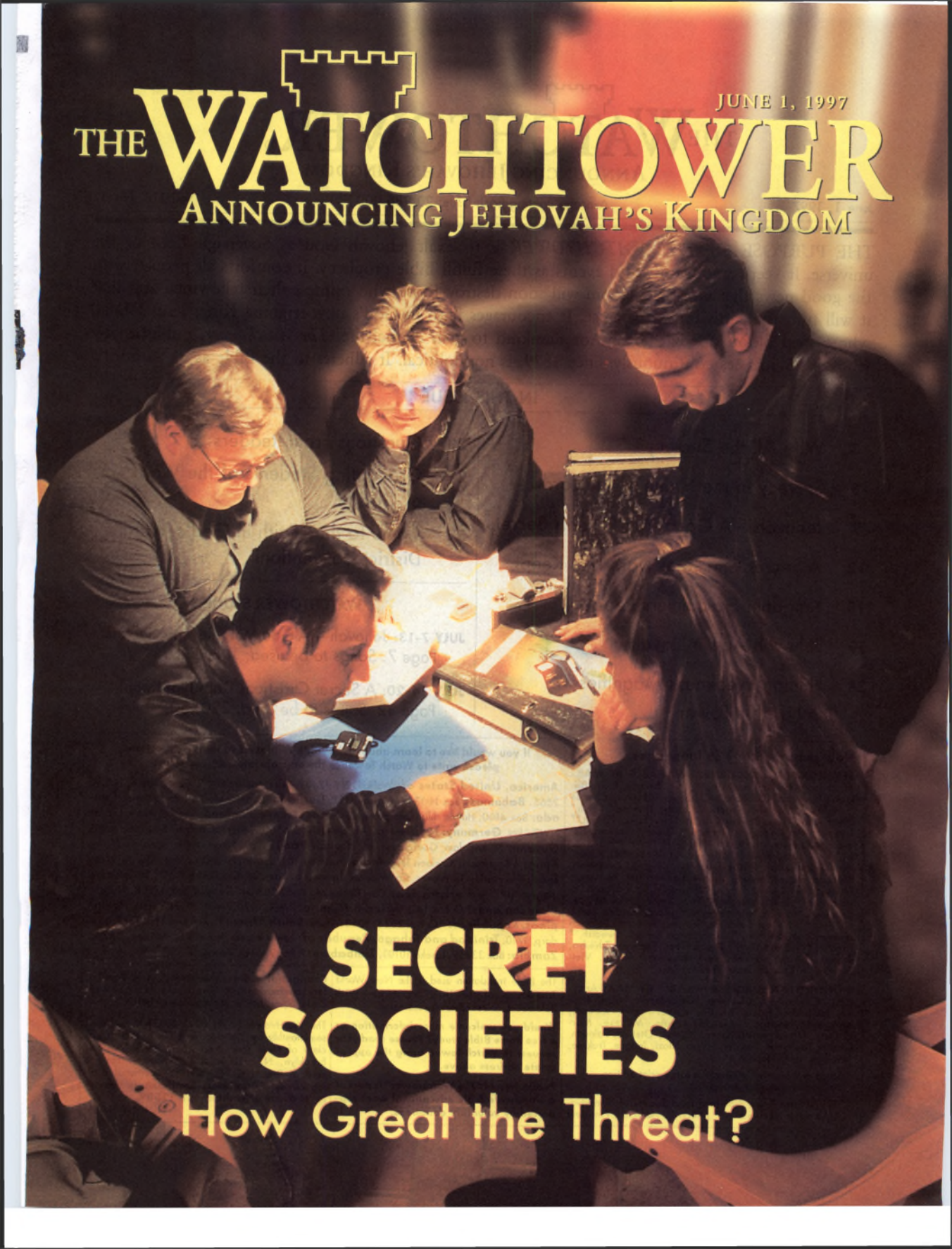




JUNE 1, 1997

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

SECRET SOCIETIES

How Great the Threat?

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.

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Why all the **SECRECY?**

"NOTHING is so burdensome as a secret." Or at least so claims a French proverb. Could this explain why we feel good when we know a secret but sometimes frustrated when we cannot talk about it? Yet, over the centuries many people have welcomed secrecy,

joining themselves together into secret groups in pursuit of a common goal.

Among the earliest of these secret societies were the mystery cults found in Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Later some of these groups wandered from their religious background and took on political, economic, or social overtones. For example, when guilds were formed in medieval Europe, their members resorted to secrecy primarily for economic self-protection.



Secret groups in modern times have often been formed for quite honorable reasons, possibly for "social and benevolent purposes," according to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and "to carry out charitable and educational programs." Some fraternal organizations, youth clubs, social clubs, and other groups are also secret, or at least semisecret. Generally, these groups are innocent, their members simply finding secrecy exciting. Secret rites of initiation have strong emotional appeal and strengthen the bonds of camaraderie and unity. Members gain the feeling of belonging and a sense of purpose. Secret societies of this kind usually are no threat to nonmembers. Outsiders are none the worse off for not knowing the secrets.

When Secrecy Signals Danger

Not all secret groups are secret to the same degree. But those that have "secrets within secrets," as the *Encyclopædia Britannica* expresses it, pose a particular danger. It explains that "by the use of special names, ordeals or revelations," members of the top ranks manage to "set themselves apart," thereby stimulating "the lower ranks to the effort necessary to reach the exalted degrees." The danger inherent in such groups is obvious. Those in the lower echelons may be completely unaware of the real objectives of the organization, not having as yet progressed to that level of revelation. It is easy to become involved in a group whose goals and methods of achieving them are only partially recognized and, indeed, perhaps not even fully shared. But the person who has been initiated into such a group may later find it difficult to free himself; he is, as it were, bound by chains of secrecy.

Secrecy signals even greater danger,

however, when a group pursues illegal or criminal goals and therefore tries to hide its very existence. Or if its existence and general aims are known, it may try to keep its membership and its short-term plans secret. This is true of highly motivated terrorist groups that periodically shock the world with their terrorist attacks.

Yes, secrecy can be dangerous, both for individuals and for society as a whole. Think of the secret teenage gangs that violently prey upon innocent victims, criminal associations like the secretive Mafia, white supremacy groups like the Ku Klux Klan,* not to mention the many terrorist groups around the world that continue to thwart efforts to achieve world peace and security.

What Are They up to Now?

During the 1950's, as a by-product of the Cold War, secret groups were organized in several Western European countries to serve as the basis for resistance movements should the Soviets ever try to conquer Western Europe. According to the German newsmagazine *Focus*, for example, "79 secret weapon depots" were set up in Austria during this period. Not all European countries were even aware of these groups. A newsmagazine realistically reported in the early 1990's: "Still unknown are how many of these organizations are alive today and what they may have been up to lately."

Yes, indeed. Who can really know how many secret groups may at this very moment be posing a threat greater than any of us might imagine?

* This U.S. group kept some of the religious elements of earlier secret societies by using a burning cross as its symbol. In the past, it carried on nighttime raids, its members being dressed in robes and white sheets and venting their rage against blacks, Catholics, Jews, foreigners, and organized labor.

SECRECY

in the name of the Lord

A POISON-GAS attack on the Tokyo, Japan, subway in March 1995 killed 12 people, sickened thousands more, and helped reveal a secret. A religious sect known as Aum Shinrikyo (Supreme Truth) had secretly built up an arsenal of sarin gas to use in pursuit of mysterious goals.

A month later a bomb blast shattered a federal building in Oklahoma City, U.S.A., and sent 167 to their death. Evidence seemed to indicate that the attack was in some way connected to the government standoff with the Branch Davidian religious cult in Waco, Texas, exactly two years earlier. At that time some 80 cult members died. The bomb blast also revealed what was a secret to most people: Dozens of paramilitary militia groups now operate in the United States, at least some of which are suspected of secretly planning antigovernment action.

Later, as 1995 drew to a close, the charred bodies of 16 persons were found in a forested area near Grenoble, France. They had been members of the Order of the Solar Temple, a small religious cult that in October 1994 had been in the news in Switzerland and Canada when 53 of its members either committed suicide or were murdered. But even after this tragedy, the sect had continued

to function. To this day its motivation and goals remain wrapped in secrecy.

The Dangers of Religious Secrecy

In view of such occurrences, is it any wonder that many people cast a wary eye in the direction of religious groups? Certainly no one would want to support a secret organization—religious or nonreligious—that misuses his trust and causes him to pursue goals with which he does not agree. What can people do, though, to avoid falling into the trap of involvement with secret societies of a questionable nature?

Obviously, anyone considering membership in a secret society would be wise to ascertain its real objectives. Pressure from friends or acquaintances should be guarded against, and decisions ought to be based not on emotion but on facts. Remember, it is likely the individual himself—not others—who will be called upon to suffer any possible consequences.

Following Bible principles is the surest method of steering clear of dangerous groups whose motives are less than honorable. (Isaiah 30:21) This involves maintaining political neutrality, showing love to others, even to enemies, avoiding “the works of the flesh,” and cultivating the fruitage of God’s spirit. Above all, true Christians must be no part of



Jehovah's Witnesses are happy to reveal who they are and what they are doing

the world, even as Jesus was no part, and this course precludes participating in worldly secret societies.—Galatians 5:19-23; John 17:14, 16; 18:36; Romans 12:17-21; James 4:4.

