines of this god, mostly on the top of hills and mountains, at every place where the ancient Greeks honored the light-giver Phoebus Apollo. . . . They even identified the Virgin-goddess Athena with the Virgin Mary herself. Thus, the gap that was created when the idol of Athena was torn down was eliminated within the soul of the converted idolater.”—*Neoterion Enkyklopaedikon Lexikon* (New Encyclopedic Dictionary), Volume 1, pages 270-1.

Examine, for instance, the situation existing in Athens as late as the end of the fourth century C.E. The majority of the inhabitants of that city were still pagans. One of their most sacred rituals was the Eleusinian mysteries, a double event,* held annually in February in the town of Eleusis, 14 miles northwest of Athens. To attend these mysteries, the pagan Athenians had to follow the Sacred Way (*Hi-era' Ho-dos'*). Attempting to provide an alternative place of worship, the leaders of the city proved to be quite ingenious. On the same road, about six miles from Athens, the Daphni monastery was built to attract the pagans and to prevent them from attending the mysteries. The church of the monastery was built on the foundation of the ancient temple devoted to the Greek god Daphnaios, or Pythios Apollo.

Evidence of the integration of pagan deities into the veneration of “saints” can be found also on the island of Kithira, Greece. On one of the island’s summits, there are two small Byzantine chapels—one of them dedicated to “Saint” George, the other to

the Virgin Mary. Excavations revealed that this was the site of a Minoan summit shrine that served as a place of worship almost 3,500 years ago. During the sixth or seventh century C.E., “Christians” built their chapel to “Saint” George on the exact site of the summit shrine. The move was highly symbolic; that advanced center of Minoan religion commanded the sea routes of the Aegean Sea. The two churches were built there to secure the favor of Our Lady and “Saint” George, the latter being celebrated on the same day as the “seamen’s protector,” “Saint” Nicholas. A newspaper reporting on this discovery said: “Today the [Greek Orthodox] priest will ascend the mountain, just as in ancient times the Minoan priest would,” in order to perform religious services!

Summing up the extent to which apostate Christianity was influenced by pagan Greek religion, a historical researcher points out: “The paganistic substratum of the Christian religion often remains unchanged in popular beliefs, thus testifying to the enduring nature of tradition.”

‘Worshiping What We Know’

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman: “We worship what we know. . . . The true worshipers will worship the Father with spirit and truth, for, indeed, the Father is looking for suchlike ones to worship him.” (John 4:22, 23) Notice that worship with truth is a must! It is therefore impossible to worship God acceptably without accurate knowledge of and a deep love for the truth. The true Christian religion must be founded on truth, not on traditions and practices borrowed from paganism. We know how Jehovah feels when people attempt to worship him in the wrong way. The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in the ancient Greek city of Corinth: “What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? . . . What agreement does God’s

* The Greater Eleusinia was held every year in September in Athens and Eleusis.

Unlikely Use of the Parthenon



"Christian" Emperor Theodosius II, with edicts pertaining to the city of Athens (438 C.E.), abolished the pagan rites and mysteries, closed the pagan temples. They could thereafter be converted into Christian churches. The only requirement for a successful conversion of a temple was to purify it by installing a cross in it!

One of the first temples to be converted was the Parthenon. Major renovation took place in order to make the Parthenon suitably fit for use as a "Christian" temple. From 869 C.E., it served as the cathedral of Athens. Initially it was honored as the church of "Holy Wisdom." This could have been a purposeful reminder of the fact that the original "owner" of the temple, Athena, was the goddess of wisdom. Later it was dedicated to "Our Lady the Athenian." After eight centuries of Orthodox usage, the temple was converted into the Catholic church of St. Mary of Athens. Such religious "recycling" of the Parthenon continued when, in the 15th century, the Ottoman Turks converted it into a mosque.

Today the Parthenon, the ancient Doric temple of Athena Parthenos ("Virgin"), the Greek goddess of wisdom, is visited by thousands of tourists as simply a masterpiece of Greek architecture.

temple have with idols?" (2 Corinthians 6:15, 16) Any attempt to harmonize God's temple with idols is repulsive to him.

