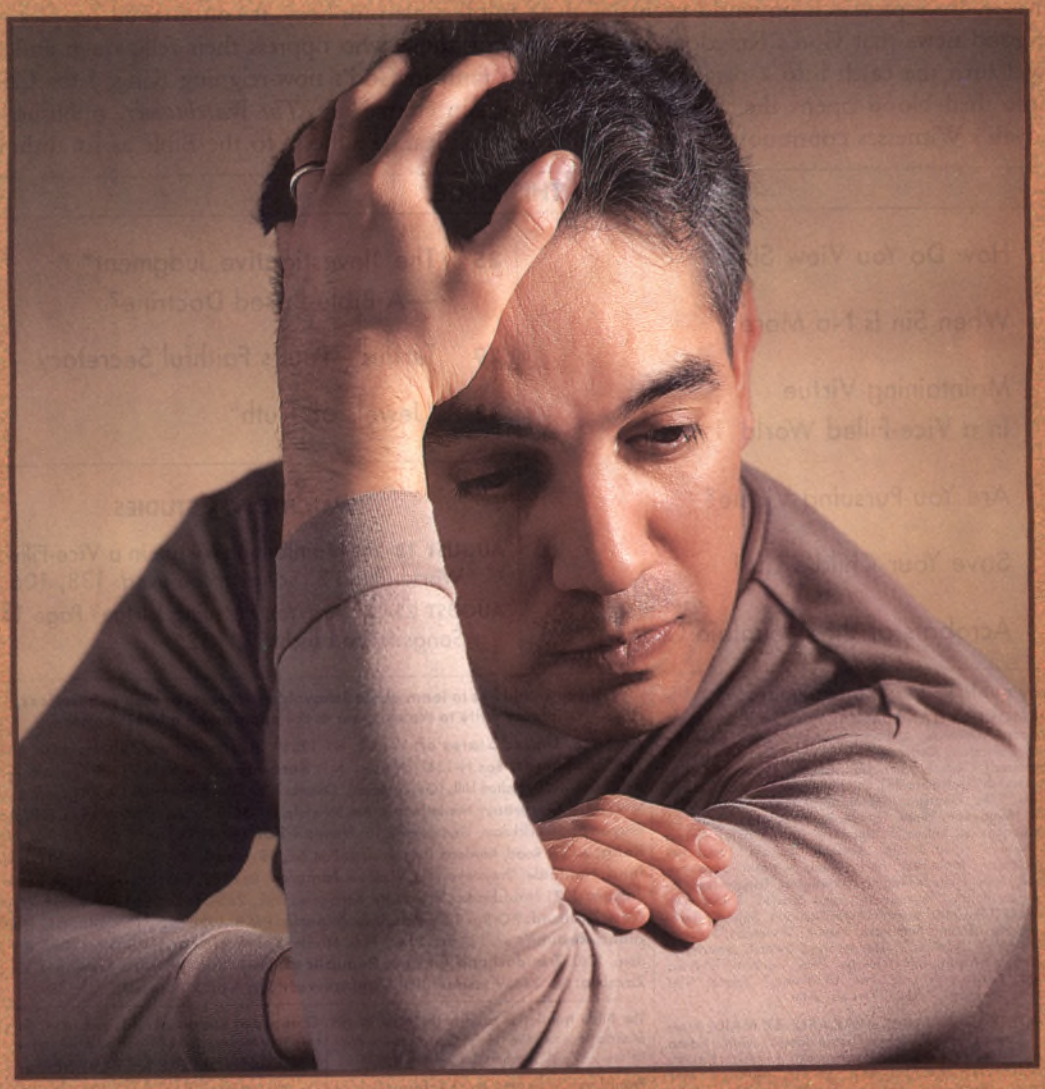
JULY 15, 1997

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



SIN HOW DO YOU VIEW IT?

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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How Do You View Sin?

"THERE is no sin in thee, there is no misery in thee; thou art the reservoir of omnipotent power." The renowned Hindu philosopher Vivekananda made this statement when explaining a passage from a Hindu holy book, the *Bhagavad Gita*. Citing the Vedanta, he claims: "The greatest error is to say that you are weak, that you are a sinner."*

Is it true, though, that there is no sin in man? And what, if anything, does a person inherit at birth? Only "physical traits are determined by heredity," says Nikhilananda, a Hindu thinker. Other characteristics are prepared by one's "actions in previous lives." According to Vivekananda, "you are the creator of your destiny." Hinduism teaches nothing about inherited sin.

The concept of inherited sin is also absent among the Zoroastrians, the Shintoists, the Confucianists, and the Buddhists. Even in Judeo-Christian religions, which have traditionally taught the doctrine of inherited sin, the attitude toward sin is changing. More and more people today do not think of themselves as sinful.

"Modern consciousness does not encourage moral reproach; in particular, it does not encourage self-reproach," says theologian Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. Churches of Christendom share some of the guilt over trivializing sin. "Don't go to church if you want to hear about sin," says a Duke University chaplain. And according to Plantinga, some churches generally speak of sin only in terms of social issues.

Admittedly, the social woes of the day are many. Violence, crime, wars, ethnic strife, drug abuse, dishonesty, oppression, and violence against children are rampant. In fact, the 20th century has been called one of the bloodiest centuries humanity has ever known. Add to this the pain and suffering that result from sickness, old age, and death. Who does not long for liberation from the enormous problems that exist in the world today?

What, then, is your view of sin? Is sin inherited? Will we ever experience freedom from pain and suffering? The next article will discuss these questions.

* The Vedanta philosophy is based on the Upanishads, which occur at the end of the Hindu scriptures, the Vedas.

When Sin Is No More

"ARE we born in sin?" That question perplexed a graduate student in the United States soon after he started studying the Bible. Because of his Hindu background, the idea of inherited sin was foreign to him. But if sin is indeed inherited, he reasoned, denying or ignoring its reality would be useless. How could one find the answer to this question?

If inherited, sin must have had a starting point. Was the first man created wicked, so that he passed on evil traits to his children? Or did the defect develop later? Exactly when did sin begin? On the other hand, if sin is only an external, evil entity or principle, can we ever hope to gain freedom from it?

According to Hindu belief, suffering and evil are concomitants to creation. "Suffering [or evil]," notes a Hindu scholar, "like chronic rheumatism, only moves from one place to another but cannot be totally eradicated." Evil certainly has been a part of the world of mankind throughout recorded history. If it predates man's historical records, reliable answers about its origin must of necessity come from a source higher than man. The answers must come from God.—Psalm 36:9.

Man—Created Without Sin

Descriptions of the creation of man given in the Vedas are figurative, admits Hindu philosopher Nikhilananda. Similarly, most

Eastern religions provide only mythological explanations of creation. Yet, there are both logical and scientific reasons for believing the Bible account of the creation of the first man.* Its very first chapter states: "God proceeded to create the man in his image, in God's image he created him; male and female he created them."—Genesis 1:27.

What does it mean to be created "in God's image"? Simply this: Man was made in the likeness of God, having godly attributes —such as justice, wisdom, and love—that set him apart from animals. (Compare Colossians 3:9, 10.) These qualities gave him the ability to choose to do good or bad, making him a free moral agent. There was no sin in the first man, no evil or suffering in his life, when he was created.

Upon the man Adam, Jehovah God placed this command: "From every tree of the garden you may eat to satisfaction. But as for the tree of the knowledge of good and bad you must not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you will positively die." (Genesis 2:16, 17) By choosing to obey, Adam and his wife, Eve, could bring praise and honor to their Creator and remain free of sin. On the other hand, an act of disobedience would indicate their failure to meet God's perfect standards and would make them imperfect —sinful.

Adam and Eve were not created divine. However, they did have a measure of divine attributes and the capacity to make moral decisions. Being God's creation, they were sinless, or perfect. (Genesis 1:31; Deuteronomy 32:4) Their being brought into existence did not disrupt the harmony that had prevailed between God and the universe for ages until then. How, then, did sin begin?

* See the book *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

The Origin of Sin

Sin occurred first in the spirit realm. Before the creation of the earth and man, God had created intelligent spirit creatures —the angels. (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:4-7; Colossians 1:15-17) One of these angels thought a great deal of his own beauty and intelligence. (Compare Ezekiel 28:13-15.) From God's instruction to Adam and Eve to produce children, this angel could see that soon the whole earth would be filled with righteous people, all of them worshiping God. (Genesis 1:27, 28) This spirit creature desired their worship for himself. (Matthew 4: 9, 10) Dwelling on this desire led him to take a wrong course.—James 1:14, 15.

Speaking to Eve through a serpent, the rebellious angel said that by forbidding the eating of fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, God was holding back knowledge that she should have. (Genesis 3: 1-5) Saying that was a hateful lie—an act of sin. By stating this lie, the angel made himself a sinner. As a result, he came to be called the Devil, a slanderer, and Satan, an opposer of God.—Revelation 12:9.

Satan's persuasive argument had an adverse effect on Eve. Putting her trust in the Tempter's words, she allowed herself to be seduced and to eat some of the fruit of the forbidden tree. Her husband, Adam, joined her in eating the fruit, and both of them thereby became sinners. (Genesis 3:6; 1 Timothy 2:14) Clearly, by choosing to disobey God, our first parents missed the mark of perfection and made sinners of themselves.

What about the offspring of Adam and Eve? The Bible explains: "Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned." (Romans 5:12) The law of heredity was already in effect. Adam could not pass on to his children what he did not have. (Job 14:4) Having

lost perfection, the first couple were sinners when their children were conceived. As a result, all of us—without exception—have inherited sin. (Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:23) In turn, sin has produced nothing but evil and suffering. Moreover, because of it, we all grow old and die, "for the wages sin pays is death."—Romans 6:23.