Jehovah's Witnesses are earnest students of the Bible who take their faith seriously and try openly to live accordingly. Worldwide, they are well-known as a religious group that 'seeks peace and pursues it.' (1 Peter 3:11) Their book *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* correctly notes: "Jehovah's Witnesses are in no sense a secret society. Their Bible-based beliefs are fully explained in publications that are available to anyone. Additionally,

they put forth special effort to invite the public to attend meetings to see and hear for themselves what takes place."

True religion in no way practices secretiveness. Worshipers of the true God have been instructed not to hide their identity or to obscure their purpose as Jehovah's Witnesses. The early disciples of Jesus filled Jerusalem with their teaching. They were out in the open as to their beliefs and activity. The same is true of Jehovah's Witnesses today. Understandably, when dictatorial regimes wrongfully restrict freedom of worship, Christians must cautiously and courageously carry on their activity, obeying "God as ruler rather than men," a situation that is forced upon them because of their courageous public witness.—Acts 5:27-29; 8:1; 12:1-14; Matthew 10:16, 26, 27.

If it ever crossed your mind that Jehovah's Witnesses might be a secret cult or sect, that was likely because *you* knew too little about them. That must have been the situation with many in the first century.

Acts chapter 28 tells us of a meeting that the apostle Paul had in Rome with "the principal men of the Jews." They said to him: "We think it proper to hear from you what your thoughts are, for truly as regards this sect it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against." (Acts 28:16-22) In response, Paul "explained the matter to them by bearing thorough witness concerning the kingdom of God," and "some began to believe." (Acts 28:23, 24) It certainly was to their lasting benefit to get the actual facts concerning true Christianity.

Dedicated as they are to the open and public service of God, Jehovah's Witnesses will be happy to reveal the plain facts of their activity and beliefs to anyone who cares to know the facts. Why not investigate for yourself, thus being in position to be properly informed as to their faith?

JEHOVAH—A GOD WHO REVEALS SECRETS

"There exists a God in the heavens who is a Revealer of secrets."—DANIEL 2:28.

JEHOVAH, the supreme and loving God of the universe, the one and only Creator, is a God of wisdom and justice. He has no need to hide his identity, his works, or his purposes. At his own time and at his own discretion, he reveals himself. In this way he differs from his Adversary, Satan the Devil, who tries to hide his true identity and intentions.

² Even as Jehovah and Satan are opposites, so also are their worshipers. Those who follow the lead of Satan are characterized by duplicity and deceit. They try to present themselves in a good light, while doing works belonging to darkness. Corinthian Christians were told not to be surprised at this fact. "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself keeps transforming himself into an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 11:13, 14) Christians, on the other hand, look to Christ as their Leader. While on earth he perfectly reflected the personality of his Father, Jehovah God. (Hebrews 1:1-3) Thus, by following Christ, Christians are imitating Jehovah, the God of truth, openness, and light. They too have no need to hide their identity, their works, or their purposes.—Ephesians 4:17-19; 5:1, 2.

³ At times that he knows to be best, Je-

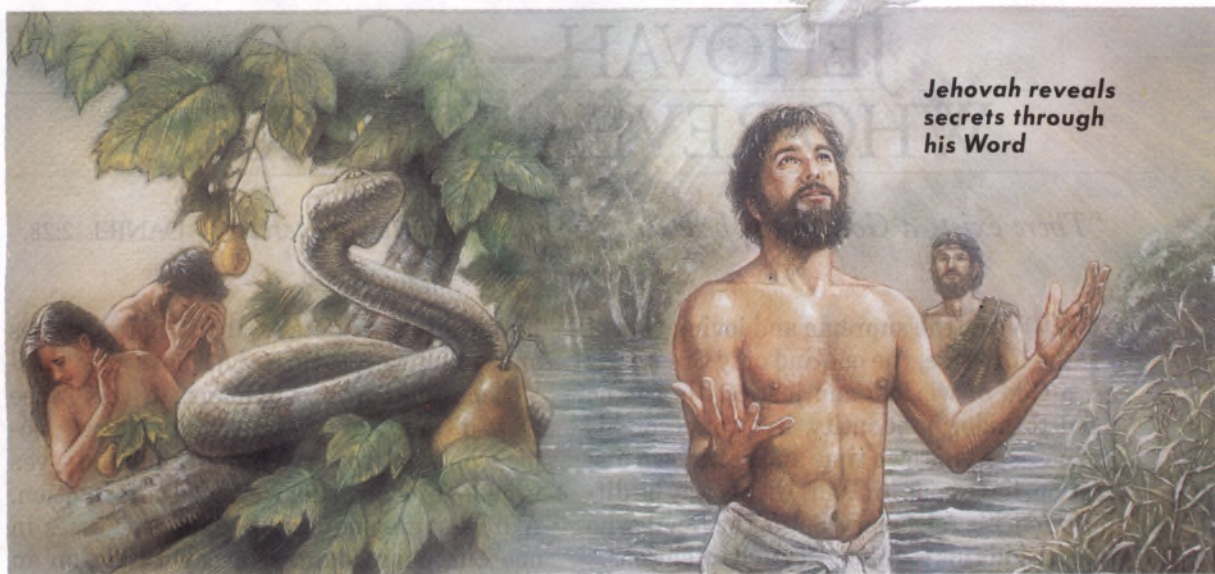
1, 2. (a) How does Jehovah differ from his great Adversary? (b) How do humans mirror this difference?

3. How can we refute the charge that people who become Jehovah's Witnesses are coerced to join a "secret sect"?

hovah discloses details about his purposes and about the future that have previously been unknown to humans. In this sense he is a God who reveals secrets. Thus, people who want to serve him are invited—yes urged—to learn such revealed information. A 1994 survey of over 145,000 Witnesses in one European country revealed that, on an average, each of them *personally* investigated the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses for three years before choosing to become a Witness. They made the choice according to their own free will without coercion. And they continued to have freedom of will and action. For example, because some few came to disagree with the high standards of morality for Christians, these later decided that they did not want to continue as Witnesses. It is interesting, though, that during the past five years, a large proportion of these former Witnesses took steps to resume their association and activity as Witnesses.

⁴ Of course, not all former Witnesses return, and among them are some who once held positions of responsibility within the Christian congregation. This should not be surprising, for even one of Jesus' closest followers, the apostle Judas, turned away. (Matthew 26:14-16, 20-25) But is this a reason to be disturbed about Christianity itself? Does this negate the success with which Jehovah's Witnesses are carrying on their educational

4. What need not disturb faithful Christians, and why not?



activity? Not at all, no more so than the traitorous action of Judas Iscariot brought God's purposes to a standstill.

Almighty yet Loving

⁵ Jehovah is a God of love. He cares about people. (1 John 4:7-11) Despite his lofty position, he enjoys making humans his friends. Of one of his ancient servants, we read: "Abraham put faith in Jehovah, and it was counted to him as righteousness," and he came to be called 'Jehovah's friend.'" (James 2:23; 2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8) As human friends share confidential matters, or secrets, so also does Jehovah with his friends. In this regard Jesus imitated his Father, for he made friends with his disciples and shared secrets with them. "I no longer call you slaves," he told them, "because a slave does not know what his master does. But I have called you friends, because all the things I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." (John 15:15) The pri-

5. How do we know that Jehovah and Jesus love humans, and how have they demonstrated this love?

vate information, or "secrets," held in common by Jehovah, his Son, and their friends unites them in an unbreakable bond of love and devotion.—Colossians 3:14.

⁶ The meaning of the name Jehovah, "He Causes to Become," indicates his ability to become whatever he needs to become in order to accomplish his purpose. Unlike humans, Jehovah has no need to hide his intentions because of fearing that others might be able to hinder him in carrying them out. He simply cannot fail, so he openly reveals in his Word, the Bible, much of what he purposes to do. He promises: "My word . . . will not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it."—Isaiah 55:11.

⁷ Shortly after the rebellion in Eden, Jehovah revealed in outline the final outcome of

6. Why has Jehovah no need to hide his intentions?

7. (a) What did Jehovah foretell in Eden, and how did Satan prove God to be true? (b) How does the principle at 2 Corinthians 13:8 always hold true?



the ongoing controversy between him and his Adversary, Satan. God's promised Seed would be painfully, but not lethally, bruised, whereas Satan would ultimately suffer a fatal bruise. (Genesis 3:15) In 33 C.E., the Devil actually did bruise the Seed, Christ Jesus, by causing his death. In this way, Satan fulfilled Scripture and in the process proved Jehovah to be a God of truth, although this was certainly not Satan's intent. His hatred for truth and righteousness, as well as his proud, unrepentant attitude, led him into doing exactly what God foretold he would do. Yes, to all opposers of truth, even to Satan himself, the principle holds true: "We can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth."—2 Corinthians 13:8.

⁸ Since God's Kingdom was invisibly established in 1914, Revelation 12:12 has applied: "On this account be glad, you heavens and you who reside in them! Woe for the earth

8, 9. (a) What does Satan know, but does this knowledge jeopardize the carrying out of Jehovah's purposes? (b) What plain warning do opposers of Jehovah ignore, and why?

and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." Yet, does the knowledge that his time is short cause Satan to change his course? That would be an admission on Satan's part that Jehovah is a God of truth and that as the Supreme Ruler, he alone is worthy of worship. However, the Devil is not willing to admit defeat, not even in the face of knowledge.