Furthermore, in a very clear way, the Scriptures rule out the idea of praying to "saints" in order for them to act as intercessors with God. In his model prayer, Jesus taught that prayers are to be addressed to the Father only, since he directed his disciples: "You must pray, then, this way: 'Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified.'" (Matthew 6:9) Jesus further stated: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it." And the apostle Paul stated: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus." —John 14:6, 14; 1 Timothy 2:5.

If we truly want our prayers to be heard by God, it is essential that we approach him in the way that his Word directs. Stressing the only valid way to approach Jehovah, Paul also wrote: "Christ Jesus is the one who died, yes, rather the one who was raised up from the dead, who is on the right hand of God, who also pleads for us." "He is able also to save completely those who are approach-

ing God through him, because he is always alive to plead for them." —Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25.

'Worshipping With Spirit and Truth'

Apostate Christianity had neither the spiritual strength nor the support of God's holy spirit to motivate the pagans to abandon their false worship and follow the truthful teachings of Jesus Christ. It absorbed pagan beliefs and practices in its quest for converts, power, and popularity. For this reason it produced, not sound Christians, acceptable to God and Christ, but counterfeit believers, "weeds" unfit for the Kingdom. —Matthew 13:24-30.

During this time of the end, however, under Jehovah's direction there is a momentous movement in restoring true worship. Jehovah's people worldwide, regardless of their cultural, social, or religious background, try to conform their lives and beliefs to the standards of the Bible. If you want to learn more about how to worship God "with spirit and truth," please contact Jehovah's Witnesses where you live. They will be more than happy to help you offer acceptable sacred service to God, based on your

power of reason and an accurate knowledge of his Word. Paul wrote: "I entreat you by the compassions of God, brothers, to present your bodies a sacrifice living, holy, acceptable to God, a sacred service with your power of reason. And quit being fashioned after this system of things, but be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." And to the Colossians

he said: "We, from the day we heard of it, have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the accurate knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual comprehension, in order to walk worthily of Jehovah to the end of fully pleasing him as you go on bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the accurate knowledge of God."—Romans 12:1, 2; Colossians 1:9, 10.



QUESTIONS FROM READERS

"The Watchtower" of August 15, 1996, said: "In the final part of the tribulation, 'flesh' that has fled to Jehovah's side will be saved." Is that suggesting that after the first phase of the great tribulation, many new ones will come over to God's side?

That was not the point being made.

Jesus' words found at Matthew 24:22 will primarily be fulfilled in the future by a salvation through the first part of the coming great tribulation, the attack on religion. The article said: "Recall that 'flesh,' both of the anointed remnant and of the 'great crowd,' already will have been saved when Babylon the Great goes down swiftly and completely in the first part of the tribulation."

Such faithful ones will be in no danger when Jesus and his heavenly army act in the final part of the tribulation. But who will thus pass through that phase of the tribulation? Revelation 7:9, 14 shows that a great crowd having an earthly hope will survive. What of spirit-anointed Christians? "Questions From Readers" in *The Watchtower* of August 15, 1990, discussed why we cannot be dogmatic about when the remnant of anointed ones will be taken to heaven. So the recent article (August 15, 1996) left the matter open, making the general comment: "Likewise in the final part of the tribulation, 'flesh' that has fled to Jehovah's side will be saved."

As to whether any new ones may be able to learn the truth and come over to God's side after the great tribulation begins, note Jesus' words recorded at Matthew 24:29-31. After the outbreak of the tribulation, the sign of the Son of man will appear. Jesus said that all the tribes of the earth will beat themselves and lament. He did not say anything about people waking up to the situation, repenting, taking God's side, and becoming true disciples.

Similarly, in the parable of the sheep and the goats, the Son of man appears and judicially separates people on the basis of what they had done or not done in the past. Jesus said nothing about people who long displayed goatlike attributes suddenly turning around and becoming like sheep. He comes to judge on the basis of what people had already proved to be.—Matthew 25:31-46.