Conscience 'Accuses' or 'Excuses'

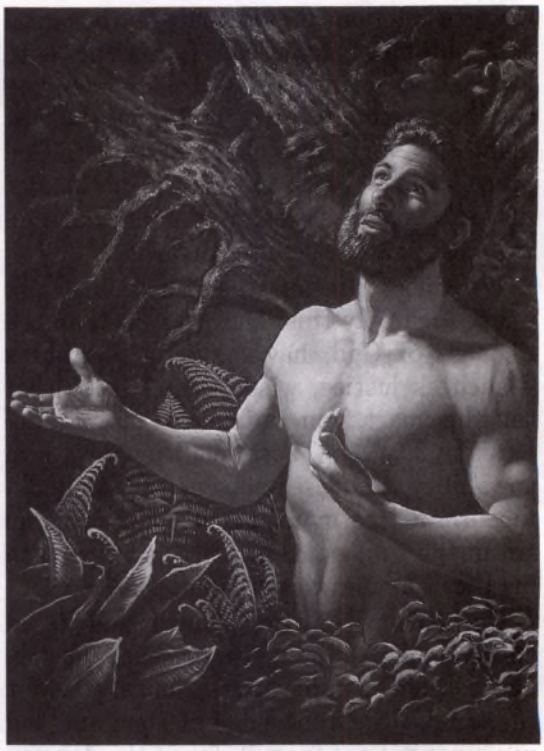
Consider also the effect of sin on the behavior of the first human pair. They covered portions of their bodies and attempted to hide themselves from God. (Genesis 3:7, 8) Sin thus caused them to feel guilt, anxiety, and shame. Mankind today is all too familiar with these emotions.

Who has not suffered uncomfortable feelings because of withholding kindness from someone in need or has not felt remorse for saying words that should never have been uttered? (James 4:17) Why do we have such troubled feelings? The apostle Paul explains that 'law is written in our hearts.' Unless our conscience has become seared, any violation of that law produces an internal upheaval. So it is that the voice of conscience 'accuses' or 'excuses' us. (Romans 2:15; 1 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:15) Whether we realize it or not, we have an inner sense of wrong, of sin!

Paul was well aware of his sinful tendencies. "When I wish to do what is right, what is bad is present with me," he admitted. "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." So Paul asked: "Who will rescue me from the body undergoing this death?"—Romans 7:21-24.

Freedom From Sin—How?

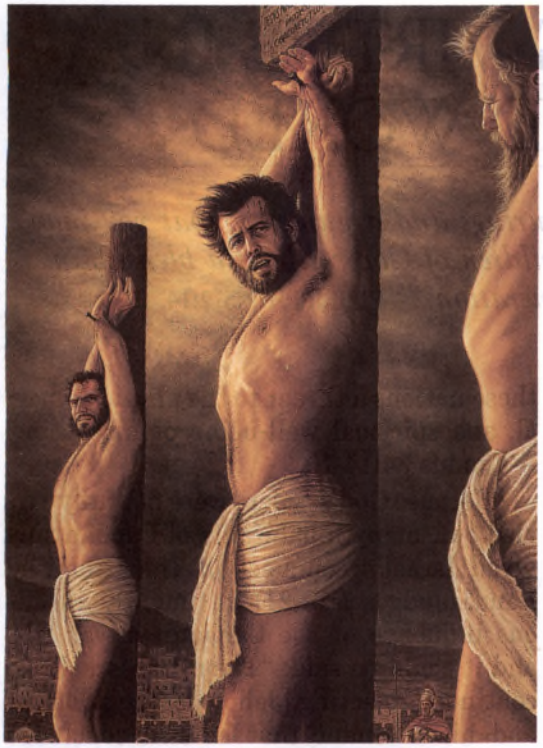
"Liberation, in the Hindu tradition," says one scholar, "is liberation from repeated births and deaths." As a solution, Buddhism similarly points to Nirvana—a state of oblivion to external reality. Not having come to grips with the concept of inherited sin, Hinduism promises only an escape from existence.



Adam brought sin and death on mankind

On the other hand, the Bible's means of liberation results in actual removal of the sinful condition. After asking how he can be rescued from sin, the apostle Paul proceeds to answer: "Thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:25) Yes, the rescue comes from God through Jesus Christ.

According to Matthew's Gospel, "the Son of man," Jesus Christ, came "to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many." (Matthew 20:28) As recorded at 1 Timothy 2:6,



Jesus' ransom sacrifice brings freedom from sin and death

Paul wrote that Jesus "gave himself a corresponding ransom for all." The word "ransom" signifies paying the price for the redemption of captives. The fact that it is a *corresponding* ransom stresses the efficacy of the price in balancing the legal scales of justice. But how could one man's death be deemed "a corresponding ransom for all"?

Adam sold all mankind, including us, into sin and death. The price, or penalty, he paid was his perfect human life. To cover this, another perfect human life—a corresponding ransom—had to be paid. (Exodus 21:23; Deuteronomy 19:21; Romans 5:18, 19) Since no imperfect man could provide this ransom, God, in his infinite wisdom, opened up a way out of these straits. (Psalm 49:6, 7) He transferred the perfect life of his only-begotten Son from the heavens to the womb of a virgin on earth, letting him be born as a perfect man.—Luke 1:30-38; John 3:16-18.

In order to accomplish the work of redeeming mankind, Jesus had to maintain a clean record the entire time he was on earth. This he did. Then he died a sacrificial death. In this way Jesus ensured that the value of a perfect human life—his own—would be available to pay as a ransom for delivering mankind.—2 Corinthians 5:14; 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

What Christ's Ransom Can Do for Us

Jesus' ransom sacrifice can benefit us right now. By exercising faith in it, we can enjoy a clean standing before God and can come under Jehovah's loving and tender care. (Acts 10:43; Romans 3:21-24) Rather than being overwhelmed with guilt for sins we may have committed, we can freely seek forgiveness from God on the basis of the ransom.—Isaiah 1:18; Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 2:1, 2.

In the days ahead, the ransom will make possible the complete healing of mankind's sickly condition caused by sin. The last book of the Bible describes "a river of water of life" issuing forth from the throne of God. Along the river's banks are bountiful fruit trees having leaves "for the curing of the nations." (Revelation 22:1, 2) Symbolically, the Bible here speaks about the Creator's marvelous provision to free mankind from sin and death forever on the basis of Jesus' ransom sacrifice.

The prophetic visions of the book of Revelation will soon be fulfilled. (Revelation 22:6, 7) Then all righthearted ones will become perfect, being "set free from enslavement to corruption." (Romans 8:20, 21) Should this not move us to learn more about Jehovah God and his loyal Son, Jesus Christ, who became the ransom?—John 17:3.

MAINTAINING VIRTUE IN A VICE-FILLED WORLD

"Keep doing all things free from murmurings and arguments, that you may come to be blameless and innocent, children of God without a blemish in among a crooked and twisted generation."—PHILIPPIANS 2:14, 15.

JEHOVAH'S commands leave no room for compromise. The Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land when the prophet Moses told them: "You should without fail devote them to destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, just as Jehovah your God has commanded you."—Deuteronomy 7:2; 20:17.

[2] Since Jehovah is a merciful God, why did he demand the extermination of Canaan's inhabitants? (Exodus 34:6) One reason was 'in order that the Canaanites might not teach Israel to do according to all the detestable things they did to their gods and thus sin against Jehovah God.' (Deuteronomy 20:18) Moses also said: "It is for the wickedness of these nations that Jehovah is driving them away from before you." (Deuteronomy 9:4) The Canaanites were the very embodiment of vice. Sexual depravity and idolatry were hallmarks of their worship. (Exodus 23:24; 34:12, 13; Numbers 33:52; Deuteronomy 7:5) Incest, sodomy, and bestiality were 'the way of the land of Canaan.' (Leviticus 18:3-25) Innocent children were cruelly sacrificed to false gods. (Deuteronomy 18:9-12) No wonder Jehovah deemed the mere existence of these nations a threat to the physical, moral, and spiritual well-being of his people! —Exodus 34:14-16.

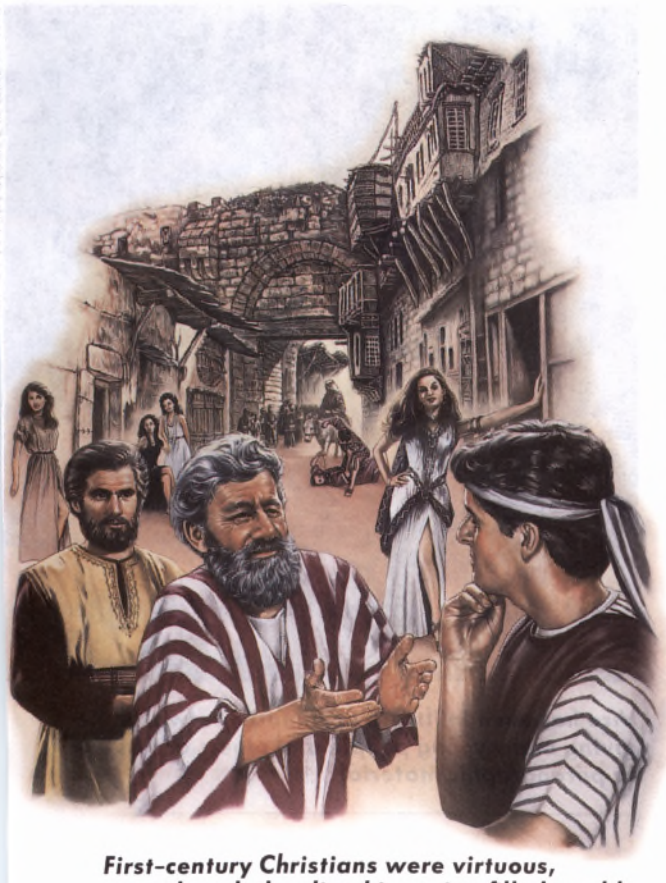
[3] Because God's orders were not fully carried out, many inhabitants of Canaan survived Israel's conquest of the Promised Land. (Judges 1:19-21) In time, the insidious influence of the Canaanites was felt, and it could be said: "They [the Israelites] continued rejecting [Jehovah's] regulations and his covenant that he had concluded with their forefathers and his reminders with which he had warned them, and they went following vain idols and became vain themselves, even in imitation of the nations that were all around them, concerning whom Jehovah had commanded them not to do like them." (2 Kings 17:15) Yes, through the years many Israelites practiced the very vices that had caused God to order the extinction of the Canaanites —idolatry, sexual excesses, and even child sacrifice!—Judges 10:6; 2 Kings 17:17; Jeremiah 13:27.

[4] The prophet Hosea therefore declared: "Hear the word of Jehovah, O sons of Isra-

1, 2. Why did God call for the extermination of the Canaanites?

3. What resulted because the Israelites did not fully carry out God's orders regarding Canaan's inhabitants?

4, 5. (a) What happened to unfaithful Israel and Judah? (b) What exhortation is given at Philippians 2:14, 15, and what questions are raised?