⁹ Jehovah openly reveals what will happen when Christ comes to render judgment on Satan's world system. (Matthew 24:29-31; 25:31-46) In this regard, his Word announces concerning world rulers: "Whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security!' then sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them just as the pang of distress upon a pregnant woman." (1 Thessalonians 5:3) Those who follow Satan's lead ignore this clear warning. They are blinded because of their wicked hearts, and this prevents them from repenting of their wicked course and from changing their plans and strategy that attempt to thwart Jehovah's purposes.

¹⁰ Particularly since 1986, when an International Year of Peace was declared by the United Nations, the world has been full of talk about peace and security. Definite steps have been taken in an effort to secure world peace, apparently with a measure of success. Is this the entire fulfillment of this prophecy, or can we expect a future startling announcement of some sort? Jehovah will clarify that matter in his due time. Meanwhile, let us stay spiritually awake, "awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah." (2 Peter 3:12) As time continues to pass with still more talk of peace and security, some individuals who know of this warning, but who choose to ignore it, may become more defiant in assuming that Jehovah will not, or cannot, fulfill his word. (Compare Ecclesiastes 8:11-13; 2 Peter 3:3, 4.) But true Christians know that Jehovah will carry out his purpose!

Proper Respect for the Agencies Jehovah Uses

¹¹ When King Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, had a troubling dream that he could not recall, he asked for help. His priests, conjurers, and sorcerers could neither tell him what his dream was nor explain what it meant. God's servant Daniel, however, was able to do so, although he readily admitted that the revealing of the dream and its meaning was not a result of his own wisdom. Daniel said: "There exists a God in the heavens who is a Revealer of secrets, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what is to occur in the final part of the days." (Daniel 2:1-30) Several centuries earlier, Joseph, another prophet of God,

10. (a) To what extent may 1 Thessalonians 5:3 have had fulfillment, but how should Jehovah's people react? (b) Why may people without faith grow more bold in the future in opposing God's people?

11. What did Daniel and Joseph learn about Jehovah?

had similarly experienced that Jehovah is a Revealer of secrets.—Genesis 40:8-22; Amos 3:7, 8.

¹² Jehovah's greatest prophet to serve on earth was Jesus. (Acts 3:19-24) Paul explained: "God, who long ago spoke on many occasions and in many ways to our forefathers by means of the prophets, has at the end of these days spoken to us by means of a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the systems of things."—Hebrews 1:1, 2.

¹³ Jehovah spoke to early Christians by means of his Son, Jesus, who made known divine secrets to them. Jesus told them: "To you it is granted to understand the sacred secrets of the kingdom of God." (Luke 8:10) Paul later spoke of anointed Christians as being "subordinates of Christ and stewards of sacred secrets of God." (1 Corinthians 4:1) Today, anointed Christians continue to serve as such, making up a faithful and discreet slave class that through its Governing Body provides spiritual food at the proper time. (Matthew 24:45-47) If we highly respect God's inspired prophets of bygone days, and particularly God's Son, should we not also respect the human agency that Jehovah is using today in revealing Biblical information so necessary for his people in these critical times?—2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13.

Openness or Secrecy?

¹⁴ Does Jehovah's openness in revealing things mean that Christians should always and under all circumstances reveal everything they know? Well, Christians follow Jesus' advice to his apostles to be "cautious as serpents and yet innocent as doves." (Mat-

12, 13. (a) Who was God's greatest prophet, and why do you so answer? (b) Who today serve as "stewards of sacred secrets of God," and how should we view them?

14. When do Christians carry on activities in secret, thereby following whose example?

thew 10:16) If told they cannot worship God as their consciences demand, Christians continue to “obey God,” for they realize that no human agency has a right to restrict Jehovah’s worship. (Acts 5:29) Jesus himself demonstrated the propriety of this. We read: “Now after these things Jesus continued walking about in Galilee, for he did not want to walk about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. However, the festival of the Jews, the festival of tabernacles, was near. Therefore Jesus said to them [his unbelieving fleshly brothers]: . . . ‘You go up to the festival; I am not yet going up to this festival, because my due time has not yet fully come.’ So after he told them these things, he remained in Galilee. But when his brothers had gone up to the festival, then he also went up himself, not openly but as in secret.”—John 7:1, 2, 6, 8-10.

To Tell or Not to Tell?

¹⁵ In some instances, keeping a matter private is not only wise but also loving. For example, how did Joseph, the adoptive father of Jesus, react when he learned that his betrothed bride, Mary, was pregnant? We read: “However, Joseph her husband, because he was righteous and did not want to make her a public spectacle, intended to divorce her *secretly*.” (Matthew 1:18, 19) How unkind it would have been to make her a public spectacle!

¹⁶ Confidential matters that could cause embarrassment or pain should not be revealed to unauthorized people. Christian elders keep this in mind when they must offer personal counsel or comfort to fellow Christians or possibly even discipline them for seriously sinning against Jehovah. Han-

15. How did Joseph indicate that keeping a secret is sometimes the loving thing to do?

16. What responsibility do elders, as well as all other members of the congregation, have as regards confidential matters?

dling these matters in a Scriptural way is necessary; revealing confidential details to those not involved is unnecessary and unloving. Certainly, members of the Christian congregation will not try to pry confidential information out of elders but will respect the elders’ responsibility to keep confidential things secret. Proverbs 25:9 notes: “Plead your own cause with your fellowman, and do not reveal the confidential talk of another.”

¹⁷ This principle also holds true within the family circle or among close friends. Keeping some matters confidential is vital to avoid misunderstandings and strained relationships. “The wind from the north brings forth as with labor pains a downpour; and a tongue giving away a secret, a denounced face.” (Proverbs 25:23) Of course, loyalty to Jehovah and his righteous principles, as well as love for erring individuals, may occasionally necessitate telling parents, Christian elders, or other authorized ones even confidential matters.* But in most cases, Christians hold

* See “Do Not Share in the Sins of Others” in *The Watchtower*, November 15, 1985.

17. Why do Christians in most cases keep confidential matters secret, but why can they not always do so?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ Why does Jehovah not need to hide his intentions?
- ☐ To whom does Jehovah reveal his secrets?
- ☐ What responsibility do Christians have as regards confidential matters?
- ☐ What three qualities will help Christians know what to tell and what not to tell?

the personal secrets of others in confidence, guarding them as they guard their own.

¹⁸ In summary, a Christian imitates Jehovah by keeping certain matters confidential when necessary, revealing them only when appropriate. In deciding what he should and should not tell, he is guided by humility, faith, and love. Humility prevents him from exaggerating his own importance, trying to impress others either by telling them everything he knows or by tantalizing them with secrets he cannot tell. Faith in Jehovah's Word and the Christian congregation motivates him to preach divinely provided Biblical information while being careful to avoid saying things that might offend others at the outset. Yes, love motivates him openly to tell

18. What three Christian qualities can help us determine what we should tell and what we should not?

things that glorify God and that people need to know in order to gain life. Confidential personal matters, on the other hand, he guards, realizing that in most cases revealing them would amount to showing a lack of love.

¹⁹ This balanced approach helps to identify true Christians. They do not hide God's identity behind a mask of namelessness or behind a mysterious, unexplainable Trinity doctrine. Unknown gods are characteristic of false religion, not of the true. (See Acts 17: 22, 23.) Jehovah's anointed Witnesses truly appreciate the privilege of being "stewards of sacred secrets of God." By openly revealing these secrets to others, they help draw honesthearted ones to seek Jehovah's friendship.—1 Corinthians 4:1; 14:22-25; Zechariah 8:23; Malachi 3:18.

19. What course of action helps to identify true Christians, and in what does it result?

A SECRET CHRISTIANS DARE NOT KEEP!

"I have spoken to the world publicly. . . . I spoke nothing in secret."—JOHN 18:20.

THE Greek word *my-ste'ri-on* is translated in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* 25 times as "sacred secret" and 3 times as "mystery." A secret called sacred must be important indeed! Anyone privileged to gain knowledge of such a secret should feel highly honored, since he has been counted worthy to share

1, 2. What is the significance of the Greek word *my-ste'ri-on* as used in the Scriptures?

a secret with the Supreme God of the universe.

² Vine's *Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* confirms that in most cases "sacred secret" is a more appropriate rendering than "mystery." It says of *my-ste'ri-on*: "In the [Christian Greek Scriptures] it denotes, not the mysterious (as with the Eng[lish] word), but that which, being outside the range of unassisted natu-

ral apprehension, can be made known only by Divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who are illumined by His Spirit. In the ordinary sense a mystery implies knowledge withheld; its Scriptural significance is truth revealed. Hence the terms especially associated with the subject are 'made known,' 'manifested,' 'revealed,' 'preached,' 'understand,' 'dispensation.'

³ This explanation highlights a major difference between the mysterious religious groups that flourished in the first century and the newly formed Christian congregation. Whereas those initiated into secret cults were often bound by a vow of silence to guard religious teachings, Christians were never put under such a restriction. It is true that the apostle Paul spoke of "God's wisdom in a sacred secret," calling it "hidden wisdom," that is, hidden from "the rulers of this system of things." It is not hidden from Christians to whom it had been revealed through God's spirit so that they might make it public.—1 Corinthians 2:7-12; compare Proverbs 1:20.