But, again, there is no reason to be dogmatic on this point. God's people, both of the anointed and of the great crowd, know what they have to do now—preach and make disciples. (Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 13:10) Right now is the period for us to take to heart the exhortation: "Working together with him, we also entreat you not to accept the undeserved kindness of God and miss its purpose. For he says: 'In an acceptable time I heard you, and in a day of salvation I helped you.' Look! Now is the especially acceptable time. Look! Now is the day of salvation."—2 Corinthians 6:1, 2.

"FAITH IN GOD'S WORD"

DISTRICT CONVENTION LOCATIONS

MAY 23-25

LONG BEACH, CA, Long Beach Convention Center, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.

MAY 30-JUNE 1

LONG BEACH, CA, Long Beach Convention Center, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.

JUNE 6-8

KANSAS CITY, MO, Kemper Arena, 1800 Genessee St.

NEW HAVEN, CT, Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 275 S. Orange St.

TUCSON, AZ, Convention Center, 260 S. Church St.

JUNE 13-15

BILLINGS, MT, MetraPark Arena, Hwy. #10.

CICERO, IL, Hawthorne Race Track, 35th & Cicero Ave.

COLUMBIA, SC, Carolina Coliseum, Assembly & Blossom Sts.

COLUMBUS, OH, Greater Columbus Convention Center, 400 N. High St.

JACKSON, MS, Mississippi Coliseum, 1207 Mississippi St.

KANSAS CITY, MO, Kemper Arena, 1800 Genessee St.

MADISON, WI, Dane County Memorial Coliseum, 1881 Expo Mall East.

MEMPHIS, TN, Mid-South Coliseum, Mid-South Fairgrounds.

NEW HAVEN, CT, Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 275 S. Orange St.

PONTIAC, MI, Silverdome, 1200 Featherstone Rd.

RENO, NV, Lawlor Events Center, 15th & Virginia Sts.

SAN DIEGO, CA, Jack Murphy Stadium, 9449 Friars Rd.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, Cow Palace, Geneva Ave.

TUCSON, AZ, Convention Center, 260 S. Church St.

JUNE 20-22

BEAUMONT, TX (Spanish only), Civic Center Arena, 701 Main St.

CICERO, IL, Hawthorne Race Track, 35th & Cicero Ave.

COLUMBIA, SC, Carolina Coliseum, Assembly & Blossom Sts.

COLUMBUS, OH, Greater Columbus Convention Center, 400 N. High St.

FORT WORTH, TX, Tarrant County Convention Center, 1111 Houston St.

HIALEAH, FL (Spanish only), Hialeah Park Race Track, E. 32nd St. at E. 2nd Ave.

JACKSON, MS, Mississippi Coliseum, 1207 Mississippi St.

LONG BEACH, CA, Long Beach Convention Center, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.

MACON, GA, Coliseum, 200 Coliseum Dr.

MADISON, WI, Dane County Memorial Coliseum, 1881 Expo Mall East.

MEMPHIS, TN, Mid-South Coliseum, Mid-South Fairgrounds.

NEW HAVEN, CT, Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 275 S. Orange St.

PORTLAND, ME, Cumberland County Civic Center, 1 Civic Center Square.

PROVIDENCE, RI, Civic Center, One LaSalle Sq.

RENO, NV, Lawlor Events Center, 15th & Virginia Sts.

ST. PETERSBURG, FL, Bayfront Center, 400 1st St. S.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, Cow Palace, Geneva Ave.

WEST PALM BEACH, FL, Auditorium, 1610 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.

JUNE 27-29

ALBANY, GA, Civic Center, 100 West Oglethorpe Ave.

ALBUQUERQUE, NM, University of New Mexico - University Arena, 1414 University Blvd. S.E.

AMARILLO, TX, Civic Center Coliseum, 3rd & Buchanan Sts.

AMHERST, MA, The Mullins Center, University of Massachusetts, Commonwealth Ave.

BEAUMONT, TX (Spanish only), Civic Center Arena, 701 Main St.