First-century Christians were virtuous, even though they lived in a vice-filled world

el, for Jehovah has a legal case with the inhabitants of the land, for there is no truth nor loving-kindness nor knowledge of God in the land. There are the pronouncing of curses and practicing of deception and murdering and stealing and committing of adultery that have broken forth, and acts of bloodshed have touched other acts of bloodshed. That is why the land will mourn and every inhabitant in it will have to fade away with the wild beast of the field and with the flying creature of the heavens, and even the fishes of the sea themselves will be gathered in death." (Hosea 4:1-3) In 740 B.C.E., the corrupt northern kingdom of Israel was vanquished by Assyria. Somewhat over a century later, the unfaithful southern kingdom of Judah was conquered by Babylon.

5 These events illustrate how dangerous it can be to allow ourselves to be overtaken by vice. God despises unrighteousness and will not tolerate it among his people. (1 Peter 1:14-16) It is true that we live in "the present wicked system of things," in a world that is becoming increasingly corrupt. (Galatians 1:4; 2 Timothy 3:13) Even so, God's Word exhorts all Christians to keep acting in such a way that they are "blameless and innocent, children of God without a blemish in among a crooked and twisted generation, among whom [they] are shining as illuminators in the world." (Philippians 2:14, 15) But how can we maintain virtue in a vice-filled world? Is it really possible to do so?

The Vice-Filled Roman World

6 First-century Christians faced the challenge of maintaining virtue because vice permeated every aspect of Roman society. The Roman philosopher Seneca said of his contemporaries: "Men struggle in a mighty rivalry of wickedness. Every day the desire for wrong-doing is greater, the dread of it less." He compared Roman society to "a community of wild beasts." It is no surprise, then, that for entertainment the Romans sought out sadistic gladiatorial contests and lewd theatrical performances.

7 The apostle Paul may have had in mind the decadent behavior of people in the first century when he wrote: "God gave them

6. Why did first-century Christians face a challenge in maintaining virtue?
7. How did Paul describe the vices that were common among many in the first century C.E.?

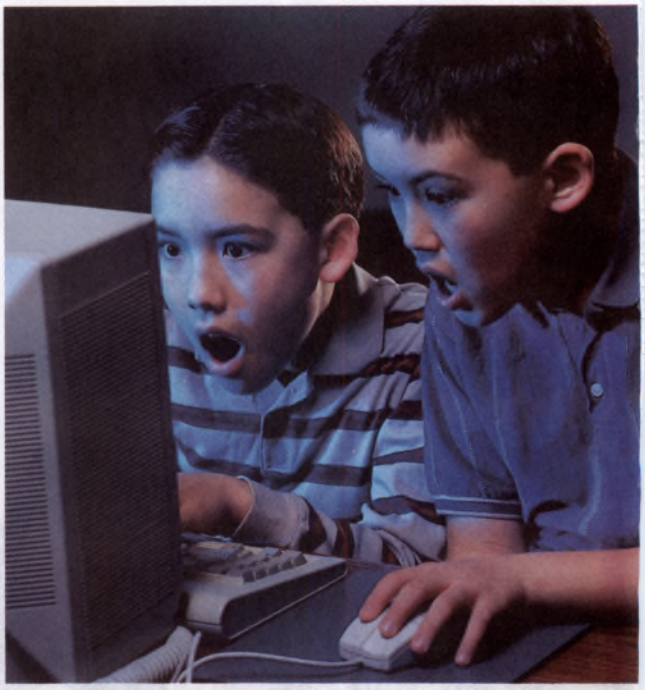
up to disgraceful sexual appetites, for both their females changed the natural use of themselves into one contrary to nature; and likewise even the males left the natural use of the female and became violently inflamed in their lust toward one another, males with males, working what is obscene and receiving in themselves the full recompense, which was due for their error." (Romans 1:26, 27) Bent on the pursuit of unclean fleshly desires, Roman society became inundated with vice.

[8] History does not make clear how prevalent homosexuality was among the Romans. No doubt, though, they were influenced by their Greek predecessors, among whom it was widely practiced. It was customary for older men to corrupt young boys, taking them under their wing in a student-teacher relationship that often steered the youngsters into deviant sexual behavior. Undoubtedly, Satan and his demons were behind such vice and mistreatment of children.—Joel 3:3; Jude 6, 7.

[9] Writing under divine inspiration, Paul told Christians in Corinth: "What! Do you not know that unrighteous persons will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be misled. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men kept for unnatural purposes, nor men who lie with men, 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.

8. How were children often exploited in Greek and Roman society?

9, 10. (a) In what way did 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 condemn vice of various kinds? (b) What was the background of some in the Corinthian congregation, and what change took place in their case?



Vice has even infiltrated computer networks, giving many young people and others access to pornographic material

[10] Paul's inspired letter thus condemned sexual immorality, saying that "fornicators" would "not inherit God's kingdom." After listing a number of vices, however, Paul said: "That is what some of you were. But you have been washed clean." With God's help it was possible for wrongdoers to become clean in his eyes.

[11] Yes, Christian virtue thrived even in the vice-filled world of the first century. Believers were 'transformed by making their minds over.' (Romans 12:2) They

11. How did first-century Christians fare in the wicked environment of their day?

abandoned their "former course of conduct" and were 'made new in the force actuating their minds.' Thus they fled from the world's vices and "put on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty."—Ephesians 4:22-24.

Today's Vice-Filled World

12 What about our day? The world we live in is more vice-ridden than ever. Especially since 1914 there has been a global moral decline. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Rejecting traditional ideas about virtue, morality, honor, and ethics, many have become self-centered in their thinking and are "past all moral sense." (Ephesians 4:19) *Newsweek* magazine said: "We live in an age of moral relativism," adding that the prevailing moral climate "has reduced all ideas of right and wrong to matters of personal taste, emotional preference or cultural choice."

13 As in the first century, decadent entertainment is common today. Television, radio, movies, and videos emit a steady stream of sexually oriented material. Vice has even infiltrated computer networks. Pornographic material is becoming increasingly available on present-day computer networks, and it is being accessed by individuals of various ages. What are the effects of all of this? Says one newspaper columnist: "When blood and mayhem and sleazy sex drench our popular culture, we get accustomed to blood and mayhem and sleazy sex. We grow jaded. Depravity becomes more and more tolerable because less and less scandalizes us."—Compare 1 Timothy 4:1, 2.

12. What change has come over the world since 1914?

13. (a) How does much of today's entertainment promote vice? (b) What bad effect can improper entertainment have upon individuals?

14 Consider this report in *The New York Times:* "What would have been considered scandalous 25 years ago has now become an acceptable living arrangement. The number of couples choosing to live together rather than marry climbed 80 percent [in the United States] between 1980 and 1991." This is not merely a North American phenomenon. The magazine *Asiaweek* reports: "A cultural debate is raging in countries throughout [Asia]. The issue is sexual freedom vs. traditional values, and the pressures for change are growing steadily." Statistics show an increasing acceptance of adultery and premarital sex in many lands.

15 The Bible foretold that satanic activity would be intense in our day. (Revelation 12:12) It should not surprise us, then, that vice is alarmingly prevalent. For example, the sexual exploitation of children has reached epidemic proportions.* The United Nations Children's Fund reports that

* See the series "Protect Your Children!," appearing in *Awake!* of October 8, 1993.

14, 15. What evidence is there that sexual morality has declined worldwide?

In Our Next Issue

How to Train Your Conscience

Let Your Brotherly Love Continue!

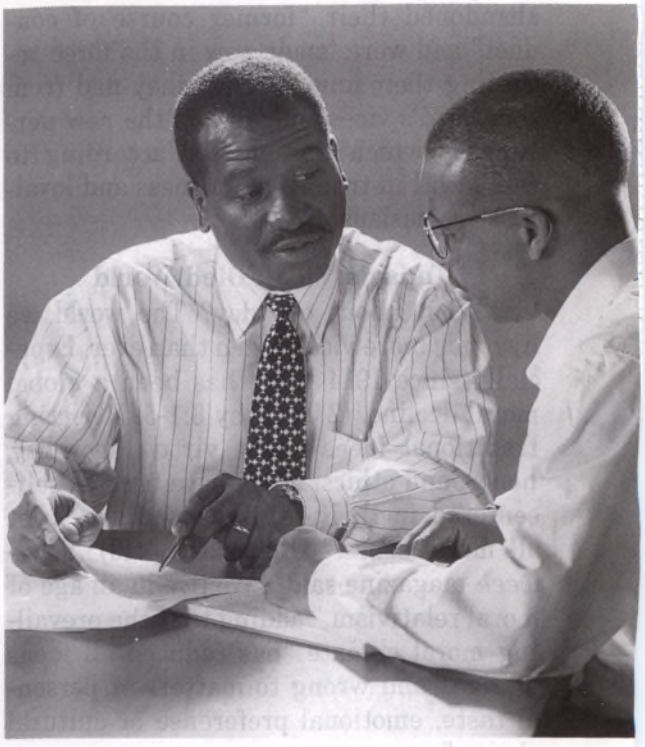
Family Study That Brings Joy

"commercial sexual exploitation is damaging children in virtually every country of the world." Each year "more than 1 million children worldwide are reportedly forced into child prostitution, trafficked and sold for sexual purposes, and used in the production of child pornography." Homosexuality is also common, with some politicians and religious leaders taking the lead in promoting it as an "alternative life-style."

Rejecting the World's Vices

16 Jehovah's Witnesses do not join the chorus of those who endorse permissive standards of sexual morality. Says Titus 2:11, 12: "The undeserved kindness of God which brings salvation to all sorts of men has been manifested, instructing us to repudiate ungodliness and worldly desires and to live with soundness of mind and righteousness and godly devotion amid this present system of things." Yes, we cultivate a real hatred, an abhorrence, of such vices as premarital sex, adultery, and homosexual acts.* (Romans 12:9; Ephesians 5:3-5) Paul gave this exhortation: "Let everyone naming the name of Jehovah renounce unrighteousness."—2 Timothy 2:19.

17 True Christians reject the world's view of seemingly minor vices. For example, many people today view alcohol abuse with wry amusement. But Jehovah's people heed the counsel of Ephesians 5:18: "Do not be getting drunk with wine, in which there is debauchery, but keep getting filled with spirit." If a Christian chooses to drink, he does so in moderation.—Proverbs 23:29-32.