The "Sacred Secret" Identified

⁴ Jehovah's "sacred secret" centers on Jesus Christ. Paul wrote: "[Jehovah] made known to us the sacred secret of his will. It is according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for an administration at the full limit of the appointed times, namely, to gather all things together again in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth. Yes, in him." (Ephesians 1:9, 10) Paul was even more specific about the nature of the "sacred secret"

when he pointed to the need for "an accurate knowledge of the sacred secret of God, namely, Christ."—Colossians 2:2.

⁵ More, however, is involved, for the "sacred secret" is a secret with many facets. It is not simply the identification of Jesus as being the promised Seed or Messiah; it includes the role he is assigned to play in God's purpose. It involves a heavenly government, God's Messianic Kingdom, as Jesus clearly explained when he told his disciples: "To you it is granted to understand the *sacred secrets of the kingdom of the heavens*, but to those people it is not granted."—Matthew 13:11.

⁶ A long period of time was to expire between the first mention of God's purpose to provide a basis for the Messianic Kingdom and the bringing of "the sacred secret . . . to a finish." (Revelation 10:7; Genesis 3:15) Its being brought to a finish would occur with the Kingdom's establishment, as a comparison of Revelation 10:7 and 11:15 proves. In fact, some 4,000 years elapsed from the giving of the first Kingdom promise in Eden to the appearance of the King-Designate in 29 C.E. Another 1,885 years elapsed before the Kingdom was established in the heavens in 1914. Thus the "sacred secret" was progressively revealed over a period of almost 6,000 years. (See page 16.) Paul was indeed correct in speaking about "the revelation of the sacred secret which has been kept in silence for long-lasting times but has now been made manifest and has been made known."—Romans 16:25-27; Ephesians 3:4-11.

⁷ In contrast with humans, who have

3. How did the Christian congregation of the first century differ from certain mysterious religious groups?

4. On whom does the "sacred secret" center, and how?

5. What is involved in the "sacred secret"?

6. (a) Why is it correct to say that the "sacred secret" was "kept in silence for long-lasting times"? (b) How was it progressively revealed?

7. Why can we have utmost confidence in the faithful and discreet slave class?

a limited life span, Jehovah never feels pressured by time to reveal his secrets prematurely. This fact should prevent us from becoming impatient when certain Bible questions cannot presently be explained to our satisfaction. Modesty on the part of the faithful and discreet slave class, commissioned to provide the Christian household with food at the proper time, prevents it from presumptuously running ahead and wildly speculating about things that are still unclear. The slave class strives to avoid being dogmatic. It is not too proud to admit that as of now it cannot answer every question, keeping Proverbs 4:18 clearly in mind. But how thrilling to know that Jehovah, in his own due time and in his own way, will continue to reveal his secrets as to his purposes! Never should we become impatient with Jehovah's arrangement, indiscreetly trying to rush ahead of the Revealer of secrets. How reassuring it is to know that the channel Jehovah is using today does not do so! It is both faithful and discreet.—Matthew 24:45; 1 Corinthians 4:6.

The Secret That Has Been Revealed Must Be Told!

⁸ Jehovah has not revealed his “sacred secret” to Christians for them to keep it hidden. It is to be made known, in harmony with the principle Jesus set down for *all* his followers—not just for a few clergymen: “You are the light of the world. A city cannot be hid when situated upon a mountain. People light a lamp and set it, not under the measuring basket, but upon the lampstand, and it shines upon all those in the house. Likewise let your light shine before men, that they may see your fine works and give glory to your Father who is in the heavens.” —Matthew 5:14-16; 28:19, 20.

8. How do we know that the “sacred secret” is to be made known?

⁹ Jesus had no revolutionary intention of forming an underground organization of followers to pursue secret purposes. In the book *Early Christianity and Society*, Robert M. Grant wrote regarding the defense made of the early Christians by second-century apologist Justin Martyr: “If Christians were revolutionists they would remain in hiding in order to reach their goal.” But how could Christians “remain in hiding” and at the same time be like “a city . . . situated upon a mountain”? They dared not hide their light under a measuring basket! The government, therefore, had nothing to fear from their activity. This writer went on to describe them as “the emperor’s best allies in the cause of peace and good order.”

¹⁰ Jesus did not want his disciples to keep secret their identity as members of a so-called religious sect. (Acts 24:14; 28:22) Failing to let our light shine today would be displeasing both to Christ and to his Father, the Revealer of secrets, and it would not leave us happy.

¹¹ Jehovah “does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9; Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11; Acts 17:30) The basis for forgiveness of the sins of repentant humans is faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all—not for just a few—so that “everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) It is vital that people be helped to take the necessary steps that will qualify them to be judged as sheep, not goats, during the coming judgment. —Matthew 25:31-46.

9. What proves that Jesus was no revolutionary, as some claim?

10. Why should Christians not keep their identity secret?

11, 12. (a) Why does Jehovah desire Christianity to be made known? (b) How did Jesus set the proper example?



Like their Leader, Jesus, Jehovah's Witnesses publicly declare Jehovah's Kingdom

¹² True Christianity is not to be hidden; it is to be made known in every appropriate way possible. Jesus himself set the proper example. When questioned by the chief priest about his disciples and his teaching, he said: "I have spoken to the world publicly. I always taught in a synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret." (John 18:19, 20) In view of this precedent, what God-fearing person would presume to keep secret what God has declared must be made public? Who would dare hide "the key of knowledge" that leads to eternal life? Doing so, would make him like the religious hypocrites of the first century.—Luke 11:52; John 17:3.

¹³ May no one ever be able to say that we as Jehovah's Witnesses have kept God's Kingdom message secret! Whether the message is accepted or rejected, people must know that it has been preached. (Compare Ezekiel 2:5; 33:33.) Let us therefore take ad-

13. Why should we preach at each and every opportunity?



vantage of each and every opportunity to speak the message of truth to all, wherever we happen to meet them.

Putting Hooks in Satan's Jaws

¹⁴ In many places Jehovah's Witnesses are becoming more and more the center of media attention. Similar to what happened to the early Christians, they are often misrepresented and placed in the same category as questionable religious cults and secret organizations. (Acts 28:22) Might our openness in preaching make us more subject to attack? It certainly would be unwise, and not in keeping with Jesus' counsel, to thrust ourselves into the midst of controversy unnecessarily. (Proverbs 26:17; Matthew 10:16) However, the beneficial work of Kingdom preaching and helping people to improve their lives is not to be hidden. It glorifies Jehovah, lifting him on high, directing attention to him and to his established Kingdom. The recent gratifying response to Bible truth in Eastern Europe and parts of Africa has partially been because of the increased openness with which the truth can now be preached there.

14. Why should we not be hesitant about being open in our worship?

A "SACRED SECRET" PROGRESSIVELY REVEALED

- **After 4026 B.C.E.:** God promises to raise up a Seed to destroy Satan.—Genesis 3:15
- **1943 B.C.E.:** The Abrahamic covenant is validated, promising that the Seed will come through Abraham.—Genesis 12:1-7
- **1918 B.C.E.:** Birth of Isaac as heir to the covenant.—Genesis 17:19; 21:1-5
- **c. 1781 B.C.E.:** Jehovah confirms that the Seed will come through Isaac's son Jacob.—Genesis 28:10-15
- **1711 B.C.E.:** Jacob indicates that the Seed will come through his son Judah.—Genesis 49:10
- **1070-1038 B.C.E.:** King David learns that the Seed will be his descendant and will rule forever as King.—2 Samuel 7:13-16; Psalm 89:35, 36
- **29-33 C.E.:** Jesus is identified as the Seed, the Messiah, the future judge, and the King-Designate.—John 1:17; 4:25, 26; Acts 10:42, 43; 2 Corinthians 1:20; 1 Timothy 3:16
- Jesus reveals that he will have fellow rulers and judges, that the heavenly Kingdom will have earthly subjects, and that all his followers are to be Kingdom preachers.—Matthew 5:3-5; 6:10; 28:19, 20; Luke 10:1-9; 12:32; 22:29, 30; John 10:16; 14:2, 3
- Jesus reveals that the Kingdom will be established at a definite time, as corroborated by world events.—Matthew 24:3-22; Luke 21:24
- **36 C.E.:** Peter learns that non-Jews will also be Kingdom joint heirs.—Acts 10:30-48
- **55 C.E.:** Paul explains that the Kingdom joint heirs will be resurrected to immortality and incorruption during Christ's presence.—1 Corinthians 15:51-54
- **96 C.E.:** Jesus, already ruling over his anointed followers, reveals that their final number will be 144,000.—Ephesians 5:32; Colossians 1:13-20; Revelation 1:1; 14:1-3
- **1879 C.E.:** Zion's Watch Tower points to 1914 as a year of great significance in the outworking of God's "sacred secret"
- **1925 C.E.:** The Watch Tower explains that the Kingdom was born in 1914; the "sacred secret" about the Kingdom must be publicized.—Revelation 12:1-5, 10, 17

¹⁵ It is true that the openness with which Jehovah's Witnesses preach, the spiritual paradise they enjoy, and their prosperity—both in human resources and material assets—do not go unnoticed. While attracting honesthearted ones, these factors may repel opposers. (2 Corinthians 2:14-17) In fact, this may eventually serve to lure Satan's forces into attacking God's people.