CICERO, IL, Hawthorne Race Track, 35th & Cicero Ave.

COLUMBIA, SC, Carolina Coliseum, Assembly & Blossom Sts.

COLUMBUS, OH, Greater Columbus Convention Center, 400 N. High St.

DAYTON, OH, Ervin J. Nutter Center, Wright State University, Colonel Glen Hwy.

FORT WORTH, TX, Tarrant County Convention Center, 1111 Houston St.

HIALEAH, FL (Spanish only), Hialeah Park Race Track, E. 32nd St. at E. 2nd Ave.

JACKSON, MS, Mississippi Coliseum, 1207 Mississippi St.

LONG BEACH, CA, Long Beach Convention Center, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.

MACON, GA, Coliseum, 200 Coliseum Dr.

MADISON, WI, Dane County Memorial Coliseum, 1881 Expo Mall East.

MEMPHIS, TN, Mid-South Coliseum, Mid-South Fairgrounds.

NEW HAVEN, CT (Spanish only), Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 275 S. Orange St.

PHILADELPHIA, PA, Veterans Stadium, S. Broad & Pattison Ave.

PORTLAND, ME, Cumberland County Civic Center, 1 Civic Center Square.

PROVIDENCE, RI, Civic Center, One LaSalle Sq.

RENO, NV, Lawlor Events Center, 15th & Virginia Sts.

RICHMOND, VA, Coliseum, 601 E. Leigh St.

ROCHESTER, MN, Mayo Civic Center Arena, 30 2nd Ave. S.E.

ST. PETERSBURG, FL, Bayfront Center, 400 1st St. S.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, Cow Palace, Geneva Ave.

TACOMA, WA, Tacoma Dome, 2727 E. "D" St.

TUCSON, AZ, Convention Center, 260 S. Church St.

JULY 4-6

ALBANY, GA, Civic Center, 100 West Oglethorpe Ave.

ALBUQUERQUE, NM, University of New Mexico - University Arena, 1414 University Blvd. S.E.

AMARILLO, TX (Spanish only), Civic Center Coliseum, 3rd & Buchanan Sts.

AMHERST, MA, The Mullins Center, University of Massachusetts, Commonwealth Ave.

BEAUMONT, TX (Spanish only), Civic Center Arena, 701 Main St.

BELLEVIEW, MI (Greek only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 43777 Ecorse Rd.

BIRMINGHAM, AL, Civic Center Coliseum, One Civic Center Plaza.

CICERO, IL, Hawthorne Race Track, 35th & Cicero Ave.

COLUMBIA, SC, Carolina Coliseum, Assembly & Blossom Sts.

DAYTON, OH, Ervin J. Nutter Center, Wright State University, Colonel Glen Hwy.

DENVER, CO, McNichols Sports Arena, 1635 Clay St.

FORT WORTH, TX, Tarrant County Convention Center, 1111 Houston St.

HIALEAH, FL (Spanish only), Hialeah Park Race Track, E. 32nd St. at E. 2nd Ave.

JACKSON, MS, Mississippi Coliseum, 1207 Mississippi St.

JERSEY CITY, NJ (American Sign Language only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2932 Kennedy Blvd.

KENNEWICK, WA, Tri-Cities Coliseum, 7100 W. Quinalt.

LINCOLN, NE, Devaney Sports Center, 16th St. & Military Rd.

MACON, GA, Coliseum, 200 Coliseum Dr.

NAMPA, ID, The Idaho Center, 5000 Garrity Blvd.

OGDEN, UT, Dee Events Center, 4600 South 1400 E.

PEORIA, IL, Peoria Civic Center Arena, 201 S. W. Jefferson St.

RICHMOND, VA, Coliseum, 601 E. Leigh St.

ROCHESTER, MN, Mayo Civic Center Arena, 30 2nd Ave. S.E.

ST. PETERSBURG, FL, Bayfront Center, 400 1st St. S.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (Portuguese sessions also), Cow Palace, Geneva Ave.

SPRINGFIELD, IL, Prairie Capital Convention Center, One Convention Center Plaza.