Christians must maintain virtue, not imitating the dishonest tactics of others

18 As Jehovah's servants, we also reject the view of some in the world that yelling and screaming at one's mate and children or reviling them with hurtful words is acceptable behavior. With a determination to pursue a virtuous course, Christian husbands and wives work together to apply Paul's counsel: "Let all malicious bitterness and anger and wrath and screaming

* Those who have engaged in homosexual acts in times past can make changes in their behavior, just as some did in the first century. (1 Corinthians 6:11) Helpful information was presented in *Awake!* of March 22, 1995, pages 21-3.

16. What stand do Jehovah's Witnesses take with respect to sexual morality?

17. How do true Christians view the use of alcoholic beverages?

18. How do Bible principles guide Jehovah's servants in their treatment of family members?

and abusive speech be taken away from you along with all badness. But become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, freely forgiving one another just as God also by Christ freely forgave you."—Ephesians 4: 31, 32.

19 Dishonesty, fraud, lying, cutthroat business tactics, and stealing also are common today. An article in the business magazine *CFO* reports: "A survey of 4,000 workers . . . found that 31 percent of respondents had witnessed 'serious misconduct' during the previous year." Such misconduct included lying, falsifying records, sexual harassment, and theft. If we are to remain morally clean in Jehovah's eyes, we must avoid such conduct and be honest in our financial dealings.—Micah 6:10, 11.

20 Consider what happened to one man who imagined that he would have more time for God's service if he made a killing in a financial venture. He drew others into an investment scheme by greatly exaggerating their prospective profits. When these did not materialize, he became so desperate to cover the huge losses incurred that he stole money that had been entrusted to him. Because of his actions and unrepentant attitude, he was disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation. True indeed is the Bible's warning: "Those who are determined to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many senseless and hurtful desires, which plunge men into destruction and ruin. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things, and by reaching out for this love some have been led astray from the faith and have stabbed themselves all over with many pains."—1 Timothy 6:9, 10.

19. How prevalent is vice in the business world?
20. Why do Christians need to be free of "the love of money"?

21 Worldly men of power and influence often lack virtue and demonstrate the truth of the maxim, 'Power corrupts.' (Ecclesiastes 8:9) In some lands, bribery and other forms of corruption are a way of life among judges, policemen, and politicians. However, those taking the lead in the Christian congregation must be virtuous and are not to lord it over others. (Luke 22:25, 26) Elders, as well as ministerial servants, do not serve "for love of dishonest gain." They must be immune to any attempts to pervert or influence their judgment by the prospect of personal enrichment.—1 Peter 5:2; Exodus 23:8; Proverbs 17:23; 1 Timothy 5:21.

22 By and large, Christians are successfully meeting the present-day challenge of maintaining virtue in our vice-filled world. Yet, virtue involves more than simply avoiding wickedness. The next article will discuss what cultivating virtue really requires.

21. What behavior is common among men in power in the world, but how are those in responsible positions in the Christian congregation to conduct themselves?
22. What will the next article discuss?

Points for Review

- ☐ Why did Jehovah order the extermination of the Canaanites?
- ☐ What vices were common in the first century, and how did Christians fare in such an environment?
- ☐ What evidence is there that the world has witnessed a global moral decline since 1914?
- ☐ What common vices must Jehovah's people reject?

ARE YOU PURSUING VIRTUE?

"Whatever virtue there is and whatever praiseworthy thing there is, continue considering these things."—PHILIPPIANS 4:8.

VICE is moral depravity or corruption. It permeates the world in which we live. (Ephesians 2:1-3) However, Jehovah God will not allow his clean worship to be corrupted. Christian publications, meetings, assemblies, and conventions give us timely warnings against unrighteous conduct. We receive sound Scriptural help to "cling to what is good" in God's eyes. (Romans 12:9) As an organization, therefore, Jehovah's Witnesses are striving to be clean, virtuous. But what about us as individuals? Indeed, are *you* pursuing virtue?

[2] Virtue is moral excellence, goodness, right action and thinking. It is not a passive quality but an active, positive one. Virtue involves more than avoiding sin; it means pursuing what is good. (1 Timothy 6:11) The apostle Peter exhorted fellow Christians: "Supply to your faith virtue." How? By "contributing in response [to God's precious promises] *all earnest effort.*" (2 Peter 1:5) Because of our sinful nature, it takes real effort to remain virtuous. Yet, God-fearing individuals of the past have done so, even in the face of immense obstacles.

He Pursued Virtue

[3] The Scriptures contain many accounts of those who pursued virtue. For instance, consider virtuous Hezekiah. His father, King Ahaz of Judah, evidently worshiped Molech. "Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign, and for sixteen years he reigned in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the eyes of Jehovah his God like David his forefather. And he went walking in the way of the kings of Israel, and even his own son he made pass through the fire, according to the detestable things of the nations whom Jehovah drove out because of the sons of Israel. And he kept sacrificing and making sacrificial smoke on the high places and upon the hills and under every luxuriant tree." (2 Kings 16:2-4) Some claim that 'passing through the fire' signified some sort of purification ritual and not human sacrifice. However, the book *Molech—A God of Human Sacrifice in the Old Testament,* by John Day, observes: "There is evidence in classical and Punic [Carthaginian] sources, as well as archaeological evidence, for the existence of human sacrifice . . . in the Canaanite world, and so there is no reason to doubt the Old Testament allusions [to human sacrifice]." Furthermore, 2 Chronicles 28:3 specifically says that Ahaz "proceeded to burn up his sons in the fire." (Compare Deuteronomy 12:31; Psalm 106:37, 38.) What wicked acts!

[4] How did Hezekiah fare in this vice-filled

1. What is vice, and why has it not corrupted Jehovah's worship?
2. What is virtue, and why is effort required to remain virtuous?
3. Of what wicked acts was King Ahaz guilty?
4. How did Hezekiah conduct himself in a vice-filled environment?

environment? The 119th Psalm is of interest, for some believe that Hezekiah composed it, doing this while still a prince. (Psalm 119:46, 99, 100) So his circumstances may be indicated by the words: "Even princes have sat; against me they have spoken with one another. As for your servant, he concerns himself with your regulations. My soul has been sleepless from grief." (Psalm 119:23, 28) Surrounded by practicers of false religion, Hezekiah may have become an object of scorn among members of the royal court, so much so that sleep was difficult. Yet, he pursued virtue, in time became king, and "continued to do what was right in Jehovah's eyes . . . In Jehovah the God of Israel he trusted."—2 Kings 18:1-5.

They Remained Virtuous

[5] Also exemplary in virtue were Daniel and his three Hebrew companions, named Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were forcibly taken from their homeland and exiled to Babylon. The four youths were given Babylonian names—Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were offered "the delicacies of the king," including foods forbidden by God's Law. Moreover, they were compelled to undergo a three-year training course related to "the writing and the tongue of the Chaldeans." This involved more than simply learning another language, for it is likely that the term "Chaldeans" here designates the learned class. Thus, these Hebrew youths were exposed to warped Babylonian teachings.—Daniel 1:1-7.

[6] In spite of enormous pressures to conform, Daniel and his three companions chose virtue over vice. Daniel 1:21 says: "Daniel continued on until the first year of Cyrus the king." Yes, Daniel "continued on" as a virtuous servant of Jehovah for over 80 years—through the rise and fall of several powerful kings. He remained faithful to God despite the intrigues and plots of corrupt government officials and the sexual vice permeating Babylonian religion. Daniel kept on pursuing virtue.

Young Hezekiah pursued virtue even though he was surrounded by worshipers of Molech

[7] We can learn much from God-fearing Daniel and his companions. They pursued virtue and refused to be assimilated into Babylonian culture. Though given Babylonian names, they never lost their identity as Jehovah's servants. Why, some 70 years later, the Babylonian king addressed Daniel by

5. What trials did Daniel and his three companions face?
6. Why can we say that Daniel pursued virtue?
7. What can be learned from the course followed by Daniel and his three companions?

his Hebrew name! (Daniel 5:13) Throughout his long life, Daniel refused to compromise even in small matters. As a young person, he had "determined in his heart that he would not pollute himself with the delicacies of the king." (Daniel 1:8) This uncompromising stand taken by Daniel and his three companions no doubt strengthened them to survive the life-and-death trials they later faced.—Daniel, chapters 3 and 6.

Pursuing Virtue Today

[8] Like Daniel and his three companions, God's people today resist assimilation into Satan's wicked world. (1 John 5:19) If you are a Christian youth, you may be experiencing strong pressure from peers to mimic their extreme tastes in dress, grooming, and music. Instead of following every fad or style that comes along, though, stand firm, and do not let yourself be "fashioned after this system of things." (Romans 12:2) "Repudiate ungodliness and worldly desires and . . . live with soundness of mind and righteousness and godly devotion." (Titus 2:11, 12) The important thing is the approval not of your peers but of Jehovah. —Proverbs 12:2.

[9] Adult Christians too face pressures and must be virtuous. Christian businessmen may be tempted to employ questionable methods or to ignore government regulations and tax laws. Regardless of how business competitors or workmates behave, however, "we wish to conduct ourselves honestly in all things." (Hebrews 13:18) We are Scripturally required to be honest and fair with employers, employees, customers, and secular governments. (Deuteronomy 25:13-16; Matthew 5:37; Romans 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:18; Titus 2:9, 10) Let us also strive to be orderly in our business affairs. By keeping accurate records and putting agreements in writing, we can often prevent misunderstandings.

8. How can Christian youths resist assimilation into Satan's world?

9. What pressures might Christians in the business world face, and how should they conduct themselves?

Keep on Guard!

[10] Psalm 119:9 highlights another aspect of remaining virtuous in God's sight. The psalmist sang: "How will a young man cleanse his path? By keeping on guard according to your word." One of Satan's most effective weapons is music, which has power to stir emotions. Sadly, some Christians have failed to 'keep on guard' when it comes to music, and they find themselves drawn to extreme forms of it, such as rap and heavy metal. Some may argue that such music does not harm them or that they pay no attention to the lyrics. Others say that they simply enjoy a strong beat or the sound of loud guitars. For Christians, though, the issue is not whether something is enjoyable. Their concern is whether it is *"acceptable* to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:10) By and large, heavy metal and rap music promote such vices as profanity, fornication, and even Satanism—things that certainly have no place among God's people.* (Ephesians 5:3) Young or old, each of us would do well to reflect on this question, By my choice of music, am I pursuing virtue or vice?