¹⁶ Should this be a cause for concern? Not according to Jehovah's prophecy found in Ezekiel chapter 38. It foretells that Gog of Magog, descriptive of Satan the Devil since his debasement to the vicinity of the earth after the Kingdom's establishment in 1914, will lead an attack on God's people. (Revela-

15, 16. (a) What purposes are served by our openness and spiritual prosperity, but is this a cause for concern? (b) Why does Jehovah put hooks into Satan's jaws?

tion 12:7-9) Jehovah tells Gog: "You must say: 'I shall go up against the land of open rural country. I shall come in upon those having no disturbance, dwelling in security, all of them dwelling without wall, and they do not have even bar and doors.' It will be to get a big spoil and to do much plundering, in order to turn your hand back upon devastated places reinhabited and upon a people gathered together out of the nations, one that is accumulating wealth and property, those who are dwelling in the center of the earth." (Ezekiel 38:11, 12) Verse 4 shows that God's people need not fear this attack, however, because it is of Jehovah's doing. But why would God allow—yes, even provoke—an all-out attack on his people? In verse 23 we read Jehovah's answer: "I shall certainly magnify myself and sanctify myself and make myself known before the eyes

of many nations; and they will have to know that I am Jehovah.”

¹⁷ Thus, rather than living in dread of Gog’s attack, Jehovah’s people look forward with anticipation to this further fulfillment of Bible prophecy. How thrilling to know that by prospering and blessing his visible organization, Jehovah inserts hooks into Satan’s jaws and draws him and his military force on to their defeat!—Ezekiel 38:4.

Now More Than Ever!

¹⁸ In modern times Jehovah’s Witnesses have been very open in expressing their Bible-based views, even though this has not been popular. For decades they have warned of the dangers of smoking and drug abuse, the shortsightedness of permissive child training, the bad effects of entertainment saturated with illicit sex and violence, and the risks of blood transfusions. They have also pointed out the inconsistencies of the evolution theory. More and more people are now saying, “Jehovah’s Witnesses are not wrong after all.” Had we not been so open in making our views public, they could not react this way. And do not overlook the fact that by making such a statement, they are taking a step in the direction of saying, “Satan, you are a liar; Jehovah is right after all.” What a powerful motivation for us to continue following Jesus’ example, publicly speaking the word of truth!—Proverbs 27:11.

¹⁹ Jehovah’s people have long understood their obligation in this regard. At a note-

17. How should we view Gog’s imminent attack?
18. (a) To what realization are many people now coming, and why? (b) How does the reaction to Kingdom preaching serve as a powerful motivation?

19, 20. (a) What determination did Jehovah’s people express in 1922, and do these words still apply? (b) How should we view Jehovah’s “sacred secret”?

worthy convention in 1922, J. F. Rutherford, then president of the Watch Tower Society, thrilled his audience by saying: “Be sober, be vigilant, be active, be brave. Be faithful and true witnesses for the Lord. Go forward in the fight until every vestige of Babylon lies desolate. Herald the message far and wide. The world must know that Jehovah is God and that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. This is the day of all days. Behold, the King reigns! You are his publicity agents. Therefore advertise, advertise, advertise, the King and his kingdom.”

²⁰ As important as these words were in 1922, how much more so 75 years later, when the revealing of Christ as Judge and Avenger is much closer! The message of Jehovah’s established Kingdom and of the spiritual paradise enjoyed by God’s people is a “sacred secret” simply too grand to keep. As Jesus himself so clearly stated, his followers must, with the help of the holy spirit, be witnesses “to the most distant part of the earth” concerning his key place in Jehovah’s eternal purpose. (Acts 1:8; Ephesians 3:8-12) In fact, as servants of Jehovah, the God who reveals secrets, we dare not keep this secret to ourselves!

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ What is the “sacred secret”?
- ☐ How do we know that it should be publicized?
- ☐ What brings about Gog’s attack on Jehovah’s people, and how should we view this?
- ☐ What should each of us be determined to do?

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

Fleeing to Jehovah's Theocratic Organization

LONG ago the prophet Isaiah was moved to declare: 'They must glorify Jehovah in the islands of the sea.' (Isaiah 24:15) Jehovah's Witnesses view the islands of the sea as part of "the inhabited earth" to which Jesus said "the good news has to be preached."—Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10.

The Marquesas Islands are located some 900 miles northeast of Tahiti. They are part of a remote group of islands in the South Pacific called French Polynesia. With rich, volcanic soil and a warm, humid climate, vegetation thrives in these islands. However, the Marquesas are also bearing another type of fruit. Consider the case of one family who responded to the Kingdom message on the island of Hiva Oa.

Jean and his wife, Nadine, were unhappy with the so-called civilized society of Western Europe in which they lived. So they decided to leave that hectic life-style behind and move with their child to the Marquesas Islands. Their new house, constructed of bamboo, was nestled in a remote valley. To reach their nearest neighbors, they had to hike along a rugged mountain path for two hours. The closest village with a doctor, school, and general store was three hours away by jeep.

Jean and Nadine were not interested in religion. They did, however, engage in discussions about the origin of life. Often, they would elaborate on complex theories of evolution. But none of their theories brought them satisfaction.

After living in seclusion for six years, they were surprised to receive a visit by two of



Jehovah's Witnesses. The Witnesses had learned of Jean and Nadine's whereabouts from the nearby villagers. Naturally, the conversation led to a discussion of the theory of evolution. To the couple's delight, the Witnesses were carrying a copy of the book *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses. Jean and Nadine were pleased to have a book

that presented a thorough examination of how life got here.

A short time later, a Bible study was started. Over a period of about three years, Jean and Nadine made steady progress. They became convinced that soon the entire earth would be made a paradise. After their family increased to three children, traveling for four hours to attend Christian meetings at the Kingdom Hall became a real challenge. That did not stop them from attending, however. Eventually Jean and Nadine symbolized their dedication to Jehovah by water baptism. This they did at a convention held in the main village, where the peak attendance was 38 people!

In order to help the small group of Kingdom publishers, the family decided to leave their isolated home. They moved to a village of about a thousand inhabitants, where Jean now serves as a ministerial servant in the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. This family, who formerly fled to the islands to escape civilization, counts it a privilege to have found the only true sanctuary, Jehovah's theocratic organization.

JEHOVAH ACTS IN LOYALTY

AS TOLD BY PETER PALLISER

It was December 1985. Excitement mounted as we began our descent to the international airport in Nairobi, Kenya. On the drive into the city, memories flooded back, awakened by familiar sights and sounds.



WE CAME to Kenya to attend the “Integrity Keepers” District Convention of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Twelve years earlier, my wife and I had been forced to leave Kenya because of a ban on our preaching work. We had lived there at Bethel, the name given to the branch facilities of Jehovah’s Witnesses. What a pleasant surprise awaited us when we returned there to visit!

Helping to prepare the noon meal at Bethel was a young Witness whom we had known since she was two years old. At least six members of the Bethel family were people we knew when they were children. What a joy it was to see them now as young adults, along with their families, all still active in the ministry! Our God, Jehovah, had cared for them in keeping with the Bible’s promise: “With someone loyal you will act in loy-

alty.” (2 Samuel 22:26) What a contrast I found between my early life and the rewarding life that these young ones were leading!

Early Life Without Purpose

I was born in Scarborough, England, on August 14, 1918. Two years later my mother and stepsister left for Canada, so I spent the next three years living with my father, his mother, and his sister. When I was five, Mother kidnapped me and took me to Montreal, Canada. Four years later she sent me back to England to live with Father and to attend school.

My mother and stepsister wrote to me about every six months. At the end of their letters, they would express the wish that I be a good citizen, loyal to King and country. My replies probably disappointed them because I wrote that I believed that

nationalism and war were wrong. Yet, not having any clear direction, during my teen years, I just drifted along.

Then in July 1939, six weeks before World War II began, I was drafted into the British army. I was only 20. My regiment was soon sent to northern France. When German aircraft attacked us, we young lads aimed our rifles and shot at them. It was a scary existence. We retreated before the advancing German armies, and I was among those evacuated at Dunkirk during the first week of June 1940. I still recall with horror the sight of a whole battalion of dead strewn across the beach. I survived that nightmare and arrived at Harwich in eastern England aboard a small freighter.

The following year, in March 1941, I was sent to India. There I received training as an instrument mechanic. After a period in the hospital as a result of an infection, I was transferred to an army unit in Delhi, India's capital. Far from home and still not feeling well, I began thinking about the future. Especially did I wonder about what happens to us when we die.

Exercising a New Loyalty

A fellow Englishman, Bert Gale, was my roommate in Delhi. One day he said that "religion was of the Devil," a comment that aroused my interest. His wife had become one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and from time to time, she sent him Bible publications. One of these, the booklet *Hope*, captured my interest. Its discussion of the hope of the resurrection provided me with a real sense of calm.

Sometime early in 1943, Bert spoke to an Anglo-Indian civilian, Teddy Grubert, who worked with us on the military base. To our amazement we learned that Teddy was a Witness. Although in 1941 a ban had been placed on the publications of Jehovah's Wit-

nesses, he took us to the meetings held by the Witnesses in Delhi. In that small congregation, I found genuine, warm companionship for the first time in my life. Basil Tsatos, an older Christian brother from Greece, took me under his wing and answered my questions. He provided clear Bible answers to questions about why we grow old and die, the resurrection, and God's promised new world of righteousness.—Acts 24:15; Romans 5:12; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:3, 4.