SYRACUSE, NY, Onondaga County War Memorial Arena, 515 Montgomery St.

TACOMA, WA, Tacoma Dome, 2727 E. "D" St.

UNIONDALE, NY, Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Tpke.

WEST PALM BEACH, FL, Auditorium, 1610 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.

WICHITA, KS, Kansas Coliseum, I-135 at 85th St. N.

JULY 11-13

BAKERSFIELD, CA, Bakersfield Convention Center Arena, 1001 Truxtun Ave.

BISMARCK, ND, Civic Center Arena, 601 E. Sweet Ave.

CICERO, IL (Spanish only), Hawthorne Race Track, 35th & Cicero Ave.

DAYTON, OH, Ervin J. Nutter Center, Wright State University, Colonel Glen Hwy.

DENVER, CO, McNichols Sports Arena, 1635 Clay St.

FORT WORTH, TX (Spanish only), Tarrant County Convention Center, 1111 Houston St.

HIALEAH, FL (Spanish only), Hialeah Park Race Track, E. 32nd St. at E. 2nd Ave.

HOUSTON, TX, Astrodome, Loop 610 at Kirby Dr.

HUNTSVILLE, AL, Von Braun Civic Center Arena, 700 Monroe St.

JACKSONVILLE, FL, Memorial Coliseum, Gator Bowl Sports Complex.

JERSEY CITY, NJ (French only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2932 Kennedy Blvd.

KENNEWICK, WA, Tri-Cities Coliseum, 7100 W. Quinalt.

LOUISVILLE, KY, Freedom Hall Coliseum, Kentucky Fair & Expo Center, 937 Phillips Ln.

MACON, GA, Coliseum, 200 Coliseum Dr.

MONROE, NY (Portuguese only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, Mountain & Forest Rds.

PHILADELPHIA, PA, Veterans Stadium, S. Broad & Pattison Ave.

RICHMOND, CA (Tagalog only), Richmond Memorial Convention Center Arena, 2544 Barrett Ave.

RICHMOND, VA, Coliseum, 601 E. Leigh St.

ST. PETERSBURG, FL, Bayfront Center, 400 1st St. S.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, Cow Palace, Geneva Ave.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (Vietnamese only), Cow Palace - South Exhibit Hall, Geneva Ave.

SPRINGFIELD, IL, Prairie Capital Convention Center, One Convention Center Plaza.

SYRACUSE, NY, Onondaga County War Memorial Arena, 515 Montgomery St.

TACOMA, WA, Tacoma Dome, 2727 E. "D" St.

TUCSON, AZ (Spanish only), Convention Center, 260 S. Church St.

UNIONDALE, NY, Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Tpke.

JULY 18-20

CICERO, IL (Spanish only), Hawthorne Race Track, 35th & Cicero Ave.

FORT WORTH, TX (Spanish only), Tarrant County Convention Center, 1111 Houston St.

HAMPTON, VA, Coliseum, 1000 Coliseum Dr.

HIALEAH, FL (French only), Hialeah Park Race Track, E. 32nd St. at E. 2nd Ave.

HUNTSVILLE, AL, Von Braun Civic Center Arena, 700 Monroe St.

JACKSONVILLE, FL, Memorial Coliseum, Gator Bowl Sports Complex.

JERSEY CITY, NJ (French only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2932 Kennedy Blvd.

JOHNSON CITY, TN, Freedom Hall Civic Center Arena, Liberty Bell Blvd.

KENNEWICK, WA, Tri-Cities Coliseum, 7100 W. Quinaluit.

RICHMOND, VA, Coliseum, 601 E. Leigh St.

ROCKFORD, IL, Metrocentre Arena, 300 Elm St.

ST. PETERSBURG, FL (Spanish only), Bayfront Center, 400 1st St. S.

SAN ANTONIO, TX, Freeman Coliseum Arena, East Houston & Coliseum Rd.

SAN DIEGO, CA (Spanish only), Jack Murphy Stadium, 9449 Friars Rd.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (Spanish only), Cow Palace, Geneva Ave.