[11] Many television programs, videos, and movies promote vice. According to one prominent mental-health expert, 'hedonism, sexuality, violence, greed, and selfishness' predominate in most of the movies be-

* See *The Watchtower,* April 15, 1993, pages 19-24, and the series "Young People Ask . . . " in *Awake!* of February 8, February 22, and March 22, 1993, and November 22, 1996.

10. Why is there a need to 'keep on guard' when it comes to our choice of music?

11. How can a Christian keep on guard with respect to television programs, videos, and movies?

Christians must keep on guard when it comes to entertainment

ing produced today. Therefore, keeping on guard includes being selective about what we choose to watch. The psalmist prayed: "Make my eyes pass on from seeing what is worthless." (Psalm 119:37) A Christian youth named Joseph applied this principle. When a certain film began to portray graphic sex and violence, he left the theater. Was he embarrassed to do this? "No, not at all," says Joseph. "I thought of Jehovah first and of pleasing him."

The Role of Study and Meditation

12 It is not enough to avoid bad things. Pursuing virtue also involves studying and meditating on the good things recorded in God's Word so that its righteous principles can be applied in life. "How I do love your law!" exclaimed the psalmist. "All day long it is my concern." (Psalm 119:97) Is personal study of the Bible and Christian publications a part of your weekly schedule? True, making time for diligent study of God's Word and prayerful meditation on it can be challenging. But often it is possible to buy out time from other activities. (Ephesians 5:15, 16) Perhaps the early morning hours would serve you well as a time for prayer, study, and meditation. —Compare Psalm 119:147.

12. Why are personal study and meditation needed in order to pursue virtue?

13 Meditation is invaluable, for it helps us to retain what we learn. More important, it can help to promote godly views. To illustrate: It is one thing to know that God prohibits fornication but quite another to 'abhor what is wicked and cling to what is good.' (Romans 12:9) We can actually feel the way Jehovah feels about sexual immorality by meditating on key Bible texts, such as Colossians 3:5, which urges: "Deaden, therefore, your body members that are upon the earth as respects fornication, uncleanness, sexual appetite, hurtful desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Ask yourself: 'What kind of sexual appetite must I deaden? What should I avoid that might arouse unclean desire? Are there changes I need to make in the way I treat the opposite sex?'—Compare 1 Timothy 5:1, 2.

14 Paul urges Christians to abstain from

13, 14. (a) Why is meditation invaluable? (b) Meditating on what scriptures can help us to abhor sexual immorality?

fornication and to exercise self-control so that "no one go to the point of harming and encroach upon the rights of his brother." (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7) Ask yourself: 'Why is committing fornication harmful? What damage would I do to myself or to someone else if I sinned in this regard? How would I be affected spiritually, emotionally, and physically? What about individuals in the congregation who have violated God's law and been unrepentant? How have things turned out for them?' Taking to heart what the Scriptures say about such conduct can deepen our hatred of what is bad in God's eyes. (Exodus 20:14; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 6:9, 10; Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8) Paul says that a fornicator "is disregarding, not man, but God." (1 Thessalonians 4:8) What true Christian would disregard his heavenly Father?

Virtue and Association

15 Another aid to remaining virtuous is good association. The psalmist sang: "A partner I am of all those who do fear you [Jehovah], and of those keeping your orders." (Psalm 119:63) We need the wholesome association provided at Christian meetings. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) If we isolate ourselves, we might become self-centered in our thinking, and vice could easily overtake us. (Proverbs 18:1) Warm Christian fellowship, however, can strengthen our resolve to remain virtuous. Of course, we must also guard against bad associations. We can be cordial with neighbors, workmates, and fellow students. But if we are really walking wisely, we will avoid getting too close to those not pursuing Christian virtue.—Compare Colossians 4:5.

16 Paul wrote: "Bad associations spoil useful habits." By making this statement, he was warning believers that they could lose their faith by associating with professed Christians who rejected the Scriptural teaching about the resurrection. The principle behind Paul's warning applies to our associations both outside and inside the congregation. (1 Corinthians 15:12, 33) Naturally, we do not want to shun our spiritual brothers and sisters because they do not happen to agree with some purely personal view that we hold. (Matthew 7:4, 5; Romans 14:1-12) Nevertheless, caution is needed if some in the congregation engage in questionable conduct or display a bitter or complaining spirit. (2 Timothy 2:20-22) It is wise to stay close to those with whom we can enjoy "an interchange of encouragement." (Romans 1:11, 12) This will help us to pursue a virtuous course and remain on "the path of life."—Psalm 16:11.

Keep On Pursuing Virtue

17 Shortly before the Israelites took pos-

15. What role does association play in our pursuit of virtue?

16. How can the application of 1 Corinthians 15:33 help us to pursue virtue today?

17. According to Numbers chapter 25, what disaster befell the Israelites, and what lesson does this provide for us?

Points for Review

- ☐ What is required in order to pursue virtue?
- ☐ Under what circumstances did Hezekiah, Daniel, and the three Hebrews remain virtuous?
- ☐ How can we be like Daniel in resisting Satan's devices?
- ☐ Why must Christians keep on guard respecting entertainment?
- ☐ What role do study, meditation, and association play in pursuing virtue?

session of the Promised Land, thousands of them chose to pursue vice—and suffered disaster. (Numbers, chapter 25) Today, Jehovah's people stand at the threshold of the righteous new world. Entry into it will be the blessed privilege of those who continue to reject this world's vices. As imperfect humans, we may have wrong inclinations, but God can help us to follow the righteous leadings of his holy spirit. (Galatians 5:16; 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4) Let us therefore heed Joshua's exhortation to Israel: "Fear Jehovah and serve him in faultlessness and in truth." (Joshua 24:14) Reverential fear of displeasing Jehovah will help us to pursue a virtuous course.

[18] If it is your heart's desire to please God, be determined to heed Paul's exhortation: "Whatever things are true, whatever things are of serious concern, whatever things are righteous, whatever things are chaste, whatever things are lovable, whatever things are well spoken of, whatever virtue there is and whatever praiseworthy thing there is, continue considering these things." If you do this, what will be the result? Said Paul: "Practice these; and the God of peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:8, 9) Yes, with Jehovah's help you can reject vice and pursue virtue.

18. Regarding vice and virtue, what should be the determination of all Christians?

ANNUAL MEETING

October 4, 1997

THE ANNUAL MEETING of the members of Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania will be held on October 4, 1997, at the Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2932 Kennedy Boulevard, Jersey City, New Jersey. A preliminary meeting of the members only will convene at 9:15 a.m., followed by the general annual meeting at 10:00 a.m.

The members of the Corporation should inform the Secretary's Office now of any change in their mailing addresses during the past year so that the regular letters of notice and proxies can reach them during July.

The proxies, which will be sent to the members along with the notice of the annual meeting, are to be returned so as to reach the Office of the Secretary of the Society not later than August 1. Each member should complete and return his proxy promptly, stating whether he is going to be at the meeting personally or not. The information given on each proxy should be definite on this point, since it will be relied upon in determining who will be personally present.

It is expected that the entire session, including the formal business meeting and reports, will be concluded by 1:00 p.m. or shortly thereafter. There will be no afternoon session. Because of limited space, admission will be by ticket only. No arrangements will be made for tying in the annual meeting by telephone lines to other auditoriums.

SAVE YOUR CHILD'S LIFE!

MICHAEL and Alphina live in a rural valley among the green hills of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. They faced many challenges in raising seven children. With the full support of his wife, Michael did his best to obey the Bible's command to fathers: "Go on bringing [your children] up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." (Ephesians 6:4) But problems sometimes develop.

For example, it is common for African herdboys to combine the cattle of one another's parents so as to have more time to play together. Sometimes they get into mischief and talk about things they should not discuss. When Michael's sons went out to herd the family cattle, he gave them strict instructions not to associate with certain children. (James 4:4) Yet, on returning home from work, he sometimes found them doing so. As a result, he had to discipline them. —Proverbs 23:13, 14.

Do you think that Michael was too strict with his children? Some might feel that way, but Jesus Christ said that "wisdom is proved righteous by its works." (Matthew 11:19) Michael and Alphina created a loving atmosphere in their home, spending time with their children and teaching them Bible accounts and truths.

Michael and Alphina have four daughters—Thembekile, Siphiwe, Tholakele, and Thembekani. All of them are full-time preachers of the good news of God's Kingdom. Two of their sons serve as presiding overseers in congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses. Their third son, whose wife is also a full-time evangelizer, serves as a ministerial servant.

Many Christian parents with large families have been blessed with success in raising their children. However, some children who receive a good parental upbringing forsake the truth. No doubt, their parents keep in mind Jesus' illustration of the prodigal son and live in hope that their son or daughter will repent and eventually attain salvation.—Luke 15:21-24.

Sadly, though, some Christian parents are losing all their children to the world. This is especially a cause for concern in parts of Africa where children seem to do well until they reach their teenage years. Then, in the bloom of youth, they get enticed by the immoral ways of Satan's world. (1 John 5:19) As a result, many fathers do not qualify to serve as congregation elders. (1 Timothy 3:1, 4, 5) Obviously, a Christian father should view the salvation of his own household as a matter of great importance. So, what can parents do to save the lives of their children?

Be a Close Friend

Jesus was not only perfect but also vastly superior to any other human in knowl-

edge and experience. Nevertheless, he treated his imperfect disciples as close friends. (John 15:15) That is why they desired to be with him and thrived in his presence. (John 1:14, 16, 39-42; 21:7, 15-17) Parents can learn from this. Like little plants with leaves stretched out toward the warm sunlight, children thrive when there is a loving, friendly atmosphere in the home.

Parents, do your children feel free to approach you with all their concerns? Do you listen to them? Before you reach conclusions, do you draw out their thoughts and feelings so as to get a more complete picture? Do you patiently help them locate answers to certain questions by doing research with them in Bible publications?

A South African mother explains: "From the first day our daughter went to school, we encouraged her to relate the day's events. For example, I would ask: 'Who did you spend the lunch break with? Tell me about your new teacher. What does she look like? What activities are planned for the week?' Once, our daughter came home and said that the English teacher was going to take the class to see a film about which they would later write a review. The title of the film was questionable. On examination, we found that it would not be suitable for a Christian. We discussed it as a family. The following day our daughter approached the teacher, explaining that she did not want to see the film, as the morals it portrayed would not be in accord with her Christian beliefs. The teacher thought the matter over and later thanked our daughter, saying that she didn't want to take the class to see something she would regret." The loving interest these parents consistently showed in the salvation of their daughter bore good fruitage. She has a happy, positive nature and now serves as a volunteer at the South Africa branch of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society.