The booklet *Peace—Can It Last?*, published in 1942, especially captured my interest. It identified the League of Nations as the "scarlet-colored wild beast." (Revelation 17:3) Quoting chapter 17, verse 11, of Revelation, the booklet said: "It can now be said that the League 'was, and is not.'" Continuing, it said: "The association of worldly nations will rise again." In 1945, more than three years later, that is exactly what occurred when the United Nations organization was formed!

During the ban on Witness literature, I was able to help my newfound friends. When a carton of *Peace—Can It Last?* booklets would arrive, the congregation turned it over to me for safekeeping. Who would think of looking in the army camp for banned literature? Each time I attended

In Our Next Issue

How Did God Inspire the Bible?

Jerusalem in Bible Times
—What Does Archaeology Reveal?

"Male and Female
He Created Them"

the meetings, I took along a few booklets to keep the brothers supplied. I even hid their personal Bible literature when they feared a search of their homes. Finally, on December 11, 1944, the ban was lifted.

My loyalty to Christian teachings was put to the test during the 1943 Christmas celebrations that were organized for our army detachment. I refused to participate, since I had learned that Jesus was not born in the cold of December and that early Christians did not celebrate Christmas.—Compare Luke 2:8-12.

When the “United Announcers’” Assembly was held in Jubbulpore (Jabalpur) December 27 to 31, 1944, I was among the some 150 in attendance. Many convention delegates traveled by train from Delhi, a trip of well over 400 miles. I shall never forget the wonderful atmosphere in that open-air setting, where I saw Jehovah’s organization in action.

The convention delegates were accommodated in school dormitories, where we sang Kingdom songs and enjoyed happy Christian fellowship. During that convention I began sharing in the public preaching work, a work that has ever since remained dear to my heart.

Full-Time Ministry in England

I returned to England in 1946 and soon began to associate with the Wolverton Congregation. Although we had only about ten Kingdom publishers, these made me feel at home, and I experienced the same contentment that I had among my brothers in India. Vera Clifton stood out in the congregation as a genuine, warmhearted person. When I learned that she shared my desire to be a pioneer, as full-time ministers are called, we were married, on May 24, 1947. I fixed up a caravan, or mobile home, and the following year, we received our

first pioneer assignment, the country town of Huntingdon.

In those days we set off on our bicycles for rural territory early in the morning. Our full day of preaching was interrupted only by a quick midday break for sandwiches. No matter how strong the head wind or how heavy the rain through which we pedaled home, we were happy and satisfied in the Lord’s work.

In time we yearned to expand our ministry and to share the “good news” with peoples of other countries. (Matthew 24:14) So we applied to attend the Gilead missionary school in South Lansing, New York, U.S.A. Finally, we were accepted to the 26th class of Gilead that graduated in February 1956.

An Expanded Ministry in Africa

Our missionary assignment was Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) in Africa. Soon after arriving, we were called in to serve in that country’s Bethel. As part of my Bethel work, I cared for correspondence with East Africa. In 1956, Kenya—one of these East African countries—had only four Witnesses, while there were well over 24,000 in Northern Rhodesia. Vera and I began to think of how fine it would be to serve where the need was greater.

Then, unexpectedly, I received another invitation to Gilead School, this time for a ten-month course for overseers. Leaving Vera behind in Northern Rhodesia, I traveled to New York City, where Gilead School was located at that time. After finishing the course in November 1962, I was assigned to Kenya to establish a branch office there. By this time Kenya had over a hundred Witnesses.

On my return to Northern Rhodesia to meet Vera, I was supposed to have a brief stopover in Nairobi, Kenya. But when I arrived, Bill Nisbet, a Gilead graduate of the

25th class, met me with news that there was an opportunity to obtain official permission to enter Kenya right away. We approached the immigration authorities, and within a few minutes, I had obtained a five-year work permit. So I never did get back to Northern Rhodesia; rather, Vera joined me in Nairobi.

After an improvised Swahili language course, we joined with the small Nairobi congregation in the ministry. Sometimes after we read our Swahili sermon, the householder would exclaim, "I don't understand English!" Despite this, we persevered and gradually overcame the language barrier.

Our territory included vast housing complexes with such Bible names as Jerusalem and Jericho. Interest was quickly developed, and from these areas came many new Kingdom publishers. What a remarkable effect Bible truth had on these people! Feelings of tribal superiority disappeared as loyalty to the Kingdom brought unity among Jehovah's people. Even intertribal marriages took place, something very unusual among non-Witnesses.

New Kingdom proclaimers embraced the truth with zeal. Samson, for example, was so eager for Bible truth to penetrate his home area that he kept asking for pioneers to be sent there. In fact, he built an extension onto his house in the Ukambani region to provide accommodations for them. Soon a new congregation of Kingdom proclaimers was established there.

Several times I visited our brothers in the East African country of Ethiopia. They were spending an average of over 20 hours a month in the ministry, despite imprisonments, beatings, and constant surveillance. Once two busloads of Ethiopian brothers and sisters traveled for a week, crossing hazardous mountain passes, to attend a district convention in Kenya. Their resourcefulness in arranging for Kingdom literature

to be available in their land was remarkable. We in Kenya were happy to help keep them supplied.

An official ban on our work in Kenya was imposed in 1973, and the missionaries were forced to leave. By then we had over 1,200 Witnesses in Kenya, and many of these were at the airport to give us an unforgettable send-off. Their presence prompted a fellow traveler to ask if we were celebrities of some kind. Vera and I returned to England and were offered an assignment there, but we yearned to return to Africa.

Back to Africa

Thus, a few months later, we received our new assignment, to the Bethel in Accra, the capital of the west African country of Ghana. Here one of my assignments brought me face-to-face with the hardships our brothers there encountered. As I cared for purchases of food and supplies for the Bethel family, I was amazed by the exorbitant price of foodstuffs. Often one simply could not buy the items needed. Petrol shortages and the scarcity of spare parts brought added problems.

I came to learn the importance of patience, something that our Ghanaian brothers had developed. It was so encouraging to see the cheerful attitude they maintained as they rejected the temptation to obtain life's necessities through bribery. As a result, Jehovah's people in Ghana became well-known for their honesty and came to enjoy a good name with many officials.

Despite material shortages, however, there was growing spiritual prosperity. Throughout the land, our Bible publications were found in practically every home. And we saw the number of Kingdom proclaimers in Ghana grow from 17,156 in 1973 when we arrived to over 23,000 in 1981. In that year my bouts with skin cancer, no doubt aggra-



◀ We pioneered in England from 1947 to 1955

First time in the ministry during a convention in India ▶



In 1985, with friends we had not seen for 12 years

vated by years of exposure to the sun in India and Africa, forced us to leave Ghana and return to England for regular treatment.

New Circumstances in England

For me our return meant a considerable adjustment in my ministry. I was so used to speaking freely with people who respected God and the Bible. But in London, I rarely find such an attitude. I marvel at the perseverance of the brothers in Britain. This has made me see the need to develop more empathy for the people who are "skinned and thrown about" spiritually.—Matthew 9:36.

After our return from Africa, Vera and I



When we were missionaries in Northern Rhodesia

served together at London Bethel up to the time of her death in September 1991 at the age of 73. It has not been easy losing such a faithful companion who labored side by side with me in the ministry for so many years. I miss her terribly. But I am happy for the fine support I receive from our Bethel family of some 250 members.

I truly count it a privilege to experience the forward movement of Jehovah's organization and to see so many making the full-time ministry their way of life. I can assure you, there is no better way of life than this, for "Jehovah . . . will not leave his loyal ones."—Psalm 37:28.

Human Weakness Magnifies **JEHOVAH'S POWER**

"Everyone thought I was this happy and vivacious full-time minister. I was always the one to help others with their problems. At the same time, though, I felt as if I were dying inside. Disquieting thoughts and mental anguish were taking a toll on me. I started to feel alienated from people. I just wanted to stay home in bed. For months, I begged Jehovah to let me die."—Vanessa.



AS IN the instance cited above, it is only to be expected that at times servants of Jehovah will feel the effects of living in these "critical times hard to deal with." (2 Timothy 3:1) Some may even become downhearted. (Philippians 2:25-27) When prolonged, despondency can rob us of our strength, for the Bible states: "Have you shown yourself discouraged in the day of distress? Your power will be scanty." (Proverbs 24:10) Yes, when we are discouraged, we need power—perhaps even what the apostle Paul called "power beyond what is normal."—2 Corinthians 4:7.

Jehovah God is the source of unlimited power. This is evident when we examine his creation. (Romans 1:20) Consider the sun, for example. The earth intercepts a steady flow of some 240 trillion horsepower from the sun. Yet, this figure represents only about *a half of a billionth* of the sun's output of energy. And the sun is small when compared with stars known as supergiants. Among these is Rigel, a star in the Orion constellation that is 50 times larger

than our sun and emits 150,000 times as much energy!

The Creator of such heavenly powerhouses must himself possess an “abundance of dynamic energy.” (Isaiah 40:26; Psalm 8:3, 4) Indeed, the prophet Isaiah stated that Jehovah “does not tire out or grow weary.” And God is willing to share his power with any who, because of human weakness, feel that they are tiring out. (Isaiah 40:28, 29) How he does this is illustrated in the case of the Christian apostle Paul.