TACOMA, WA, Tacoma Dome, 2727 E. "D" St.

TUCSON, AZ (Spanish only), Convention Center, 260 S. Church St.

UNIONDALE, NY, Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Tpke.

WEST PALM BEACH, FL, Auditorium, 1610 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.

JULY 25-27

BAKERSFIELD, CA, Bakersfield Convention Center Arena, 1001 Truxtun Ave.

ESCONDIDO, CA (Japanese only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1873 Iris Ln.

HAMPTON, VA, Coliseum, 1000 Coliseum Dr.

JACKSONVILLE, FL, Memorial Coliseum, Gator Bowl Sports Complex.

JERSEY CITY, NJ (Korean only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2932 Kennedy Blvd.

JOHNSON CITY, TN, Freedom Hall Civic Center Arena, Liberty Bell Blvd.

ROCHESTER, MN, Mayo Civic Center Arena, 30 2nd Ave. S.E.

ST. PETERSBURG, FL (Spanish only), Bayfront Center, 400 1st St. S.

SAN ANTONIO, TX, Freeman Coliseum Arena, East Houston & Coliseum Rd.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (Spanish only), Cow Palace, Geneva Ave.

SPRINGFIELD, IL, Prairie Capital Convention Center, One Convention Center Plaza.

SYRACUSE, NY, Onondaga County War Memorial Arena, 515 Montgomery St.

UNIONDALE, NY, Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Tpke.

AUGUST 1-3

BAKERSFIELD, CA, Bakersfield Convention Center Arena, 1001 Truxtun Ave.

CLEVELAND, OH, Cleveland State University Convocation Center, Prospect & E. 21st Sts.

ESCONDIDO, CA (American Sign Language only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1873 Iris Ln.

JACKSON, MS, Mississippi Coliseum, 1207 Mississippi St.

LONG BEACH, CA, Long Beach Convention Center, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.

ROANOKE, VA, Civic Center, 710 Williamson Rd. N.E.

ROCHESTER, MN, Mayo Civic Center Arena, 30 2nd Ave. S.E.

SYRACUSE, NY, Onondaga County War Memorial Arena, 515 Montgomery St.

UNIONDALE, NY, Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Tpke.

WEST PALM BEACH, FL, Auditorium, 1610 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.

WOODLAND HILLS, CA (Korean only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 20600 Ventura Blvd.

AUGUST 8-10

BAKERSFIELD, CA, Bakersfield Convention Center Arena, 1001 Truxtun Ave.

CLEVELAND, OH, Cleveland State University Convocation Center, Prospect & E. 21st Sts.

CORPUS CHRISTI, TX (Spanish only), Memorial Coliseum, 402 S. Shoreline Blvd.

JACKSON, MS, Mississippi Coliseum, 1207 Mississippi St.

LONG BEACH, CA, Long Beach Convention Center, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.

LONG ISLAND CITY, NY (Japanese only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 44-17 Greenpoint Ave.

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK, Myriad, One Myriad Gardens.

ROANOKE, VA, Civic Center, 710 Williamson Rd. N.E.

SAN ANTONIO, TX (Spanish only), Freeman Coliseum Arena, East Houston & Coliseum Rd.

TOLEDO, OH, University of Toledo - Savage Hall, 2801 W. Bancroft.

UNIONDALE, NY (Spanish only), Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Tpke.

AUGUST 15-17

BAKERSFIELD, CA (Spanish only), Bakersfield Convention Center Arena, 1001 Truxtun Ave.

CLEVELAND, OH, Cleveland State University Convocation Center, Prospect & E. 21st Sts.

CORPUS CHRISTI, TX (Spanish only), Memorial Coliseum, 402 S. Shoreline Blvd.

LONG BEACH, CA (Spanish only), Long Beach Convention Center, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.

LONG ISLAND CITY, NY (Italian only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 44-17 Greenpoint Ave.

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK, Myriad, One Myriad Gardens.

TOLEDO, OH, University of Toledo - Savage Hall, 2801 W. Bancroft.