Jesus set an excellent example in dealing with other people's children. He enjoyed their company. (Mark 10:13-16) How happy parents should be to do things with their own children! In some parts of Africa, a father is ashamed to be seen playing ball or other games with his sons. But never should a Christian father feel that he is too important to be seen doing things with his children. Young ones need parents who enjoy spending time with them. This makes it easier for children to express their concerns. When such emotional needs are neglected, children may become irritated or withdrawn, especially if they are constantly being corrected.

In writing to the Colossians about family relationships, Paul said: "You fathers, do not be exasperating your children, so that they do not become downhearted." (Colossians 3:21) This may indicate that there sometimes is an imbalance of too much discipline and too little friendship. Children, including teenagers, who are loved and appreciated will be more likely to respond to needed discipline.

The Love of God

The most valuable inheritance that parents can pass on to their children is their own example of showing love. Children need to see and hear their parents express and show genuine love of God. A young man who serves at the South Africa branch of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society explains: "When I was a boy, I would assist my father around the house. I loved helping him, simply because Dad really appreciated the little that I did. He would use the time to tell me many things about Jehovah. For example, I recall one Saturday when we were working hard at mowing the lawn. It was

really hot. Dad was sweating, so I ran and fetched two glasses of water and put ice in them. Dad said: 'Son, do you see how wise Jehovah is? Ice floats on water. If it sank, all life at the bottom of lakes and ponds would die. Instead, ice serves as an insulating blanket! Doesn't that help us to know Jehovah better?'* Later, when I was imprisoned for maintaining neutrality, I had time to think. Feeling down one night in my prison cell, I recalled those words of Dad. What meaning they had! I would worship Jehovah forever if I could."

Yes, children need to see the love of God reflected in everything their parents do. Love of God and willing obedience to him should especially be seen as the motivating force behind presence at Christian meetings, participation in the field ministry, and family Bible reading and study. (1 Corinthians 13:3) Most important, love of God should be reflected in wholehearted family prayers. The importance of giving such an inheritance to your children cannot be overemphasized. That is why the Israelites were commanded: "You must love Jehovah your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your vital force. And these words that I am commanding you today must prove to be on your heart; and you must inculcate them in your son and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up."—Deuteronomy 6:5-7; compare Matthew 22:37-40.

A great obstacle to loving and obeying God is our inherent sinful nature. (Romans 5:12) Therefore, the Bible also commands: "O you lovers of Jehovah, hate what is bad."

* As water approaches the freezing point, it becomes less dense and rises to the surface. See pages 137-8 of the book *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

(Psalm 97:10) Bad thoughts often lead to bad acts. To avoid these, a child must also develop another vital characteristic.

The Fear of God

Love mingled with a reverential fear of displeasing Jehovah is something very desirable. Jesus Christ himself set for us the perfect example of one who found delight "in the fear of Jehovah." (Isaiah 11:1-3) Such fear is vital as a child reaches the bloom of youth and begins to experience powerful sexual drives. Fear of God can help a youth to resist worldly pressures that may lead to immoral conduct. (Proverbs 8:13) In some communities, parents shy away from teaching their children how to deal with sexual temptations. In fact, many feel that it is wrong to discuss these matters. But what has been the result of such parental neglect?

Three medical specialists named Buga, Amoko, and Ncayiyana interviewed 1,702 girls and 903 boys from the rurals of Transkei, South Africa. The *South African Medical Journal* reported that "76% of the girls and 90.1% of the boys in this survey were already sexually experienced." The average age of the girls was 15, and many were forced into sexual intercourse. Over 250 had experienced one or more pregnancies. An-

other consequence was a high incidence of sexually transmitted diseases.

Apparently, many parents do not see a need to teach their children how to avoid premarital sex. Instead, the foregoing journal explains: "Childbearing and motherhood are highly rated attributes of womanhood in rural Transkei society, and this is quickly perceived by girls just emerging from puberty." The same problem is documented in other parts of the world.

Many young people in Africa are finding fault with their parents for not helping them to understand their sexuality. Some Christian parents have been too embarrassed to make use of the book *Your Youth —Getting the Best Out Of It.** On pages 20-3, it explains the honorable use of the sex organs and the changes that take place at puberty.

Christian parents who meet the challenge of discussing God's view of sex with their children are to be commended. This is best done progressively, according to a child's ability to grasp matters. Depending on such a factor as the child's age, parents may need to be specific in referring to body parts and their functions. Otherwise, an inexperienced youth may miss the point of what is being said.—1 Corinthians 14:8, 9.

One South African father of two daughters and a son explains: "On frequent occasions, I had opportunities to discuss the sensitive subject of sexual matters even with the girls. My wife, though, paid particular attention to our daughters, using the book *Your Youth—Getting the Best Out Of It.* [See pages 26-31.] When my son was 12 years old, I decided to take him for a long walk in the mountains. On that occasion, we discussed in detail the development of the

* See also *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work,* published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

A father can arrange for the right setting to explain the facts of life

body of a boy and the privileged purpose this would later serve in marriage. I also discussed with him the need to avoid the degrading habit of masturbation and to view girls with honor and respect—as he views his mother and sisters."

Joyous Rewards

The father and mother just mentioned worked hard and are happy that they had good results in raising their three children. All three are now adults, married to faithful Christians. Their son and sons-in-law all serve as elders in the Christian congregation, and two of the couples have been in the full-time evangelizing work for many years.

Yes, parents who work hard for the salvation of their household can expect a joyous reward from children who choose to respond to such Bible teaching, for Proverbs 23:24, 25 says: "The one becoming father to a wise one will also rejoice in him. Your father and your mother will rejoice." Consider the large family mentioned in the introduction of this article. "When I think of the spiritual progress my children have made," says Alphina, "my heart bubbles with joy." May all Christian parents work toward this happy reward.

Acrobats of the Mountain Crags

Courtesy of Athens University

SITUATED along the western shore of the Dead Sea was the ancient city and surrounding wilderness called En-gedi. The area's rocky passes and precipices provide an ideal home for the mountain goat of the Promised Land, similar to those seen here.

This surefooted creature is among the wonders of animal creation. Let us open the Bible and get a closer look at this fascinating animal.

"The High Mountains Are for the Mountain Goats"

So sang the psalmist. (Psalm 104:18) Mountain goats are well equipped for living in lofty places! They are extremely agile, moving over rugged terrain with great confidence and speed. This is partly due to the construction of their hooves. The opening can expand under the goat's weight, giving the animal a firm grip when standing or moving on narrow rock shelves.

Mountain goats also have extraordinary balance. They can leap great distances and land on a ledge scarcely large enough to accommodate all four feet. Biologist Douglas Chadwick once observed a mountain goat of another type use its balance to avoid being trapped on a ledge that was too narrow for it to turn around. He says: "After a glance at the next ledge some 400 feet below, the goat planted its front feet and slowly walked its rear end over its head along the rock face as though it were performing a cartwheel. As I held my breath, the goat continued until its hind feet came down so that it faced the direction from which it had come." (*National Geographic*) No wonder mountain goats have been called "the acrobats of the mountain crags"!

'Do You Know When Mountain Goats Give Birth?'

Mountain goats are very timid creatures. They prefer to live isolated from man. Indeed, people have difficulty getting near enough to observe them in their wild state. Thus, the Owner of "the beasts upon a thousand mountains" could rightfully ask the man Job: "Have you come to know the appointed time for the mountain goats of the crag to give birth?"—Psalm 50:10; Job 39:1.

God-given instinct tells the female mountain goat when it is time to give birth. She searches out a secure spot and delivers one or two kids, usually at the end of May or in June. Newborn kids acquire a sureness of step within just a few days.

"A Lovable Hind and a Charming Mountain Goat"

Wise King Solomon urged husbands: "Rejoice with the wife of your youth, a lovable hind and a charming mountain goat." (Proverbs 5:18, 19) This was not meant to belittle women. Apparently, Solomon was alluding to the beauty, grace, and other outstanding qualities of these animals.

The mountain goat is among the countless "living souls" that give overwhelming testimony to the Creator's wisdom. (Genesis 1:24, 25) Are we not happy that God has surrounded us with so many fascinating creatures?

THE "INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT"

A Bible-Based Doctrine?

OCTOBER 22, 1844, was a day of great anticipation for some 50,000 people on the East Coast of the United States. Their spiritual leader, William Miller, had said that Jesus Christ would return on that very day. The Millerites, as they were called, waited in their meeting places until darkness fell. Then the next day dawned, but the Lord had not come. Disillusioned, they returned home and thereafter recalled that day as the "Great Disappointment."

Yet, disappointment soon gave way to hope. A young woman named Ellen Harmon convinced a small band of Millerites that God had revealed in visions that their time calculation was right. She held that a momentous event had taken place on that day —Christ had then entered "the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary."

More than a decade later, Adventist preacher James White (who had married Ellen Harmon) coined a phrase to describe the nature of Christ's work since October 1844. In the *Review and Herald* of January 29, 1857, White said that Jesus had begun an "investigative judgment." And this has remained a fundamental belief among some seven million who call themselves Seventh-Day Adventists.

However, some respected scholars in the Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) Church have been wondering if the "investigative judgment" is a Bible-based doctrine. Why are they having second thoughts about it? If you were a Seventh-Day Adventist, this question would concern you. First, though, what is "investigative judgment"?

What Is It?

The anchor text cited to support this doctrine is Daniel 8:14. It reads: "He said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." (*King James Version*) Because of the phrase "then shall the *sanctuary be cleansed,*" many Adventists link this verse with Leviticus chapter 16. It describes the cleansing of the sanctuary by the Jewish high priest on the Day of Atonement. They also connect Daniel's words with Hebrews chapter 9, which describes Jesus as the Greater High Priest in heaven. One SDA scholar says that this reasoning is based on the "proof-text" method. A person finds "a certain word like sanctuary in Dan. 8:14, the same word in Lev. 16, the same word in Heb. 7, 8, 9" and holds "that they are all talking about the same thing."

The Adventists reason this way: Ancient Israel's priests performed a daily ministry in the temple compartment called the Holy, resulting in forgiveness of sins. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest performed an annual ministry in the Most Holy (the temple's innermost room) that resulted in the blotting out of sins. They conclude that Christ's priestly ministry in heaven consists of two phases. The first began with his ascension in the first century, ended in 1844, and resulted in the forgiveness of sins. The second, or "judgment phase," began on October 22, 1844, still continues, and will result

in the blotting out of sins. How is this accomplished?