Coping With Trials

Paul told the Corinthians about an obstacle that he had to endure. He called it “a thorn in the flesh.” (2 Corinthians 12:7) This “thorn” may have been a health problem, perhaps impaired vision. (Galatians 4:15; 6:11) Or Paul may have been referring to false apostles and other disturbers who challenged his apostleship and work. (2 Corinthians 11:5, 6, 12-15; Galatians 1:6-9; 5:12) Whatever it was, this “thorn in the flesh” deeply distressed Paul, and he prayed repeatedly that it would be removed.—2 Corinthians 12:8.

However, Jehovah did not grant Paul’s request. Instead, he told Paul: “My undeserved kindness is sufficient for you.” (2 Corinthians 12:9) What did Jehovah mean by this? Well, when we consider Paul’s past course of persecuting Christians, it was only by undeserved kindness that he could have a relationship with God at all—much less serve as an apostle!* (Compare Zechariah 2:8; Revelation 16:5, 6.) Jehovah may well have been telling Paul that the privilege of discipleship was “sufficient.” It would not be accompanied by a miraculous removal of life’s

* Of course, since “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” it is evidence of God’s mercy that any humans can come into a relationship with him at all.—Romans 3:23.

personal problems. Indeed, some hardships might even come as a result of added privileges. (2 Corinthians 11:24-27; 2 Timothy 3:12) In any event, Paul would simply have to endure his “thorn in the flesh.”

By no means, though, was Jehovah heartlessly abandoning Paul. Rather, he said to him: “My power is being made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9) Yes, Jehovah would lovingly supply Paul with the strength to cope with his situation. Thus, Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” became an object lesson. It taught him to rely on Jehovah’s strength rather than his own. Paul evidently learned this lesson well, for some years later he wrote to the Philippians: “I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to



be self-sufficient. For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me.”—Philippians 4:11, 13.

What about you? Are you enduring some sort of “thorn in the flesh,” perhaps an illness or a circumstance in life that causes you much anxiety? If so, take comfort. While Jehovah may not miraculously remove the obstacle, he can grant you the wisdom and fortitude to cope with it as you continue to put Kingdom interests first in life.—Matthew 6:33.

If illness or advancing age hinders you from accomplishing as much as you would like in Christian activity, do not despair. Instead of viewing your trial as limiting your service to Jehovah, look upon it as an opportunity to increase your reliance on him. Remember, too, that the value of a Christian is gauged, not by his level of activity, but by his faith and depth of love. (Compare Mark 12:41-44.) Loving Jehovah with your whole soul means that you serve him to the best of your own ability—not that of someone else.—Matthew 22:37; Galatians 6:4, 5.

If your “thorn in the flesh” involves a distressing circumstance in life, such as the death of a loved one, follow the Bible’s admonition: “Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you. Never will he allow the righteous one to totter.” (Psalm 55:22) A Christian woman named Sylvia did this. In a span of just a few years, she lost her husband in death after 50 years of marriage and also nine other family members—including two young grandchildren. “If it were not for Jehovah,” Sylvia says, “I would grieve uncontrollably. But I find great comfort in prayer. I carry on a virtual running conversation with Jehovah. I know he gives me the strength to make it.”

How reassuring it is to know that “the God of all comfort” can give those who are



The preaching work is accomplished only by Jehovah's power

grieving the power to endure! (2 Corinthians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13) Appreciating this, we can understand Paul’s conclusion on the matter. He wrote: “I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in cases of need, in persecutions and difficulties, for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am powerful.”—2 Corinthians 12:10.

Coping With Imperfections

All of us have inherited imperfection from our first human parents. (Romans 5:12) As a result, we are in a battle against the desires of the fallen flesh. How disheart-

ening it can be to discover that the traits of "the old personality" have a more powerful grip on us than we had thought! (Ephesians 4:22-24) At such times we may feel as did the apostle Paul, who wrote: "I really delight in the law of God according to the man I am within, but I behold in my members another law warring against the law of my mind and leading me captive to sin's law that is in my members."—Romans 7:22, 23.

Here, too, we can avail ourselves of power from Jehovah. When struggling with a personal weakness, never stop turning to him in prayer, earnestly seeking his forgiveness no matter how often you have to approach him about the same problem. Because of his undeserved kindness, Jehovah, who "is making an estimate of hearts" and who can see the depth of your sincerity, will grant you a cleansed conscience. (Proverbs 21:2) By means of his holy spirit, Jehovah can supply you with the strength to resume the fight against fleshly weaknesses.—Luke 11:13.

We also need strength from Jehovah when dealing with the imperfections of others. For example, a fellow Christian may speak to us "thoughtlessly as with the stabs of a sword." (Proverbs 12:18) This could cut us deeply, especially if it comes from someone that we feel should know better. We might become highly disturbed. Some have even used such offenses as justification for leaving Jehovah—the biggest mistake of all!

However, a balanced attitude will help us to view others' weaknesses in a proper light. We cannot expect perfection from imperfect humans. "There is no man that does not sin," the wise man Solomon reminds us. (1 Kings 8:46) Arthur, an anointed Christian who loyally served Jehovah for some seven decades, observed: "Weaknesses in fellow servants create for us an area for integrity, testing our Christian mettle. If we

allow what humans say or do to interfere with our serving Jehovah, we are serving humans. Besides, our brothers must love Jehovah too. If we look for good in them, we soon see that they are not so bad after all."

The Power to Preach

Before ascending to heaven, Jesus told his disciples: "You will receive power when the holy spirit arrives upon you, and you will be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the most distant part of the earth."—Acts 1:8.

True to Jesus' words, this work is now being carried out by Jehovah's Witnesses in 233 lands around the globe. Collectively, they spend more than a billion hours each year helping others come to a knowledge of Jehovah. Accomplishing this work is not always easy. In some lands the Kingdom preaching work is banned or restricted. Consider, too, who is doing the work—frail, imperfect humans, each of whom has his or her own share of problems and anxieties. Yet the work continues, and as a result, in the past three years, over a million persons have dedicated their lives to Jehovah and symbolized their dedication by water baptism. (Matthew 28:18-20) Truly, this work is being accomplished only in God's strength. Jehovah said through the prophet Zechariah: "Not by a military force, nor by power, but by my spirit."—Zechariah 4:6.

If you are a publisher of the good news, you are having a share—no matter how seemingly small—in that grand accomplishment. Regardless of the 'thorns' that you must endure, you can be assured that Jehovah will not forget "your work and the love you showed for his name." (Hebrews 6:10) So continue to rely on the Source of all dynamic energy for support. Remember, it is only in Jehovah's strength that we can endure; his power is made perfect in our weaknesses.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

"The Watchtower" of November 1, 1995, focused on what Jesus said about "this generation," as we read at Matthew 24:34. Does this mean that there is some question about whether God's Kingdom was set up in heaven in 1914?

That discussion in *The Watchtower* offered no change at all in our fundamental teaching about 1914. Jesus set out the sign to mark his presence in Kingdom power. We have ample evidence that this sign has been in course of fulfillment since 1914. The facts about wars, famines, plagues, earthquakes, and other evidences bear out that since 1914, Jesus has been active as King of God's Kingdom. This indicates that since then we have been in the conclusion of the system of things.

What, then, was *The Watchtower* clarifying? Well, the key was the sense in which Jesus used the word "generation" at Matthew 24:34. That passage reads: "Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur." What did Jesus mean by "generation," both in his day and in ours?

Many scriptures confirm that Jesus did not use "generation" with regard to some small or distinct group, meaning only the Jewish leaders or only his loyal disciples. Rather, he used "generation" in condemning the masses of Jews who rejected him. Happily, though, individuals could do what the apostle Peter urged on the day of Pentecost, repent and "get saved from this crooked generation."—Acts 2:40.

In that statement, Peter was clearly not being precise as to any fixed age or length of time, nor was he tying the "generation" to any certain date. He did not say that people should get saved from the generation that was born in the same year Jesus was or the generation that was born in 29 C.E. Peter was speaking about the unbelieving Jews of that period—some perhaps being rather young, others being older—who had been exposed to Jesus' teaching, had seen

or heard of his miracles, and had not accepted him as Messiah.

That evidently is how Peter understood Jesus' use of "generation" when he and three other apostles were with Jesus on the Mount of Olives. According to Jesus' prophetic statement, Jews of that period—basically, Jesus' contemporaries—were going to experience or hear of wars, earthquakes, famines, and other evidences that the end of the Jewish system was near. In fact, that generation did not pass before the end came in 70 C.E.—Matthew 24:3-14, 34.

It must be acknowledged that we have not always taken Jesus' words in that sense. There is a tendency for imperfect humans to want to be specific about the date when the end will come. Recall that even the apostles sought more specifics, asking: "Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?"—Acts 1:6.

With similar sincere intentions, God's servants in modern times have tried to derive from what Jesus said about "generation" some clear time element calculated from 1914. For instance, one line of reasoning has been that a generation can be 70 or 80 years, made up of people old enough to grasp the significance of the first world war and other developments; thus we can calculate more or less how near the end is.

However well-meaning such thinking was, did it comply with the advice Jesus went on to give? Jesus said: "Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father. . . . Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming."—Matthew 24:36-42.

So the recent information in *The Watchtower* about "this generation" did not change our understanding of what occurred in 1914. But it did give us a clearer grasp of Jesus' use of the term "generation," helping us to see that his usage was no basis for calculating—counting from 1914—how close to the end we are.

Graduating Students of the Word of God

IN IMITATION of first-century Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses are known worldwide for their door-to-door preaching. This work was brought into focus in the opening remarks at the graduation program of the 102nd class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead.