UNIONDALE, NY (Spanish only), Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Tpke.

AUGUST 22-24

BAKERSFIELD, CA (Spanish only), Bakersfield Convention Center Arena, 1001 Truxtun Ave.

CLEVELAND, OH, Cleveland State University Convocation Center, Prospect & E. 21st Sts.

CORPUS CHRISTI, TX (Spanish only), Memorial Coliseum, 402 S. Shoreline Blvd.

LONG BEACH, CA (Spanish only), Long Beach Convention Center, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.

LONG ISLAND CITY, NY (Chinese only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 44-17 Greenpoint Ave.

UNIONDALE, NY (Spanish only), Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Tpke.

AUGUST 29-31

LONG BEACH, CA (Spanish only), Long Beach Convention Center, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.

NAMPA, ID (Spanish only), The Idaho Center, 5000 Garrity Blvd.

SEPTEMBER 5-7

LONG BEACH, CA (Spanish only), Long Beach Convention Center, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.

SEPTEMBER 12-14

LONG BEACH, CA (Spanish only), Long Beach Convention Center, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.

Britain

JUNE 13-15

GUERNSEY, C.I., Beau Sejour Leisure Centre, St. Peter Port.

JUNE 20-22

COVENTRY, Highfield Road Stadium, King Richard St.

NEWCASTLE, Newcastle Arena, Arena Way.

SOUTHAMPTON, Southampton Football Club, The Dell.

JUNE 27-29

LONDON (Italian only), Edgware Kingdom Hall Complex, Avon Crescent.

PLYMOUTH, Plymouth Argyle Football Club, Home Park.

JULY 4-6

BRISTOL, Bristol City Football Club, Ashton Gate.

LEEDS, Leeds United Football Club, Elland Rd.

LONDON (Greek only), North London Assembly Hall, 174 Bowes Rd.

JULY 11-13

NOTTINGHAM, Notts County Football Club, Meadow Ln.

PERTH, St. Johnstone Football Club, McDiarmid Park, Crieff Rd.

JULY 18-20

LONDON (CRYSTAL PALACE), National Sports Centre, Norwood.

MANCHESTER, Manchester Arena, Hunts Bank.

NORWICH, Norwich City Football Club, Carrow Rd.

WOLVERHAMPTON, Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club, Molineux Ground.

JULY 25-27

LONDON (Spanish only), North London Assembly Hall, 174 Bowes Rd.

LONDON (TWICKENHAM), Rugby Union Ground, Whitton Road, Twickenham, Middx.

AUGUST 1-3

BRIGHTON, The Brighton Centre, Kings Rd.

Ireland

JULY 11-13

NAVAN, CO. MEATH., Navan Exhibition Centre, Trim Rd.

JULY 18-20

NAVAN, CO. MEATH., Navan Exhibition Centre, Trim Rd.

JULY 25-27

NAVAN, CO. MEATH., Navan Exhibition Centre, Trim Rd.

Canada

JUNE 20-22

KITCHENER, ONT., Kitchener Memorial Auditorium Complex, 400 East Ave.

MONCTON, N.B., Coliseum Agrena, Killam Dr.

PENTICTON, B.C., Penticton Trade & Convention Centre, 273 Power St.

WINDSOR, ONT., St. Denis Athletic & Community Centre, University of Windsor, College Ave. & Huron Church Rd.

JUNE 27-29

BRANDON, MAN., Keystone Centre, #1 - 1175 Eighteenth St.

DARTMOUTH, N.S., Dartmouth Sportsplex, 110 Wyse Rd.

HAMILTON, ONT. (Sign language also), Greek sessions also, Copps Coliseum, 101 York Blvd.

KITCHENER, ONT. (Spanish only), Kitchener Memorial Auditorium Complex, 400 East Ave.

LETHBRIDGE, ALTA., Canada Games Sportsplex, 2510 Scenic Dr.

SHERBROOKE, QUE. (French only), Palais des sports, 360, rue Parc.

VANCOUVER, B.C. (Sign language also), Pacific Coliseum, P.N.E. Grounds, Hastings St. E. & Renfrew St.