Since 1844, Jesus is said to be investigating the life records of all professing believers (first of the dead, then of the living) to determine if they merit eternal life. This examination is the "investigative judgment." After people are thus judged, the sins of those who pass this test are blotted out of the record books. But, explained Ellen White, those who do not pass will have 'their names blotted out of the book of life.' Thus, "the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death." At that point, the heavenly sanctuary is cleansed and Daniel 8:14 is fulfilled. So Seventh-Day Adventists teach. But the SDA publication *Adventist Review* admits: "The term *investigative judgment* is not found in the Bible."

A Missing Linguistic Link

This teaching has troubled some Adventists. "History shows," says one observer, "that loyal leaders in our ranks have undergone agony of soul as they contemplated our traditional teaching on the investigative judgment." In recent years, he adds, agony turned to doubt as scholars began to "question many pillars of our usual sanctuary presentation." Let us now examine two of them.

Pillar one: Daniel chapter 8 is linked with Leviticus chapter 16. This premise is weakened by two main problems—language and context. First, consider language. Adventists believe that the 'cleansed sanctuary' in Daniel chapter 8 is the antitype of the 'cleansed sanctuary' of Leviticus chapter 16. This analogy seemed acceptable until translators learned that "cleansed" in the *King James Version* is a mistranslation of a form of the Hebrew verb *tsa·dhaq'* (meaning "to be righteous") used at Daniel 8:14. Professor of theology Anthony A. Hoekema notes: "It is unfortunate that the word came to be translated *be cleansed,* since the Hebrew verb usually rendered cleansed [*ta·her'*] is not used here at all."* It is used in Leviticus chapter 16 where the *King James Version* renders forms of *ta·her'* as "cleanse" and "be clean." (Leviticus 16:19, 30) Hence, Dr. Hoekema correctly concludes: "If Daniel meant to refer to the kind of cleansing which was done on the Day of Atonement, he would have used *taheer* [*ta·her'*] instead of *tsadaq* [*tsa·dhaq'*]." Yet, *tsa·dhaq'* is not found in Leviticus, and *ta·her'* is not found in Daniel. The linguistic link is missing.

What Does the Context Reveal?

Now consider the context. Adventists hold that Daniel 8:14 is "a contextual island," having nothing to do with the preceding verses. But do you get that impression when you read Daniel 8:9-14 in the accompanying box entitled "Daniel 8:14 in Context"? Verse 9 identifies an aggressor, a small horn. Verses 10-12 reveal that this aggressor will attack the sanctuary. Verse 13 asks, 'How long will this aggression continue?' And verse 14 answers: "Until two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings; and the holy place will certainly be brought into its right condition." Clearly, verse 13 raises a question that is answered in verse 14. Theologian Desmond Ford says: "To detach Dan. 8:14 from this cry ["How long?" verse 13] is to be exegetically at sea without an anchor."#

Why do Adventists detach verse 14 from the context? To avoid an awkward conclusion. The context ascribes the defilement of the sanctuary, mentioned in verse 14, to the activities of the little horn. However,

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* *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies* defines *tsadaq* (or, *tsa·dhaq'*) as "to be righteous, to be justified," and *taheer* (or, *ta·her'*) as "to be clear, bright, and shining; to be pure, clean, purged; to be clean from all pollution or defilement."

Dr. Ford was a professor of religion at the church-run Pacific Union College in the U.S.A. In 1980 the SDA leadership gave him a six-month leave to study the doctrine, but they rejected his findings. He published these in the book *Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment.*

Daniel 8:14 in Context

DANIEL 8:9 "And out of one of them there came forth *another horn, a small one,* and it kept getting very much greater toward the south and toward the sunrising and toward the Decoration. 10 And it kept getting greater all the way to the army of the heavens, so that it caused some of the army and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it went *trampling them down.* 11 And all the way to the Prince of the army it put on great airs, and from him the constant feature was taken away, and the established place of his *sanctuary* was thrown down. 12 And an army itself was gradually given over, together with the constant feature, because of transgression; and it kept throwing truth to the earth, and it acted and had success.

"13 And I got to hear a certain holy one speaking, and another holy one proceeded to say to the particular one who was speaking: *'How long* will the vision be of the constant feature and of the transgression causing desolation, to make both the holy place and the army things to trample on?' 14 So he said to me: *'Until* two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings; and the holy place will certainly be brought into its right condition.' "—*New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.*

the "investigative judgment" doctrine attributes the defilement of the sanctuary to the activities of Christ. He is said to transfer the sins of believers to the heavenly sanctuary. So, what happens if Adventists accept both the doctrine and the context? Dr. Raymond F. Cottrell, a Seventh-Day Adventist and former associate editor of the *SDA Bible Commentary,* writes: "To pretend to ourselves that the SDA interpretation reads Daniel 8:14 in context then would thus be to identify the little horn as Christ." Dr. Cottrell honestly admits: "We can't have both context and the Adventist interpretation." With regard to the "investigative judgment," therefore, the Adventist Church had to make a choice—accept the doctrine or the context of Daniel 8:14. Unfortunately, it embraced the former and dropped the latter. No wonder, says Dr. Cottrell, that informed Bible students blame Adventists for "reading *into* Scripture" what cannot "be drawn *from* Scripture"!

In 1967, Dr. Cottrell prepared a sabbath school lesson on Daniel, which was sent to SDA churches worldwide. It taught that Daniel 8:14 does relate to its context and that the 'cleansing' does not refer to believers. Significantly, the lesson omits any mention of an "investigative judgment."

Some Remarkable Replies

How great is Adventist awareness that this pillar is too weak to support the "investigative judgment" doctrine? Dr. Cottrell asked 27 leading Adventist theologians, 'What linguistic or contextual reasons can you give for the link between Daniel chapter 8 and Leviticus chapter 16?' Their response?

"All twenty-seven affirmed the nonexistence of any linguistic or contextual reasons for applying Dan. 8:14 to the antitypical day of atonement and the investigative judgment." He asked them, 'Do you have any other reasons for making this link?' Most of the Adventist scholars said that they had no other reasons, five replied that they made this link because Ellen White did, and two said that they based the doctrine on

a "fortunate accident" in translation. Theologian Ford remarks: "Such conclusions offered by the cream of our scholarship assert in effect that our traditional teaching on Dan. 8:14 is indefensible."

Any Help From Hebrews?

Pillar two: Daniel 8:14 is linked with Hebrews chapter 9. "All our early works draw heavily on Heb. 9 when explaining Dan. 8: 14," says theologian Ford. This link was born after the "Great Disappointment" in 1844. Searching for guidance, Millerite Hiram Edson dropped his Bible on a table so that it would fall open. The outcome? Hebrews chapters 8 and 9 were facing him. Says Ford: "What could be more appropriate and symbolic of the Adventist claim that these chapters hold the key to the meaning of 1844 and Dan. 8:14!"

"That claim is crucial for Seventh-day Adventists," adds Dr. Ford in his book *Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment*. "Only in Heb. 9 . . . can be found a detailed explanation of the significance of . . . the sanctuary doctrine so vital to us." Yes, Hebrews chapter 9 is *the* chapter in the "New Testament" to explain the prophetic meaning of Leviticus chapter 16. But Adventists also say that Daniel 8:14 is *the* verse in the "Old Testament" that does so. If both statements are true, there must be a link between Hebrews chapter 9 and Daniel chapter 8 as well.

Desmond Ford observes: "Certain things stand out immediately as one reads Heb. 9. There is no obvious allusion to the book of Daniel, and certainly none to Dan. 8:14. . . . The chapter as a whole is an application of Lev. 16." He states: "Our sanctuary teaching cannot be found in the only book of the New Testament which discusses the significance of the sanctuary services. This has been acknowledged by well-known Adventist writers around the world." So, then, pillar two is also too weak to support the troubled doctrine.

However, this conclusion is not new. For many years, says Dr. Cottrell, "Bible scholars of the church have been well aware of the exegetical problems our conventional interpretation of Daniel 8:14 and Hebrews 9 encounters." Some 80 years ago, influential Seventh-Day Adventist E. J. Waggoner wrote: "Adventist teaching concerning the sanctuary, with its 'Investigative Judgment' . . . , is virtually a denial of the atonement." (*Confession of Faith*) Over 30 years ago, such problems were presented to the General Conference, the SDA Church's leadership.

Problems and an Impasse

The General Conference appointed a "Committee on Problems in the Book of Daniel." It was to prepare a report on how to resolve the difficulties centering on Daniel 8:14. The 14 committee members studied the question for five years but failed to propose a unanimous solution. In 1980, committee member Cottrell said that most committee members felt that the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14 could be "established satisfactorily" by a series of "assumptions" and that problems "should be forgotten." He added: "Remember, the name of the committee was the Committee on Problems in the Book of Daniel, and the majority was suggesting that we forget the problems and not say anything about them." That would have amounted to an "admission that we had no answers." So the minority refused to back the majority's view, and there was no formal report. The doctrinal problems remained unsolved.

Commenting on this impasse, Dr. Cottrell says: "The issue of Daniel 8:14 is still with us because we have been unwilling, thus far, to face up to the fact that a very real exegetical problem does exist. That issue will not go away so long as we keep pretending that

there is no problem, so long as we insist on holding our heads, individually and collectively, in the sand of our preconceived opinions."—*Spectrum,* a journal published by the Association of Adventist Forums.

Dr. Cottrell urges Adventists to make "a careful reexamination of the basic assumptions and the principles of exegesis on which we have based our interpretation of this —for Adventism—indispensable passage of Scripture." We would encourage Adventists to examine the doctrine of "investigative judgment" to see whether its pillars are based solidly on the Bible or are founded on the unstable sands of tradition.* The apostle Paul wisely urged: "Make sure of all things; hold fast to what is fine."—1 Thessalonians 5:21.

* For a reasoned explanation of Daniel chapter 8, see pages 188-219 in the book *"Your Will Be Done on Earth,"* published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

TERTIUS

Paul's Faithful Secretary

TERTIUS faced a challenge. The apostle Paul wanted to use him as his secretary when writing a long letter to fellow Christians in Rome. This would be hard work.

Why was it so hard to be a secretary in the first century C.E.? How was such work done? What writing materials were then in use?