On March 1, 1997, Albert Schroeder, a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, called attention to a recent article in the French journal *Le Point*. It noted Roman Catholic plans to begin house-to-house preaching in Italy. "So that [the Vatican missionaries] do not arrive empty-handed as they compete on Jehovah's Witnesses' turf," stated the article, "the Vatican has even gone so far as to have a million copies of Saint Mark's Gospel printed, as their emissaries face experts [the Witnesses] in the door-to-door 'placement' of the good word."

The 48 graduates are among those who have imitated Jesus' expert preaching methods in spreading the Word of God. They had come from eight lands to the Watchtower Educational Center at Patterson, New York. During the five months of their schooling, they studied the Bible from cover to cover. Their course also included the history of God's organization, practical aspects of missionary life, and the fruitage of God's spirit. All of this was with one goal in mind—to prepare them for foreign missionary service in the 17 lands to which they were being sent. As they were graduating, an international audience of 5,015 shared the joy of the occasion. What final practical counsel did those Gilead students receive?

Timely Encouragement for New Missionaries

After the chairman's opening remarks, Ralph Walls, a helper of the Personnel Committee of the Governing Body, gave the first short talk with practical advice for the new missionaries. His theme was "Remember to Love." He pointed out that the Bible, in 2 Timothy chapter 3, foretold that the world would become increasingly loveless. He offered this timely reminder to the new missionaries, in harmony with the description of love found at 1 Corinthians 13:1-7: "You, as missionaries, may exceed your hourly quotas. You may have a wealth of knowledge from your Gilead training. Or we may zealously work extra time at our branch assignments. But all of our efforts and sacrifices amount to nothing if we forget to love."

Next on the program was Carey Barber, of the Governing Body, who considered the subject "Jehovah Is Leading Us On to Victory." From their small beginnings following World War I, Jehovah God has led his faithful servants to victory in the proclamation of the good news of his Kingdom, despite persecution. In 1931 the Bible Students, as they were then known, adopted the name Jehovah's Witnesses, to the chagrin of the clergy of Christendom. "The 102nd class of Gilead-trained missionaries now has the grand privilege of having a large share in the glorious work of giving as many as possible the opportunity to learn that sacred name," stated Brother Barber. They join a long list of 7,131 missionaries who have been trained at Gilead School and who have helped to extend the

preaching of God's Word from 54 lands in 1943 to 233 lands today.

The next speaker, Lloyd Barry, also of the Governing Body, was a graduate of the 11th class of Gilead and served as a missionary in Japan for over 25 years. He provided encouragement with his theme, "Stay by These Things." "Much of your joy will be found in enduring," he told the students. What rewards come from enduring in the missionary work or in any theocratic assignment? "Above all, our endurance makes Jehovah's heart rejoice . . . There is great satisfaction to be found in keeping integrity under test . . . Make missionary service your life's vocation . . . Your reward will be a heartwarming 'well done.'" (Matthew 25:21; Proverbs 27:11) In concluding his presentation, Brother Barry heartily recommended that the new missionaries "stay by these things" by being determined that the missionary field becomes their very life.—1 Timothy 4:16.

"What Will You See?" was the question raised by Karl Adams, who has had a share in instructing many Gilead classes. He pointed out that what the new missionaries would see in their assignments depends not only on their physical eyesight but also on the eyes of their heart. (Ephesians 1:18) This was illustrated by what the Israelite spies saw when they surveyed the Promised Land. All 12 spies saw the same things from a physical standpoint, but only two saw the Promised Land from God's viewpoint. Missionaries can also view things in different ways. In some lands where they will be serving, they may see poverty, pain, and hopelessness. But they should not react negatively and abandon the land. Brother Adams told of one missionary from a recent class who said: "These experiences made me realize that I have to stay here. These people need a hope for the future. I want to make a difference in their lives." Brother Adams concluded by encouraging the new missionaries to see the lands to

which they are assigned as areas that Jehovah has determined to make part of His global Paradise and to view the people there as prospective members of the new world society.

The final discourse in this part of the program was by Wallace Liverance, who served for a number of years in the missionary field before becoming a Gilead instructor. "Act With Insight Into God's Wonderful Works" was his theme. Acting with insight involves acting with prudence, discretion, and common sense. That was something that King Saul of Israel failed to do.—1 Samuel 13:9-13; 15:1-22.

One way to act with insight is by accepting the challenges of adjusting to a new way of life, including learning a new language and getting to know the people. The experiences missionaries have in meeting challenges and overcoming obstacles can strengthen them spiritually in the way that Joshua and Caleb were fortified as they conquered the land God had assigned to them.

Interviews

The following part of the program included a series of interviews. Harold Jackson interviewed Ulysses Glass, registrar and longtime instructor of Gilead School, who is now 85 years old. Many missionaries still in the field remember well his years of faithful teaching and training. Next came Mark Noumair, a Gilead instructor who spent years in foreign service in Africa before joining the Gilead School staff. He interviewed students about their ministry during the five months of their schooling. Their experiences demonstrated clearly that there are people interested in God's Word in the local territory.

Robert Ciranko and Charles Molohan then spoke with experienced men who were attending another school at the facilities, a school for branch personnel. Their advice to the graduating class included the need to be



102nd Graduating Class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead

In the list below, rows are numbered from front to back, and names are listed from left to right in each row.

- (1) Duffy, C.; Alexis, D.; Harff, R.; Lee, J.; Corey, V.; Nortum, T.; Mora, N.; Journet, F.
- (2) Djupvik, L.; Singh, K.; Hart, B.; Kirkoryan, M.; Lee, S.; Rastall, S.; Zoulin, K.; Kollat, K.
- (3) Singh, D.; Pitteloud, J.; Pitteloud, F.; Bokoch, N.; Torma, C.; Muxlow, A.; Richardson, C.; Nortum, D.
- (4) Harff, J.; Journet, K.; Barber, A.; Loberto, J.; Loberto, R.; Muxlow, M.; Mora, R.; Hart, M.
- (5) Torma, S.; Rastall, A.; Diaz, R.; Diaz, H.; Weiser, M.; Weiser, J.; Kirkoryan, G.; Zoulin, A.
- (6) Alexis, R.; Barber, D.; Djupvik, H.; Duffy, C.; Kollat, T.; Richardson, M.; Bokoch, S.; Corey, G.

humble and contribute to the unity of the congregation. They suggested that the graduates should not have preconceived ideas of what will happen in the missionary work but, rather, simply be willing to accept whatever comes their way. Applying this counsel will undoubtedly help the new missionaries fulfill their assignments as teachers of God's Word.

Finally, Theodore Jaracz, a member of the Governing Body, addressed the audience on the subject "What Is Influencing Whom?" He explained that when we as Christians display the fruitage of the spirit, we can be a good influence on other people. "Missionaries that are sent out by Jehovah's organization have produced a commendable record of influencing people in a wholesome, spiritual way," he noted. He then cited some comments made by individuals who have been helped to serve

God as a result of good examples set by missionaries. "May you maintain the reputation that Jehovah's people have gained and continue to knock on those doors in your foreign assignment in search of deserving ones . . . Also, by your upright, clean conduct, resist the spirit of this world, and be an influence for good to Jehovah's praise and honor," he concluded.

In the wrap-up of the program, the chairman shared greetings from near and far and then presented the diplomas and announced the missionary assignments. After that, one of the graduates read a class resolution expressing thanks for the instruction provided. Clearly, the graduation program of the 102nd class made all in attendance more determined to go forward in publishing the Word of God.

“FAITH IN GOD’S WORD”

District Convention!

MANY millions will be present at hundreds of locations throughout the world. In the United States alone, 193 conventions are scheduled. The first will be May 23-25 and the last, September 12-14. Likely one of these three-day gatherings—Friday through Sunday—will be at a city not far from your home.

You will benefit from a wealth of practical Bible instruction. In most places the program will begin each morning with music at 9:30. Friday morning features 25 minutes of interviews with people whose lives have been deeply affected by their faith in God’s Word. That first session will conclude with the keynote address, “Walking by Faith, Not by Sight.”

The first talk Friday afternoon will consider the vital part youths have in the Christian congregation. The following three-part symposium discusses Bible standards as they relate to Christian conduct in speech, manners, and personal appearance. Next the talks “Beware of a Lack of Faith” and “The Word of God Is Alive” focus on the fine admonition in Hebrews chapters 3 and 4. Friday’s program will conclude with the discourse “A Book for All People.”

The first talk Saturday morning is “Faith Without Works Is Dead.” Another important discourse that morning, “Become Root-



ed and Stabilized in the Truth,” describes how spiritual growth can be realized. The session will conclude with a regular convention feature, “Faith in God’s Word Leads to Baptism,” after which there will be provision for new disciples to be baptized.

The opening talk Saturday afternoon, “Put Up a Hard Fight for the Faith,” discusses admonition of the Bible book of Jude. An hour-long symposium entitled “To the House of Jehovah Let Us Go” will consider the benefits of Christian meetings. The program that day concludes with the discourse “The Quality of Your Faith—Tested Now.”

Sunday’s morning program features a three-part symposium that will discuss the Bible book of Joel, including its application to our day. Then follows a Bible drama entitled “Keep Your Eye Simple.” A highlight of the convention is the afternoon public address, “Faith and Your Future.”