JULY 4-6

HAMILTON, ONT., Copps Coliseum, 101 York Blvd.

KAMLOOPS, B.C., Riverside Coliseum, 300 Lorne St.

MOUNT PEARL, NFLD., Mount Pearl Glacier, Olympic Dr.

QUEBEC CITY, QUE. (French only), Collège de Québec, 2205, avenue du Collège.

RED DEER, ALTA. (Spanish sessions also), Centrium, Westerner Park, 4900 Delburne Rd.

SASKATOON, SASK. (Sign language also), Saskatchewan Place, 3515 Thatcher Ave.

SHERBROOKE, QUE. (French only), Palais des sports, 360, rue Parc.

VICTORIA, B.C., Victoria Memorial Arena, 1925 Blanshard St.

JULY 11-13

MONTREAL, QUE. (Arabic only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 12700, boul. Métropolitain Est, Pointe-aux-Trembles.

NANAIMO, B.C., Frank Crane Arena, Beban Park Recreation Centre, 2300 Bowen Rd.

NORTH BAY, ONT., Memorial Gardens Sports Arena, 100 Chippewa St. E.

PRINCE GEORGE, B.C., Prince George Multiplex Arena, 2188 Ospika Blvd.

RED DEER, ALTA., Centrium, Westerner Park, 4900 Delburne Rd.

SHERBROOKE, QUE. (French only; sign language also), Palais des sports, 360, rue Parc.

JULY 18-20

BRAMPTON, ONT. (Portuguese only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, Hwy. 7, 1 mile W. of Mississauga Rd., Norval.

GRANDE PRAIRIE, ALTA., Canada Games Arena, 10017 99 Ave.

MONTREAL, QUE. (Spanish only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 12700, boul. Métropolitain Est, Pointe-aux-Trembles.

NORTH BAY, ONT. (French only), Memorial Gardens Sports Arena, 100 Chippewa St. E.

SHERBROOKE, QUE., Palais des sports, 360, rue Parc.

SURREY, B.C. (Chinese only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 15577 82nd Ave.

JULY 25-27

BRAMPTON, ONT. (Polish only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, Hwy. 7, 1 mile W. of Mississauga Rd., Norval.

MONTREAL, QUE. (Italian only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 12700, boul. Métropolitain Est, Pointe-aux-Trembles.

SHERBROOKE, QUE., Palais des sports, 360, rue Parc.

SURREY, B.C. (Spanish only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 15577 82nd Ave.

The Truth About Hell



Charles T. Russell



A REPORT by the Church of England's doctrine commission states that hell is not a fiery furnace after all; rather, it is an abstract place of nothingness. "There are many reasons for this change," the report explains. "But amongst them have been the moral protest from both within and without the Christian faith against a religion of fear, and a growing sense that the picture of God who consigned millions to eternal torment was far removed from the revelation of God's love in Christ."

This discomfort with the traditional view of hell is not exclusive to the Church of England. People from various denominations find it difficult to worship a vengeful God who incinerates sinners. "People want a God who's warm and fuzzy," says Jackson Carroll, professor of religion and society at Duke University's Divinity School. "It's counter to the culture of today to talk about sin and guilt."

Jehovah's Witnesses have long held that hell,

as the Bible teaches it, is simply the common grave of dead mankind—not a place of fiery torment. They hold this view, not because it is popular, but because of what the Bible says: "As for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all . . . There is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol ["hell," Catholic Douay Version]."—Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10.

With this clear understanding regarding the condition of the dead, Charles Taze Russell, first president of the Watch Tower Society, wrote back in 1896: "We find [in the Bible] no such place of everlasting torture as the creeds and hymn-books, and many pulpits, erroneously teach. Yet we have found a 'hell,' *sheol*, *hades*, to which all our race were condemned on account of Adam's sin, and from which all are redeemed by our Lord's death; and that 'hell' is the tomb—the death condition."

Thus for more than a century, Jehovah's Witnesses have taught the Biblical truth about hell.