Secretaries in Antiquity

In ancient Greco-Roman society, there were various kinds of secretaries. Some men served as state secretaries—public functionaries who worked in the chancelleries. There were also public secretaries offering their services to citizens in the marketplace. Private secretaries (often slaves) were retained by the wealthy. Then, too, there were willing friends who were happy to write letters for others. According to scholar E. Randolph Richards, the skills of these unofficial secretaries "could range from a minimal competency with the language and/or the mechanics of writing to the highest proficiency at rapidly producing an accurate, proper, and charming letter."

Who would use secretaries? First of all, those who did not know how to read and write. Many ancient contracts and business letters were completed with notes in which the secretary attested that he had written the document because of the inability of the person who had entrusted the job to him. A second reason for employing a secretary is illustrated by an ancient letter

from Thebes, Egypt. Penned for a certain Asklepiades, it said in conclusion: "Eumelus, son of Herma, has written for him . . . for he writes somewhat slowly."

Yet, knowing how to read and write does not seem to have been the determining factor in the use of a secretary. According to Bible expositor John L. McKenzie, "it was probably not even a concern for legibility, but rather a concern for beauty, or at least for neatness" that induced people to resort to the services of a secretary. Even for the educated, writing was wearisome, especially where long and elaborate texts were concerned. Scholar J. A. Eschlimann says that any who could do so "gladly avoided this chore, entrusting it to the care of slaves, professional scribes." Moreover, it is easy to understand why people were not fond of writing their own letters when the materials used and the working conditions are considered.

The writing material commonly used in the first century C.E. was papyrus. Thin strips were obtained from this plant by cutting the pithy core of its stems lengthwise. A layer of strips was laid out. Another layer was placed at right angles on the first layer. The two were bonded by pressure, producing a sheet of "paper."

It was not easy to write on this surface. It was rough and fibrous. According to scholar Angelo Penna, "the spongy fibers of the papyrus contributed to the spread of the ink, particularly along the tiny channels that remained between the thin strips." The secretary might work sitting cross-legged on the ground and holding the sheet on a board with one hand. If he was inexperienced or the materials were not of the best quality, his calamus, or reed pen, could snag in the papyrus, the sheet could tear, or the writing could be illegible.

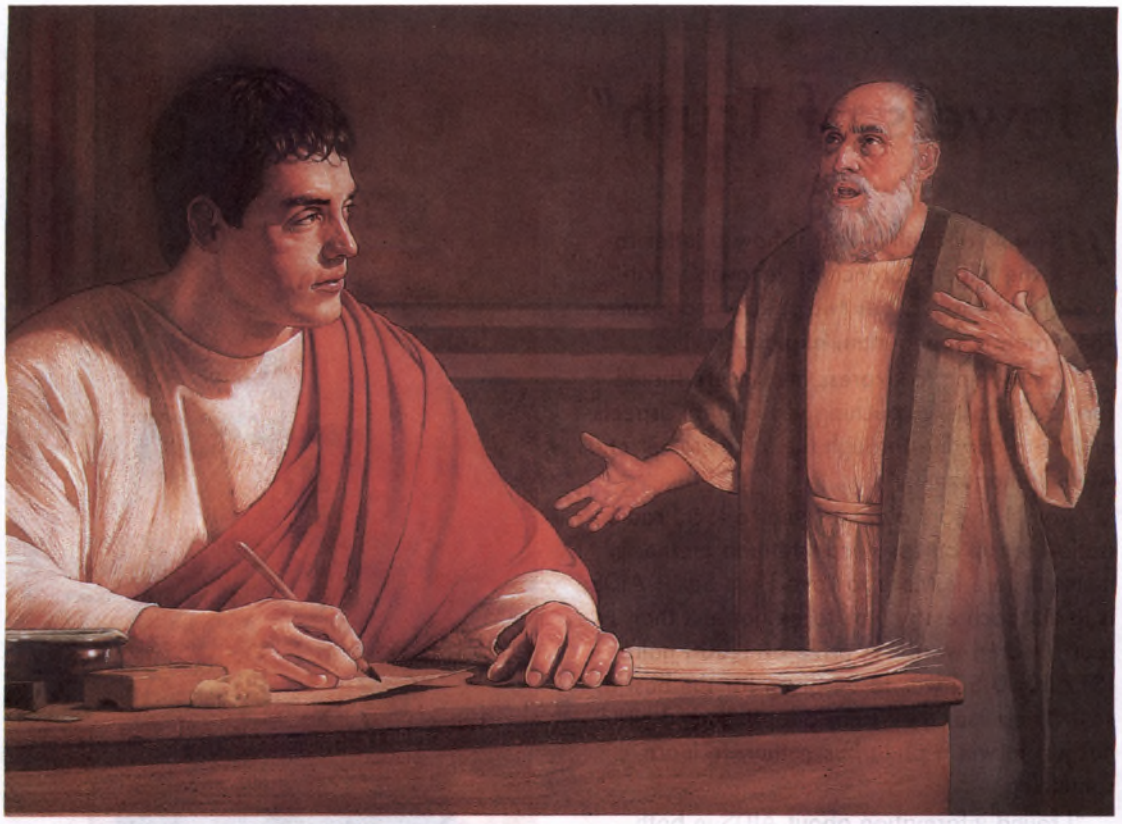
The ink was made from a mixture of soot and gum. Sold in the form of bars, it had to be diluted with water in an inkwell before it could be used to write. Among the other instruments that a secretary like Tertius would probably have had with him were a knife to sharpen the reed pen and a damp sponge to erase his errors. Every character had to be written with care. Writing therefore proceeded slowly and with some difficulty.

'I, Tertius, Greet You'

Among the greetings included at the end of the letter to the Romans is that of Paul's secretary, who wrote: "I, Tertius, who have done the writing of this letter, greet you in the Lord." (Romans 16:22) This is the only occasion in the writings of Paul where explicit reference is made to one of his secretaries.

We know little about Tertius. From his greeting "in the Lord," we may conclude that he was a faithful Christian. He was probably a member of the congregation in Corinth and may have known many Christians in Rome. Bible scholar Giuseppe Barbaglio suggests that Tertius was a slave or a freedman. Why? First, because "scribes generally belonged to this class; then, because his Latin name . . . was extremely common among slaves and freedmen." "Therefore," says Barbaglio, "he was not a 'neutral' professional writer, he was a fellow worker who in this way helped Paul to compile his longest and most articulate piece of writing: a precious service, enabling Paul to save time and fatigue."

This work of Tertius surely is precious. Baruch did similar work for Jeremiah, even as Silvanus did for Peter. (Jeremiah 36:4; 1 Peter 5:12) What a privilege such coworkers had!



Writing to the Romans

The letter to the Romans was written while Paul was a guest of Gaius, probably in Corinth. That was about 56 C.E., during the apostle's third missionary journey. (Romans 16:23) Although we know for a certainty that Paul used Tertius as his secretary to write this letter, we do not know exactly *how* he used him. Whatever the method used, the work could not have been done easily. But of this we can be certain: Like the rest of the Bible, Paul's letter to the Romans was "inspired of God."—2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

When this letter was finished, Tertius and Paul had written thousands of words, using several sheets of papyrus. After being glued to one another along the margin, these sheets formed a scroll, probably some 10 to 15 feet long. The letter was carefully rolled and sealed. Then Paul seems to have entrusted it to Phoebe, a sister from Cenchreae, who was about to embark on a journey to Rome.—Romans 16:1, 2.

Since the first century, the methods used to produce written material have changed enormously. But throughout the centuries, the letter to the Roman Christians has been preserved by God. How grateful we can be for this part of Jehovah's Word, penned with the help of Paul's faithful and hard-working secretary Tertius!

"Jewels of Truth"

"Jewels of truth." That is how a letter to the Nigeria branch of Jehovah's Witnesses describes two special magazines. The writer, a young man, explains:

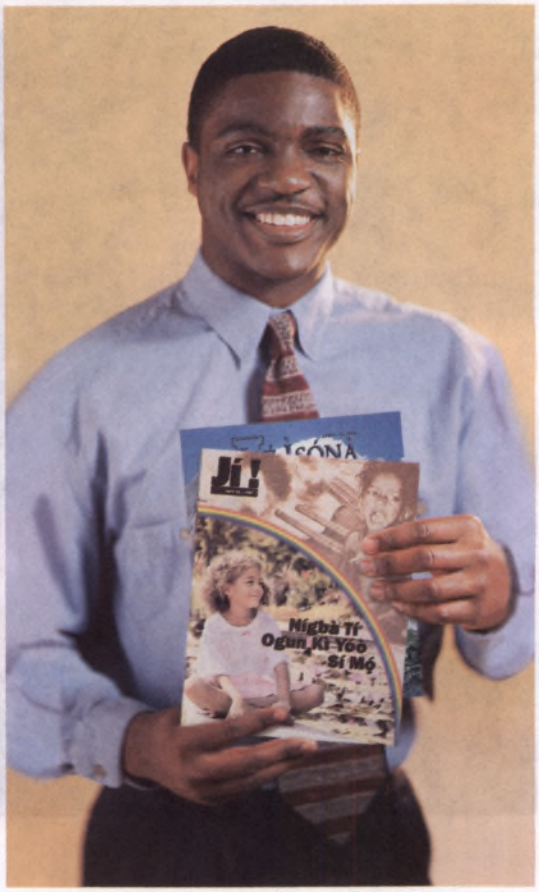
"I am writing to express my sincere thanks for your efforts in touching virtually all aspects of day-to-day life through the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines.

"I am 17 years old. Last year a local radio station set up an essay competition on the theme 'There Is More to Love Than Sex—AIDS Is Real.' Each essay was to be not less than four hundred words. A prize of 1,000 naira [$12.50, U.S.] was to be given for the best essay. Of course, they said, people should write not just to win a prize but, rather, to learn something. . . .

"I found information about AIDS in both magazines. Concerning love, there was an inexhaustible array of articles. I used points from *Awake!* of August 8, 1978.

"Barely two months after sending in my essay, the results came out. To my surprise, I came in first in the states of Cross River and Akwa Ibom!

"All the information I used came from the magazines. It is really marvelous that Jehovah provides timely information for us in this troubled and sick world. As true Christians, we



know that there is much, much more to love than sex. And, of course, living a clean, moral life protects us from diseases like AIDS.

"I can't help thanking you for these jewels of truth that you tirelessly produce. May Jehovah continue to bless your efforts as you continuously provide these precious magazines."